



Putting customers first

Classic Granite & Marble, an eight-year-old Virginia-based fabrication shop, aims to please its diverse group of clientele

by Sara Garafalo



Classic Granite & Marble, of Midlothian, VA, specializes in jobs from custom residential to a multitude of small- and medium-sized commercial projects. In the production area, the company utilizes a variety of equipment, including a Robot CAD from Baca Systems of Macomb, MI.

Classic Granite & Marble (CGM), of Midlothian, VA, specializes in jobs from custom residential to a multitude of small- and medium-sized commercial projects. Tony Kilic, President of CGM, became involved in the stone fabrication business in Maryland before

moving to the Richmond, VA, area. "What drew me to the business was seeing an increasing number of my friends beginning to navigate towards stone fabrication, and I saw the success and growth opportunity in the industry," said Kilic. "The Richmond market

peaked my interest for many reasons. The area presented ample potential for future growth, and even though there was strong, dominating competition, I still saw room to expand. That is what inspired me to move to Richmond, where Classic Granite & Marble came to be."



“We believe the most important of our machines is the Robot CAD, the impressive robotic cutting machine from Baca Systems, as it immediately allows us a competitive advantage,” said Tony Kilic, President of Classic Granite & Marble.



The evolving facility, with state-of-the-art equipment, allows for the company to supply customers with beautiful results, whether for condominiums and apartments, or hotels and hospitals. While most jobs are of residential or commercial nature, Classic Granite & Marble has also completed enhancements for different types of businesses, such as veterinarian and lawyers’ offices.

In the past, the sales region has covered a 60-mile radius. The shop has the advantage of being in central Virginia, so they can go to different areas of the state where there are not as many fabricators. The region has since expanded to 120 miles east, west and south of Richmond, VA, to be able to accommodate more customers.

To complete all these jobs, the company currently has 52 employees. Of those, there are 21 people involved in the production, about 14 in installation, four for templating and office personal make up the remainder.

“Some of our employees are specialized,” said Kilic. “For example, we have guys that are specialized in cutting, CNC cutting, and we also have guys that are multi-taskers. They can do both. That also applies in the office where we have specialized Commercial Account Managers.”

Kilic admits he has an unconventional method of hiring new employees. “I know it sounds funny, but we have been hiring a lot of people from Craigslist,” he said. “It hasn’t been easy. We have tried Monster.com and we have tried word of mouth. I have



A Montresor Luna 740 inline polishing machine from Salem Stone is used for varying edges.



The Marmo Meccanica LCV Magnum backsplash machine is solely used for standard edges and backsplash polishing.

not been disappointed with the results so far.”

The production process

As of right now, the production

capacity is at approximately 900 square feet a day, five days a week. According to Kilic, roughly 3,000 to 4,000 square feet a week is the company’s goal for square footage.

In the production area, the company utilizes a variety of equipment. “We believe the most important of our machines is the Robot. The impressive robotic cutting machine from

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Classic Granite & Marble maintains both an indoor and outdoor slab yard.



quality and the speed of production. With the Robot, it was mostly about increasing the speed while being able to do more intricate and accurate cuts. With a standard saw, it used to take us two hours, but with the Robot we can do it in 30 minutes. The Robot is a focal point more now than ever because of the drastic increase — about 50% — in our production.”

Investing in waterjet technology also helped CGM become faster and more accurate, and allowed them do more detailed-oriented jobs where it was previously impossible, even with the CNC’s.

Templates are created using LT 55 Templators from Laser Products of Romeoville, IL, because they are user-friendly, and it is simple to convert field measurements to digital documents. In addition to being cost-effective, reliable and easy-to-use, the LT 55 accurately captures areas with many angles, and there is no maintenance on the equipment, according to Kilic.

Overcoming hurdles

As a fabricator in today’s market, Kilic’s team faces a number of obstacles. “The biggest challenges fall under five, maybe six steps,” he said. “First, local fabricators in our industry advertise cheap, attractive pricing that dilutes the market and persuades us to present lower pricing. Second, the prices for granite are declining, as granite countertops are becoming a commodity, as opposed to a luxury. This, alone, is the purpose behind our drive to differentiate ourselves from local fabricators. Third, an unfavorable practice I’ve seen in the past is fabricators not educating

Baca Systems immediately allows us a competitive advantage,” he said. “We have two Intermac 45 CNCs, a Park Industries Yukon II bridge saw and a Montresor Luna 740 inline polishing machine from Salem Stone for various edging applications. Our Marmo Meccanica (LCV Magnum) backsplash machine is solely used for standard edges and backsplash polishing. We also use the Marmoelettromeccanica Master 3500 hand router for smaller jobs while the other machine is occupied. As for the compressor, we have an Ingersoll Rand air compressor.”

For tooling, CGM uses several different brands. “For CNC tooling, we have tried Regent’s Marmoelettromeccanica tooling,” said Kilic. “We also tried Tyrolit, and we use blades from a Salem-owned brand called Cuda and Zenesis Black for cutting,” he said. “For hand polishing, we use Cyclone pads

and for drilling on the jobsite we use Cyclone core bits.”

The company has also made several investments in machinery and tooling, most recently being the Marmo Meccanica backsplash machine. Kilic bought and installed it in December, and it has proved to be a great part of production. In July 2014, he bought and installed the robot cutting machine from Baca Systems. Additionally, the company recently purchased a Jib Crane, which has an Abaco suction system and Milwaukee chain hoist for lifting slabs.

“Increasing speed without hurting quality was a big reason we made investments into new technology,” said Kilic. “Before we invested in the Marmo Meccanica backsplash machine, I talked to a bunch of different fabricators and everyone seemed to be pretty happy with the increase in



The company operates a showroom where customers can come to view and learn about the various stone products offered.

the customers. The customer does not fully understand what they are committing to, as they are blinded by the salesperson and the lower prices. This is a challenge for us and the indus-

try, as a whole. Therefore, we pride ourselves in having an educated, knowledgeable sales force. Fourth, consistent education is crucial in the stone industry. Customers need to be

educated about materials, what the processes are during template, stone selection, fabrication and install. Fifth, being such a unique industry, we often run into challenges in hir-

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The showroom features several kitchen vignettes and a mezzanine area.

ing. Finding qualified employees for such a niche market proves to be an ongoing obstacle. Most of our employees have been trained here with our style of operating, so that makes it difficult for us to do outside hiring. Lastly, another big issue that I think the whole industry has is clear communication lines between employees, contractor, and residential customers. It has been an ongoing challenge for us as we attempt to close those gaps. We strive to capture all information that flows so rapidly and between multiple communication channels."

It was also a challenge for the company to adjust to the digital age, although Kilic now views this as the most beneficial advancement in fabrication in recent years. "This was a big step for us," he said. "The transition wasn't easy, but once we made the transition, it made our fabrication process so much simpler, and it allowed us the opportunity to increase our volume and cut costs. Before digitalization, our average production was approximately 350 square feet. Now, our production has potential to reach 1,000 square feet a day."

As for the future of his company,

Kilic is optimistic. "As the economy continues to recover from the recession, consumers have larger disposable incomes, and home improvement is again becoming a growing trend," he said. "Based on that fact alone, I anticipate the market for natural stone and quartz to become more lively and for demand to increase. At the rate of growth we are currently experiencing, I envision an increase of 15% over the next three years."

Further down the road, Kilic is even more confident. His ultimate vision for the company is to become the premier granite and quartz fabrication and installation company in the region.

"As the demand continues in our market," he says, "I have full confidence we will develop a proactive approach and match the needs of our customers, giving us the competitive advantage we seek to become number one in central Virginia by 2017." □

Classic Granite & Marble Midlothian, VA

Type of Work: custom residential and a multitude of small- to medium-sized commercial projects

Machinery: a Robot CAD from Baca Systems of Macomb, MI; two Intermac 45 CNCs; a Yukon II bridge saw from Park Industries of St. Cloud, MN; a Montresor Luna 740 inline polishing machine from Salem Stone of Winston-Salem, NC; a Marmo Meccanica LCV Magnum backsplash machine from Marmo Meccanica of Rochester Hills, MI; a Marmoelettromeccanica Master 3500 hand router and Marmoelettromeccanica CNC tooling from Regent Stone Products of Virginia Beach, VA; an Ingersoll Rand air compressor; LT 55 Templators from Laser Products of Romeoville, IL; Zenesis Black saw blades; and Cyclone polishing pads and core bits

Number of Employees: 52

Production Rate: about 900 square feet per day