

# ARCHITECT'S PREFERENCE

## Architect's Project Review

*Madi van Wyk*

### University of Pretoria: Engineering 3

The Built Environment & Information Technology Faculty of the University of Pretoria is a leading source of locally relevant and internationally competitive programmes at both undergraduate and graduate levels and, as part of the School of Engineering, it embarked on a growth strategy over the last decade in view of the shortage of engineering skills in South Africa.

This has resulted in a significant increase in engineering student numbers, and culminated in the need for additional teaching and research facilities for the School of Engineering. In turn,

this was supported by the University and the Department of Higher Education & Training, resulting in the construction of the new Engineering 3 Building on the Hatfield campus which comprises electrical and electronic laboratories and offices.

This project was undertaken by the award-winning Pretoria practice, ARC Architects, and entrusted to director Madi van Wyk who was delighted to be responsible for all the architectural needs for her Alma Mater on this project!

She chose to collaborate with Belgotex Commercial (Nexus) on the design of the carpets, some of which were Custom-X products eventually manufactured specifically for this project.

For the offices, laboratories and drawing hall, Belgotex Commercial's Dynamic Tufted Multi-scroll Loop Pile (UP002) was supplied, with inlays of Times Square, together with Tufted Level Loop Pile (UP black) 500x500 carpet tiles. The tiles were also used in the Musaion Library.

"Dynamic is a custom-made stripey tile chosen for the heavy-traffic areas to hide marks and wear on the carpets. It also has a low electrostatic rating that complemented a building of this nature which entails working with a high volume of electrical and electronic equipment," says Madi.

"In the boardrooms we used Belgotex

Commercial's Westminster heavy commercial cut-pile carpet – colour *Umbria* – which provides a plush softness underfoot with excellent sound-absorption properties," she says.

Westminster is manufactured from 100% Stainproof Solution Dyed Nylon and was provided in 4m widths to cover the entire boardroom.

"For the existing Musaion library Belgotex Commercial's Cube Square Tufted Multi-Scroll Loop Pile in *Sudoku* with inlays of Bitumen Black Times Square Tufted Level Loop Pile 500x500 carpet tiles were to have been used but, due to a tenant request for a specification change on the carpet, the tiles that were retained for the existing library were used in the main building, and we had to source new carpets in a very short time."

"We therefore matched the Cube Square Sudoku with the Dynamic range as the main field tile. The Cube Square was still a great solution as it offers superior stain resistance and could handle the high-traffic areas of the Music Library," says Madi.

"In terms of the inlays, the black was a custom-made run, which meant we had

to order a minimum of 500m<sup>2</sup>, so we then adjusted the design to use the inlays only in the visible walkways as the rest had shelving that would not be moved, which helped us stick to the bare minimum of tiles that we still had left."

The initial design brief included a 'green garden space' under staircases as smaller focal areas around the building but, as many projects have their challenges, in this instance drainage was an issue for the plants, and an alternative solution had to be conceived.

Madi decided on specifying Duraturf artificial grass for these areas as a solution, which resulted in not only being aesthetically pleasing to the eye but the students actually use these spot pause areas for studying and socialising. A win-win in the end!

### Favourite Products

Amongst the vast sales programme offered by Belgotex Floorcoverings, the products that Madi favours most are *Duraturf*, which is constructed of durable, tufted polyethylene yarn, and ideal for creating low-maintenance (only needs to be brushed) lawn effects in deep shade areas.

*Duraturf* is non-slip and allergen-free with high UV resistance and here Madi says her favourite is the lifelike Country Club range in Autumn Green with a 25mm pile height.

"This is ideal for use at A-grade offices on open balconies, because it doesn't need sun to grow, needs no irrigation, is non-slip, allows for movement (as opposed to tiles), has a low maintenance requirement (people might eat on these balconies) and is provided with a 6-year warranty," she says.

*SilverCare* is another firm favourite. It is a long-lasting protection system, with a base



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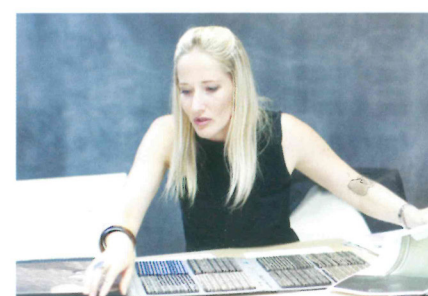
of silver ions that penetrates deeply into carpets, permanently inhibiting bacteria and reducing carpet odours, as well as sterilising over 650 types of bacteria. "It is also non-toxic and hypoallergenic, making it ideal for domestic use as well as carpets in doctors' consulting rooms," she says.

"They also have a very exciting *Seneca* range of vinyl tiles in a variety of wood designs of which *African Teak* is my favourite," says Madi. "This type of flooring is not as cold as tiles, not as noisy as wooden flooring and has a waterproof surface that can even be used in ablutions and kitchens. The NovaClic system is a glueless installation system that is easy to install and therefore less detrimental to the environment."

### Why Belgotex?

"Perhaps the main attraction to Belgotex is their innovative products, but they also provide really great customer service levels. They are always there and reliable in tender phases when you need them most; they have a great willingness to assist and that's what we need in a supplier. Belgotex also displays a high level of honesty and integrity, and takes accountability for any project."

"I like how they display their product information, and they mark the tickboxes when it comes to installation methods explained, maintenance of product going forward and warranties they offer," concluded Madi. ■



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