



IRIS CERAMICA GROUP – A Benchmark for Innovation

This past summer London added a new contemporary art experience to its already rich cultural landscape in the shape of the redesigned ICG Gallery. The new immersive space invites visitors to tangibly experience and virtually explore the Italian company's cutting-edge achievements by blending its traditional ceramic expertise with a pioneering use of new technology.

With virtual rain turning into green hydrogen and digital installations using the visitor's own movements to produce clean energy, this is a truly immersive experience and a stunning affirmation of the role Iris Ceramica Group plays in the wider ceramic industry as ambassador for the high-end "Made in Italy" brand.



Romano Minozzi
President of Iris Ceramica Group

The gallery is also an opportunity for Iris Ceramica Group to showcase its own proprietary technology, particularly its Active Surfaces, which exploit the photocatalytic process to transform the simple ceramic slab into an eco-active material with superior properties. In the Material Gallery on the upper floor, visitors can experiment with the magnetic laying functions of its ATTRACT interior design solution. "We call ourselves eco-innovators, because our surfaces embody a profound value which serves people while fully respecting nature and the environment," says Federica Minozzi, CEO of Iris Ceramica Group.

In the context of the growing drive to reduce carbon emissions, the digital representation of water producing hydrogen is of equal importance and is a demonstration of the company's own initiative, which is already underway in Italy. Ceramic production has always been an energy-intensive process. Europe's manufacturers account for approximately 1% of all the EU's industrial emissions. But that may be about to change with the news that Iris Ceramica Group has joined forces with decarbonization specialist Edison Next to design and build a \$53 million hydrogen factory.

Located in Castellarano, close to the company's headquarters at Fiorano Modenese in the heartland of Italy's ceramics industry, the new factory will center on a one-megawatt green hydrogen production system that will be based on electrolysis and powered by renewable energy. Designed to produce "4D ceramic" large slabs – the fourth dimension is represented by the sustainability – the electrolyser will use rainwater drawn from collection tanks. The project is a shining example of virtuous water management – a key principle in the concept of the circular economy that is critically important to doing business in today's world.

"We are looking at a new dawn for the ceramic industry," Minozzi says. "The underlying principle of our green hydrogen factory is what I define as a new industrial



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Federica Minozzi
CEO of Iris Ceramica Group

humanism, with a central focus on sustainability and all its factors, particularly the environmental, the social and the economic. The challenge is to assure significant savings of CO₂ in the next two years."

It is certainly a step in the right direction. The expected production, around 132 tons of green hydrogen per year, will replace about 500,000 cubic meters of methane gas annually.

Right from the start, the blend will significantly reduce carbon dioxide, saving around 900 tons of CO₂ per year.

Federica Minozzi hopes it will show the world that even an industry as energy intensive as ceramics can become a virtuous net-zero energy transition role model. "We hope that other companies will follow our example," she says. "That will benefit the whole community, and lead to the training of new professional expertise." The project will also involve the installation of another 1.2 MW photovoltaic system, taking the company's solar power capacity up to 3.2 MW.

Along with Minozzi's commitment to cutting-edge product development and zero-emission production, she has inherited the passion for ceramics that prompted her father, Romano Minozzi, president of Iris Ceramica Group, to buy a struggling company in 1961 and rename it Iris after the Greek goddess of the rainbow. As the post-war Italian economy boomed, so too did the company's fortunes. The father-and-daughter team have built ICG into an over \$550 million international organization with additional production facilities in the U.S. and Germany. In the process, Iris Ceramica Group has become a world leader in the design, production, and distribution of high-quality ceramic slabs for residential, commercial and industrial architecture. On top of which the company is taking ceramics to new heights, developing bespoke innovative solutions. Iris Ceramica is committed to reengineering ceramics to improve the interaction between people and the environment.

A willingness to adopt the latest-generation machinery, to continually invest in R&D and to adhere to a strict quality-control system are top priorities. So too is the dedication to sustainability, innovation, and excellent quality, in line with what

Romano Minozzi articulated back in the 1960s as «Economy Equals Ecology.» "I'm a ceramics industrialist at heart, I bake noble earth elements," he says. "But you have to keep on developing and researching to continue moving forward."