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TILE AS ART: A RIPPLE EFFECT



How has American Olean been used in your community to promote community expression? In the District of Columbia, a new plaza located in Columbia Heights demonstrates the possibilities of collaborative design and community effort.

As part of a revitalization plan for Washington, DC, the Columbia Heights neighborhood was selected as a model for city beautification intended to encourage growth of residential, commercial and multi-use spaces.



Artist Jann Rosen-Queralt was selected from a group of professional artists to collaborate with Zimmer Gunsul Frasca Architects, the DC Department of Planning and the DC Department of Transportation to design the public gathering spaces. "Integrating art into city planning adds so much to the significance of a community. The residents of Columbia Heights were integral to this renewal project, which instills a sense of pride in their neighborhood. Personal projects such as these are rarely vandalized or defaced."



The community project includes a fountain featuring radiating bands that symbolize ripples, as well as a mosaic at a nearby metro stop. In between the two high-traffic locations is a series of 17 medallions designed by local artists. "Involving local artists was an important element in creating personalized community art. We also held training seminars with them to develop their mosaic designs," says Rosen-Queralt. Rosen-Queralt used American Olean Custom Design Service's waterjet technology to bring the local artist's designs to life.



What was the inspiration behind the artistic style of the Columbia Heights project? According to the artist, the community had expressed an interest in kaleidoscopes, representing eternal change and the effect people and things have on each other. Rosen-Queralt combined this idea with the element of water ripples to arrive at the current design.

Additionally, she used textile patterns from various cultures to represent the diversity of the community. "I wanted the design to honor the cultures of those who live there. Using the textiles provides an individual reference to each resident. It celebrates their pride in who they are and where they come from, and in the end is really more about the similarities they share as a community than about their personal differences." So, with the help of the nearby Textile Museum, Rosen-Queralt selected patterns and photographically represented them on tile. American Olean exterior porcelain tile surrounds the textile elements in the fountain.

Create a ripple effect of expression in your community. [Learn how](#) with American Olean.