



Zandra Rhodes' terrazzo terraces in Del Mar, California, created in collaboration with David Humphries. Recipient of the 1998 Honor Award by the Terrazzo and Mosaic Association of America

THEATRICAL ARCHITECTURE IN DEL MAR

WHEN El Niño storms battered the Californian coast during the winter of 1997, the oceanfront residence of Salah Hassanein and Zandra Rhodes was extensively damaged. Since then, a massive sea wall, 12 metres high and 30 metres long, has been built and their beachfront terrace has undergone major reconstruction. Zandra Rhodes was so inspired by the heroic effort to save the house that she designed a magnificent terrazzo floor to celebrate the grand new terrace.

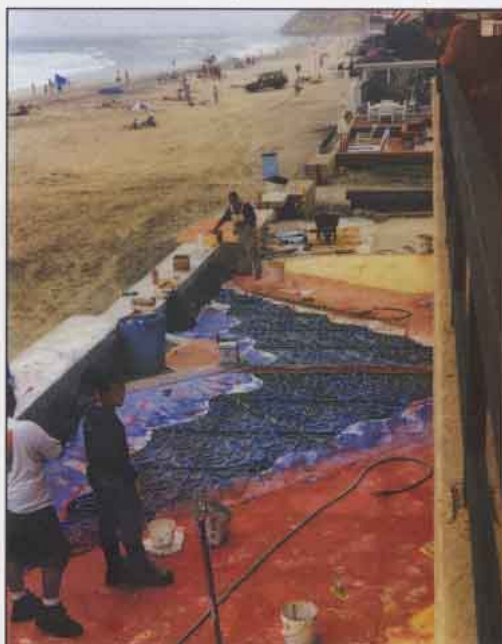
Terrazzo is an ancient flooring material made from a conglomerate of special cements and pigments



Butterfly No. 53, coat designed by Zandra Rhodes in 1971



Photograph of Zandra Rhodes taken in 1982 for use on 'Indian' poster



with a variety of material marble chips. These are then ground down and polished to expose the stones and other decorative elements.

In order to materialise her vision, Zandra Rhodes called upon her old friend, Australia's foremost terrazzo specialist, David Humphries, to collaborate with her on the creation of a 72-square-metre terrace.

With his Public Art Squad company, Humphries has been largely responsible for the revival of interest in terrazzo mosaic, which he has elevated to new heights of artistic expression with his massive "Pollock-like" creations of splashed and dribbled colour on the floors and walls of public buildings, hotels and corporations from Darling Harbour and Hamilton Island to Singapore and New Caledonia.

He first met Rhodes in the mid-'70 in London while he was doing postgraduate studies in arts administration. At the time Rhodes was starting to gain recognition for her innovative and extravagant fashion designs that would eventually make her famous.

Born in Kent in the 1940s, Rhodes was introduced to the fashion world by her mother who had been a fitter in a Paris fashion house and taught at Medway College of Art, where Zandra Rhodes began her studies before attending the Royal College of Art in London, majoring in textile design.

Rhodes' early textile and fashion designs were dismissed as too outrageous by the traditional British manufacturers, so in 1969 she opened her own retail outlet in the fashionable Fulham Road in West London. Since then her own lifestyle has proved to be as dramatic and extrovert as her designs. With her bright green hair (later changed to a spectacular pink and sometimes radiant red), theatrical makeup and art jewellery, Rhodes has stamped her identity on the international world of fashion. She was among the new wave of British designers who put London at the forefront of the international fashion scene in the 1970s. Her designs have always made clear, dramatic statements, bold but feminine, and her garments possess a distinctive style that makes them unmistakably a Rhodes creation.

Her distinguished clientele included the late Diana, Princess of Wales and she continues to design for the royal and the rich and famous around the world. In the US she has a loyal cult following. Over the years she has had many academic and professional honours bestowed

View of beachfront terrazzo terrace under construction at the home of Zandra Rhodes, Del Mar, California

Zandra Rhodes and David Humphries have collaborated on numerous public art projects since the 1980s



upon her, and was made a Commander of the British Empire by the Queen in 1997.

Over the past 20 years, Rhodes and Humphries have collaborated on a number of terrazzo installations, such as the Global Plaza entrance to Harbourside Marketplace at Darling Harbour, Sydney and a series of exquisite limited-edition terrazzo tabletops. The two artists are currently developing designs for the Museum of Fashion and Textiles which is still under construction in London's Bermondsey Street, on the South Bank near Tower Bridge.

The union of the unconventional and idiosyncratic design philosophy of both artists was electric and inspiring. The results of this whimsical collaboration are now permanently set into the expansive terrazzo patio of Rhodes' house in Del Mar, California. The beach environment and the rhythms of the sun, sea and sand are reflected in the design, which bears a flowing blue squiggle pattern of water over a base of sandy yellow and pink, inset with decorative elements of shells, marble mosaic, terrazzo shards and sparkling mirror. The artists Zandra Rhodes and David Humphries have applied the magic of terrazzo in a unique way. Thousands of local beachgoers observed the creation of the terrace over the 10 days of production and responded with a mixture of curiosity and delight at the brilliance of the final result – a triumphant tribute on the beach. Shortly after completing the Del Mar project, Humphries installed a 40-metre-long Celebration Pathway in terrazzo for the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games. In the form of a huge snake, located in front of the Sydney Convention and Exhibition Centres, the pathway incorporates some 25,000 signatures of people who participated in the Olympic journey organised by SOCOG back in 1997–98.

David Humphries overviews the terrazzo terrace under construction



Detail of finished surface of Zandra Rhodes' terrazzo terrace, 1999

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Zandra Rhodes participating in the construction of her terrazzo design

Alexander Burton

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