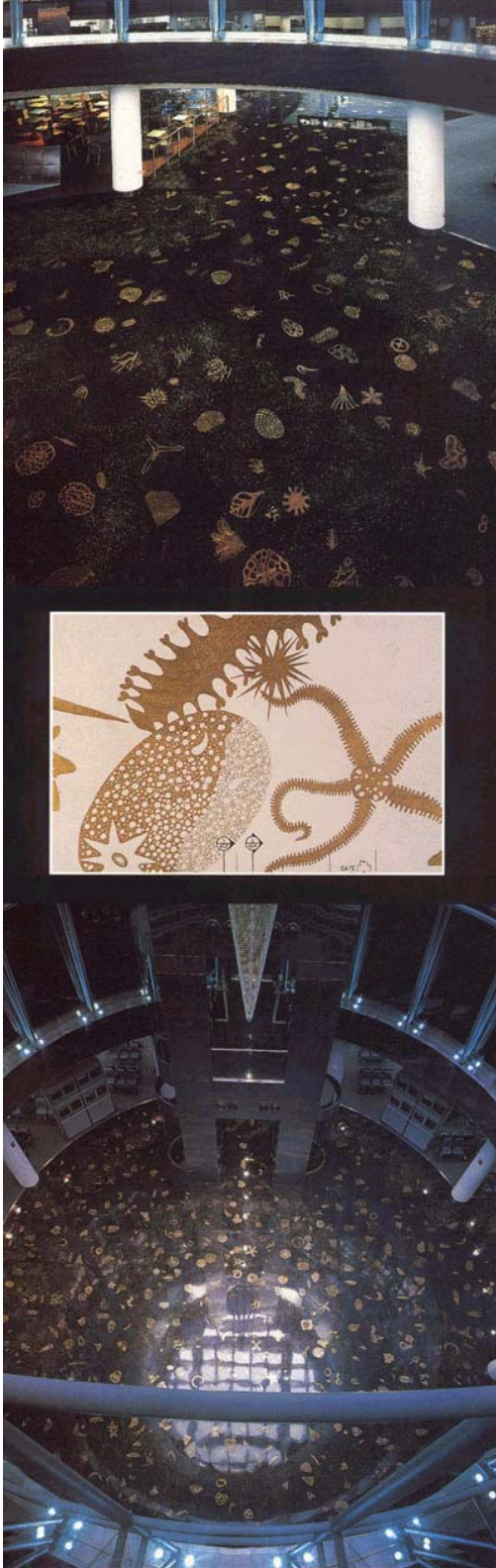




Restoring Public Art at Miami International Airport is a “Walk on the Beach” for UNICCO



Miami International Airport (MIA) is not just any airport. It is a gateway to the world and helps define southern Florida and Miami/Dade county. Both the county and airport management recognize this and, as part of a countywide initiative, try to project Miami’s unique personality through public art. The airport, working with Miami/Dade Art in Public Places (AiPP), commissioned one of the most spectacular, and certainly the largest artwork at MIA, called “A Walk on the Beach” by Michele Oka Doner. It is a three-phase bronze, terrazzo and mother-of-pearl floor in Concourse A that, when completed, will be almost two miles long. The first two phases, completed in 1995, are three-quarters of a mile long and have seen wear from millions of passengers.

UNICCO Service Company began providing facilities services to MIA in January of 2001. UNICCO’s hundreds of employees maintain 10 million square feet of interior and exterior space. In conducting an initial facilities audit, UNICCO site manager, Jack Deem and MIA contract manager, Eli Micrahi determined that “A Walk on the Beach” needed refurbishment. After conferring with AiPP director, Ivan Rodriguez, they decided to undertake the project.

Although the project was part of UNICCO’s normal facilities services contract and did not get special funding, UNICCO did not approach it as just another strip and reseal job. Working closely with MIA management and Bill Iverson, art collection specialist for AiPP who oversaw the project on behalf of the AiPP, which is the curator, UNICCO workers began to experiment with a small test area. They discovered that the bronze inlays presented challenges. First, since the bronze was hand set, it was not absolutely level with the terrazzo matrix; second, the surface density of the bronze and terrazzo were different; and finally, the new high-gloss, low-slip sealant caused the bronze to oxidize and turn green.

UNICCO contacted Johnson Wax, the supplier for UNICCO’s cleaning and sealing products. AiPP provided a bronze sample that Johnson Wax laboratories used to test several of their floor finishes. They found the right combination of waxes for the mother-of-pearl, terrazzo, bronze combination floor. Independently, UNICCO solved the surface buffing issues. Once all of the technical challenges were met, UNICCO was able to tackle the entire three-quarter miles of floor at night when traffic was low.

The project resulted in a refreshed public art piece that showcases Miami/Dade’s unique image, as well as some happy clients. Commented Ivan Rodriguez of AiPP, “UNICCO went the extra mile, which is important because this is a major piece for us and for everyone who uses the airport.”

Eli Micrahi of MIA is equally pleased. “This was a major project that required close management and coordination between MIA and UNICCO. Together, we brought the necessary technical expertise and sensitivity in researching and restoring this important public work of art. Under MIA’s direction, UNICCO brings these same high standards to everything that they do for the airport.”



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