



Sara Krulwich/The New York Times

The artist Rudolf Stingel's carpet remains at Grand Central through July 29.

A Rush Job Has Commuters Walking on Art

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ing up somewhere else," she said.)

By yesterday morning, as tens of thousands of commuters returned to the terminal, the carpetlayers, like nylon-carpet Christos, had conquered all but a small portion at the western end of the room.

Mr. Jaquay said that the work had gone pretty smoothly, considering, and that he had lost his temper only a few times — like one morning when the workers were racing a deadline to finish a swath of carpet before Grand Central's doors were reopened, and Ms. Remen kept asking him nervously whether he would finish in time.

"By that point, I was sick and tired of telling her everything was going to be O.K.," he said. "So I just said, 'No Doreen, we're not going to make it.' But we did."

All this seemed a distant memory yesterday, as the two surveyed the vast carpet and watched as commuters suddenly looked down at their feet, startled, as if they had accidentally walked into a casino. (The carpet, which will be officially unveiled on Thursday, will remain in Vanderbilt Hall, to be walked on and sat on, through July 29.)

David Poli, the sales manager for Popular Carpets, looked at the work yesterday morning and declared, "This is like a new chapter in the carpet-installing handbook."

Carol Neuman and her daughter, Lauren, from Briarcliff Manor, N.Y., paused to look at the carpet on their way to an appointment. Ms. Neuman, who has begun to paint still lifes, was asked what she thought about the possible future of the carpet she was walking on: that it might later be cut into pieces that would be sold for thousands of dollars to art collectors.

She paused and smiled.

"Uh-huh," she said finally. "It's going to take me a little time to digest that one."

Mr. Jaquay has already digested it.

"I took a piece about like this home with me," he said, showing the size of the swatch with his hands. "Nobody knows about it."