

**SPECIAL MENTION 2. ARCHITECTURE**

# The SantaCreu Hotel on the island of Tabarca

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The underlying concept behind the SantaCreu Hotel is contemporary in nature, yet at the same time seeks to integrate the island's traditional materials, in keeping with the philosophy of hotel construction as a series of locally tried and tested building systems and solutions that are proven in terms of their durability, maintenance and functionality. To a certain extent, the intention was to reinterpret the use of these materials in a move towards a more contemporary vision of building.

Ceramic tiles were chosen due to the diversity they offer in terms of formats, finishes and colours, as well as their easy use and versatility on exterior roofs (water-proofing) and flooring (friction and wear and tear), as well as in bathrooms (water-tightness). Furthermore, they are natural products coming straight from the earth, clay and sand, thereby instantly creating calming, comfortable and natural atmospheres that are fully compatible with the contemporary settings demanded by modern-day society.

Essentially, the SantaCreu Hotel project features three major ceramic elements: traditional Spanish *bardos*, *tobas* and wall tiles. What follows is a description of how each type was used.

The ***bardo*** tiles form structural elements in the style of exposed vaults, and together with the beams they form the hotel's different types of floor slabs. Yellow in tone and measuring 80 x 25 cm, they were placed over the beams to bear the concrete compression layer, creating warm and natural textured floor slabs. The contrast between the uniformity of the painted steel and the natural effect of the *bardos* creates a traditional effect in the hotel's exposed ceilings yet which does not look out of place in contemporary settings. The tone variations of each piece add a greater sense of complexity to the final effect, in a reminder of the time and effort needed for the handcrafted process of making these tiles.

Lightweight ceramic ***toba*** tiles measuring 28 x 14 cm, made of limestone and also in a yellow, slightly pinkish tone were used on the floors of the hotel lobby as well as on the interior façade in the reception area and on the entire exterior sloping roof, arranged in a staggered vertical layout. Their earthy composition means that each piece is different in terms of shading and texture, allowing for the creation of a kind of continuous skin that is an ideal solution when seeking a single material for use on the suite roofs, façades and

floors. Indeed, very few materials currently available on the market are able to provide the full range of characteristics required in this sense.

It is precisely this versatility that makes *toba* tiles an alternative to flat tiles for use with both vertical and horizontal elements. Furthermore, they are less bulky than standard tiles, as well as being easier to lay and requiring less specialised expertise.

**Wall tiles.** The reduced size of the rooms was one of the principal reasons behind the decision to include the bathroom area inside the actual room, separating both spaces with a fixed glass pane and a sliding door with pine strips in order to afford hotel guests the necessary degree of privacy. The bespoke design ceramic washbasins include meticulously made special pieces in the rounded and corner sections. Both the walls and the floors in the wet zones feature 20 x 10 cm ceramic tiles to guarantee complete watertightness and enable the water to drain away. The decision was made to use tiles with a matt finish to offset the sense of 'luxury' produced by gloss finish tiles and in coherence with the other materials used in the product. As with the other ceramic elements included in this project, the joints create a staggered effect.