

Refrigerators and Joint Transition ◀ ▶ My Opinion

Have a technical question? Check MIA's Dimension Stone Design Manual VII first. If you can't find the answer there, contact MIA's Technical Director, Chuck Muehlbauer at technical@marble-institute.com. This FREE service is for MIA members only! (Non-member charge: \$85/hour) As a courtesy to other members, please limit phone conversations to ten minutes per call. All opinions and advice provided by Chuck Muehlbauer or anyone else from MIA are provided as general information only. MIA assumes no responsibility and shall not be liable for any damages resulting from your use of this information. Any information provided by the MIA are the exclusive property of MIA and shall not be disseminated, republished, or reproduced in any manner without the prior written consent of MIA.

Q. We installed a lobby job with honed marble, and the owner is complaining that there are swirl marks visible at acute angles to light due to the downwashed lighting. The marks are not visible when the lights are turned off. Does MIA have a position on this?

A. Actually, we have two positions on it, but they would support opposite sides of this argument. In Chapter 15 (page 15-12) of the *Dimension Stone Design Manual VII*, it states that walls with downwashed lighting should be inspected with the lighting turned off, because downwashed lighting artificially accentuates lippage between adjacent panels. But in Chapter 13 (page 13-10), it very clearly states that "Polishing wheel marks or other scratches caused during fabrication are unacceptable on honed or polished stone." I would opine that in this case, the text in chapter 13 governs, since the discussion of downwashed lighting is really aimed at lippage considerations (which is an installation issue), and not the surface textural quality of the stone (which is a fabrication issue). This would mean that the installed stone would not comply with industry quality standards. Two other issues to consider are viewable distance and approved samples. If the marks are not noticeable from 6 ft away (which is a specified viewing distance in EN standards; no such specification exists in American standards), one could make the argument that they are not significantly detracting from the visual qualities of the wall. Or, if the approved samples were sub-

jected to the same oblique lighting angle, the same circular marks might be visible on them, in which case an argument could be made that the supplied material conforms to the approved samples.

Q. I recently had granite countertops installed in my kitchen, and purchased a copy of your countertop installation guide to help me evaluate the quality of the work. Would you be able to clarify for me your standard "10.6 Joints at materials transition"? It states that visible joints between the stone units and other materials (e.g., cabinetry, gypsum wall board) shall be 1/8" nominal. Do you apply this same standard to ends of granite countertops leading up to appliances (e.g., ovens and refrigerators), seeing that they too create joints at materials transition? The joint between my countertop and refrigerator is larger than 1/8", and I think it should be fixed.

A. No, this standard would not be enforceable at appliances. The manufacturing of appliances also has tolerances, so this transition is not entirely under the control of the countertop fabricator/installer. The service life of your countertops will exceed the service life of your appliances, and the replacement refrigerator that will be purchased someday may be slightly larger or smaller than the existing. Particularly in the case of refrigerators, the side panels will usually be bowed due to the insulation injection during manufacturing, so exact fit of the countertop to the appliance would be neither practical nor

advised.

Q. We're having a travertine floor installed over a concrete substrate, and the subcontractor is installing it with five globs of mortar, one at each corner and one in the center of each tile. He says this is the standard way of doing it. The tiles are only about 5/8" thick – we think they should have more support.

A. You are correct. They should have more support. We include 5/8" thickness in our definition of "tile", and therefore we're really looking for "as close to 100% contact" as practical. The subcontractor's claim is true, in at least several regions of the country, where the "corner spot" or "butterball" method of setting interior pavers is common. It is not, however, a high quality installation and has several inherent problems. The first problem is that of extreme hollow sounds throughout the floor when traversed by pedestrians. The next problem is that you will frequently see the grout falling out of the joint and dropping into the void space below. A third issue is the possibility of non-uniform discolorations due to such a large portion of the stone area unbonded on its underside. There is also the potential of cracking under extremely heavy, concentrated loads. In this case, the cracked stone can actually drop into the void area, which would create a safety issue. MIA guidelines specifically recommend against this practice.