

## ***MAPEI MOVES IN THE BEST CIRCLES AT HOUSTON GALLERIA MALL***



Patterned after the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II in Milan, Italy, the Houston Galleria sports the signature glass skylights of its namesake. When the Italian Galleria opened in 1877, it served as an enclosed pedestrian shopping arcade connecting the Duomo cathedral with La Scala opera house. The Houston Galleria, which opened nearly 100 years later in Texas (USA), has become a mecca to tourists and shoppers as well. In 1970, it was the first mall in the United States to integrate living, working, playing, and shopping into a single giant entertainment complex. Today, the Galleria houses more than 400 shops ranging from moderate to ritzy, along with four office towers, two hotels, a private fitness club and a skating rink. The mall is ranked as the fifth-largest shopping center in the United States.

In 2003, the Houston Galleria Mall expanded to house even more upscale shops and boutiques. More than 80,000 square feet of floor and wall space was covered with stone, ceramic tile, and onyx – all secured in place with MAPEI mortars and grouts. MAPEI's surface-preparation products provided a level foundation for all this beauty.



Before installing the tile and stone in Phase IV, Sigma Marble & Granite Inc. prepared the surface using *Mapecem*® mortar binder and *Ultraplan*® 1 and *Novoplan*® 2 self-leveling underlayments. Carol Gregory of Sigma commented, "This was the first time I had worked with MAPEI's self-levelers, and I was amazed at how easy they were to work with and how fast they dried. Because this was a very fast-track construction project, we had to complete all the work in 58 days, and *Ultraplan 1* gave us the added edge we needed to get finished on time." *Ultraflex*®2, *Ultraflex RS* and *Ultracontact*™ were used to tile the floors, while *Kerabond*™/*Keralastic*™ was used to set 10" x 17" vertical tiles of onyx onto a two-story wall to match a similar wall at the opposite end of the mall.

MAPEI products were used throughout the installations in the new Phase IV of the Galleria Mall because they had been used in all three previous phases of the mall, and the architect's specifications called for the use of a single supplier's products throughout. However, the renovations in the older parts of the mall did not use MAPEI grouts. When Carol Gregory learned

of this, she approached the architect; and he rewrote the specification for the new phase to include MAPEI's *Keracolor<sup>TM</sup>* S grout so that the owner could receive the MAPEI warranties.

By the time Sigma was allowed in to install the tile in the new phase, some of the store tenants were already working on their store interiors, so the tile had to set quickly enough for workers to travel over it in order to get inside the stores without undue delays. Gregory said the MAPEI products were up to the challenge. When very fast-track construction provides only a short time frame for installation, MAPEI gets the job done!