

New materials ancient ideals

A floor design by artist Barbara Astman has been chosen to grace the entrance of the Olympic Speedskating Oval.

Ms. Astman submitted a design for the flooring of the entrance way that is at once beautiful and practical. She was at the U of C last week to discuss the design with Olympic Oval architect Barry Graham, local installer Craftsman Floors (Alberta), and John Tewnion, co-ordinator of Olympic projects for the U of C.

Ms. Astman says her design attempts to capture the sense of the undaunted and the venturesome, a feeling of humans embarking on a once in a lifetime voyage.

"In light of both what this structure is and what it represents, it demands a bold and heroic entrance," she says.

The floor design will be made from a new tile material called marmoleum. It is an exceptionally durable material that resists cigarette burns, retards fire, destroys bacteria and is easy to maintain, Ms. Astman says. It is completely natural, composed of cork, linseed oil, wood flour, pine resin and jute. The tile is also slip resistant and absorbs sound.

Since the design will represent a mosaic, the ability of marmoleum to be permanently bonded to itself is also important. Through the use of heat welding, different colors of marmoleum will be brought together to form Ms. Astman's design.

A black and white checkerboard pattern throughout the floor refers to the past – the historical aspect of the Olympics. An advancing perspective of stairs acts as a directional flow into the Oval and creates an illusion of stepping up.

"The intent of the floor I have designed is to enhance the excitement, splendour and spirit of the 1988 Calgary Olympic Winter Games. The floor is meant to compliment and reflect the impressive design of the Olympic Oval itself, and to enhance the public's enjoyment and appreciation of both the space they occupy and the historic events they are about to witness."

Ms. Astman has an associate degree from the Rochester Institute of Technology in Rochester, New York, and is a graduate of the Ontario College of Art in Toronto. She is currently on the faculty of the Ontario College of Art and York University, and also works with the public art commission.

The materials for the floor will arrive in late June. Installation is scheduled for completion by August 15.



Barbara Astman