



Swissôtel

Chicago, IL

Project Spotlight: May 2006



LOCATION:

Swissôtel
Chicago, IL

ARCHITECT:

Architectural Interiors
Annapolis, MD

**GENERAL
CONTRACTOR:**

Meyne Company
Chicago, IL

TILE CONTRACTOR:

Bourbon Tile
Chicago, IL

TILE SUPPLIER:

TileArtisans Inc. — High Resolution
Photographic Image Transfer to Ceramic Tile
Orroville, CA

**TILE INSTALLATION
SYSTEM:**

LATICRETE International, Inc.
Bethany, CT

LATICRETE DISTRIBUTOR:

Century Tile
Chicago, IL

TileArtisans Inc. and LATICRETE usher the Swissôtel into the new millennium

By Eric Carson

When it came time for the Swissotel in downtown Chicago to remodel the swimming pool area on the 42nd floor of the four-star hotel, the concept was to bring the pool space into the new millennium. A lofty goal for sure, and when Architectural Interiors of Annapolis was contracted to complete this mission, the idea that they came up with was indeed groundbreaking. But, the execution of this plan ended up taking the Maryland-based firm down an avenue that they had previously never explored.

The original plan that Architectural Interiors came up with was to create a giant mosaic mural of porcelain tile that would mirror the Chicago skyline and run along the entire length of the Olympic-sized swimming pool. The only problem was they couldn't find an artisan capable of replicating the city of Chicago in a mosaic like they wanted.

Enter the solution: Dale Marsh, who co-founded Tile Artisans in Orroville, California with his father, Joe, in 1991. The cutting-edge service they provide was just the remedy for Architectural Interiors and the pool space at the Swissotel. Tile Artisans are at the forefront of a new and exciting process called "High Resolution Image Transfer."

This new process is the ultimate in custom commercial ceramic tile, and is accomplished by burning a high-resolution photo right onto the face of the ceramic tile, and firing it at 1,650 degrees Fahrenheit, creating a lasting image that will stand up to the harshest elements that nature can provide: permanently. The durability of the ceramic tile that they produce was perfect for the high-humidity environment of the pool area at the Swissotel, too.

The original picture of the Chicago skyline that Tile Artisans used in the image transfer process was taken by Casey Sills Photography, while the finished shots were taken by Barry Fritz at the completion of the mural project in October of 2005.

Tile Artisans produces each tile one by one, labels them according to their final resting place, then ships them off for installation. The installer fits them together on the wall with the help of thin-set mortar, and then grouts them in place. As you can imagine, these high-end tiles are costly to produce, and the with the end result being of such high-visibility, only the finest in setting materials will do. For these reasons, Tile Artisans works exclusively with LATICRETE International.

Headquartered in Bethany, Connecticut, LATICRETE International has over 50 years of experience in tile and stone installation systems, and has earned the trust and respect of Tile Artisans over the course of 15 years of working together.

"We have an expensive product that demands proper installation" said Marsh. "Right up front, I requested an installer that uses LATICRETE products. They are the top of the line. There is nothing on the market better. We can only have it perfect, and that's why we use LATICRETE."

The relationship that Marsh has built with LATICRETE has been a huge benefit for Tile Artisans. When Marsh has a new job to install anywhere in the country, LATICRETE has a trusted installer ready to go.

"LATICRETE is a huge asset to us," Marsh said. "We are bidding on jobs all over the United States, and I'm able to contact LATICRETE and



they recommend a qualified installer in the area. These are highly qualified installers that I know will do a great job.”

For the installation of the Chicago mural at the Swissotel, Tile Artisans contacted Larry Bourbon, senior project manager at Bourbon Tile in Chicago on LATICRETE’s recommendation. Bourbon chose the W202 method of installation, more commonly referred to as the “thin-set method” for dry-set mortar over masonry or concrete.

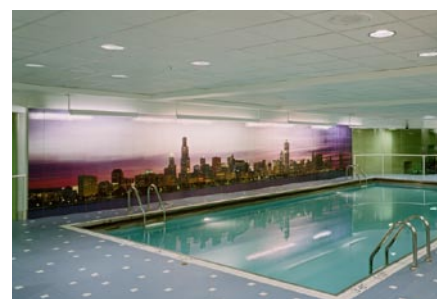
The challenge for Bourbon was making sure that there were no gaps between the first row of tiles and the floor. Not knowing the exact pitch of the floor, Bourbon Tile marked off the low point, then set and bridged the second course of 12” X 12” tiles with LATICRETE® 253 Gold Multipurpose Thin-Set Mortar to support the rest of the installation. The setting system Bourbon chose from LATICRETE is a smooth and creamy multipurpose thin-set designed to be mixed with water for interior and exterior applications, which he troweled onto the wall and the back of each tile before placing them in their respective rows. LATICRETE’s 253 Gold Multipurpose Thin-Set Mortar provides superior bond over concrete and masonry and is GREENGUARD™ Certified for commercial and residential low VOC building requirements under the GREENGUARD standard for low emitting products.

“I use LATICRETE first and foremost for performance,” Bourbon said, “but also for their ingenuity. They are the innovators of the industry. They are always one step ahead of the pack. I would much rather be with the innovators, the rest are just reacting to what LATICRETE does.”

To grout this majestic mural of the Chicago skyline, Bourbon went with LATICRETE® 1500 Series Tri-Poly Fortified Sanded Grout, a premium factory prepared cement grout designed to be mixed with water. Formulated from a blend of high strength Portland cement, graded aggregates and color-fast pigments, LATICRETE 1500 Series Tri-Poly Fortified Sanded Grout provides a grout joint that is dense, hard and durable, making it the perfect selection to protect and ensure the long-lasting beauty of the Chicago mural for the Swissotel. LATICRETE 1500 Series Tri-Poly Fortified Grout is also GREENGUARD Certified, and as such, a contributing factor towards LEED certification for the Swissotel.

“Some of our clients want (Tile Artisans) to be responsible for the installation for the life of the project,” Marsh said. “We can only use a quality product that will last. LATICRETE has always been so honest with me. I trust their recommendations 100 percent, and have never had a failure in all of my years of working with them.”

Since 1956, LATICRETE has been the global leader in tile and stone installation systems. During that time, their innovative products and commitment to technological and scientific advancements has allowed them to distance themselves from the competitors. But still, after all the years and accomplishments, Dale Marsh can pick up the phone and hear a familiar voice on the other end – a voice he can trust.





1956 - 2006

50 years
of innovation

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