

The river art is flush with the surrounding polished gray concrete for a floor that is both safe and fascinating for shoppers of all ages. Photo: Robin Nelson/Blackstar.

Harris priming the sculpted areas prior to dyeing and placement of epoxy.



Concrete Project of the Year

Whole Foods Market, Duluth, Ga.

Whole Foods Market grocery stores have for many years been a leader in the use of decorative concrete floors. For their new store in Duluth, Georgia, they took a leap forward, partnering with an all-star team (see box), to gain Concrete Construction's recognition as the 2006 Decorative Concrete Project of the Year.

"We were asked to design and install a stylized map of the Chattahoochee River," said Mike Miller, "which is less than a quarter mile from the new Duluth store and is a rich Georgia natural resource." The total project was some 3500 square feet of sensory concrete art depicting highlights and contours of the river, spread across 40,000 square feet of ground and polished natural gray concrete. The polishing exposed a beautiful Georgia crushed granite aggregate.

Conceived on paper and computer, the project team laid it out, then needle-scaled, scarified, ground, and cut by eye and by hand, with no templates or mechanical aids. The sculpting provided significant relief to the concrete which they then dyed. The artists then filled the carved out areas with clear epoxy casting resin which had been specially chosen to develop an irregular "orange-peel" texture, suggesting the movement of water in the river. The epoxy was also finished with subtle hammering, for slip resistance.

"The sense of visual interest and space-appropriate-scale is exceptional," said Miller "The blue and green art piece is the perfect foil for the gray concrete and vice versa." Whole Foods was so pleased with the final result that just prior to the store's open-

ing they developed a special brochure about the decorative work and brought Miller and partner Kelley Burnham back for press conferences with the media. "The GC joked with us that 'It's all about the river,'" said Miller. "In other words, they're really into it!"

Decorative Team of the Year

Conceived by Whole Foods regional president Scott Allshouse with preliminary development by Whole Foods in-house construction manager Mike Farish and interior designers Danielle Pruitt and Julie Schamburger of Studio Image.

Ultimate project design by Michael Miller, Kelley Burnham, and Martin Webb of the concretist, Benicia, Calif., with additional aesthetic and technical consultation by Bob Harris, The Decorative Concrete Institute, Douglasville, Ga.

Research was done in conjunction with Sally Bethea, The Upper Chattahoochee Riverkeeper, and author and historian, Billy Winn.

Additional onsite design development by Bob Harris (DCI) and by Mike Speech, Tropical Toppings, Winston, Ga.

The concrete floor was placed by Regal Services, Marietta, Ga., the floor was ground and polished by Questmark, Atlanta, and the general contractor was Choate Construction, Atlanta.

Sensory concrete art installation by Tropical Toppings and The Decorative Concrete Institute with art direction and assistance by Miller and Burnham.