

# Construction Week



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# GLAZE'S JOURNEY INTO THE BUSINESS OF STONES

Umesh Punia, CEO, GLAZE GRANITE & MARBLE speaks with *Construction Week's* Disha Dadlani about how the company has elevated the way marble and other natural stones are sold in UAE



Umesh Punia, Chief Executive Officer, GLAZE GRANITE & MARBLE

The business of stones can lend itself to quite an interesting, extensive and rewarding entrepreneurial journey, if you've carved yours as intrinsically as Umesh Punia, Chief Executive Officer, GLAZE GRANITE & MARBLE.

With a self-affirmed passion for marbles, Punia dedicates his efforts in discovering new and quality marble and introducing it

to the market for use.

This passion dates back to circa 1995, when Punia first put on his entrepreneurial cap while working at a granite company in India, after completing a course in civil engineering from Maharashtra Institute of Technology, Pune, India.

"During my time there, I was required to travel to the UAE for the sale of some

granite slabs. In that first visit, I realised that most customers preferred buying locally over importing; ready stock was lacking in the market. It didn't take me very long to realise the potential of setting up my own shop. So, I started at micro level, importing just one or two containers a month at a very low operating cost," he says.

Now, 26 years in the nation, Punia affirms that the UAE is the right place for aspiring entrepreneurs to grow a business from the ground up. As an established entrepreneur himself, he prides on increasingly adding better-quality marble to GLAZE's stone gallery. "I believe this is the reason why today we not only have the largest collection of stones in the Middle East, but probably even in the world," he stresses.

## "Sourcing top-quality marble"

Helping the affairs and operations at GLAZE, Punia has changed and elevated the way marble and other natural stones



The GLAZE GRANITE & MARBLE office is located in Emirates Industrial City, Sajja, Sharjah

are sold in the UAE. He says: “My main role has always been the same – sourcing top-quality marble, at the best prices, from all around the world. Natural stones can be quite deceptive for an end user, and our job is to source and stock the best options. Even today, my role is to supervise, monitor imports, and uncover the best value for investment on behalf of our clients using all of our expertise, network, and resources.”

A dedicated team facilitates this process and tends to the details by overseeing operations, sales and finance. “After more than two decades in the industry, we can guarantee that we are sourcing the best selections for our clients from every corner of the world.”

### Flooring and countertops

Putting its spin on the flooring and countertop industry, GLAZE has introduced a variety of materials including reconstituted quartz for flooring and counters. The company brought to the UAE a leading quartz brand Caesarstone and Coante, another BRETONSTONE technology quartz for kitchen tops, both of which provide a 20-year warranty for kitchen countertops.

Sharing more details, Punia says: “Last year, we introduced a revolutionary product, a sintered stone, called NEOLITH. This next-generation product is non-porcelain, and is a nearly indestructible slab which can be used for exterior cladding, countertops, and floors. No other product can match its quality and character. These slabs are completely scratch, heat, water, chemical, and fire resistant.”

“In the second quarter of this year, we introduced GEOLUXE, another next-generation product, which is applicable for all surfaces, and is produced with 3D printing technology using melted minerals as ink. We have also introduced some other products including ARIOSTEA, entailing an impressive porcelain slab brand from Italy, which belongs to the oldest and largest Italian porcelain group, Iris Ceramic Group,” he continues.

GLAZE is focused on constantly evolving its position as a brand through the conceptualisation and introduction of engineered and natural stones.

Outlining the company’s achievements in this regard, Punia says: “We [GLAZE] were the first to introduce Brazilian



The GLAZE GRANITE & MARBLE office is indicative of its commitment to the best quality of natural stones

natural quartzite as a flooring and countertop product. Quartz or quartzite are hard in nature, so their performance as flooring or counter material is incredible. The most popular quartzite is from Brazil and is extremely popular in the US. The trend of quartzite emerged in the US in the 2010’s, and it took us no time at all to introduce these products to the UAE market. Quartzite such as Mont Blanc, Super White, Quartz Cremo, Fusion, and Cortecchia were once very new in the UAE, and they were a risky investment because they are expensive, but they are now some of the most popular products in the gallery. At this current moment, there are over 400 natural stones in our collection. The introduction of these exotic and rare stones was our brainchild - many of them are extremely popular today, and found exclusively at GLAZE.”

### Into a GLAZE showroom

Across GLAZE’s showrooms, our clients walk through the real stock, which would finally end up as the floor in their home or office. The company has created a totally different experience for clients in its state-of-the-art gallery, whereas in other places, clients can only preview a sample of the materials they are interested in, although the final material for delivery would be stored far away in an open yard.

Going into the specifics around natural stones, Punia says: “The final product you would receive may look and feel completely different, as is often the case with natural stones especially. In fact, you should never buy a natural stone from a sample, because no two pieces of natural

## BUSINESS FOCUS

- Hosts top brands such as NEOLITH, Caesarstone, Coante, ARIOSTEA, KoZo, and GEOLUXE
- Signed exclusive agreements with top quarries in Italy, Spain, Turkey, Greece, and Brazil
- Created a totally different experience for clients in its state-of-the-art stone gallery
- Enables clients to walk through the “real stock”
- Currently establishing its newest stone gallery in ICAD Musaffah

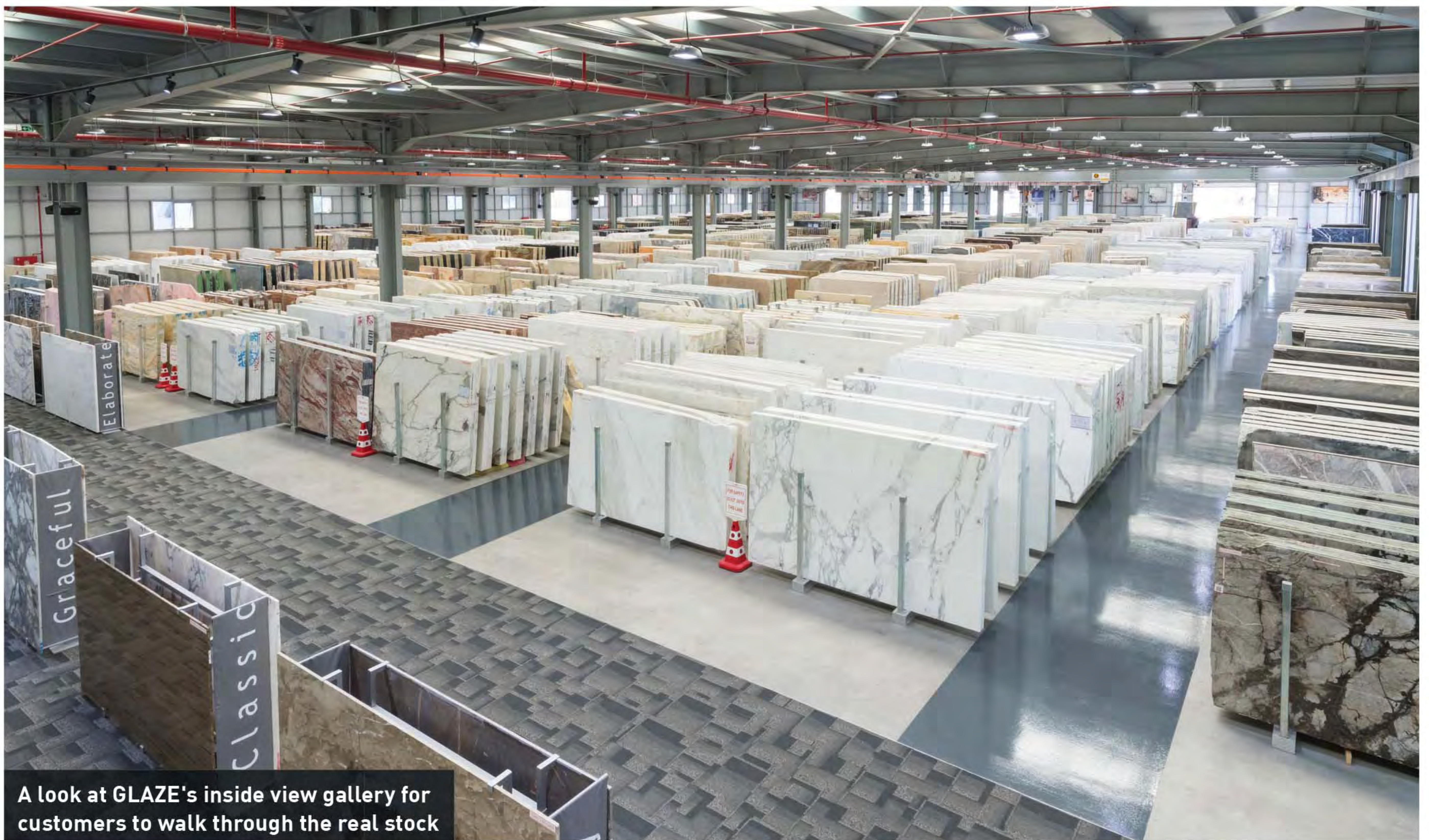
stones can ever be the same. Nature never repeats its designs, and so each block or lot is completely different from the others, in terms of quality, colour, texture, tone and veining. Even in the case of porcelain slabs, you never get a real feel of the final finished floor from a sample in a showroom display.”

It is important that clients are able to walk through the “real stock”, Punia says, adding that this is possible only at GLAZE, enabling the homeowner or designer to realise his/her vision, with “no chance of an error” in selecting the most suitable surface solution.

He continues: “Our gallery is like a fresh fruit store, you get to feel, touch, and smell before putting anything in your cart. Our store not only allows our clients to touch, feel and see how the final floor or wall would look like, but ensure there is no scope for misjudgment.”

### Investing in marble

In 1995, when Punia started out his



A look at GLAZE's inside view gallery for customers to walk through the real stock

business, he noted that marble was kept in open dusty yards, treated like ordinary masonry stones. Taking a leaf from the top galleries in Europe, GLAZE conceptualised marble from a totally different perspective, backed by Punia's passion and excitement about exotic stones – their origin, source, chemical composition, grain size, texture,

hardness, and polishing degree.

He says: "Marble is no less of an investment than a gemstone from a reputable jewellery store. People don't buy marble as a basic necessity; people invest in marble for their home or office and to benefit future generations. It [marble] is a statement, a declaration of success, and an

arrival. This attitude has translated into all aspects of our business, from handpicking the best stones from every corner of the world, and to showcasing these materials in our gallery."

GLAZE's quality of natural stone in the UAE is "far ahead of other GCC countries and the Middle East," Punia says. Initially, their concept of selling "stone" as a luxury product was met with surprise and confusion, he adds.

"Understanding the value of these stones radically changed the way the marble business and its trade takes place in the UAE. I consider this as my biggest accomplishment and contribution to the industry," Punia reckons.

He adds: "Whatever profession or business one has made their fortune in, when they picture their dream home or office, do you think they would settle for a cheap ceramic floor? We at GLAZE believe that marble stone deserves the same respect and appreciation as any other gemstone does."

#### Forward-looking approach

Sharing the company's plans for the remainder of this year, he says: "We are currently working on establishing our newest stone gallery in Abu Dhabi, in Industrial City of Abu Dhabi (ICAD),



The GLAZE office features Amazonite, which is a quartzite with its primary origin from Brazil

Mussafah, which is under construction at the moment. We aim to complete this gallery by the first quarter of 2022, and as always are adding new natural stones, as well as engineered stones to our collection from different parts of the world.”

GLAZE hosts leading brands such as NEOLITH, Caesarstone, Coate, ARIOSTEA, KoZo, and GEOLUXE, but its real strength comes from the exclusive agreements it holds with top quarries in Italy, Spain, Turkey, Greece and Brazil, Punia explains. “This allows us a continuous flow of material and exclusive access to the very best collection in this regard. And, of course, replenishes our huge inventory, which means we are able to deliver immediately for projects of any scale,” he concludes.

GLAZE holds its suppliers to the highest and most rigorous standards to ensure the very best quality of material. These specifications are aimed at particularly benefitting the market, climate, and clients here in the Middle East, using 20mm or 30mm thickness of slabs, homogeneity in thickness, controlled variation in colour, ideal processing quality, etc. The company’s rigorous standards of quality control aim to meet the approval of architects and consultants, and allow customers to complete their projects successfully



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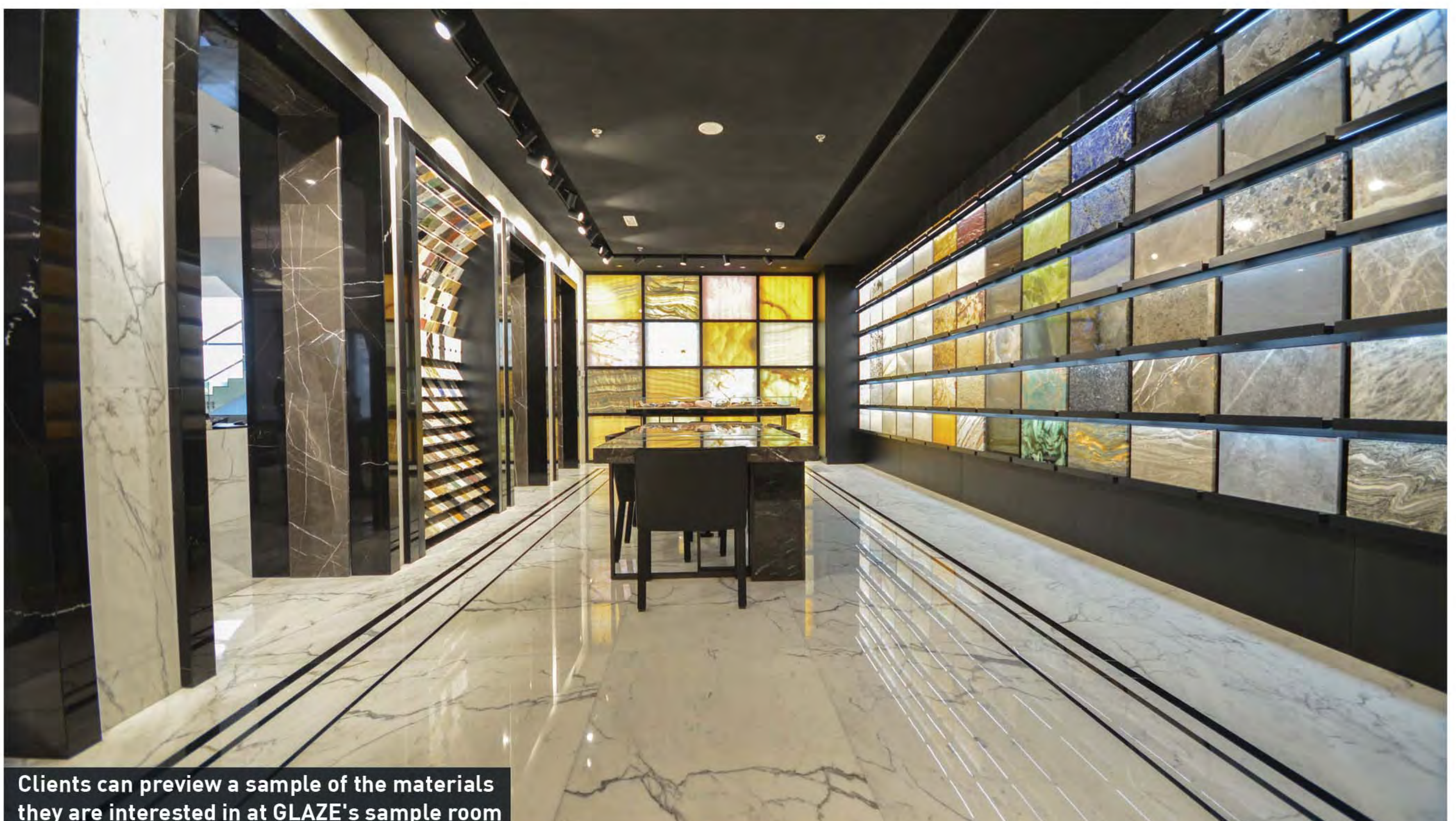
and in a timely manner.

As of today, GLAZE stocks a total of over 400 unique styles of stones including marble, granite, quartzite, onyx, travertine, limestone, sandstone, slate, quartz, and sintered stone in order to provide customers with an expansive

range of natural stones.

GLAZE brings these natural stones from different parts of the world to its customers, to elevate the aesthetic appeal of varied spaces.

*For more details about GLAZE’s products, visit [www.glaze.ae](http://www.glaze.ae)* **CW**



**Clients can preview a sample of the materials they are interested in at GLAZE’s sample room**