

The Arts

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A Rush Job Has Commuters Walking on Art

By RANDY KENNEDY

If you are planning to cover 27,000 square feet of the floor of Grand Central Terminal with hallucinogenic blue-rose-patterned carpet that is not just carpet but also a major work by a renowned artist, here are a few things the Metropolitan Transportation Authority would like you to know.

First, no power tools allowed inside the terminal. And nothing flammable. And no toxic glue. And if you plan to use glue, you had better make sure that not one drop touches the landmarked Tennessee marble. And if a drunken woman stumbles in at 5 a.m. and looks as if she is going to throw up on your carpet, she's your problem.

Finally, if anybody trips on this carpet — sorry, artwork — it's also your problem. Or your lawyer's.

"When I first got the call, I thought, 'Either these people are crazy or they are dead serious — nothing in between,'" said Peter Jaquay, the president of Popular Carpets, a Midtown company.

In its 25 years as a member of the Better Business Bureau, Mr. Jaquay said, the company has never had a complaint. "And that doesn't mean we had one 26 years ago, either," he added. "We've never had one."

So when the Art Production Fund, a nonprofit organization, called and said it wanted him to take a weekend rush job to carpet all of Vanderbilt Hall to fulfill the artistic vision of Rudolf Stingel, an Italian-born Conceptual artist, Mr. Jaquay's years of carpet-laying experience urged him to say no.

"I came very close to just hanging up the

phone," he said. "We get nuts like that all the time."

But the company was persuaded, and last Thursday night it moved in 13 workers, including Mr. Jaquay, who slept in shifts and worked around the clock to carpet the hall while observing all of the terminal's strict work rules. They had to protect the marble by first laying plastic kitchen-floor covering. Atop this they put quarter-inch plywood, and finally atop this they glued the carpet. ("God forbid we should scratch the marble," Mr. Jaquay said, adding, "This

glue is so safe that hummingbirds have been known to make their nests in this glue.")

He said that late-night commuters would sometimes stop and say: "Hey, I heard there was supposed to be some art here. Where is it?"

"And I'd say, 'You're walking on it, ma'am.'" (Doreen Remen, a founder of the Art Production Fund, said she intercepted the pale drunken woman at 5 on Sunday morning just before she wandered onto the artwork. "I asked her if she'd mind throw-

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Vanderbilt Hall at Grand Central Terminal has a new artwork in the form of carpeting.