

THE FEMALE WORKERS

Inlaid stoneware tiles

Fired at high temperatures, the clay mixture becomes vitrified and acquires a hardness that gives the tile exceptional resistance.

To obtain a clear separation of the colors, a divider is used which is placed in a mould.

Using a stencil (one per color), the worker fills the bottom of the cells with colored clay powders to 1/3 the thickness of the divider.

This work is done manually and requires a lot of precision and accuracy. This is why the small, delicate and meticulous hands of the ladies are used.

Less than 5mm of powder height is enough before removing the divider and completing with clay powders.

Then, a press with the trademark is used to agglomerate the whole.

At this stage, the tile can be handled without breaking and the colors have not mixed. The firing at 1300 degrees finishes the tile which becomes wear-resistant and waterproof thanks to the presence of a silica ensuring vitrification.

The flourishing production of patterned stoneware tiles was endangered after the First World War, when everything had to be rebuilt quickly and cheaply. As a result, there was less demand for sophisticated designs.

You can still see these tiles today in many corridors of houses in and around Welkenraedt. These tiles are square, but you can also find some hexagonal models.