Seven Days of Creation Mural
Project Spotlight: June 2011

LOCATION:
Our Savior’s Lutheran Church
Sioux Falls, SD

COMMISSION MURAL ARTIST:
“Seven Days of Creation”
Eyob Mageria

GLASS MOSAIC MURAL SUPPLIER:
SICIS North America
New York, New York

LATICRETE DISTRIBUTOR;
TILE CONTRACTOR:
Syverson Tile & Stone, Inc.
Sioux Falls, SD
By Eric Carson

More and more these days, when interior or exterior mural projects are designed with tile and specified as direct adhered applications, LATICRETE has been the installation materials system of choice. When considering all of the benefits provided by trusting an experienced manufacturer with single-source responsibility, it’s difficult to ignore the totality of performance offered by the LATICRETE® product range. For these intricate, often public architecture commission murals, LATICRETE materials and methods can be counted on for durability, ease of use, technical finesse, grout color options and finished beauty. These attributes, provided by LATICRETE products for large-scale interior and exterior mosaic murals, as well as smaller, more artistic projects, have helped return award-winning results and international acclaim on a consistent basis for several different tile artisans.

Now there are architecture commission mosaic murals, and then there’s the majestic, powerful and prodigious masterpiece created by Ethiopian American artist Eyob Mergia for the exterior vertical terraces of Our Savior’s Lutheran Church in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Installed with a premium range of products manufactured by LATICRETE, including a revolutionary waterproofing membrane and tile grout, Mergia’s wondrous mural design was transferred into thousands of iridescent SICIS glass mosaic tiles and set on eight, 23’ x 7’ (7x2m) panels as part of the church’s $12 million renovation directed by Koch Hazard Architects of Sioux Falls.

Mergia’s commanding mural design was based on an incredibly deep concept and one perhaps as delicate as any other imaginable. Charged with designing a series of murals on the creation of the world, Mergia’s Seven Days of Creation dominates the church’s exterior landscape and is expressed in pixelated murals produced in Italy by SICIS.

Mergia’s Seven Days of Creation was installed with incredible expertise in the heat of summer by the Sioux Falls location of Syverson Tile & Stone, a long-time LATICRETE distributor that doubles as a leading commercial tile contractor for the region. The project was managed by Syverson Tile & Stone’s Raven Stammer, and installed by just two members of her team in a five-week span beginning in July of 2010. For Nathan May and Roger Harris, two experienced tile installers for Syverson Tile & Stone, the difficult and highly-visible installation was accomplished using just simple scaffolding, a one-man lift and patience.

In the wake of the Big Sioux River, Our Savior’s Lutheran Church developed this ambitious concept for the exterior component of the renovation to the current building that opened in 1958. For the exterior vertical terraces, the church desired through art to chronicle the divine incantation of our world in seven different murals for each day, including a two-panel design for the final day that spans the face of the church and boldly accepts the first sun of morning.

Mergia’s Seven Days of Creation portrays an awe-inspiring illustration based on the opening passages of Genesis, the Old Testament narrative on the sequential creation of our world. In the submittal process for the architecture commission, Mergia actually presented a series of seven paintings that were selected by the church to become exterior glass mosaic murals. And while the first six days of the Old Testament passages provide plenty of imagery to guide Mergia, his depiction of the seventh day of rest was far more organic and developed through hours of prayer and meditation.

“One of the goals of my art in general, and in particular for the Seven Days of Creation, is to set a higher standard for art in our culture, in Sioux Falls and in the world,” said Mergia. “I wanted to raise the level of art produced around us. As I promised Our Savior’s Lutheran, this is a garden for all four seasons. It was quite a challenge. There was the definite spiritual component, but I also wanted it to be spontaneous. It’s a very deep concept about the creation of human life, and like all great modern art you need to stand back and take it all in. There’s a lot that goes into understanding the concept and the composition, and each time you go to look at it you can see different things and discover new elements.”

Syverson Tile & Stone, Inc, established in 1932, is a third-generation family run distributor, fabricator, installer and supplier of tile, stone, and installation materials. During its 79 years in operation, Syverson Tile & Stone has opened two other locations in Rapid City and Fargo, North Dakota. In addition to materials supply, Syverson Tile & Stone operates as a commercial tile contractor and is a
dedicated LATICRETE shop when it comes to applications of tile and stone. Syverson Tile & Stone is also a supplier of SICIS mosaic tiles, and worked with its North American sales director Julio Velez to transfer Mergia’s paintings into seven different pixelated glass mosaic tile murals produced by SICIS artisans in Italy.

“We’ve been working with Syverson Tile & Stone for years,” said Velez. “They really developed the project, and we had our factory in Italy interpret the artist’s paintings into pixelated murals. We do a lot of handmade, hand-clipped murals, so a pixelated mural is just a different style where we replicate the pattern using full clips. The mural arrives in boxes on mesh-backed, one-square foot sheets labeled to mirror the design. For this project we used a couple of different lines to match the colors as closely as possible. All of the glass mosaics were 3/8” x 3/8” and included our Murano Smalto, Iridium and Waterglass collections.”

For Syverson Tile & Stone, although there were eight panels to install, they actually had 16 different areas to prepare on the one-story high vertical terrace where the murals now rest. Using the double indirect method with LATICRETE materials to transfer the paintings to the mosaic sheets and finally to the concrete masonry unit wall substrate, the collaboration came through with impressive results.

The 16 different CMU areas were first prepped by roller applying two coats of LATICRETE® Hydro Ban™ to provide waterproofing and anti-fracture protection. LATICRETE Hydro Ban is a revolutionary, liquid-applied membrane that does not require the use of fabric in the field, covers or corners. The single-component membrane applies quickly with a paint roller, brush or trowel, and meets or exceeds ANSI A118.10 and A118.12 requirements for both waterproofing and anti-fracture protection up to 1/8” (3mm). Perhaps even more innovative than not requiring fabric even around pipe penetrations or drains on any given project, LATICRETE Hydro Ban can be flood tested in just 2 hours† once the second coat has cured to a lighter olive green color.

For each particular mural depicting the Seven Days of Creation on each 23’ x 7’ panels, Syverson Tile & Stone treated the substrate for the glass mosaic sheets by applying a skim coat of LATICRETE 254 Platinum thin-set. When the skin-coat had cured, the pixelized SICIS mural, all boxed up and numbered accordingly, was set in place by May and Harris, sheet by sheet, beginning with the bottom rows and working up 32 feet (10m) to the very top edge. LATICRETE 254 Platinum thin-set, Stammer’s “favorite setting material,” represents the ultimate one-step, polymer-fortified thin-set adhesive mortar for interior and exterior installations such as the Mergia’s Seven Days of Creation. LATICRETE 254 Platinum has a long open time with unsurpassed adhesion that far exceeds all industry requirements, and the premium thin-set has been specially-formulated for easy workability in even the most trying conditions. With a proven track record on high-profile building projects around the world, LATICRETE 254 Platinum is ideal for challenging installations such as vertical exterior façades with difficult to bond glass mosaic tiles.

Another revolutionary LATICRETE® product was used by Syverson Tile & Stone to grout all eight panels of the vertical terrace murals for Our Savior’s Lutheran Church in Sioux Falls. To grout the mosaic sheets from SICIS consisting of three different tile collections, LATICRETE SpectraLOCK® PRO Grout was used in the color Smoke Grey, offering the high performance, durability and stain resistance of an epoxy grout with extraordinary ease of use. LATICRETE SpectraLOCK PRO Grout applications result in perfect color uniformity and full, attractive tile grout joints that stay that way for the life of the installation. Ideal for interior and exterior installations on both floors and walls, LATICRETE SpectraLOCK PRO Grout never requires additional sealants to keep tile designs looking brand new year after year.

The performance of LATICRETE SpectraLOCK PRO Grout is magnified by how easy it is to use, a feature that once again played a critical role in the installation of the Seven Days of Creation mural. With the given challenges of installing a detailed piece of artwork on a vertical exterior façade, Syverson Tile & Stone also faced trying mid-summer conditions during the five-weeks it took to complete the work. With the heat and humidity in mind, Syverson Tile & Stone opted to use LATICRETE SpectraLOCK PRO Grout in the more residentially-geared mini-units to help stay ahead of the cleanup stages and avoid a more difficult to remove grout haze from the iridescent glass mosaics.

“We just really like working with LATICRETE products,” said Stammer. “We use LATICRETE on every project that we can. We use LATICRETE Hydro Ban on most of our projects whether it’s to prep the substrate for a tiled floor or for waterproofing and anti-fracture protection in wet areas. My installers love using it. In a more general overview, we’ve never had any issues using LATICRETE products on any type of job. And when you have no issues you’ve found an awesome line of products.”

† See Data Sheets 663.0 and 663.5 for complete details.