

The art of tile was to be rooted in the Iberian Peninsula by the influence of the Arabs, who, for the conquered lands, brought the mosaics to ornament the walls of their palaces, giving them brightness and ostentation through a complex geometric game. The style fascinated Spaniards and Portuguese. The artisans took the time-consuming Moorish technique, simplified it and adapted the standards to Western taste. The first copies used in Portugal, Hispano Mooriscos, came in the late fifteenth century of Seville and served to cover the walls of palaces and churches. After about seventy years, in 1560, pottery workshops were started in Lisbon, which produce tiles according to the technique of earthenware, imported from Italy.

The originality of the use of the Portuguese tile and the dialogue established with the other arts, will make it unique in the world. In the National Tile Museum, there are panels that testify to the evolution and monumentality of this piece of decorative ceramics that adapts to the needs and accompanies the styles of the different epochs. The altarpiece of Our Lady of Life dating to the end of the 16th century, consisting of 1384 tiles that survived the great earthquake, is for Alexandra Curvelo, an art historian, an example of the importance of tile in Portugal.

The new tile industry flourishes with the orders of the nobility and the clergy. Large panels are custom-made to fill the walls of churches, convents, palaces, plots and gardens. The inspiration comes from the decorative arts, textiles, jewelery, engravings and travels of the Portuguese to the East. Great scenographic compositions appear, a striking feature of the Baroque, with geometric motifs, figurative and vegetal themes of an exotic fauna and flora. It is the time in which the standard tile appears, especially the altar front, one of the original ways of using the tile, as we can appreciate in this extract from the "Guided Tour" program,

It is the ruling classes that first cultivate the taste for the tile, choosing the most appropriate theme for the decoration of the buildings; from military campaigns, historical episodes, to everyday scenes, religious, mythological and even some satire. To the potters, it was necessary to satisfy the requests, copying models, adapting fashions and styles. At the end of the seventeenth century, the quality of production and execution is greater, there are entire families involved in this art of making tiles, and some painters begin to assert themselves as artists, beginning to sign their works, thus beginning the Masters Cycle .

In Portuguese tiles emerge unusual, surprising both for their originality and the audacity of the craftsman to replace humans with monkeys, jaguars and chicken, for example, constructing fantasy stories, ironic, that arouse laughter. The concern to bring new themes to the decorative arts often rests on a certain improvisation associated with this unique form of wanting to do differently, which can be seen in the panel highlighted in the video below, titled "The Leopard Hunt." The color of the yellows, the greens, the purplish browns, will give way to the blue on white, two colors inherited by Dutch influence and the oriental porcelain.

After the earthquake of 1755, the reconstruction of Lisbon will impose another rhythm on the production of standard tiles, now called Pombalinos, used to decorate the new buildings. The tiles are manufactured in series, combining industrial and artisan techniques. At the end of the eighteenth century, the tile is no longer exclusive to the nobility and clergy, the wealthy

bourgeoisie makes the first orders for its farms and palaces, the panels sometimes tell the family history and even its social ascent. sees in the set entitled "History of the Hatter António Joaquim Carneiro", exhibited in the National Museum of the Tile ".

From the 19th century, the tile gained more visibility, leaving the palaces and churches to the facades of the buildings, in close relation with the architecture. The urban landscape illuminates with the light reflected on the glazed surfaces. Tile production is intense, new factories are set up in Lisbon, Porto and Aveiro. Later, already in full twentieth century, the tile enters the railway and metro stations, some sets are signed by established artists. The tradition has become even more popular, presenting itself as a decorative solution for kitchens and bathrooms, in a test of resistance, innovation and renovation of this small piece of pottery.