

Swimming with the Fishes at the Georgia Aquarium

Williams Tile Uses MAPEI Products to Make Aquarium Sparkle with Glass Tile

In November of 2001 Bernard Marcus, founder of Home Depot, presented a gift of \$250 million to the city of Atlanta, Georgia, to build the world's largest aquarium at the time. With additional contributions from other local heavyweights in the Atlanta business world, the Georgia Aquarium was able to open debt-free on November 21, 2005. Less than 100 days later, the aquarium was welcoming its one-millionth visitor. As of May 23, 2007, five million visitors had passed through the portals of the elegant marine habitat to view the more than 120,000 animals housed in the aquarium's collection.

The beauty of the aquarium's interior sparkles from the walls of fountains, viewing areas, the food court and even the bathrooms. The sparkle comes from glass mosaic tiles installed by Williams Tile of Smyrna, Georgia. Project manager David Arthur managed up to 7 installation teams at peak times during the construction. "Our advantage in successfully completing our part of the project was the craftsmanship of our experienced mosaic glass installers on each team," said Arthur. The teams were also able to depend on the reliability of MAPEI Tile & Stone Installation products.

In the bathrooms and around the fountains in the central rotunda, the Williams Tile Team waterproofed the walls with *Mapelastic HPG*, a ready-to-use liquid membrane from MAPEI. "We used the *Granirapid* System to set the tiles in these areas, because we wanted high adhesion and rapid setting, so that we could peel off the plastic film that covered the front of the mosaic tiles and held them in place until they were installed," said Arthur. "We used *Granirapid* on the walls in the food court area as well." The "Trend" Italian glass mosaic tiles were supplied by Ceramic Techniques of Alpharetta, Georgia. All the wall tiles were set with *Keracolor U* unsanded grout.

On the floors in the bathrooms, one of the teams installed porcelain tiles from Atlas Concord, using MAPEI's *Ultracontact* full-contact mortar, which works well for installing large-format tiles without backbuttering, saving time and labor. These tiles were grouted with *Keracolor S* sanded grout. Williams Tile was also asked to install stone tile in some exhibit areas and unglazed ceramic tile on the walls in backstage locations. For these installations, they used *Kerabond/Keralastic*.

"The biggest issue we faced with the glass mosaics was the usual difficulty of installing them and having the faces of the tile aligned perfectly to satisfy the owners, and we accomplished that," said Arthur. "The project went really well. All the MAPEI products worked very well for our installers. The general contractor, Brasfield & Gorrie LLC, was easy to work with, and we had an opportunity to show off our best work."

Together, MAPEI and Williams Tile have made it fun for the Georgia Aquarium's visitors to "swim with the fishes."