

Rotex +Granat + Marble = WOW!

I had a interesting problem thrown at me by one of my regular clients today. He had accepted a job to restore a staircase and 4 bathroom floors in a large house in Camberwell that was undergoing a serious renovation .

The problem he faced was that the floors and staircase were clad in reclaimed marble tiles that were irregularly sized, shaped and of irregular thicknesses.

Had already completed a section of one of the bathrooms and whilst the laying of the tiles the levelling of the thick tiles using a grey diamond head fitted to the Protool RGP 130 presented no real problem, the finishing and repolishing of the tiles did. He'd given me a call earlier in the day to explain the problem, so when he rocked in with some samples of the tiles I was ready to play.

We moved into the Festool test centre at the shop and clamped one of the marble samples to the MFT table.

In order to fully replicate his problem I grabbed a RGP 130 fitted with a grey diamond head and scuffed up the surface of the tile. I then put that aside and moved on to the Rotex which I'd fitted with a sheet 60g Granat paper. Beginning with the speed on 6 and in Rotex mode I ran the sander over the entire surface of the tile paying careful attention to the gouges I'd put in with the RGP. After about 30 seconds I

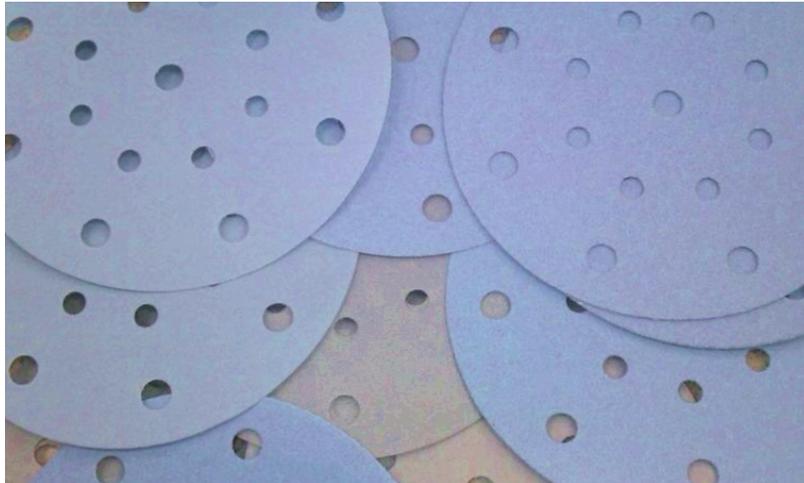
stopped to inspect the result. Minimal change.

Bugger.

Started again but dropped the speed of the sander down to 3. Went at it again for another 30 seconds. Better result, but still not what I was looking for.

I decided to change to a piece of 40g

Granat and bumping the speed back up to 5 and still in Rotex mode, went at it again. Much better result this time with a marked decrease in the gouges . I gave the surface another sand using the edge



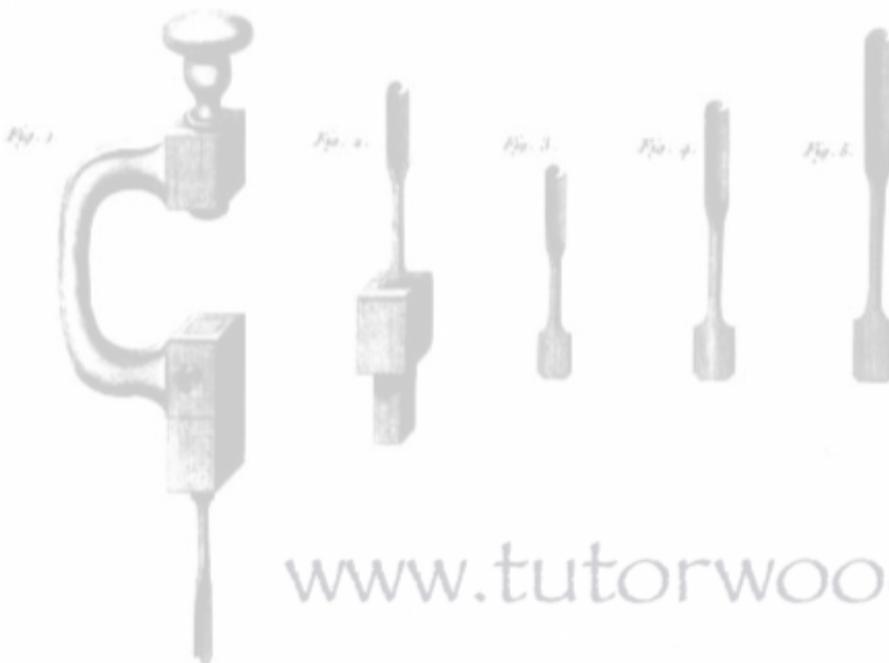
of the pad to remove the deeper gouges then put the Rotex into random orbital mode and went over the entire surface again.

I put the sheet of 60g Granat back on the sander and with it set on speed 5 and in Rotex mode went over the entire surface again. After 30 seconds I flipped into random and worked the surface again. The progress was repeated with 100, 150, 240, 320 and 400 grit Granat papers, with the sanding speed being decreased as the abrasives became finer. By the time I got to 400 g I was on speed 2 and the finish of the marble was becoming, dare I say, sexy. From the 400g Granat I moved on to 500g Titan paper, still on speed 1 and still using the Rotex / random orbital method. After the 500g Titan, came 800g and then the final sand using 1500g Titan. On the 1500g I had the sander set on speed1 and used Rotex mode only. By this stage the finish was awesome. The whole tile had a uniform gloss which highlighted its natural structure and yes, by this stage I had an extremely happy customer.

To finish the tile off I gave it a quick polish using a hard felt pad which was impregnated with 10000 grit polish which I'd used on a corian polishing demo I'd done earlier. The Rotex was set again to speed 1 on Rotex mode and I worked the surface for about a minute. The result was stunning with the tile now exhibiting a uniform high gloss finish.

If your going to give this method a go I'd stress that you take your time and experiment on an off cut of your project before proceeding with a large scale project. Different types of stone behave very differently to this type of polishing technique and I've also found that different colours of marble also react differently.

The best advice I can give is for you to follow the process listed here, but don't be afraid to experiment. On a particularly tough piece of stone benefit can be gained by slowing down the sander on the coarser grades so that the abrasive can "bite" into the material deeper. Remember not to resort to brute force to get the job done faster. Pushing hard on the sander will only result in deeper scratches, more heat build up and shorter pad and abrasive life.



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