



A dive in paradise

Until now, swimming with dolphins and other forms of marine life was an experience reserved for very few people. Today, with the opening of the wonderful "Sea World and Bush Entertainment" center in the "Discovery Cove" in Orlando, Florida, this dream has come true.



SeaWorld.

The work that was carried out in the park to offer visitors a "realistic" image of paradise is truly remarkable.

This dream has become reality thanks to the contribution of Reptile Design, which allowed the birth of an enchanting place such as the Discovery Cove. Ralph Young, with the help of Houston Winn and Jim Spencer, Reptile Design's creative designers for the project, made an amazing use of mosaic art, while

Mapei supplied installation technology, and precisely KER 200* and KER 700* as sealants and KER 121*, an adhesive low-thickness grout modified with polymers. Thousands of colored mosaic cover various areas of the park, in a sequence of tropical images so beautiful that the visitor doesn't know on which "magic combination of colors" to place his feet. Wherever he looks, the tiles are animated in circles and figures, representing animals and imitating the flow of the ocean's waves.

In the Administration Building, for example, an elaborated mosaic of over 75 m²




Photo 1. Sophisticated combinations of shapes and colors brighten up the different areas that compose the Discovery Cove in Orlando.

Photo 2. Thousands of tiles compose the numerous mosaics that surround the park, in a continuous succession of combinations of shapes and colors that immediately call to mind the sea and luxurious tropical paradises.

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Photo 3. A detail of the mosaic pavement of over 1,000 m², totally based on the contrast between the slate elements and the ceramic tiles that reproduce a portrait of water.

Photo 4. Installation phase of the slate elements and preparation of the substrate for the colored ceramic tiles.

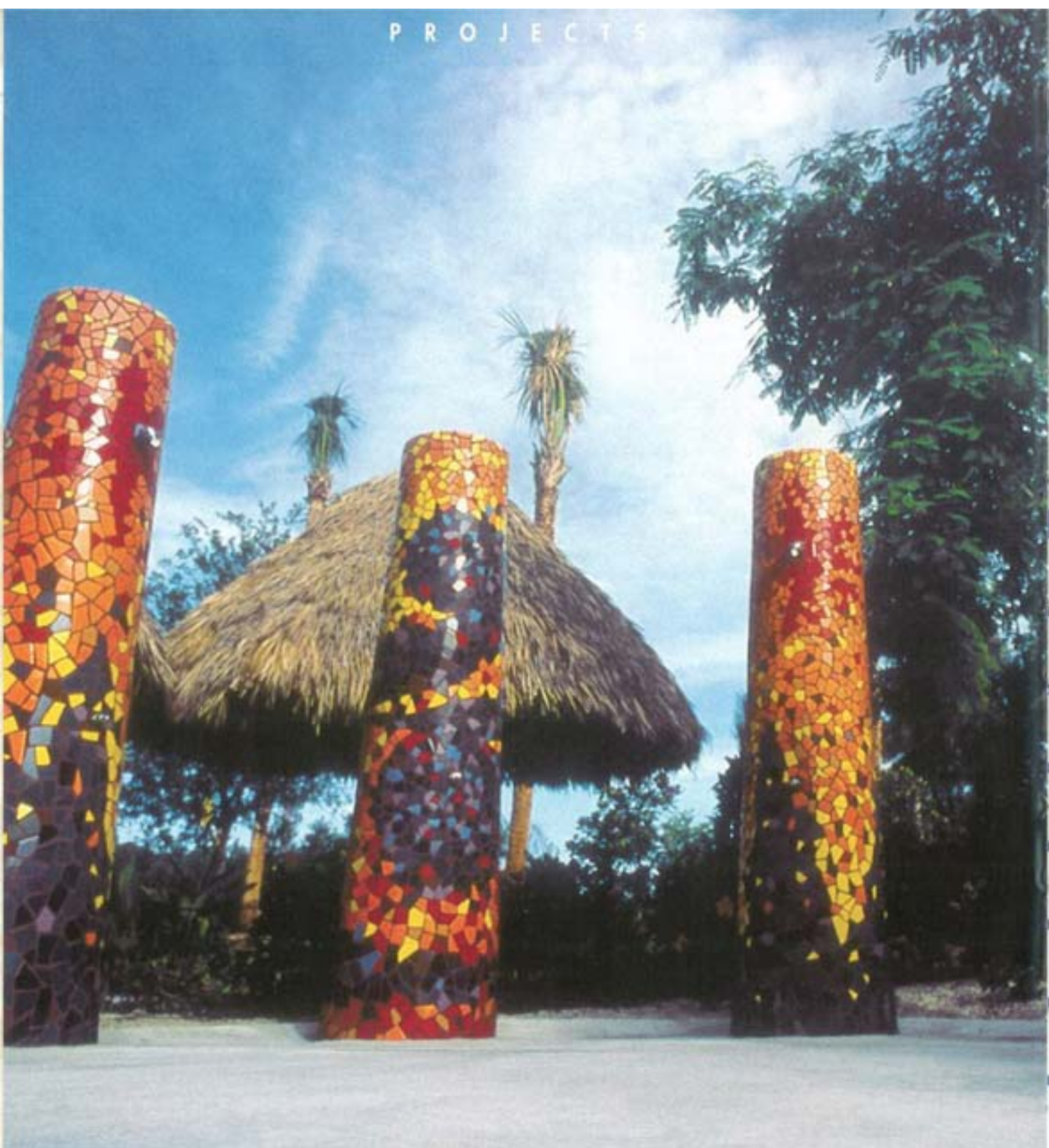
Photo 5. The constructive elements of the elaborated mosaics were previously prepared on the basis of designer's drawings.

Photo 6. In the operational phases, great attention was paid to the installation of tiles, that were shaped and chamfered on site to reproduce the drawings of the project with the utmost precision.



depicts marvelous water-works. And still, the pavement is a combination of two tones of slate and ceramic tiles that are shaped and chamfered on site, to realize the drawing requested by the designers with maximum precision. The ceramic mosaic was used in combination with glass mosaic to emphasize the sensation of water in movement. Even restoration points offer a continuous reminder of aquatic images and give the sensation of walking on a tropical island. And the list of wonders





continues with the restaurant, the signs, the vases, the bathrooms: in any direction, you can see excitement, spectacular mosaics and decorations that are never the same.

Behind the mirage

Of course, the work necessary to realize a similar project was a challenge right from the start. As explained by Ralph

Young, the combination of materials used for the mosaics, as well as their thicknesses and different levels of porosity, made work execution particularly difficult. Furthermore, the installation of all the coverings was done between December 1999 and January 2000, in a particularly unfavorable period due to the adverse weather conditions. In all, thirty people worked simultaneously, from the application of the adhesive for installing the tiles to their sealing, on a total surface of over 700 m². For this reason, thanks to the intervention of the general tile contractor, Nehemias Rivera, the main contractor, Suitt Construction, chose Mapei KER 200* sealant instead of an



Photo 7. And after the "dive in paradise... with the dolphins", 14 giant columns that emerge like majestic pillars in various tones of red allow the fortunate swimmers to wash themselves up: in fact, they are 14 giant showers.

epoxy sealant that was previously planned by the specifications. All Mapei products, the adhesive KER 121* as well as the grouts KER 200* and KER 700*, were supplied by Summitville Orlando Inc. In spite of the dimensions and complexity of the project, the KER 200* sealing grout worked perfectly, as confirmed by Ralph Young, who added: "I filled in spaces of different widths and thicknesses, from 1/8" to 11/2", with no

problems. In some areas of the pavement that required flawless execution, for example near the main entrance, I sealed even under rain and in the cold". Ralph Young continued his testimony by talking about the good results provided by the KER 700* grout: "This grout is a good alternative when it's not possible to use an epoxy product. I don't think there is any other product that offers the same performance of KER 200*. It doesn't drip vertically on the walls and it perfectly bonds all the different types of materials that I use for the mosaics requested by my clients, such as porcelain, glass, tiles of all kinds, hand made mosaics, steel, shells, etc".

Once in the Discovery Cove, visitors will simply be amazed by the wonders of the park, and will not easily forget its beauty. Thanks to the collaboration between designer Susan Price of Reptile Design and the architect John Kasman, and to the quality of Mapei products, for each lucky visitor the "dive in paradise" will be an unforgettable experience. 

TECHNICAL DATA

Discovery Cove Park - Orlando, Florida (USA)

Year of construction: December 1999/January 2000

Mosaic creative design: Reptile Design, Orlando; creative designers: Ralph Young, Houston Winn and Jim Spencer; coordinators: designer Susan Price and architect John Kasman
Executive design: architects Peckham, Gayton, Albers and Viets, Inc. of St. Louis (Missouri); designer Suzanne Sessions, Inc., of St. Louis

General contractor: Suitt Construction

General tile contractor: Nehemias Rivera

Materials installed: mosaic tiles of different materials and shapes

Mapei Products: KER 121, KER 200, KER 700

Main supplier of mosaic tiles: QTC - Quarry Tile Company, Spokane (Washington)

Mapei Reseller: Summitville Orlando Inc.

Mapei coordinator: Diana Chiodi

*These products are realized and distributed only on the American market by Mapei Corp.(USA). For more information, please visit the web site www.mapei.com.

