

PIECES OF THE PUZZLE: CASINO FLOORING

By Amanda Huggett



MGM Grand in Detroit

Most people don't like to be taken advantage of, but these companies invite you to walk all over them. Well, their products, anyway. This series of articles takes a look at architectural and design features from the ground up, and this month we're staying grounded—literally. We're examining all things flooring, from carpeting to tile, wood and beyond. We talked to architect and design firms to get an overview of the topic and its issues, then introduce you to a couple companies in particular we recommend for your own flooring work.

Any flooring, upon entry, sets the tone for a customer's visit to a casino or resort. Good flooring is striking, while of course remaining durable and functional. Branding can even be incorporated, leaving a lasting impression on the guest.

But like any other feature, it's not without its potential pitfalls. This is the space where people must constantly navigate. There are numerous considerations that go into flooring, including cracking, elevation, deflection and/or moisture issues, not to mention other components like underfloor cabling and access floors.

"Casino flooring is a specific science that professional interior designers have learned to develop successfully," notes Ken Kulas, principal at Cleo Design. "The right product is selected for aesthetic design and durability, as well numerous other qualities that are required for a successful environment."

"Flooring not only can visually 'tune up or tune down' the atmosphere, but the right selection can control or animate the audio environment as well," he continues. "Hard surfaces, being sound reflective, can add life to a somber space while carpet can help reduce unwanted noise."

Good color and pattern selection can also aid in masking future wear and tear.

Jocye Teske, interior design principal at Walsh Bishop Associates Inc., shares that proper flooring selection is an important feature that enhances the aesthetic appeal. "The floor in a casino facility is one of the largest spaces where designers make an impact in color, pattern and image. The use of hard surface flooring, including translucent acrylic panels, with carpet provides the facility with unique design solutions within the casino."

Kulas adds that guests are presented with a great amount of visual competition from the gaming floor, so an attractive connection between the architecture, gaming product and interior must be



ability to deliver product on time without flaws, and available customer service when issues arise."

"When it comes to the final selections, interior designers try to be loyal to the manufacturer's representatives that have serviced them professionally and consistently in the past," Kulas adds. "Suppliers that display a history of product knowledge, experience, design techniques, as well as a strong warranty, build confidence and make a difference in selecting materials."

Though we profile two fabulous firms on the following pages, they are, of course, not the only options. Walsh Bishop has worked with Tai Ping Carpets, Milliken and Durkan. "We've specified 3Form acrylic floor panels and a variety of porcelain and stone tile products," Teske says. "Each manufacturer has provided appropriate product solutions in terms of design, product type and quality, production time and installation support."

But to find out more about ArCon Flooring and Centrex, in particular, just read on. They both get our recommendation.



Sky Ute Casino in Colorado

maintained—a delicate balance for sure.

Of course, there are also logistics to consider. "When installing any flooring product, additional space is required beyond the immediate flooring surface for the stacked product prior to installation," Teske says. "Installation crews need space to work without interruption from the facility staff or public." She also reminds that proper ventilation is a must if working with adhesives that have fumes. However, she says, "There are so many products available today that meet indoor air quality standards that using a noxious product is unacceptable."

Your flooring options are nearly endless. From tile to carpet, to wood or stone and non-traditional mediums, you must first determine your needs. Teske says the selection and type of casino flooring must consider a number of factors, including aesthetic requirements of the design, planned replacement schedule, product performance longevity, floor type, underfloor accessibility frequency, maintenance practices and geographical location.

"We have found that each gaming property has a different approach as to installation," adds Ann Fleming, another principal at Cleo Design. "Casino floors that tend to have a great deal of fluctuation in machine locations have found that a carpet tile product gives them the flexibility and access to any subfloor power/data systems. Others look for the formality, beauty and comfort of a broadloom carpet over a sturdy carpet cushion."

In terms of ease, Teske says that carpet tile is one of the easiest, especially if it needs to be replaced as the product can be removed and replaced in small quantities. Broadloom carpet, porcelain tile or wood typically require more time and space.

So, you know what you need, but how do you choose your vendor? Teske advises that, "Besides the aesthetic compatibility of the flooring product to the design expectations, the flooring vendor must exhibit longevity in the industry both as a company and for product quality,



St. Croix Casino & Hotel in Danbury, Wis.

ArCon Flooring

ArCon Flooring didn't start out in the casino industry, but they certainly are excelling in it now. You may have heard about one of their most recent projects, The Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas, with its 300,000 square feet of specialty custom terrazzo and MMA pool decking.

ArCon began in 1992 in Reno, primarily working small specialty venues such as wineries and retail boutiques. Their name quickly spread, and their work was getting noticed by renowned architects and designers. ArCon was asked to come to Las Vegas and work on the Forum Shops at Caesars Palace, where they developed a flooring system that was the first of its kind. They've been in the casino and destination resort market ever since, now boasting over 50 such projects in their portfolio.



Photo courtesy of Creative Edge Mastershop

The Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas

And they understand all the components that go into flooring jobs. "Casino floors have to be unique and visually pleasing, but they also have to be extremely durable and easy to maintain as there is such a high volume of pedestrian traffic," notes president Mark Balogh. "Finding the right materials that set a casino floor apart from the competition, maintaining design integrity and being practical and cost effective are key."

Their work goes beyond just carpet or tile. ArCon plays with different materials to produce endless flooring possibilities, including using seashells, sand, glass and other aggregates. This artistic focus, combined with the extra versatility of adding geometric inlays, signage, logos, graphics and border treatments, allows ArCon to create an indelible impression for any project.

"Installations of casino floors can be very difficult," states executive vice president Carl Postma. "Obviously, the fast track schedules associated with any gaming facility presents challenges. To accommodate the fast paced schedule, there are a variety of trades working in all areas that need to be on the floor while we are installing."

This makes the need for a good partnership so important. And ArCon definitely is a believer in that. Alone, they're a full service, design-build contractor and installer of architectural flooring. But they become even stronger through their solid relationships with owners, general contractors, architects and designers. They know the importance of staying on top of trends and technology.

By making it a high priority to be involved in a project during the design phase, ArCon's preconstruction and project management team work closely with the general contractor and designers to properly plan and execute around all other trade schedules to stop any delays and remain cost effective. "Also, we combine creative installation processes with advance compounds and drying agents to meet the installation timeframes," Balogh says. "Regarding the property needs, flexible membranes are installed to compensate for cracking, deflection and waterproofing underbeds. There are structural cementitious products that are resin-based and have some chemical resistance, UV stability and are rated for both vehicular and pedestrian traffic."

Postma explains that ArCon has spent a vast amount of time and effort in research and development to produce an extensive product line that can transcend many different types of projects. "Our latest product that we are very excited about is ARTEGO TZ," he shares. "ArCon used this product to install the one-of-kind valet and *porte cochere* at The Cosmopolitan. It is an exterior terrazzo that is extremely durable and is rated for vehicular traffic. Custom aggregates and colors make this medium a beautiful alternative to other products on the market, and it is very easy to maintain."

More of ArCon's impressive work, including interior and exterior flooring landscapes, can be seen at Bellagio, Wynn Las Vegas and Fashion Show Mall.



Photo courtesy of Creative Edge Mastershop

The Cosmopolitan

ArCon Flooring at a Glance

Company headquarters: Las Vegas

Number of employees: 110

Years in business: 19

Types of products offered: Specialty architectural flooring

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Website: www.arconflooring.com

Centrex Inc.



Win Star World Casino in Thackerville, Okla.

Centrex is a company in the flooring business that has decades of proven experience. Boasting 36 years of providing quality flooring and installation services worldwide, they have 38 quality craftsmen at hand.

Kevin Laub, president of Centrex, says that service and quality are key to a successful and timely completion of any flooring project. Not to mention experience and professionalism. He adds that: "Working as a team with the management of the property is key. We align ourselves with our clients as partners and work with them to achieve their goals and objectives."

He attests that flooring is one of the first items guests see when they walk through the doors of a property. And details such as seaming and pattern matching are important to ensure that first impression is a good one.

Centrex specializes in the installation of woven Axminster carpeting (a type of high-quality carpet) that has a lot of pattern and design. This makes seaming and pattern matching all the more important. The company can furnish and install not just carpet, but also wood and ceramic. Beyond that, they also provide field measurements, CAD drawings, project management, warehousing

and storage, and consulting services.

"We can provide a turnkey project," Laub says. "We can provide project management, furnish material and install, warehouse, design the Axminster carpet, and furnish pad. We can take a project from the start and walk away with a finished project."

Planning a big flooring project? No job is too big or complicated for these guys. "The more challenging the project, the better," Laub says.

Serving the hotel, casino and convention center markets worldwide, Centrex already has some big-name installations on their track record. At Winstar World Casino in Thackerville, Okla., they installed 48,500 yards of woven Axminster carpet over a double stick pad. Other projects have included Sycuan Resort & Casino, Hilton Americas in Houston and Terranea Resort & Spa.

Centrex is also a national agent for Healthier Choice carpet cushion, a company dedicated to environmentally responsible products and practices. "Centrex feels that it's important to support the 'green movement' by using products like Healthier Choice and green label adhesives that are better for the environment, for our installers and for your project," Laub states.



Centrex At a Glance

Company headquarters: Dallas, Texas

Number of employees: 41

Years in business: 36

Types of products offered: Woven Axminster carpeting, hard surface, wood flooring, resilient flooring

For sales info: Kevin Laub, kevin@centreflooring.com, (817)-337-0273 or (801)-560-1560

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(new website coming soon)