

The Custom Tile Commission Process With Paul Lewing Custom Tile

Since 1986, I've done well over 1000 custom tile commissions, so I know pretty well what you might want to ask. It's easy, even if you've never commissioned a piece of art before, or aren't exactly sure what you want.

Where do we start?

First, I need from you the measurements of the spaces where the tile will go, and anything you can show me to tell me what you'd like on the tile in terms of imagery, style and colors.

Pictures, drawings, color samples, links to web sites, and lists of things you'd like are all valuable. I will not copy the work of another artist, but I can usually design something that incorporates the aspects of others' work that you like. I will not reproduce copyrighted material, but I'm happy to match fabric, wallpaper or dinnerware patterns on tile. The more you can show me, the easier my job will be, and you may be as specific as you like in designing your mural.

How will I know what it's going to look like?

I will almost always make you a scale drawing or a color sample, if it's something I can't draw. This will usually be a colored pencil sketch in my sketchbook, which I will send you a digital picture of. The colors will be as close to the fired colors as I can manage, but there are differences. If the first sketch is not exactly what you had envisioned, I will make another at no charge. In most cases, it's pretty close the first time, and if there are only minor differences, I usually do not have to do another drawing.

What will it cost?

I currently charge \$144 per square foot for any tile that goes into the kiln. That means that, if there are areas of unpainted field tile, you don't pay for those. That works out to \$36 each for 6" tile, or \$18 each for 4 1/4" tile. Other sizes are priced similarly. One exception to this price scale is for tiles 12" x 18" (\$250 each), up to 12" x 24" or 13" x 24" (\$350), as they are much harder to handle and fire. Once your drawing is done, we will know exactly how big the tile area will be, and so the cost.

Is there a charge for drawings?

If we go ahead and do a tile commission, any number of drawings are part of the price. However, if for any reason I make drawings for you, and we do not proceed with tile in a reasonable amount of time, I charge for drawing at the rate of \$50 per hour.

How and when do I pay you?

When you approve your drawing, I will ask you for half the cost. The other half, plus any shipping costs or sales tax (Washington State residents only), are due when the job is done. I can accept Visa or Mastercard, or you can e-mail money to my Paypal account. You can call and read me a number over the phone if you're not comfortable e-mailing

the number. I will also accept your personal check in the mail, although this will slow down the process.

What tile can we use?

I have worked on virtually every brand and color of ceramic and porcelain tile, glazed and unglazed, glossy and matte, and so far have not found any that I cannot use. While it's not necessary that the background tile be pure white, the glazes are a bit translucent, so any color other than white, particularly if it's as dark as a brown paper bag, for instance, will affect the colors. If given a choice, I usually opt for Dal Tile, as it is widely available and reasonably priced, and they give me excellent service and selection here at their Seattle showroom. If there is a large area of tile, but only some is painted, I will get the ones that need to be painted here, and you get the unpainted ones where you are, so we don't ship field tile all over the country.

How is the process done?

Almost all my commissions are fired in a kiln to a temperature lower than the glaze on the tile was fired (about 1450°F), so the factory glaze remains completely unaffected. In a few cases, for certain styles of landscapes, I start with an unglazed tile and apply all the glazes myself. For this style of landscape, I need to get the tile myself.

How long will it take to get my tile?

Once we agree on the design and I have received your deposit, most jobs take between one and three weeks to complete. Jobs of over 50 square feet may take longer than that.

How durable is it?

The fired images will be completely impervious to sunlight and most chemicals. I recommend that you treat the painted tile exactly as you would the unpainted ones, or your porcelain sink. Scouring powders or pads may scratch it, just as they will the factory glaze. I do not recommend my painted tile for floors in high traffic areas, although they are fine in low traffic areas. You may want to install your tile outside, in which case we will select a frostproof tile, if you live in a cold climate.

Will my tile setter know how the tile lays out?

Each tile is numbered on the back using a very clear numbering system. I will include a card that explains this system with your tile. No tile setter has ever had a problem figuring my system out.

Is my satisfaction guaranteed?

Absolutely. If you're not happy with your Paul Lewing Custom Tile mural, I will either redo it or refund your money.

If you have any other questions, or if you'd like to start the commission process, please contact me.