

SLATE LITE: A HAPPY ACCIDENT

German quality assurance paired with the raw beauty of natural slate

SLATE LITE represents over fifteen years of field research into processes of extraction, adhesion and application but the material itself came about by chance.

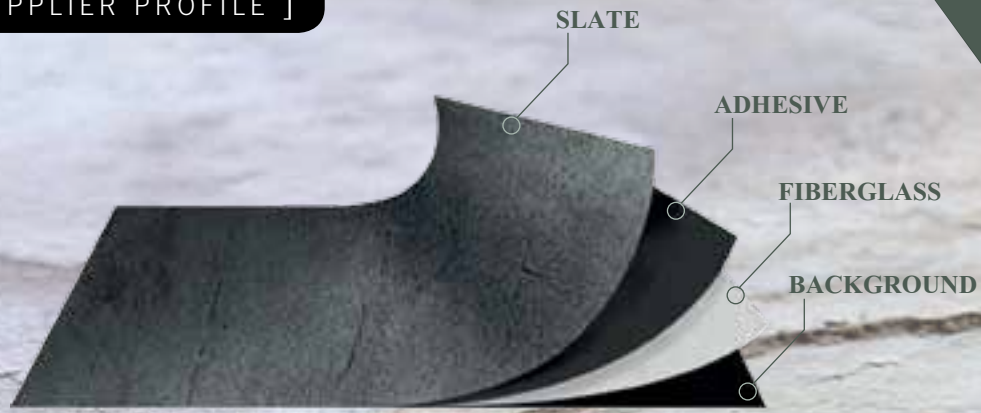


In 1970, Gernot Ehrlich left Germany for South Africa to take up an appointment as lecturer of architecture at the University of Natal, Durban. He brought with him a spirit of adventure and a keen eye for the entrepreneurial. As a side project he began distributing charcoal to the German DIY market. Operations were quickly up-scaled with the addition of slate to his portfolio. In less than ten years the young academic would be responsible for supplying over 80% of the world's slate tabletops. Five years later he would revolutionise slate delivery through the innovation of Slate Lite.

Slate Lite is a flexible stone veneer suited to both indoor and outdoor environments. At a thickness of just 1.5 – 2 millimetres, it retains the natural beauty and material advantages of slate whilst enjoying simple fabrication and versatile application. With its authentic stone look and feel, it offers an alternative to slate that is both eco-friendly and cost-effective.

Slate Lite represents over fifteen years of field research into processes of extraction, adhesion and application but the material itself came about by chance. In the process of repairing a damaged slate tabletop, Ehrlich discovered that the carrier retained a thin veneer of slate when peeled away from the original slate tiles. It presented the same aesthetic effect as thick slate slabs without the difficulties associated with the heavy, raw material.

Slate Lite in Falling Leaves Translucent



Slate Lite layers

Ehrlich recognised the potential of such a lightweight stone veneer. When the vogue for slate tables waned, he diversified. Moving to America, he utilised the material that was to become Slate Lite in the production of large slate fountains for the gift item industry. Impressed with the material's performance, in 2002 Ehrlich formed R&D GmbH, dedicated to launching Slate Lite across the global design and construction markets.

Like slate, Slate Lite's high-wear resistance and chemical composition make it ideal for commercial and residential environments. It exhibits slate's textured personality and unique colour gradations, as well as sharing its thermal stability and chemical inertness, its capacity to be fire and waterproof and an effective electrical insulation.

Slate's layered sheet-like structure lends itself to horizontal extraction. An adhesive and a carrier mat are adhered to the metamorphic slab then peeled away. Through this process of "pulling", a micro-thin layer of stone is

extracted: radically lightweight, resilient and flexible. In fact, Slate Lite is stronger than slate tiles, thanks to its reinforced backing, yet able to affix to curved surfaces, corners, and even direct to tiling. The backing is made from an adhesive which gives a strong, textured grip with dimensional stability. And with fabrication achievable using standard woodwork tools, installation is simple and inexpensive.

Due to its versatile nature, Slate Lite's potential applications are almost limitless: from feature walls to furniture and columns, or wet environments like swimming pools, boats, hotel bathrooms, exterior façades, and even private jets. "Slate Lite could even be applied to a high-rise building with the right application," Marius Ehrlich, Production and Sales Director, laughs. "It's even been used in the exterior of a Smart Car."

Synonymous with fine quality and a refusal to compromise on standards, Slate Lite practices strict quality assessment, from the "pulling" process at the slab to the accuracy of sheet dimensions, batching and the matching of materials. European-grade adhesives and glass fibres are used and with standard stock levels of up to 3,000 sheets per material, lead times are short. Customised large sheet sizes are also available.

Today Slate Lite operates out of Germany with Ehrlich's son, Marius, and Jan Hofmann at the helm. 2012 saw a strategic shift within the company from pure producer to an integrated brand. With a global network of 21 distributors stretching from Korea and Taiwan to Canada, Mexico and Eastern Europe, Slate Lite shares knowledge from suppliers employing Slate Lite across

a vast spectrum of uses to further perfect the material and its application.

Slate Lite continues to develop material benefits, differentiating themselves by their commitment to quality. It is this dedication to innovation that assures Slate Lite's pre-eminence in the field.

Slate Lite's philosophy is: One world, one family. Baresque is proud to be a part of this initiative, offering twelve different designs with five translucent options to the Australian market.

Written by Kay Harrison
Photography Supplied by Slate Lite



Quarry in India

Like slate, SLATE LITE's high-wear resistance and chemical composition make it ideal for commercial and residential environments.

Slate Lite in Moka Rosa



Slate Lite in Cobre



Slate Lite in ArcoGaleno Gris



Slate Lite in Negro

