

The W Hotel on Miami Beach Meeting the Creative Challenge

General George S. Patton said, “Accept the challenges so that you may feel the exhilaration of victory.” That’s just what the installers from Italbec US did when they were challenged with the creative genius of the NBWW (Nichols Brosch Wurst Wolfe & Associates) designers who planned the interior of the W South Beach Hotel in Miami Beach, Florida. With more than 200 workers on site at various times, the Italbec team spent 18 months installing over 500,000 square feet of incredibly beautiful marble, stone and tile to create a space that spells out “luxury” on every floor and wall. The semi-precious stone, granite, quartzite, ceramic tile and marble was set on all guestroom flooring, walls, bathrooms, kitchens, the restaurant, ballroom, nightclub, bars, lounges, public bathrooms, terraces and lobby areas using MAPEI tile and stone installation systems.



One signature feature of the hotel is the “Living Room” – the name given to the hotel's vast lobby. An entire wall of mechanically-anchored Grigio Orobico marble tiles – each one measuring 4' x 7' – serve as a stunning background for a row of columns marching down the length of the lobby. Italbec covered the

narrow sides of each giant column with white quartzite tile finished with a “brushed rubble” look.

Single pieces of the quartzite, 3/4 of an inch wide and varying in length from 4 to 12 inches were set individually without grouting. Fingers of this white quartzite tile were



also used in a vertical pattern for floor-to-ceiling columns in the Soleo Restaurant of the hotel.



Italbec's installers switched to a horizontal pattern to cover the front and sides of an immense bar in the Living Room

and the base of the lobby reception desk. Here and throughout the hotel, the team used MAPEI's *Ultraflex™ 2* thinset mortar with Low-Dust Technology, which reduces dust up to 90% and keeps the workplace cleaner.

In another area of the Living Room, the designers changed the pace from the marble slabs, switching instead to handmade glazed tiles from China. Italbec installers set the tiles with *Ultraflex 2* and grouted with *Keracolor™ U* unsanded grout.



The walls behind the display kitchen, where pizzas are served in the Soleo, presented another unique challenge for Italbec. Small mosaic marble tiles from Saint John Stone were set on backing in a herringbone pattern. These 12" x 12" squares of mosaics had to be matched perfectly to maintain the pattern. Since the stones would not be grouted, the Italbec team worked very carefully to set each square with *Ultraflex 2*.

All the kitchens in the hotel restaurants were tiled with gray quarry tile and grouted with MAPEI's *Kerapoxy®* grout to provide excellent stain and chemical resistance. *Kerapoxy* was also used to grout a cascading water element in an outdoor lounge of the hotel's night club.



NBWW designers' creativity carried over into the guest rooms, suites and condominiums of the hotel as well. Here, Italbec set over 420,000 square feet of 4" x 24" white porcelain tile manufactured to look like white-washed wood planks. The result gives a

true Florida feel to the floors of the rooms. To insure a serene environment, the substrate was first covered with MAPEI's *Mapelastic SM* sound reduction and crack isolation sheet membrane before the tiles were set with *Ultraflex 2*. The tiles had very close joints, so they were grouted with *Keracolor U*.



In the bathrooms, the luxury theme continued with the installation of 12" x 24" Cipollino marble tiles on all the walls. Before setting these tiles, the installers applied *Mapelastic HPG*, a ready-to-use liquid waterproofing and crack isolation membrane from MAPEI. Grouting was done with white

Keracolor U. Some of the rooms feature the white porcelain tile on the floors, while others are set with the same tile "planks" in black.

As with all well-planned installations, the Italbec team did a lot of surface preparation throughout the hotel and condos. MAPEI technical consultant and sales representative Chuck Urtega provided excellent technical support throughout this phase, training hand-picked Italbec crews in self-leveling techniques. The crews used *Primer L™* and *Novoplan 2* high-strength, self-leveling underlayment extensively on the job. "We had to carefully plan out the work in each room because other tradesmen were coming in right after our workers and we really appreciated MAPEI's technical support," said Rick Watson, Vice President of Italbec US.

Putting in a lot of hard work and meeting all the challenges really did pay off for the Italbec team. They won the Marble Institute of America (MIA) Pinnacle Award of Excellence for 2009. To make the victory even sweeter, they also won MIA's Grande Pinnacle Award, presented for the best project from the past 10 years.

