

A real work of art

Armstrong custom floor medallion colorfully conveys students' career wishes

Little Toby Murray hopped onto a trolley in downtown Memphis, TN with dozens of other students and adult guides. The kids embarked on an up front and personal tour to see the variety of ways Memphians earn a living. At the end of the trip, Toby and the other children were asked, "So, what do you want to be when you grow up?" Armed with their new perspective on occupations, and with crayons and paper in hand, the children drew their career dreams in a special workshop. Their handiwork can be seen in the first floor entrance rotunda of the **Downtown Elementary School**. The theme: Working in Downtown Memphis. The artistic medium: Standard EXCELON® Imperial® Texture vinyl composition tile (VCT).

Professional artist Lurlynn Franklin adapted the drawings into executable art. Her design features a circular mural depicting people dressed for work, using a variety of trade tools ranging from artist palettes to chemist beakers. David Goldwasser, a visual media specialist from Inertia Visual Media, scanned the artwork to create a vector design, turning artwork into architectural concept. From that



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[Between us, ideas become reality.™]

point, Memphis architectural firm Looney, Ricks, Kiss managed the architectural specifications. Imperial® Texture was selected because it is economical, durable, and offers an extensive color selection.

Looney, Ricks, Kiss interior designer Sandy Tinker says. "There are so many colors to work with in the Armstrong Imperial® Texture tile collection that it was easy to find the right colors and truly represent what the children were seeing. The colors work well with each other, creating an integrated look across the medallion that extends to the rest of rotunda and then down the hallways." Over two dozen colors of Imperial® Texture are used. Bright and vivid colors such as Pomegranate Red, Caribbean Blue and Lemon Yellow bring to life a school teacher's sweater, a policeman's uniform and a fireman's gear. "The VCT is very cost effective and durable, so it represents a good value for the school over its lifetime," adds Tinker.



Most importantly for this job, Imperial® Texture is easy to cut and install. The medallion required precision custom cutting, executed by Waterjet Works! of Dallas, TX. "We knew we wouldn't have any problem cutting the floor, so our real excitement came from being involved with such a worthwhile project," says Philip Einsohn, president of Waterjet Works! "As long as the specifications are tight, we can precision cut practically any design specified for Armstrong VCT with no problem. The tile is always

consistent, square, smooth and within specifications, which makes our job easier. When the specs are good, the cutting is precise, and the instructions specific, designers can create the most intricate custom



insets with confidence that the installer will fulfill their vision," concludes Einsohn.

After the floor tiles were cut, every piece was meticulously labeled and face-taped together with low tack tape into 12 in. x 12 in. squares. An installation key map with numbers, letters and arrows was prepared by Waterjet Works! to guide the installers where to place every piece. The plans included instructions where to place each carton of tile so that the contents corresponded to the nearest proximity inset.

The process that began with kids' drawings and ended with the

spectacular custom flooring inset was the direct result of enthusiastic coordination between public and private industry. Participants included the Memphis City Schools in collaboration with the Public Art in Public Schools Program of the

UrbanArt Commission, the Center for Arts

Education, formerly affiliated with the Greater Memphis Arts Council, and Storage USA. Danita Beck, who is project manager for the UrbanArt

Commission, is full of praise for all the parties involved. "It represents an overwhelming team effort. It was so successful, we'd like to do more projects like this in the future."

Students slated to attend the new Downtown Elementary School were on hand for the official unveiling in October 2002. The parties who brought the Downtown Elementary School from concept to reality were overwhelmed to see the reaction from excited students as they recognized their artwork. Today, Toby still breaks into a big smile and points to his handiwork on the floor. Long after he graduates, and even when his children are of school age, the installation should still look terrific.

Quick Facts

The Downtown Elementary School Challenge:

- Transform public art into flooring medallion in high traffic area
- Dozens of colors needed to create multiple custom insets
- Tight tolerances needed for precision custom cutting

Armstrong Solution:

- Imperial® Texture VCT embodied all the physical and aesthetic attributes needed to create the custom medallion
- The product was easy to cut and install
- The floor is durable to last the lifetime of the school

Standard EXCELON® Imperial® Texture Product Specs:

- Sets the standard for VCT durability, value and quality with decades of proven performance
- A comprehensive color palette for design flexibility
- Easy to install; good maintenance

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