

# Departure, sweet departure

The French Railways have started a plan of restoration of the stations to make it so that the growing mobility of the population finds an outlet in an integrated system made of multiple railway networks. Recently, in fact, both the Gare du Nord in Paris and the Gare du Arras in the city of Arras have been object of modernization and enlargement, mainly in the zones of traveller transit and interchange.

## The Gare du Nord

The Gare du Nord is, in terms of importance, the first in Europe and the third in the world. Its restoration is the symbol of the program of revival of the stations planned by the Arep (the agency of the French Railways for the study of the stations, planning, research and exchange terminals).

To optimise the circulation of the travellers – more and more numerous – a new and vast interchange area has been built.

It involved connecting together in a fluid manner the local, national and international networks that make up this complex railway junction. The new area, that has taken the place of an old parking lot, was studied in order to support the strong stresses caused by the intense and constant foot traffic.

For this construction site Mapei products have been chosen, with the consultancy of Philippe Latrace of Mapei France SA. The works were realized over an area of 20,000 m<sup>2</sup>.

### The coverings in reconstituted marble

For the coverings, the white reconstituted marble Microtechnica of Quarella and the Artic White reconstituted marble of Rover were used. These were installed with GRANIRAPID\*, a two-component adhesive system with rapid setting





*Photo 1.*  
A picture of the inside of the new pavilion of the Gare du Nord in Paris, a structure in steel and glass that expands on various levels, with a system of stairs and footways that ensure the vertical and horizontal connections.

*Photos 2 and 3.*  
Two moments of the installation of the tiles in reconstituted stone: grey Granirapid was used, using the double backbuttering technique.

*Photo 4.*  
For the internal floorings large-sized tiles were chosen, 60x60x1.2 cm, suitable for the dimensions of the surrounding spaces.

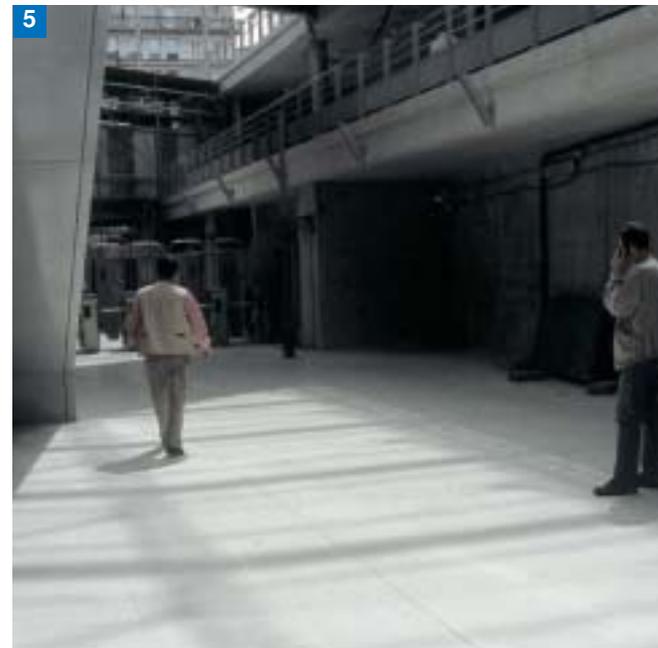
and hydration for the installation of ceramic tiles, natural and artificial stones. The installation was performed on the cementitious screeds, using the double backbuttering technique. For the joints white KERACOLOR FF\* was used, a cementitious grout for the grouting of joints up to 6 mm. The white Keracolor harmonized perfectly with the colouration of the tiles and also allowed for the realization of joints with a resistance suitable for the multiple aggressions that these surfaces will have to support. "In compliance with the dictates of the specifications – explained Philippe Latrace, regulation manager at Mapei – the Upec classification of the flooring realized is U4 (wear resistance), P3 (flexion and strong impact resistance), E3 (porosity) and C1 (resistance to acidic and basic stains)".



*Photo 5.*  
Thanks to its adhesive and quick drying characteristics, Granirapid allowed for the immediate placing into service of the flooring: it is, in fact, set to light foot traffic after only 24 hours.

### Functionality and savings

There are essentially two factors that have orientated the choice of the coverings and of the products used: the flooring had to aid the legibility of the spaces and limit the needs for lighting. This double need led to favour light-coloured floorings. The choice fell, on the one hand, on a line of tiles that allowed to vary the



adhesives and the aggregates and, on the other hand, on tiles with a high quality finish, for the corners and surface uniformity in particular. Furthermore, a covering was desired with an intermediate cost, between that of asphalt and that of stone. Having adopted the solution of the reconstituted stone slabs, there was recommended the application in factory, and then on-site, of "stain-resistant" products. The works were completed at the end of 2001.