



Innovative Tile and Stone
Installation Systems

A Tribute to Steve Irwin

Project Spotlight: December 2008



LOCATION:

Australia Zoo, Steve Irwin Drive, Beerwah, Qld Australia

MURAL DESIGNER:

Sandy Robertson - Mosaic Artist/Team OzMosaics Studio.
Mural presented as a gift to Australia Zoo

LATICRETE DISTRIBUTOR:

LATICRETE Brisbane Australia – Qld Manager Ken Fisher

TILE INSTALLATION SYSTEM:

LATICRETE International, Inc., Bethany, CT

Zoo Mosaics Created as Everlasting Tribute to Steve Irwin

By Ron Treister



Just two years ago, our planet lost one of its most engaging and memorable human beings. Steve Irwin was an iconic Australian television personality, wildlife expert and conservationist who achieved worldwide fame from the television program, "The Crocodile Hunter," an internationally broadcast wildlife documentary series co-hosted with his wife, Terri. Together, they also co-owned and operated Australia Zoo, which was founded by his parents in Beerwah, Queensland. Steve tragically passed away in 2006 after his chest was fatally pierced by a stingray barb while he was involved in directing a film on Australia's Great Barrier Reef. The impact he left on the world will be everlasting. Therefore, it made sense for some kind of everlasting tribute to be created in memory of this very unique man.

An idea of creating mosaic designs as a tribute to Steve Irwin for Australia Zoo surfaced shortly thereafter, the Steve Irwin Mosaic Tribute Project was initiated. Mosaic artist and teacher, Sandy Robertson of OzMosaics and President of MAANZ (Mosaic Association Australia & New Zealand), the person who spearheaded this amazing project, stated, "I was shocked to hear of Steve's passing away. As I worked on a mosaic that day, I could not get out of my head the vision of how so many people were paying tribute with flowers, kindness and messages at Australia Zoo and the outpouring of emotions worldwide."

"I posted a note on the mosaic addicts' group internet site about how sad I felt, and later posted again with the idea of making a mosaic mural and presenting it to Terri Irwin, perhaps for Australia Zoo or somewhere in Queensland," continued Robertson. "I had decided to make the mosaic with the help of some amazing friends, (all mosaic addicts), but then wondered how many people may get behind a community mural from around the world! The support from the mosaic addicts group was beyond belief!"

Sandy Robertson had no idea the outpouring of response would be as huge as it was. Two years after her original post, she had received more

than 350 segments for the mural from across the globe ranging creatively from "ants to gigantic camels!" At that point, she declared, "We have been receiving mosaic art on fiberglass mesh to compile our huge mosaic mural from beginners to professional mosaic artists in Canada, USA, Europe, New Zealand Australia and other locations. All of these have been made with love; all mosaic participants completed a questionnaire and the caring stories are being compiled to present to Terri Irwin as record of the mosaic making, dedicated to Steve," continued Robertson. "These mosaics will form 10 huge murals each (96" x 48") which will be constructed as panels on cement sheeting to be given to Australia Zoo Wildlife Warriors as a tribute to the great Steve Irwin. It's emotional, wonderful and exciting. Most importantly, they will be on public view at Australia Zoo forever!"

"Fabrication has begun and, of course, I am using all LATICRETE products in this mural. I would not be the artist I am or have the mosaic methods that are now recognized worldwide if not for the support of LATICRETE...it's quite an incredible story of how I began my journey with LATICRETE and it has become quite a legend in the mosaic world. Through forums I moderate with thousands of mosaics artists attending," stated Robertson, "I only recommend LATICRETE materials. For me, there is no substitute for the quality, service and flexibility of these products in the mosaic art form."

From the onset of the project, Sandy worked directly with LATICRETE Technical Sales Representative, Ken Fisher. Fully aware that this would be not only an incredibly unique project, but also one which would be highly visible for years to come, it was paramount to him that the most efficient installation system would be used when installing the panels. "This was no ordinary tiling project," Fisher stated. "There are a few mind-blowing effects that have resulted from curious minds and a little bit of experimentation."

The fibrous cement sheets used for the substrate must be installed externally, so two coats of LATICRETE® Hydro Ban™ were applied prior to

adhering the tiles. Sandy and her team used LATICRETE® 4237 Latex Mortar Additive for the adhesive and LATICRETE 500 Series Sanded Floor Grout in a variety of colors to bond to the mesh, remembering some of these pieces had been donated from around the globe and that the system used had to perform at a level of which they were 100 percent confident.

“These products gave Sandy the opportunity to adhere and mould much of her art resulting in a three-dimensional effect. When using the meshed pieces, she pointed out that the LATICRETE 4237 Latex Additive and LATICRETE 1500 Sanded Grout in the color white was useful in some instances, to hide the white mesh under transparent glass tesserae.

“In later parts of the project, the use of LATAPOXY® 310 Rapid Stone Adhesive helped in speeding up the process by bonding pieces together prior to adhering panels to the substrate.”

“Once adhered,” continued Fisher, “the pieces could be grouted using a variety of colors. LATICRETE 500 Series Sanded Floor Grout is fortified with LATICRETE 1776 Flexible Grout Fortifier. Even though these very large panels were supported by the temporary framework, until they were completely in place, much movement occurred due to changing studio work areas, storage transport and installation; necessitating a flexible system.”

The materials used in this immense project were not limited to ceramic or even glass tile. “The imagination shown by these artists was totally unparalleled,” exclaimed Fisher. Creative materials used included china plates, cups and mugs; several different colors of glass bottles and jars...and, much more, all adding to the kaleidoscope of hues, textures and colors being incorporated into the Steve Irwin Tribute. In addition, LATICRETE SpectraLOCK® PRO Grout*, a revolutionary grout offering maximum stain resistance, color uniformity, durability and ease of use, was used in the most creative way with its glow-in-the-dark component.

Sections of background ocean surrounding the fish and seaweed in the underwater mural panel were coated with the glow-in-the-dark and glitter

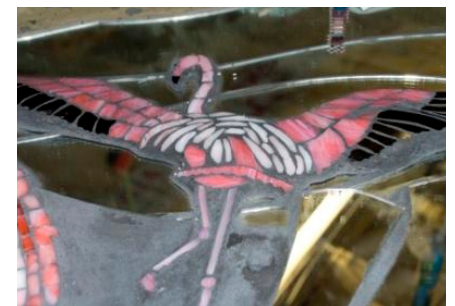
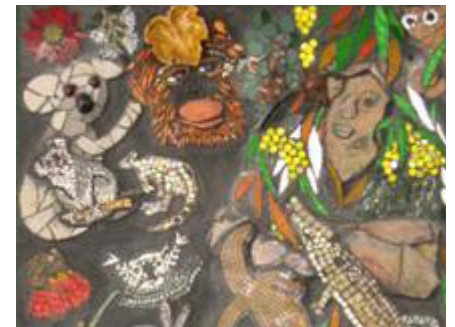
component offered with LATICRETE SpectraLOCK PRO Grout. “Some one-of-a-kind, fascinating effects were created,” added Fisher. “For example, I saw the mixing of a thin, runny mix of LATICRETE 4237 Latex Mortar Additive and LATICRETE 500 Series Sanded Floor Grout. From there, small amounts of this concoction were poured into bottles and then rolled so a vein-like pattern appeared on the underside of the glass. This same mixture was also used as a paint to shade some of the grouted areas, which visually, was great for bringing life to tree trunks and other focal designs.”

MAANZ “Art from the heart program” supports charities such as the Starlight Children’s Foundation and its Grant-a-Wish Program; children suffering from various illnesses have also been able to participate in this project. Clients of the Brisbane Endeavour Foundation were keen participants and made a beautiful koala.

Ken Fisher (whose wife and youngest son made two Wrasse fish for the mural) has been invited to make a presentation relative to the mural project at the MAANZ Symposium to be held in Brisbane, October, 2009 which will include mosaic artists not just from Australia and New Zealand, but from around the world. Sandy Robertson’s studio, OzMosaics, also donated materials needed to put the mosaic together and managed the team which worked so closely on this labor of love. The amount of pro-bono work which was put into the Steve Irwin Mosaic Tribute Project for Australia Zoo was unprecedented.

There are no questions whatsoever that this mega mosaic masterpiece will be a focal and long-lasting visual experience for all who have the pleasure of seeing it firsthand. And, if Steve were around today and could witness this amazing production, we all know what he would say.

“Crikey!”



Note: LATICRETE 500 Series Sanded Floor Grout not available in the USA

* United States Invention Patent No.: 6881768 (and other Patents)

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