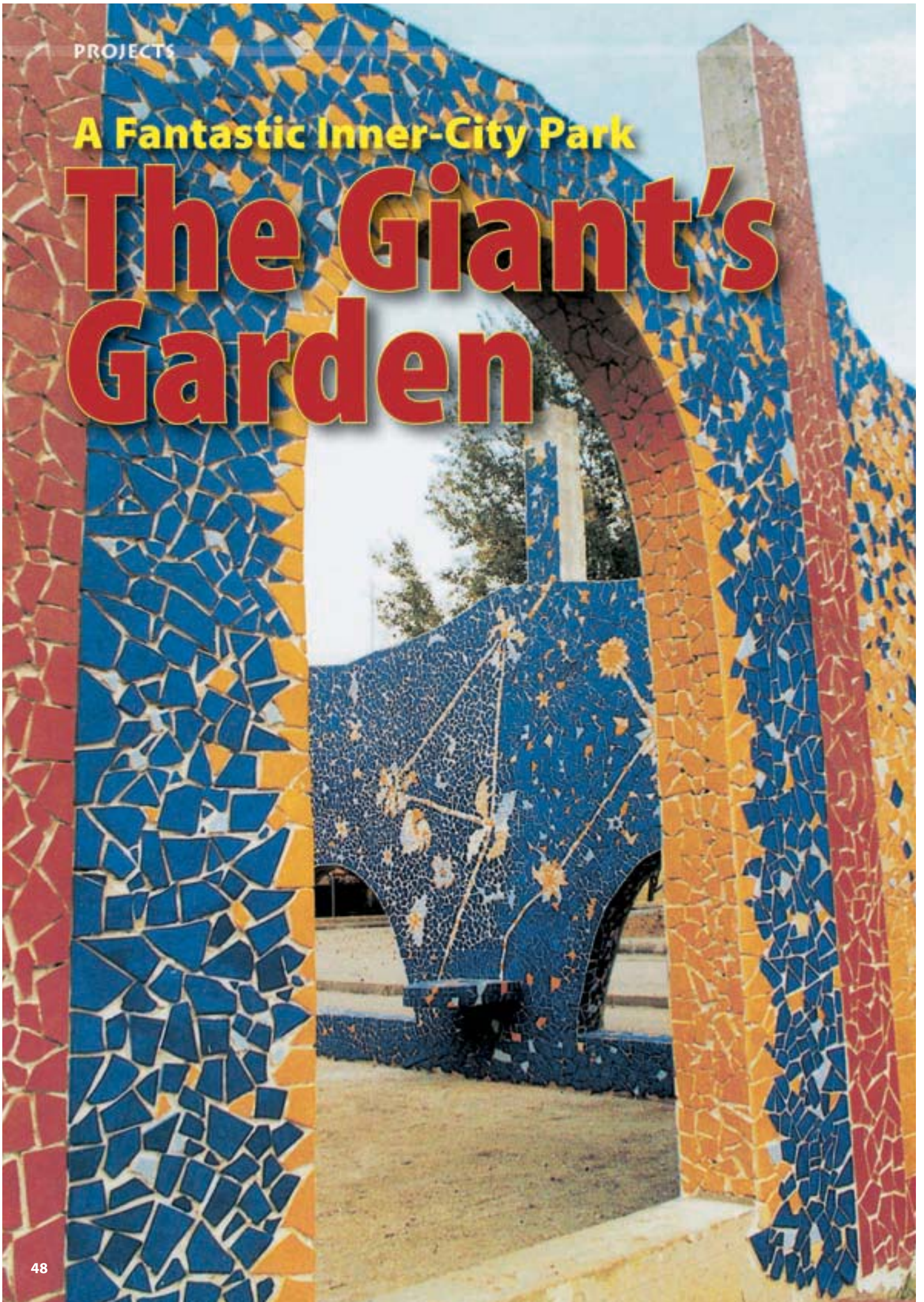


PROJECTS

A Fantastic Inner-City Park

The Giant's Garden



A DREAM COMES TRUE

A little girl's dream has come true thanks to an artist's creativity and the joint efforts of art students, private enterprises and a number of sponsors.

The "Giant's Garden" (Giardino del Gigante) in Cento, a city located in the province of Ferrara (Italy), was designed around a large area of public greenery set between a big new residential-commercial complex and the city's main school facility.

This public space, serving recreation-service purposes for a wide range of locals (families with children, students and the elderly, as well as visitors from out of town), has been converted into an authentic work of environmental art, thanks to Mapei's sponsorship and products. Designed and created by the artist Marco Pellizzola, the park is a magically evocative place, whose landscaping and sculptural refurbishing (designed as individual features, unique of their kind) combine to create a place for thought and recreation, thanks to a synergy of art and nature. All this in osmosis with the naturalistic traits of the Po Valley region, like some fabulous haven set inside the existing cityscape.

The theme is an imaginary rendition of certain distinctive features of the Po Valley landscape, like, for instance, a leaf, a lizard, blackbirds, a snake and heavenly constellations. The huge size of all these elements, made to look fabulous by this over-sizing, means they can be inhabited and walked through. Sculptures which are also games, rest areas and congregation areas inside a landscaped garden specially set out to accommodate them properly, so as to ensure a harmonious view of art and nature.

Even the lights and approximately 1-kilometre cycle path through the garden are designed in relation to the works: the support posts for the lamps vary in colour and height in accordance with the structures placed alongside them. The lampposts, tall stanchions with illuminated cages, are sculpture/objects providing night-time lighting to make the park look truly spectacular.

The main technique for creating the sculptural features is a "Gaudi-style" ceramic mosaic, an incredibly striking decorative colour scheme, not very common in this area but ideal for applying to lots of products manufactured by leading local ceramics companies.







The Garden also provided a wonderful chance to lay on an educational-training course on installing ceramic mosaics. In 2003 Paola Morselli, the Cento City Councillor for Culture, organised a workshop on working with ceramic mosaics for pupils at the city's primary and middle schools. For a whole month, pupils were directly involved in the work and helped design and install the glazed ceramic tiles, under the artist Mr. Pellizzola's supervision. But that was not all. This chance to learn about and spread a very special work method resulted in a training course being set up: "Specialist technique in laying traditional and designer ceramic mosaic", financed by the European Social Fund.

Started in 2001, the building of the Giant's Garden will be entirely over by October 2006: this was a work in progress which opened to the public as the various sections were completed.

Mapei made a notable contribution and the ceramics products used proved just how durable and effective they are as the works progressed.

We thought Mapei's input to the construction of Garden could best be summed up by the person, who, more than anybody else, was responsible for its creation: Marco Pellizzola.



THE USE OF MAPEI PRODUCTS WHEN BUILDING THE “GIANT’S GARDEN” ART PARK

by Marco Pellizzola

Every single storage place for building materials is probably a container of potential sculptures or, rather, objects which, if suitably adapted, could serve a different purpose than that for which they were originally designed. That is why, whenever I happened to be in one of these places, I have always ended up imagining that a large concrete pipe could easily be turned into an armchair or a piece of tree trunk could be sat on. Working on these assumptions, I designed my first real objects covered with ceramic mosaics, which are now part of the Giant’s Garden, a large theme park I designed and that was built in Cento.

It is also cheaper to use existing objects than make brand-new ones from scratch. A concrete pipe measuring 100 cm in diameter, cut both vertically and horizontally, already has the basic structure of a chair. Then, with iron rods, a drill, metal mesh and a welder, it can easily be knocked into the desired shape. After injecting the iron into the reinforced concrete and anchoring it in place with chemical resin, it can be bent and welded; the metal mesh can be shaped into the right form and then the empty spaces between the iron rod and mesh can be filled with polyurethane foam to make the frame lighter and watch the figure rapidly take shape.

As soon as the polyurethane dries, it can be covered with a layer of cement, then the cement can be touched up with several coats of grey KERAFLEX* adhesive, which has high thixotropic properties, binding together the original and new cement.

KERAFLEX*, mixed with just a little water, can be shaped in several layers to achieve very special finishes. The surface is smoothed over with a damp sponge before the adhesive dries, in order to obtain the right kind of surface for installing the mosaic. Some of the structures used for the park, which were touched up on the outside using just grey KERAFLEX* adhesive and left outside for a whole year, subject to temperatures ranging from +35 to -15° C, showed no signs of surface changes, despite not yet being covered with mosaic.

After undergoing these procedures, the structure is ready for the installation of ceramic mosaic tiles. We used white KERAFLEX* adhesive for installation purposes, due to its fine bonding and non-slip properties. Its clear colour means you get a good idea of exactly how to set out the joints. Here again some of the structures were left uncovered without grouting for an entire year and still they adhered perfectly, none of the mosaic tiles broke off even under pressure; this was a pleasant surprise because a number of builders were sceptical about bonding without grouting. The grouting is the final part of the entire job; it is what creates the final image. The choice of the colour of the grout is important for chromatic-highlighting reasons. Mapei’s ULTRACOLOR* allowed me to create the desired contrast, gradually applying the product to bring out the colours of the mosaic tiles.





At the start I had some problems in finding just the right consistency for the grout, since in the past I had always used grouts with bigger grains (and hence easier to apply) but then, once I had got the right mix, the work was over very quickly.

Mixing the colours of ULTRACOLOR* grouts meant I could achieve new shades and, during final painting using acid, the blend of superimposed colours created some unique colour effects, initially by chance but then carefully reproduced. The latest Mapei product, ULTRACOLOR PLUS*, is very similar to ULTRACOLOR*, but different in terms of its sculptural properties. I used it to grout the small lake: slightly glossier than its predecessor, it is ideal for surfaces simulating a watery effect, as in this case, where the surface is decorated with nymphs and goldfish against a light-blue background. Building work aside, further experimentation was carried out with Mapei products during a series of educational workshops with children from primary and middle schools in Cento. In this case, the ceramic mosaic tiles were bonded onto a smooth substrate.

They were actually single-fired tiles laid using white KERAFLEX* adhesive after experimenting with various drying times and ensuing bonding ratings. The tests carried out showed that after just twelve hours it was already hard to remove the mosaic tiles and after twenty-four hours it was a lot more difficult. After a few days they could only be removed with a hammer. Overall, the characteristics of Mapei products turned out to be ideal for the purpose at hand, both in terms of resistance to outside agents and performance. The aesthetic quality of the grouts was of key importance and vital in carrying out a work whose visual impact calls for great attention to chromatic appearance. The wide range of ULTRACOLOR* colours ensured this goal was achieved.



***Mapei Products:** the products referred to in this article belong to the "Products for Ceramic Tiles and Stone Materials" range. The technical data sheets are available on the "Mapei Global Infonet" CD/DVD and from the website: www.mapei.com. Mapei adhesives and grouts conform to EN 12004 and EN 13888 standards.

Keraflex (C2TE): high performance cementitious adhesive, with no vertical slip and extended open time, for ceramic tiles and stone material.

Ultracolor (CG2): fast-setting and drying, anti-efflorescence grout for joints from 2 to 20 mm, available in 26 colours. **N.B.** The product has been replaced by Ultracolor Plus.

Ultracolor Plus (CG2): fast setting and drying, high performance, polymer modified, anti-efflorescence, water-repellent grout for joints from 2 to 20 mm. With Dropeffect® and anti-mold with BioBlock® technology.

TECHNICAL DATA

The Giant's Garden, Cento - Ferrara (Italy)

Work: installation of mosaic coverings

Years: 2001-2006

Customer: Cento City Council

Project: Professor Marco Pellizzola

Works Management: Professor Marco Pellizzola

Contractor: Martinelli Costruzioni S.p.A.

Installation Workers: Pupils of Professor Marco Pellizzola

Mapei Distributor: S.I.L.L.A., Cento

Mapei Co-ordinator: Gian Paolo Grillenzoni, Mapei S.p.A.