

P R O J E C T S

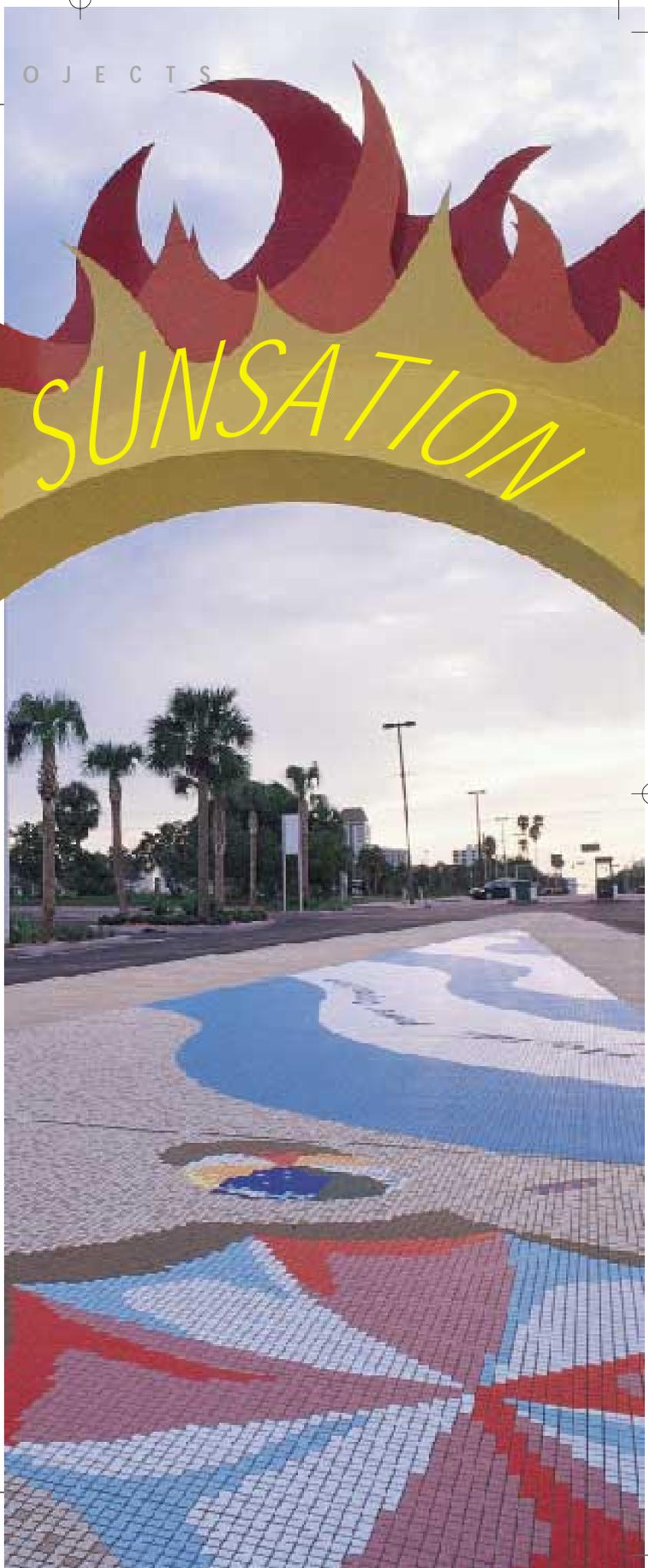
Florida Power Corporation's "Sunsation!" is the 10x275 pedestrian promenade at the entrance to Tropicana Field, Home of the Tampa Bay Devil Rays baseball team. Florida Power Corporation (FPC) approached the landscape architect, Phil Graham Fasla of Phil Graham & Co., P.A., St. Petersburg, Florida, to upgrade the existing run-down walkway as part of the company's sponsorship of the Devil Rays. Upon review of the site, the landscape architect suggested that FPC do more than "upgrade" and instead construct a high-focal, "showplace" entrance which would be a long-term asset to the stadium and to the community. FPC was enthusiastic about the proposed concept and contracted with Phil Graham to design and oversee construction of the \$1.3 million project.

The American tropics

A tropical theme was developed featuring original art, exuberant use of colour, a state-of-the-art outdoor sound system, exciting theatrical lighting effects and dramatic landscape. Sunsation showcases one of the largest mosaic tile murals in the world.

Phil Graham contacted Hank Hilton, President of Ceramic Solutions, Tampa, Florida, the local American Olean Tile distributor, on the mechanics of the ceramic tile design for this project.

A 5 m wide inset of the sidewalk is covered with a mural consisting of over



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two million pieces (approximately 1,200 m²) of America Olean 2.5x2.5 cm ceramic tiles installed showing sea life, beach scenes, waves and a dramatic scenes, waves and a dramatic sunburst depicting FPC's logo which consists of 54 circles with hundreds of fibre optics made of 2 cm Corian within a tile sunburst.

A completion deadline of March 15, 1998 was established. This was the first game of the inaugural season for the Tampa Bay Devil Rays.

Hurricane-proof

In early October of 1997, Phil Graham contacted Frank Canto, President of Craig Tile, Inc., St. Petersburg, Florida. Having worked together previously on many high profile projects, he selected Craig Tile for the installation because he recognised the importance of a professional tile installation. It was critical for the success of this project that the tile withstand the exposure to the harsh Florida sun, to rain and thermal shock. Ironically, the design theme was based on the Florida attractions of sun and water.

In mid-October 1997, the General Contractor, Hennessey Construction Services of St. Petersburg, Florida, was selected and Jim Williams was named Project Manager. He put together a critical path method schedule, began to coordinate the different sub trades and also began the task of demolishing the existing concrete sidewalk and starting to form/pour the new concrete structure that would be totally designed around the ceramic tile mosaic surface.

Also in mid October, Frank Canto contacted one of the country's leading experts in tile installation, Robert Young of Ceramic Tile & Marble Consultants, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Mr. Canto described the project to him and asked "Who makes the best thin-set mortar?" Mr. Young said he was impressed with the performance of Mapei's GRANI/RAPID*.

The project

Frank Canto then contacted Craig Hamilton, Director of Technical Services with Mapei Corp. (USA) and, after many phone conferences, it was decided that the best method of installation in this environment would be a "thin-set"



installation with GRANI/RAPID*, a two-component adhesive system with rapid setting and hydration that bonds directly to the concrete slab in lieu of a "thick-set" (mud) installation. Mr. Hamilton also worked to specify the requirements for the concrete installations addressing compaction of the subgrade, wire reinforcing, slump, thickness, finish, expansion joint location and curing requirements.

Credit comes with time

In December of 1997 Phil Graham and his wife and office manager Stephanie, who was also an integral part of the tile design, initially travelled to American Olean's factory in Olean, New York, and met with Paul Brown, Design Manager. Drawings were then sent back and forth between Florida and New York before the different panels were finalised.

By mid-January 1998, Craig Tile had set up six 6x6 m tents on the west side of the first poured sections of concrete. They were used to keep it cool, dry and clean prior to tile installation. The free form wave pattern curvatures were laid out with PVC piping.

Craig Tile determined, due to the industry recommended 20x20 mm knotted trowel size to install 2.5x2.5 cm tile, the GRANI/RAPID* bonding mortar would also become the grouting between the tiles. This would provide more of a mechanical bond than the standard procedure of a separate portland cement grout.

At the end of January, the first of the mural panels began to arrive. Each panel measured 3.70x4.90 m and consisted of 96

sections of 2.5x5 cm tile sheets. Each sheet was numbered to correspond with an overall tile layout.

In mid February 1998, Craig Tile received the final sunburst pattern design. One of the most challenging aspects of this job is to incorporate 54 corian circles with the need for fibre optics to feed from under the slab and then to flush with surrounding 2.5x2.5 cm tiles. Craig Tile decided a substrate of two layers of 20 mm thick corian (overall 40 mm thick) could be routered more precisely than forming the concrete for the critical dimensions needed for the corian circles. A template was then made and sent to American Olean's Design Department to waterjet the circles. Tile was installed with Mapei's PLANICRETE W*, a urethane adhesive, over the corian panel.

Tony Tavernese, General Superintendent for Craig Tile, coordinated all tile shipments and the installation, installing the panels faster than American Olean could assemble and ship to Florida. However, working several overtime shifts, American Olean was able to get all the panels shipped in time for Craig Tile to finish the installation just a few days prior to opening day.

Laser light dream

At night laser lights mounted in the surrounding palm trees move across the seascape as if magically bringing the water and sea life alive. Synchronised music with the laser lights and fibre optics have transformed Sunsation into a year round attraction for tourists and Tampa Bay residents alike.

Sunsation was one of those rare projects we all see periodically in our careers. At some of our first coordination meetings with the architect, general contractor, tile supplier and tile contractor, there was an atmosphere of professionals working together to create something really unique. It was one of those extraordinary projects where we develop friendships and respect for each other along the way. This exceptional atmosphere made this project a real success! This was definitely a "team effort" and one of those "once in a lifetime" projects that has become a source of great pride.

*by Joe Richardson
President of FPC*



TECHNICAL DATA

Sunsation-Tropicana Stadium - St. Petersburg, Florida (USA)

Built: 1997-1998

Commissioned by: Florida Power Corporation (FPC)

Architect: Phil Graham FASLA-Phil Graham & Co.P.A., St. Petersburg, Florida

Contractors: Hennessey Construction Services - St. Petersburg

Installed by: Craig Tile Inc. - St. Petersburg

Materials used: American Olean 2.5x2.5 cm ceramic mosaic tiles

Local distributor: Ceramic Solutions - Tampa, Florida

Mapei products used to install the mosaics:
GRANI/RAPID*
PLANICRETE W*

Mapei coordinator: Craig Hamilton - Mapei Corp.

**These products are manufactured by Mapei Corp. (USA)*

