

INTERIOR DESIGN[®]

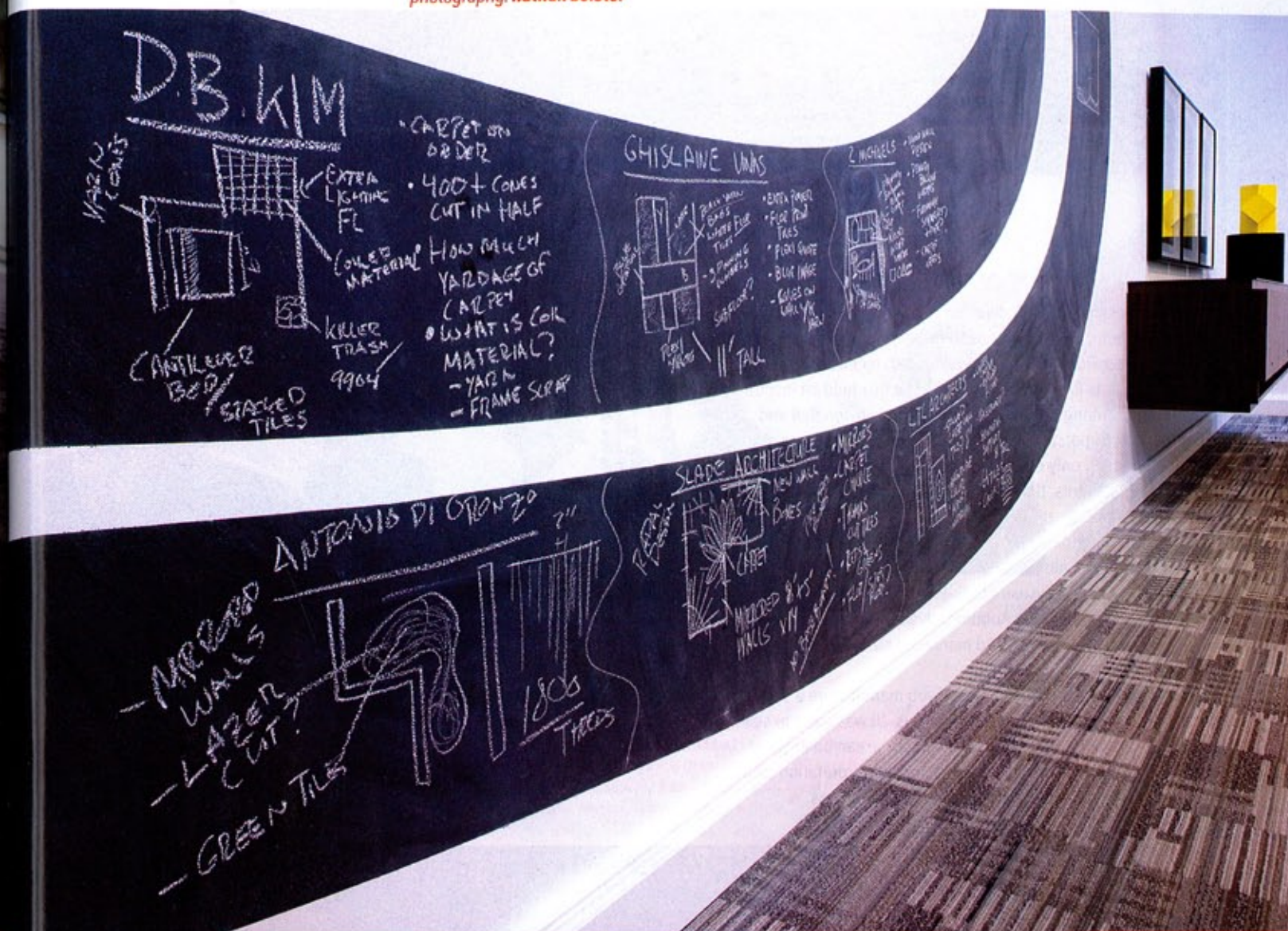
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room with a view



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the rules are...



there are no rules

Editor in chief Cindy Allen invited designers to rethink carpet—and inaugurate InterfaceFlor's Awarehouse in LaGrange, Georgia

The square footage, the budget, the structural column stuck squarely in the center of a space. Interior design, it's often said, is a creative endeavor in which limitations give rise to possibilities. So what happens when a carpet manufacturer, InterfaceFlor, hands a group of disciplined professionals a challenge with no restrictions? Leave it to *Interior Design* editor in chief Cindy Allen to raise that particular question. After flying down to LaGrange, Georgia, to tour InterfaceFlor's nearly completed Awarehouse, a former warehouse that now provides clients such as Gensler and Boeing with carpet-related ideas, Allen took one look at the freshly installed drywall alcoves intended to contain traditional vignettes—and declared these spaces of 200 or 300 square feet the perfect repositories for experimental installations. ➤

Top left: A corridor carpeted with Superflor tile runs past the installations of the inaugural InterfaceFlor/Interior Design Idea Lab.
Top right: The InterfaceFlor marketing team sketched basic designs in chalk on blackboard paint in the conference room.
Bottom: Slade Architecture's lounge incorporates multilevel plywood platforms covered by 11 shades of carpet tile.



Company president John Wells gave an immediate thumbs-up. A few months later, the teams chosen by Allen to participate in the very first InterfaceFlor/Interior Design Idea Lab received a package that seemed a little like Christmas in July. The box held an inspirational carpet tile along with its constituent parts: nylon fluff and yarn, unbacked carpet, and cloth backing. An accompanying note from Allen provided only one directive, "Design anything."

For some participants, thinking outside the box was a natural. For others, the lack of parameters seemed ironically confining. The designers were determined, however. In the words of Joyce Lavalle, then InterfaceFlor's senior vice president for marketing, "Failure just wasn't an option. Everyone went to the mat." One crack contractor, 15 architecture students from Auburn University, and the manufacturer's own maintenance crew and marketing staff participated in the three-day construction process.

"You can easily become insular when you manufacture a single product," creative director Russ Ramage says. "It was great to see how outside designers were inspired by us, so we can be inspired by them." As each designer's interpretation and reinterpretation came to fruition, everyone involved discovered new awareness.



Center: Photographs printed on the entry's vinyl wall covering introduce visitors to Interior Design editor in chief Cindy Allen and participants James and Hayes Slade of Slade Architecture, Larry Weinberg of Weinberg Modern with Joan and Jayne Michaels of 2Michaels, Jaime Viñas of Viñas Design with Ghislaine Viñas of Ghislaine Viñas Interior Design, Antonio Di Oronzo of Blurarch Architecture + Interiors + Urban Planning, David Lewis and Perla Dis Kristinsdottir of Lewis.Tsurumaki Lewis, and independent designer D.B. Kim. **Bottom left:** The marketing department has taken up residence at custom workstations. **Bottom right:** Worn Again recycled carpet tiles flow through the reception area, except where Techtonics tiles anchor a group of vintage chairs in chrome and vinyl, flanking tables by Ward Bennett.



Materials: Carpet tiles, mirror, plywood.

concept In Spanish, *flor* means *flower*. Which might or might not be the first thing you notice when confronted by this op art lounge of carpet-covered blocks by husband-wife architects James and Hayes Slade. "We came up with modules that would be somewhere between furniture and landscape," James Slade says. Computer renderings determined the dimensions and configuration of the laser-cut plywood forms. Reproducing their digitized color scheme in carpet tiles required not letting the black vinyl backing show at every seam; tiles had to be scored on the diagonal before being fitted together. Mirrored walls make the flower quadrants expand to 360 degrees. "Doing an installation for a manufacturer gave the project an incredible immediacy," Hayes Slade reports. "If we needed to change colors and get new tiles, it was instantaneous." For all the complexity, the Slades' installation was the first completed—going to show that, even with an experimental project, the proof is in the planning. ➤

