

# Amherst Community Centre

## Artworks by **VJzoo**

Completed March 2009



**Client:** City of Gosnells

**Project Manager:** Paul McAllister

**Artists:** VJzoo  
(Jasper Cook and Kat Black)

**Architects:** Holton Connor

**Builders:** Gavin Construction

**Art Consultant:** Pip Sawyer

**Flooring Contractors:** Jupps

**Flooring Consultants:** Forbo

**Flooring Cutters:** Jetcut

**Wallprint Contractors:**  
Sign-a-rama Osborne Park



### Amherst Community Centre Public Art Project - VJzoo

We (VJzoo - Jasper Cook and Kat Black) were commissioned by the City of Gosnells to design artwork for the new Amherst Village Community Centre under a Percent for Art scheme.

The project took approximately nine months, and was completed in March 2009.

The Centre will be used by a wide range of community groups and will incorporate a Knowledge Centre (aka Library), a Digital Centre, Meeting Rooms and a Hall. Our work is located in the foyer, and reflects potential users of the new facility.

The Centre was designed by Holton Connor Architects and built by Gavin Construction. It will be a wonderful resource for the local community when completed - we're especially impressed with the Digital suites that will be available for the people of Amherst to use.



## The Design Process

The first step in our process was to video in the area, and also to look through the City's large collection of video of local community activities - over a hundred hours of footage to hunt through.

We digitised a great deal of this footage and converted it to vectors.

Then, the long hunt for frames to use. At 25 frames per second, and with many hours of footage in the digitised 'shortlist', this involved slowly hunting through hundreds of thousands of potential images.

Here are some examples of 'before' (screenshots from the low-quality video) and 'after' (the same image converted to vectors).



Intergenerational Art project - we loved the 'Banksy' look of this one.



from a dance performance at the Don Russell Performing Arts Centre.



Aside from abstracting the image and giving it the aesthetic look we wanted, once vectorised an image can be enlarged to any size without loss of quality. This is because it is based on mathematical formulae rather than a collection of pixels. Any bitmap-based image file, such as jpegs, psds and tiffs are based on dots and thus lose quality when enlarged.



## Production Considerations

As the original specifications in the EOI had specified that the project was for a design for a Marmoleum floor, we needed to adapt our designs based on the limitations of physically cutting and laying the product.

In consultation with stakeholders and technical consultants such as Jen Lote from Forbo Australia, we investigated the degree of detail that would be possible. Unfortunately there weren't many detailed Marmoleum floor designs in Perth, and the flooring contractors could not give any examples of similar projects cut by hand. Another option was to have the designs cut by the Forbo factory in Europe, but this was ruled out due to time constraints.



The option of having the designs cut locally by water-jet was investigated. The local company that does this process, Jetcut, could not provide any examples of projects they'd done using Marmoleum.

As Marmoleum is an all-natural product and can be damaged by water, we needed to have a test cut done to see if the result would be satisfactory, and if the simplified designs once cut would be possible to lay by the flooring contractor.

The test cut showed that there would be some buckling of the product due to the water, so this sample cut was provided to the contractors to take into consideration when requesting a variation for the extra labour that would be involved in laying the product in this state.



The jetcutting process is very precise and would be great for other materials that are not as affected by water, but in this case it was far from ideal - but as it was the only locally available option the choice was Jetcut or no floor designs.

At this point, with time running out, we needed a Plan B in case the cutting and/or laying of our designs in the Marmoleum floor proved to be impossible.

We researched options for producing the designs as wall-prints. Vinyl prints, coated with an anti-graffiti surface, proved to be a viable and attractive option. These could be far more detailed than designs to be cut from Marmoleum (see right).



## Developing the Final Design

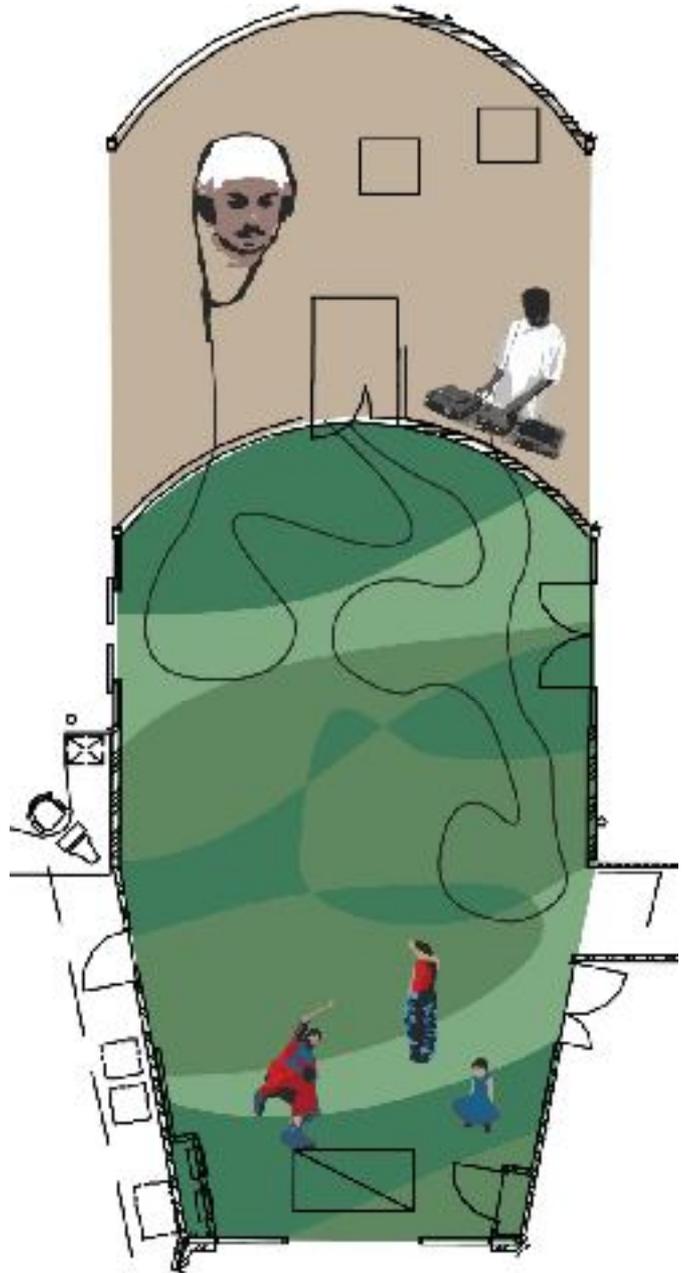
Once we had about 20 vectorised images we were happy with, the next stage was to do an overall design incorporating several of them. As this was during the test-cut process, we did options for Floor Only, Wall Only, and also for designs incorporating both Floor and Wall.

We chose a green base for the rest of the floor based on the idea of a village green, or a playground - grassy areas where people meet. Rather than just have a solid base of one colour, we designed a series of overlapping arcs to match the vector designs of the feature panels.

This went through various adaptations in consultation with the Art Panel formed by the City of Gosnells for the project.

In order to give the Panel a better idea of how the designs would look in context, we created a 3D digital model using Google Sketch-Up.

With this 3D model, the designs could be viewed in a simplified model of the building from any angle, and in meetings we could do virtual walk-throughs to view the designs on the floor and wall. This was especially helpful in deciding the size and positioning of each design.



## Installation

Once the final design was agreed, then there was the wait until the site had progressed to the point that the artworks could be installed.



We visited the site during the building works, and it became clear that the "final" design would need to be adapted due to both logistical and aesthetic issues when the building was nearing completion and the installation of the artworks could commence.

For example, on one of our early site visits, there were overhanging ducts and such, and the architects advised us that a bulkhead was going to be installed. We modified our design to suit the bulkhead's position.



The design originally had a trail of "cables" through the floor. These were removed from the design as they would have added considerably to the cost, and they weren't particularly necessary in the overall design.

We had originally been told that as the Marmoleum floor is easily damaged by equipment such as Genie Lifts, it would only be laid when all other work on the building was completed. Unfortunately there were some delays with other aspects of the building - for example the provisioning of electricity and sewage - so it turned out that when the floor was scheduled to be laid there was still quite a bit of site work to be done.

We therefore had to make sure that once the Marmoleum floor was laid, no heavy equipment was brought through the foyer. As the foyer is the only access to much of the building, this was a bit of an issue. The floorlaying went ahead as per the original schedule though, so there was nothing that could be done about this.



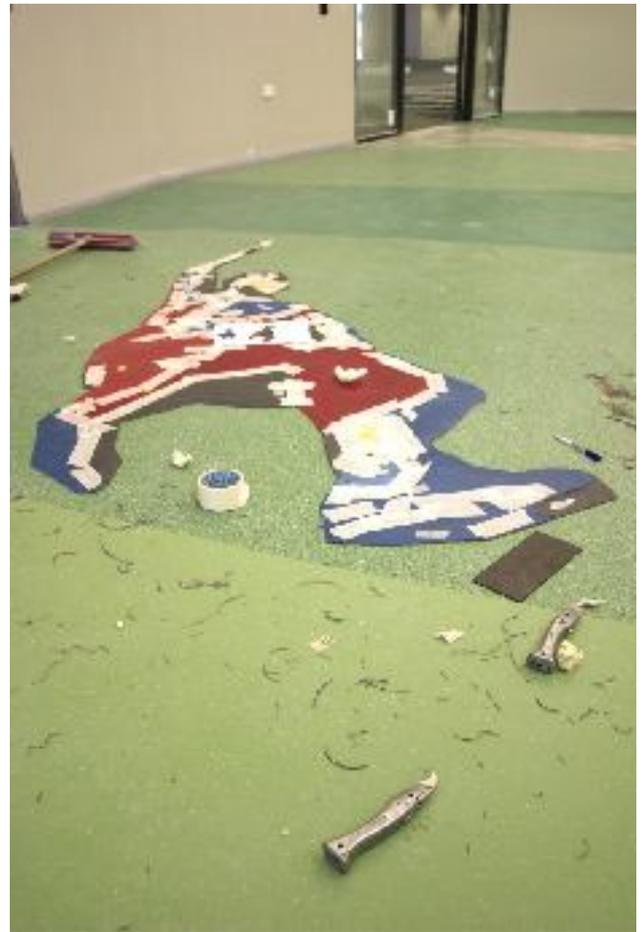
As expected from the test cut, the pieces of the floor designs were bowed and needed considerable trimming by hand.

Luckily for us, Jupps had employed one of only a handful of contractors in Perth who has had considerable experience in laying Marmoleum in Europe.

He commented that if the cut had been done at the Forbo factory in Europe, it would have been much easier to lay and a more accurate fit, as the pieces are reassembled in the factory and provided as one taped block.

Here is one of our designs which he had tidied up by hand and assembled in the way that a factory-cut design would have been provided.

Securing the services of such an experienced professional was a great asset to us - we wish we'd been able to deal with him six months earlier. He suggested that having Jetcut cut a template out of some other material would have been preferable, as he could have cut the designs by hand from the template, and thus kept the product dry.



Reassembled jigsaw of pieces of Marmoleum, trimmed by hand for a more accurate fit.

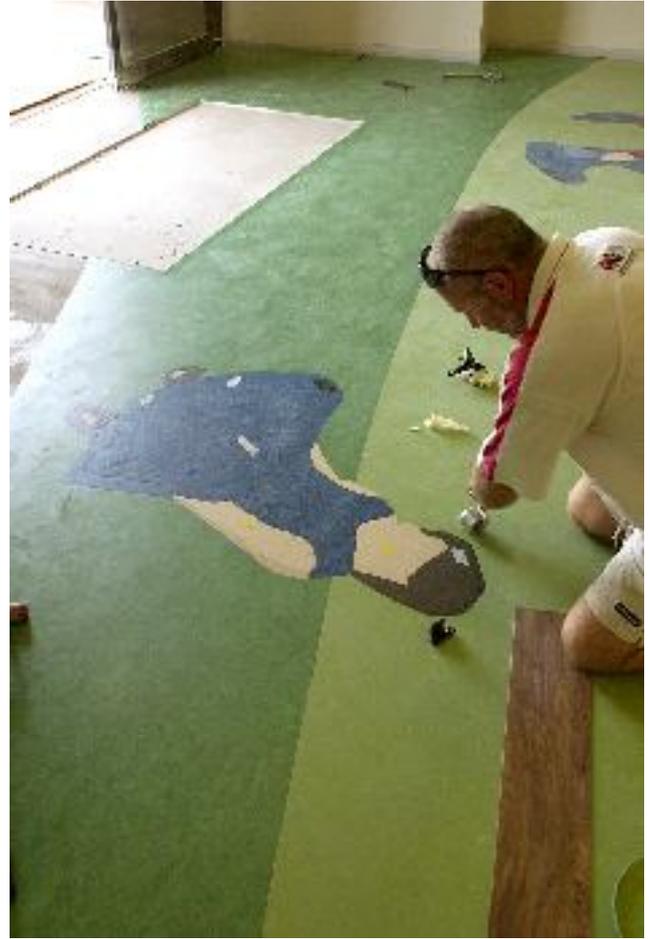


In future, that option (or ideally having designs cut at the Forbo factory in Europe) would be our recommendation - assuming you can secure the services of a layer skilled enough to cut such complex pieces by hand with a template.

Finding the right person to lay the floor right from the design stage really is essential.

The main bulk of the floor - the green intersecting arcs - were cut by hand and glued down before the detailed figures were placed.

This meant that we could move them around and decide on the final placement before they were laid, which was very helpful for some final tweaks to the positioning of the figures to suit the feel of the space.



Once the figures were laid, the contractor pressed them flat with a small roller, taking great care to do a neat job. He welded the joins in the large green arcs after laying the figures. The figures are not welded, just glued in position - hence the need for an accurate fit.

We were very happy with the end result, and so grateful that Jupps found such a skilled contractor who paid so much attention to detail.



Once the floor was done and the painters had made final touch-ups to the walls of the foyer, we called in the wallprint contractors.

As they couldn't use the Genie lift because of the risk of damaging the Marmoleum floor, they needed to use old-skool scaffolding.



As with the flooring contractors, we were lucky to get excellent sign-contractors.

We were given the opportunity to find our own contractors for the wall prints.

After emailing over twenty companies to explain the project and ask for a quote, I realised most companies aren't too interested in the extra hassle of an "art" project.

Sign-a-rama Osborne Park rang us back and discussed the options for the prints, explaining different products and their suitability, different methods of putting on the "cables" and such.

In addition to being by far the most helpful of the companies contacted, they were also the least expensive!

We would be very happy to work with them again and also recommend them to other artists.

The final result was excellent, as was their suggestion to use a vinyl product to match the Marmoleum finish.





## Conclusion

While there were challenges along the way, in particular through the project specifying a material that has been little used in Perth to date, we are very pleased with the outcome.

We feel that our design is a good reflection of potential users of the new facility, and we look forward very much to being able to demonstrate our vectorisation technique to local residents in the Digital Suite contained in the Centre.

Although many of the challenges during the project were due to the use of Marmoleum, now that the project is completed we are keen to use the experience to assist others interested in working with this medium.

The product is available in a wide range of colours including deep, rich, vibrant shades that are of particular interest to us as artists. In addition, Marmoleum is a very environmentally-friendly product, so it is likely to be specified in an increasing number of Public Works projects. It's a wonderful product to use, so long as you can find an experienced contractor to lay it and preferably have it cut in the factory by Forbo.

The wall designs were of course much cheaper, faster to install and could support a higher level of detail. We will certainly use this technique and these contractors on future projects.

There were so many people who helped during the project, but we would particularly like to thank Project Manager Paul McAllister and Art Consultant Pip Sawyer, without whom the project could not have been such a success. Their advice and patience were invaluable.

We hope that the people of Amherst enjoy the new Community Centre, and also our artwork within it.

## Appendix

Some of the remaining unused vectorised images that we particularly liked are shown throughout this report.

As the commissioning client, we are happy for the City of Gosnells to use these designs in other applications - for example, printed on canvas and framed, to be hung on walls. The designs are representative of a wide range of activities in the local community, and so may be appropriate for other venues within the City of Gosnells.

