Tiled Interiors on Paper: Trade Catalogues as a Key Source to Understand the Use of Floor and Wall Tiles in European Interiors

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The enormous popularity of decorated industrial wall and floor tiles in Europe in the years 1840–1940 is strongly linked to the standardization, technical quality, and aesthetic variety of the products that were well marketed through often lavishly colored trade catalogues.

More than the study of existing tile schemes in interiors, a systematic study of these trade catalogues leads to a better understanding of the general use of tile in the nineteenth- and twentieth-century interior. They inform us about factories and offer invaluable information on the technical and aesthetic evolution of tiles. They help us to date the designs and acquire a better knowledge of changes in taste in applying them. They are also a valuable source for documenting differences and similarities between factories and countries in matters of tile design and reveal opportunities to better understand the global export success or stylistic influence of many European factories in other countries on the continent as well as overseas.

In this paper a general and theoretical approach is elucidated by referring to concrete cases based on a research collection of more than 600 tile catalogues from all over the world.

Keywords: interior design; industrial design; architectural history; trade catalogues; ceramic wall tiles; ceramic floor tiles.

1. Trade catalogues and the evolution of their study

Trade catalogues – as part of the broad spectrum of commercial printed matter – have been around since the sixteenth century. They originated in the practice of bundling together loose printed sheets with illustrated product overviews. From the second half of the eighteenth century, the publishing of trade catalogues gradually became a regular part of the business practice of firms, including metal ware factories and artificial stone manufacturers, such as Eleanor Coade, as well as producers of architectural ornaments.

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ceramics and terracotta objects, such as Josiah Wedgwood in England or Joseph Beunat and his successor Heiligenthal in France. Particularly in the case of large and heavy objects, catalogues were an easier means of informing the potential customer of what was on offer, especially if they resided elsewhere in the country or even abroad.

The scientific interest in trade catalogues as an object of study in its own right, and no longer as a special form of collectible printed matter, only really commenced around 1980, following a few older and bibliographical-oriented publications on trade catalogues in 1934, 1960, and 1971.

Over the following decades in the United States, articles and studies increasingly appeared that used commercial catalogues as a valuable resource for general and theoretical research into the evolution of technology, commerce, advertising, consumer behavior, and many other aspects of human activity, including some specifically targeted on architecture and interior design.

5 A catalogue of cameos intaglios, medals, and bas-reliefs; with a general account of vases and other ornaments, after the antique, made by Wedgwood and Bentley; and sold at their rooms in Great Newport-Street, London (London: Cadel, Robson and Parker, 1773).


That trade catalogues are an interesting source specifically for art-historical research into interiors was stated in 1984 by E. Richard McKinstry in his *Introduction to Trade Catalogues at Winterthur*: “House decoration, both architectural and that relating to the arrangement of furnishings, can be better understood by using catalogues.” In this he was aligning himself with Kenneth L. Ames, chairman of the office of Advanced Studies at Winterthur, who a few years earlier, in 1978, had indicated that one of the main reasons for this was the fact that trade catalogues “can provide a scholar with more images of thoroughly documented artifacts than he could hope to gather in years of scouring museums, historical societies and private collections.” Not mentioned by Ames nor McKinstry is the fact that even extensive field research into *in situ* realizations, which is without a doubt also crucial in this type of research, can never provide the same comprehensive picture as trade catalogues because many interior applications have disappeared or have been strongly modified over the years. Furthermore, they can rarely be dated with great precision, and they are usually very difficult to access, even for scientific research, especially when it concerns interiors in private residences.

In Europe, the interest in trade catalogues in general and their usefulness for art-historical research grew more or less in parallel with the United States, thanks to various more general publications in Germany, the Netherlands, Great Britain, France, and Belgium. Only a few

18 Katrien Vanbrabant and Johan David, “Handelscatalogi, reclame als bron voor de geschiedenis van de technieken [Trade catalogues, advertising as a source for the history of the techniques]”, in *Ervgoed van Industrie en Techniek*, 16 (2007), 1:2–11.
22 studies focused on architecture and interior design, especially in Great Britain\(^{19}\) and France.\(^{20}\)

2. Tile catalogues as an important resource for research on ceramic tiles

Within this evolution, studies of the ceramic tile industry in which extensive use is made of trade catalogues remained rare. Although, on occasions, at least a few trade catalogues are used in detailed studies of a specific company or sector.\(^{21}\) In architectural and interior studies, however, these are only rarely examined in a more exhaustive and systematic manner.\(^{22}\)

2.1. Research on the production of tiles and architectural ceramics in individual factories

One of the first European studies on architectural ceramics that gave full attention to trade catalogues as a crucial source for a better understanding of the production of one or more ceramic manufacturers was a 1977 article by the German researcher Gerhard Dietrich.\(^{23}\) By making extensive use of the commercial catalogues available at the time, Dietrich was able to bring a fairly comprehensive picture of the production of ceramic

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\(^{21}\) A good example of this type of studies is Luc Dunias, *Les Perrusson-Desfontaines. Industriels céramistes et leur résidence d’Écuisses* (Le Creusot: Ecomusée Le Creusot-Montceau, 2004) which contains a chronological list of trade catalogues of this French firm that produced architectural ceramics and plain and encaustic floor tiles but doesn’t make extensive use of this source. Since publication of this study, many catalogues of this firm have been digitised and made accessible via the *Portail Archives Numériques et Données de la Recherche* of the *Maison des Sciences de l’Homme de Dijon* via, https://pandora.bourgogne.fr when searching on “Perrusson-Desfontaines”.

\(^{22}\) A good example of this type of studies is Dalia Klajumienė, *Vilniaus gyvenamųjų namų interjery dekoru elementai nuo klasizmo iki moderno* [Elements of interior decoration of Vilnius residential houses from classicism to modern] (Vilnius: Vilniaus dailės akademijos leidykla, 2015) in which extensive use is made of pattern books, trade advertisements and trade catalogues.

2 A, B.
Title page and one of the few colour plates with architectural ornaments of the 1904 Catalogue N° 2 Construction et Décoration Architecturale from the Emile Muller & Cie factory in Ivry near Paris (Fr) (Collection Mario Baeck)

„Emile Muller & Cie“ fabriko (Ivry prie Paryžiaus, Prancūzija) 1904 m. katalogo Catalogue N° 2 Construction et Décoration Architecturale titulinis puslapis ir viena iš keleto spalvotų reprodukcijų su architektūriniais ornamentais, Mario Baecko kolekcija
wall claddings and tiles for interiors and exteriors by two French firms – that of Alexandre Bigot in Paris and Mers and the much larger company of Emile Muller in Ivry – and make interesting comparisons. In my own research of 2005 into the production of the Manufacture de Céramiques Décortatives – Majoliques de Hasselt, a detailed study of preserved trade catalogues proved to be an important aid in a better understanding of the importance of this leading Belgian company in the period from 1895 to 1914 and shed more light into the exact relation with its forerunner, the Brussels based company of Henri Baudoux & Cie from which many tile models were acquired.24 A fairly recent study with a comparable approach in which, for the first time in Europe, the available trade catalogues from one particular company are analyzed in detail – almost page by page – is the 2016 study by the Portuguese researcher Francisco Queroz, which is devoted to the production of architectural ceramics and ceramic floor and wall tiles in Devezas.25

2.2. Research on a specific type of tile production in one country

Much broader in scope, and therefore of much greater significance for a better understanding of the tile production of a particular country or region over various centuries, is the groundbreaking study by the Dutch researcher Jan Pluis, in collaboration with Dr Daniël Hanekuijk, Piet Bolwerk, and Jan van Loo, which was published for the first time in 1997 and revised and enlarged in 2013.26 Based on a wide-ranging study of thousands of tiles – in situ, in museums and private collections, or illustrated in the professional literature – the assembled research corpus was systematically compared with the data collected from systematic research of both the original hand-drawn and colored pattern or model books for exclusive use in the various companies themselves as well as from the available published trade catalogues that were printed on behalf of the main tile manufacturers from the second half of the nineteenth century onwards, probably starting from about 1885. In this way a systematic classification of the Dutch tin-glazed tile designs over the period from 1570 to 1930 could be established.

Additional research in English and German trade catalogues and in the specialist literature on the Spanish and Portuguese production made it possible to identify many international parallels and mutual influences. It is a pity that the more modern decors, in particular those of the Art Nouveau period and later, were explicitly not included in this study. Despite this small limitation, the research forms a solid basis for further scientific research into the distribution of designs for tin-glazed tiles from the indicated period in the remainder of Europe.

2.3. Research on the production of architectural ceramics in general in a specific country

Although of a very different nature, research by the French academic Anne Maillard on the rich collection of trade catalogues of architectural ceramics held by the Musée de la céramique architecturale in Annevili27 – a collection that today is kept in the Musée départemental de la céramique architecturale in Auneuil.

de l’Oise in Beauvais – is also broad in scope. Her study, published in 1999, fully focuses on the trade catalogues themselves and starts with a brief investigation into the representativeness of this collection – which has since been expanded and includes more than 200 items – by siting it within what then was known to be kept in French public collections. She then outlines the documentary importance of this comprehensive collection and briefly discusses what such a collection can mean in terms of providing a better knowledge of the various companies, their geographical location, their commercial policy, and the products themselves. In the second part, Maillard discusses the trade catalogues by sector, including those of floor and wall tile production and architectural façade cladding, in addition to roof tile and brick production, stoves and fireplace cladding, sanitary appliances, refractory products, and machine production for all these sectors. Finally, in the third part she gives an overview of the trade catalogues available in the collection per company, together with a short historical note on each firm based partly on data found in the various catalogues but enriched with information from other sources.

In her study Maillard briefly points out that in these trade catalogues, valuable data are to be found that are difficult to find elsewhere – as I personally experienced in my own research on the evolution of the Belgian floor and wall tile industry. Information can indeed be found on very diverse aspects difficult to find elsewhere, such as the location of sales outlets and warehouses, commercial representations at home and abroad, pricing policy and trade discounts, packaging and transport costs, and awards earned at world, international, national and regional exhibitions as well as data on the quality of the products through the occasional inclusion of test reports and recommendations from architects and engineers. Trade catalogues also regularly reveal a great deal of information on the appearance,
size, and evolution of the company buildings, the available machinery, and occasionally also about the production method and production numbers. Occasionally, the images in the catalogues provide a better insight into the composition of the workforce (which comprised men, women, and children) and exceptionally even offers images of the staff areas for lunch, medical care, and personal hygiene. It is evident that we always learn more about the products themselves, about their appearance and – especially when several catalogues of the same factory are available – about their evolution within a particular factory. This also applies to the sizes, the quality ranges, the prices, the names, the variation within the offer, the evolution of the factory brands, external designers, if any, and more generally to the collaboration between the factory, the architect-designer, and the customer-client. Frequently, the manufacturer suggests the means of application and provides technical data regarding installation and maintenance. Lists of realizations, whether or not supported by photos, are also included and offer opportunities for concrete *in situ* research.

### 2.4. Research on tile applications in exteriors and interiors

The different aspects indicated by Maillard make it clear that trade catalogues offer many possibilities for solid research into tile applications in interiors and exteriors. For example, they can assist in providing an

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30 Thanks to clear indications printed on many catalogue sheets from Gilliot & Cie in Hemiksem (Belgium) the important role of the French designer Henri Bonnerot around 1911 could be brought to light in the article: Mario Baeck, “Henri André Bonnerot (1881–1914), begaafd ontwerper van tegelpanelen Gilliot & Cie Hemiksem – deel 1” [Henri André Bonnerot (1881–1914), gifted designer of tile panels for Gilliot & Cie – part 1], in *Heymissen. Driemaandelijks tijdschrift van de Heemkundige kring Heymissen v.z.w.*, 30 (2020), 4:13–19; “deel 2” [part 2], *Heymissen. Driemaandelijks tijdschrift van de Heemkundige kring Heymissen v.z.w.*, 31 (2021), 1:19–26.
The front and back pages of the 1908 trade catalogue of the Franco-Belgian firm of Léon De Smet & Cie of Canteleu near Lille (Fr) offers a wealth of information on the production, the participations at industrial exhibitions, and press marks at the back of their tiles. A rubber stamp indicates that the firm changed owner after 1908 and came under the direction of Jean Van Overstraeten (Collection Mario Baeck)

1908 m. prancūzų ir belgų firmos „Léon De Smet & Cie of Canteleu“ (netoli Lilio, Prancūzija) prekybos katalogo pirmas ir ketvirtas viršeliai suteikia daug informacijos apie plytelių gamybą, firmos dalyvavimą pramonės parodose ir antspaudus kitose plytelių pusėse. Guminis antspaudas nurodo, kad firmos savininkas pasikeitė po 1908 m., pradėjęs jai vadovauti Jeanui van Overstraetenui, Mario Baecko kolekcija
exact identification and greater understanding of the object studied because they offer the possibility of determining with certainty the provenance and approximate date of in situ materials without the need to dismantle them. This is clearly demonstrated in various recent studies on tiling schemes in entrance porches, entrance halls, and interiors of homes all over Europe, including those from Germany, Switzerland, Russia, Poland, Lithuania, and Turkey to name just a few countries less widely mentioned in publications on the subject written in English.

By studying a multitude of tile catalogues of one country over a longer period, we also gain insight into fundamental changes in the layouts of floor and wall tile patterns and wainscoting and into changes in shape and size of the various tile types. A practical example for this specific aspect – which also shows that the research of commercial tile catalogues can be an important aid in restorations or partial reconstructions of historical interiors – is the restoration project for the Brussels residence and studio of Victor Horta, Rue Americaine 27 in Saint-Gilles, built between 1898 and 1900.

In the period between the end of the original construction work and 1911, the house was renovated three times. In preparation for the planned restoration, identification of the wall and floor tiles found in the basement


33 Vera Borisovna Korkina, Keramicheskiey e ubranstvo inter’yerov dokhodnykh domov Peterburga na rubezhe XIX–XX v. (magisterskaya dissertatsiya) [Ceramic decoration of the interiors of apartment houses in St. Petersburg (Master thesis)] (Saint Petersburg: State University of Industrial Technologies and Design, 2019).


kitchen after removal of the more recent additions was necessary to map out the different options. Based on my research, the older wall tiles have all been identified with the help of tile catalogues.\textsuperscript{37} The wall tiles appeared to be faïence tiles from the range of Boch Frères, La Louvière, amongst them the series “Paysage bleu” after a design by Charles Mouzin (1895–1896). The original octagonal floor tiles were also found to be made by Boch Frères in the period from 1890 to 1929. A more precise dating was found by studying the development of the laying patterns in Boch Frères catalogues. It was established that these patterns changed profoundly after 1908: from that year on, borders with geometric motifs were chosen instead of borders with intricate decorative patterns. The floor pattern design was of the intricate decorative type and could therefore be considered fairly safely as belonging to the original construction period. Based on the remaining, now identified, and relatively dated tiles, an accurate reconstruction of the floor and wall tiling could subsequently be realized.

2.5. Techniques for putting trade catalogues in chronological order and the added value for research

This example also makes clear that the value of trade catalogues as a source for systematic research is greatly increased if several publications of the same company are available and arranged in chronological order. This is usually possible after detailed study of several editions of the catalogues of one specific factory. Various elements may be important, each of which requires careful attention. Sometimes the year of publication is printed on the cover or is indicated in the inside of the publication by some means, for example, by a date placed at the end of the textual introduction or on a bound tariff list, or by an image of a tile panel indicating the year. The recipient of the catalogues (a wholesaler, an architect, or a builder) frequently inscribed in handwriting the date of receipt on the cover or inside. Additionally, \textit{post quem} or \textit{ante quem} dating can usually be applied by looking at the announcement of awards earned at important industrial exhibitions or by the dates supplied on attached price lists in which the model numbers from the catalogue are included. Many companies deliberately

Wall and floor tiles by Boch Frères La Louvière (B) and Maubeuge (Fr) found at the private residence of Victor Horta in Brussels during restoration works. The tiles were identified through research in the trade catalogues of these firms (Musée Victor Horta & collection Mario Baeck).

"Boch Frères La Louvière" (Belgium) and "Maubeuge" (France) tiles identified at Victor Horta’s private residence in Brussels during restoration works. The tiles were identified through research in the catalogues of these firms (Musée Victor Horta & collection Mario Baeck).

5 A–D.
chose not to date their catalogues so that they would not be considered obsolete too quickly, instead providing them with a number or letter code where Album 1 naturally precedes Album 2 or where Album A precedes an Album B or C from the same company. There are, however, a few exceptions as letter codes were also used to distinguish catalogues aimed at various user groups (e.g., for the internal market as opposed to the export market or for professionals rather than the general public). Additionally, even small changes in factory names, addresses, telegraph codes, or telephone numbers or the increase of indicated production numbers are in many cases a great help. If none of these indications are present, we can place the catalogues of one company in a logical chronology by looking at the highest model number shown in each individual catalogue. However, we must take into account that large manufacturers occasionally proceeded to completely renumber the individual designs in their offer. And finally, in some countries it is also possible to rely on the data being found in registration lists of tile designs to protect them against unauthorized copying. The added value of such time-intensive research in order to arrive at a collection of dated catalogues is quite large. The study of such an ensemble of exact or relatively datable catalogues allows for a fairly precise analysis of the supply side over time, both at the level of an individual factory and at that of several factories within one country, in both cases with the possibility of studying mutual influences.

For example, in my own research I was able to document in detail the relatively late appearance, from about 1905 onwards, of Art Nouveau motifs in floor tile catalogues of Belgian factories, together with the continuing supply of these motifs, in parallel with motifs in all possible earlier neo-styles, until about 1929,38 long after the style had gone out of fashion. The evolution of style between various countries and the mutual influence in the development of this between them can also be mapped in a more systematic way with excellent results. My own research showed that not only are the catalogues of factories from a given city or region in my own country important in the study of historical in situ floor or wall tiles,

6 A.
Overview of a series of trade catalogues of the Compagnie Générale de Produits Céramiques in Saint-Ghislain (Belgium), published between 1888 and 1939 and put in chronological order.

„Compagnie Générale de Produits Céramiques in Saint-Ghislain“ (Belgija) prekybos katalogų, išleistų tarp 1888 ir 1939 m., aptverti chronologine tvarka.
but that those of foreign companies can be also be of great significance.

Floor and wall tiles have indeed been imported and exported for centuries and continue to be so. In many countries – especially in the Netherlands, the Scandinavian countries, and the territories of the former German and Austro-Hungarian Empires and Imperial Russia before 1914, in many Latin American and Asian countries, and from the Middle to the Far East, a relatively high percentage of the ceramic floor and wall tiles that are applied are of foreign manufacture. For example, Belgian ceramic tiles – as well as those from Germany and England and to a lesser extent those from France – played a prominent role in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in neighboring countries such as the Netherlands, where there was no local production of encaustic ceramic floor tiles. Additionally, it appears that a considerable export of wall tiles from Belgium via the port of Antwerp around 1905, estimated to be approximately one third of the total Belgian

production amounting to 19 to 20 million pieces per year, were shipped to distant destinations in Latin America and Asia.40

40 Mario Baeck, Vloer en wandtegels, een verhaal van import en export. Thema-artikel voor de website Open Monumentendag Vlaanderen 2006 [Floor and wall tiles, a story of import and export. Thematic article for the website Open Monuments Day Flanders 2006], online available at https://www.academia.edu/349061/Vloer_en_wandtegels_een_verhaal_van_import_en_export.
Belgian investors – as well as those from Great-Britain in Commonwealth countries – laid the foundations for several important factories abroad, such as the Marywil factory in Radom, now in Poland.

Furthermore, the Belgian tile industry was influential in the field of design. In my research, many examples of motifs copied from Belgian catalogues – with or without minor changes – have already been found in catalogues of Spanish, Portuguese, and Japanese tile factories. The same goes for the English, German, and French tile industries, which have also been very influential in the field of tile design as well as through their exports. This is confirmed, for example, by Agnieska Partridge’s recent doctoral research into historic tile applications in Krakow, which were largely imported. It is not without reason that in the title of her study she refers explicitly to Europe as a whole as a place of origin of many of the Krakow tiled interiors.

3. Tile catalogues: a difficult-to-find research resource

The added value of a more systematic study of trade catalogues may have become clear from the above. However, there are many difficulties in assembling an extensive and representative research corpus of relevant trade catalogues. Indeed, they are quite difficult to find and to obtain access to. Trade catalogues were and still are very rarely consciously and systematically acquired by libraries, research institutes and archives, although there has been a gradual change in recent decades. A central catalogue of such materials does not exist, and trade catalogues are often not even included in the existing central and individual indices of libraries and archival institutions. Searches in digital databases are also made more difficult by the lack of unambiguous terminology for the trade catalogue as phenomenon. We find them in most languages catalogued under various names in various spellings. For example, in (American) English they can be found not only with the search term trade catalog/catalogue, but they are also to

41 Mario Baeck, Belgian Influences on Spanish and Portuguese Tile Production of the Late 19th and early 20th Centuries, Queremos Saber O Que Andam A Estudar! Investigação Em Azulejo [We want to know what you are studying!] Azulejo Research – 13 de Novembro de 2019 Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Lisboa – November 13, 2019 School of Arts and Humanities of the University of Lisbon. Abstract: https://blogazlab.files.wordpress.com/2019/09/azlab52_mario_baeck-1.pdf.

8 A–C.

Two designs of 1911 made by the French artist Henri Bonnerot – as indicated on the catalogue sheets – for Gilliot & Cie that are copied by the Spanish Cedolesa firm in their trade catalogue of 1967 (Collection Mario Baeck)

Du prancūzų menininko Henri Bonnerot 1911 m. modeliai, sukurti, kaip nurodoma kataloge, „Gilliott & Cie“ kompanijos užsakymu. Ispanų „Cedolesa“ firma juos nukopijavo savo 1967 m. prekybos kataloge, Mario Baecko kolekcija
be found under the labels sales catalog/catalogue or commercial catalog/catalogue. In French they can be found under the terms catalogue commercial/industriel/d’entreprise/de vente, in German under Musterbuch or (Produkt)katalog, and in Dutch under the labels handelscatalogus, bedrijfscatalogus of verkoop(s)catalogus. Other terms are used in other languages.

Moreover, in institutions where there are large numbers of catalogues, bibliographic descriptions are rarely sufficiently detailed owing to the fact that the typical way of cataloguing monographs, series works, and periodicals is completely inadequate. With a title alone, which often remains identical for many editions of trade catalogues from the same factory, there is insufficient data to determine whether or not the copy described is already known. For example, there is usually no mention of the company printing the catalogue, which is very often mentioned on commercial publications, and that can be distinctive. The date of publication is often problematic because it is far too broad and not reliable enough owing to the lack of essential research. The format or pagination is either not mentioned or not stated clearly enough (that is to say, most of the time only the numbered pages are incorporated while the ancillary pages are left out). Seldom, lacunae (as cut outs or removed pages) or loose inserts (e.g., additional explanations of price increases or reductions, price and tariff lists, and the like) are included, account is not taken of meaningful indications that point to past users, or the frequent evidence is seen of the use of rubber stamps for designs removed from regular offer.

Furthermore, the at times high price of rare, luxuriously illustrated trade catalogues bought from knowledgeable antiquarian dealers give rise to a great reluctance to release these in fully digitized form, even when they are required for serious scientific research. This phenomenon is not only found among private collectors but even in renowned institutions. Moreover, valuable private collections, which were usually laboriously and carefully assembled over a long period of time, are sadly frequently dispersed when sold by heirs.

However, there are some bright spots for the aspiring researcher. Worldwide, given the insight that such material is relevant for scientific
research, there is also a growing willingness to make the existing collections, often long dormant in the reserves, more accessible by making them easier to find as well as by making full text available. Within the scope of this article, it is not the intention to discuss systematically and in detail all major collections of trade catalogues. Increasingly, specifically developed general digital guidelines are available for this purpose and provide a good starting point for researchers who are more broadly interested in general trade catalogues rather than those for ceramic floor and wall tiles.43

For those wishing to conduct research in these latter areas, there are some very interesting starting points worldwide. In the United States, there are initiatives such as that provided by the American Winterthur Library,44 which offers various fully digitized Belgian, English, and French tile catalogues; the Building Technology Heritage Library (BTHL),45 which includes many integrally accessible English, Spanish, and French tile catalogues; the collection of the Thomas Watson Library of the Metropolitan Museum46 with various Belgian, English, and French tile catalogues, all of course next to many American catalogues. In Canada, the collection of the Canadian Centre for Architecture (CCA) included in the above-mentioned BTHL is of importance, with English, French, German, Italian, and Austro-Hungarian catalogues. In Australia, a notable collection is that of the Historic Houses Trust/Caroline Simpson Library & Research Collection of the Sydney Living Museums, with various English, French, Italian, and Spanish catalogues.47

In the majority of European libraries and archives, trade catalogues are much less accessible and often difficult to find, even in countries with an important tile production tradition. Although most national digitization programs now make available millions of full-text searchable pages from books, magazines, and newspapers, they hardly pay any attention to this specific source. In the National Art Library48 of the Victoria and Albert

43 Good example are the information page on Trade catalogue resources of the American Library of Congress: https://guides.loc.gov/trade-catalogs/online-resources or that of the Smithsonian Institution Libraries Trade Literature Collection: https://library.si.edu/trade-literature.
44 http://archive.org/details/winterthurlibrary when searching on “tiles” or “carreaux”.
45 http://archive.org/details/buildingtechnologyheritagelibrary when searching on “tiles”.
48 http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/n/national-art-library-trade-catalogues-collection/.
Museum in London, for example, many tile catalogues in the database are found under the label “trade catalogues,” but these have not yet been digitized, so a visit to London remains necessary for researchers interested in them. The Spanish Institut de Promoció Ceràmica (IPC)\(^{49}\) manages one of the richest collections of commercial catalogues in the wide field of the ceramic industry, with many Spanish tile catalogues as well as a wide selection of Belgian, German, English, French, and Portuguese ones, which can also only be consulted on site. However, through the collection database it is possible to see a number of images per catalogue, which provides a reasonable idea of what is on offer.

Among the partly digitally accessible collections, three initiatives can be mentioned for research into tile catalogues. The Repertorium van de Belgische Handelscatalogi (RCB)\(^{50}\) [Repertory of the Belgian Trade Catalogues], kept at the Museum of Older Techniques (MOT) in Grimbergen, Flanders, contains Belgian tile catalogues of many important factories that exported large parts of their production. In France, part of the collection of trade catalogues of the famous Bibliothèque Forney\(^{51}\) in Paris has recently been made accessible, with several fully digitized English and German tile catalogues in addition to many French ones. Finally, there is the German Archiv Historische Dachziegel\(^{52}\) with an excellent website that, in addition to a wealth of catalogues from brick and roof tile manufacturers, also provides several tile-related catalogues.

4. Desirable evolutions in the field of historical tile catalogue research

In order to facilitate research into the European tile industry on the basis of historical tile catalogues, it seems appropriate that the above-mentioned evolution towards broader digital accessibility should be continued and that more collection managers can be persuaded to share their possessions in this area in a digital fashion. Specialized tile museums, archival institutions with important company archives of long since closed

\(^{51}\) https://bibliotheques-specialisees.paris.fr/search searching on „catalogue commercial“ carrelages.
\(^{52}\) http://dachziegelarchiv.de/index.html.
tile factories, and companies still active with a large historical archive all still maintain extremely valuable and often unique material in this field. A pan-European digitization initiative therefore seems more than desirable.

Finally, one important consideration must still be made. The research of trade catalogues – as the results of my own doctoral research have shown – can be greatly enriched within a broader investigation of commercial printing in general. This includes address books (with concise but dataable data), advertisements (which are intended to market the company or its products and are often not only beautifully illustrated but also accurately dated), company magazines (both those for employees, through which we can learn more about working conditions, and those for the general public, mostly with product information), company memorial books (in which the history of a company – albeit rarely critically – is described, often with attention to the evolution of products), letters and invoices (often with images of the factory and information about its products and its participations in world exhibitions, etc.), patents (providing information on innovations in the manufacturing process), sample books or boxes made for itinerant sales representatives and for architects (with samples of the products bearing product identification numbers), shares certificates (often containing information about the corporate purpose of the company, about founders, etc.), and annual reports (that provide much financial data).

That such thorough research based on commercial printing in all its diversity can also be important for better understanding the use of the more recent production of building materials in general was recently demonstrated in a fascinating and very useful study on post-war building materials in houses in Brussels from 1945 to 1975.53 This shows that the study of trade catalogues will continue in the future to be more than useful in helping to meet the need for knowledge about rapidly evolving building materials, including tiles. It should certainly encourage research institutions and (national) repository libraries to collect contemporary trade catalogues alongside historical trade literature in a more systematic manner and to make them available as widely as possible, preferably in digital form.

9. A share of the S.A. de Carreaux Ceramiques Marywill administrated in Liège (B) but with a factory in Radom (P) offers many details about the administrative changes the firm underwent between 1896 and 1912 (Collection Mario Baeck)

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<td>DIVISÉ EN 10,500 ACTIONS DE 125 FRANCS</td>
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<td>ACTION DE 125 FRANCS AU PORTEUR</td>
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<td>ENTIEREMMENT LIBÉRÉE</td>
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</table>

„S. A. de Carreaux Ceramiques Marywill“ kompanijos, kurios valdyba buvo įsikūrusi Lježe (Belgija), o fabrikas – Radome (Lenkija), akcija atskleidžia nemažai detalių apie administracinius kompanijos pokyčius 1896–1912 m., Mario Baecko kolekcija
5. Conclusion

Based on a broad analysis of the international publications on trade catalogues and published research, it could be established in the above reflections that from the late 1970s onwards, a consciousness was growing about their importance for research on ceramic tiles, not only for acquiring better knowledge about the production of tiles and architectural ceramics in individual factories, about a specific type of tile production, or about the production of architectural ceramics in a specific country, but also in research on tile applications in exteriors and interiors. It could further be established that applying a diverse set of techniques for putting trade catalogues in chronological order as much as possible leads to much added value for tile research in many areas. However, it is also demonstrated by reflecting on the many practical difficulties of data collection that tile catalogues are, due to several factors, unmistakably still a difficult-to-find research resource. The examples of some good practices presented at the end of the text show a positive evolution during recent decades and even years that lead to better access of trade catalogues in general, and tile catalogues in particular, which in turn opens interesting perspectives for innovative research on tiles and their use.

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Santrauka

Plytelių interjerai popieriuje. Prekybos katalogai kaip svarbiausias informacijos apie grindų ir sienų plytelių naudojimą Europos interjeruose šaltinis

Mario Baeck

Reikšminiai žodžiai: interjero dizainas, pramoninis dizainas, architektūros istorija, prekybos katalogai, keraminės sienų plytelės, keraminės grindų plytelės.