FROM EARTH TO TABLE

The complete story of how a Moroccan mosaic table is made



From raw clay to zellige, from zellige to mosaic, and from mosaic to a table handcrafted in Fez.

A Story That Begins in Fez

In Fez, zellige is far more than a decorative tile. It belongs to an ancient craft tradition passed down through practice, observation and experience. A Moroccan mosaic table therefore does not begin when the pattern is assembled: its story starts much earlier, with the earth itself.

Before the hundreds of small coloured pieces that make up a tabletop can exist, the clay must be prepared, shaped, dried, fired, glazed and fired once again. Only then do the tiles become the mosaic artisan's raw material: they are marked, cut and adjusted one by one before the final assembly.



In the workshop, material and time prepare the future pieces of zellige.

01 – THE RAW MATERIAL

Clay: Where It All Begins

The process begins with natural clay. The earth is prepared to create a smooth and sufficiently workable mixture. It is moistened, kneaded and cleared, as much as possible, of any unwanted elements.

This preparation determines the quality of everything that follows. A consistent clay body makes shaping easier and reduces the risk of cracks or deformation during drying and firing.



02 – SHAPING

Transforming Earth Into Tiles

The prepared clay is flattened and shaped. The slabs are levelled and then cut to the required size. At this stage, they are still raw: they have neither the hardness nor the shine of finished zellige.

The surface and thickness already carry the subtle traces of handmade production. The aim is to create a base that is sufficiently even to withstand the following stages.



03 – DRYING

Letting Time Do Its Work

The raw tiles must dry before entering the kiln. The water contained in the clay gradually evaporates. A piece fired too early could crack, break or become distorted.

Drying is therefore an essential part of the process. The material sets its own pace, and the artisan must respect this time before moving on to fire.

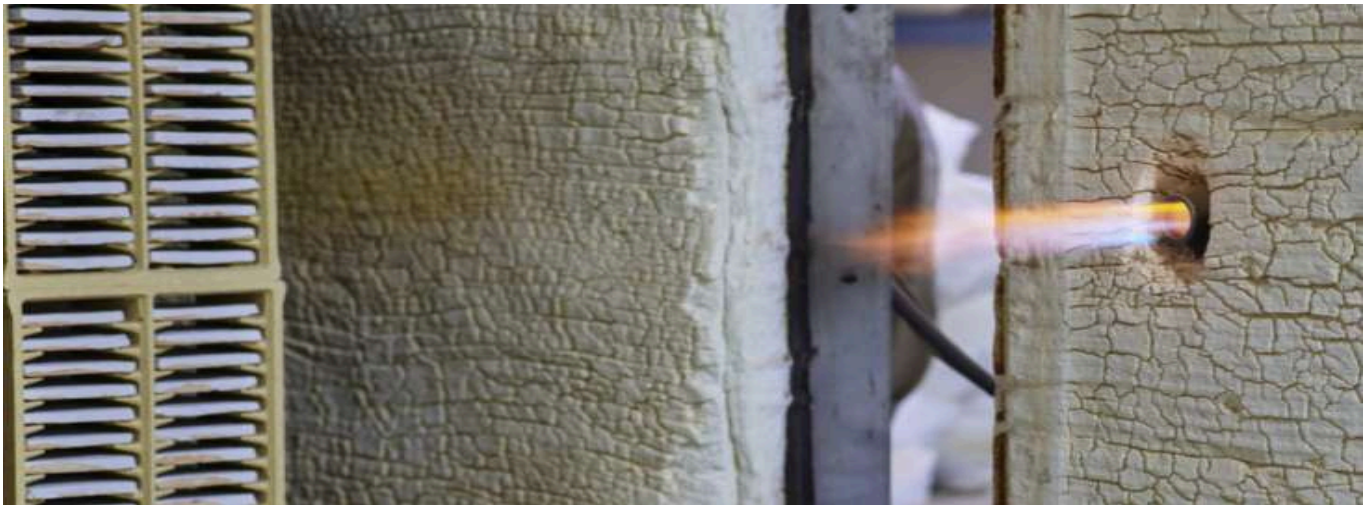


04 – THE FIRST FIRING

From Raw Tile to Bisque

Once dry, the tiles undergo their first firing. The heat transforms the fragile clay into a hard, porous ceramic known as bisque.

This firing gives the tile its strength and prepares its surface to receive the glaze.



05 – THE GLAZE

Bringing Colour to Life

After the first firing, one face of the tile receives its coloured glaze. White, blue, green, yellow, red, black or softer shades: the chosen palette will determine the identity of the future mosaic.

Artisanal glaze reacts naturally to both the material and the heat of the kiln. Subtle differences in tone, depth and sheen give zellige its distinctive character and luminosity.



06 – THE SECOND FIRING

Setting the Colour Through Fire

The glazed tiles return to the kiln. This second firing permanently sets the glaze onto the bisque and reveals its glossy or satin surface.

When the tile leaves the kiln, it has become zellige. The natural variations found in each piece will later add richness and depth to the mosaic.



07 – THE MARKING

Preparing the Shapes of the Pattern

The whole tile is only an intermediate material. To become part of a mosaic, it must first be transformed into smaller geometric shapes.

Depending on the chosen design, the artisan prepares stars, triangles, diamonds, crosses, squares, polygons, borders and adjustment pieces. The precision of these shapes is essential to the balance of the final pattern.

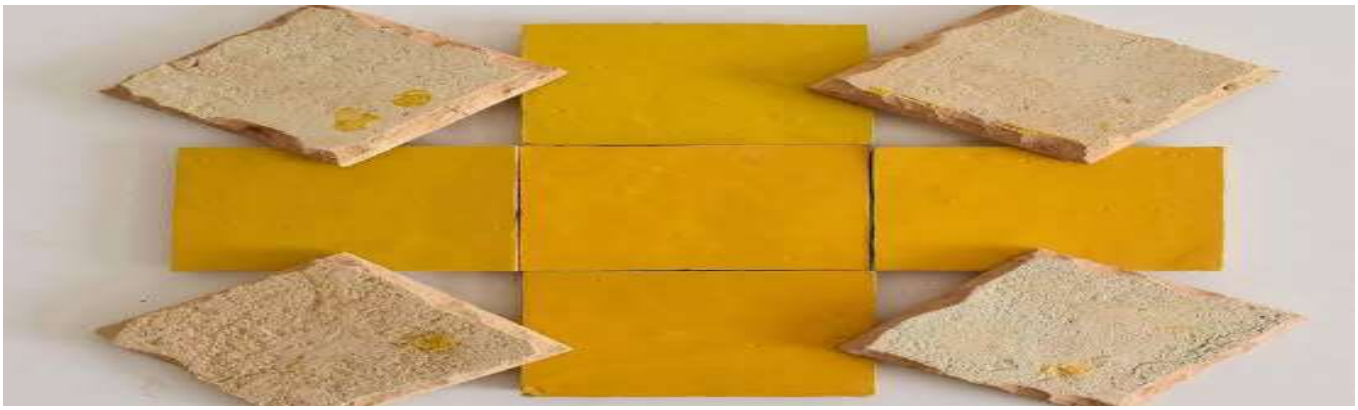


08 – THE CUTTING

Every Piece Is Cut by Hand

Using traditional tools, the artisan cuts and adjusts each tile to create the required shape. The pieces are shaped progressively, and their edges are refined to allow them to fit closely together.

This work requires precision and experience. The subtle differences between individual pieces are a natural result of the handmade process and give the mosaic its unique, living character.



09 – THE DESIGN

Designing the Future Table

Before assembly begins, the tabletop is considered as a complete composition: its dimensions, shape, colours, border, centre and pattern repetition are carefully planned.

For a custom order, the starting point may be an existing design, a photograph, a sketch or simply an idea. The design is then adapted to the exact dimensions of the tabletop so that its proportions remain harmonious.



10 – THE ASSEMBLY

The Mosaic Appears Piece by Piece

The prepared tesserae are positioned one by one according to the design. In many traditional assemblies, they are placed with the glazed face down: the artisan works from their shape, position and an experienced understanding of the pattern.

Gradually, the centre, stars, interlacing forms, repetitions and borders begin to appear. Depending on the size and complexity of the table, a single tabletop may require hundreds of individually prepared pieces.



11 – THE TABLETOP

Transforming the Mosaic Into a Solid Structure

Once the composition is complete, the mosaic must become a functional tabletop. The back of the mosaic is bonded and reinforced before being integrated into a structure suited to its size and shape.

The perimeter, thickness and edges are carefully formed. The artisan checks the overall alignment, stability and consistency of the tabletop.



12 – THE FINISHING

Revealing the Final Pattern

Once the structure has been set and been reinforced, the surface is cleaned and the finishing work begins. The joints, edges and perimeter are refined to reveal the composition clearly.

Small variations in cutting, joints, colour and sheen remain visible. These are inherent characteristics of handmade production.

13 – THE BASE

The Metal Structure: Strength Beneath the Mosaic

The finished tabletop is paired with a metal base that provides stability and support. Its dimensions are adapted to the size and intended use of the table. Depending on the model, a foldable or removable iron base can make transport, positioning and storage easier.

For special projects, the structure can also be adapted to the required height, shape and specific constraints of the tabletop. The base is intentionally discreet: its purpose is to support the craftsmanship without drawing attention away from the mosaic.



14 – THE FINAL RESULT

From Earth to a Moroccan Table

After all these transformations, the original clay is almost unrecognisable. Earth became tile, and tile became colour. The colour was cut into geometry, the geometry assembled into mosaic, and the mosaic transformed into a tabletop designed to last.

Every table is worked on individually. The larger the tabletop and the more complex the design, the more pieces, cuts, adjustments and hours of work it requires.

No two handmade tables are ever perfectly identical. That is precisely what gives each one its own character.

From Fez to Your Space

Whether placed in a home, garden, terrace, balcony, courtyard, restaurant or hotel, the table carries with it a part of Fez's artisanal heritage.

What arrives in its owner's space is not simply a piece of furniture: it is a composition born from earth and fire, then shaped and assembled by human hands.

