Domestic Grounds

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Domestic Grounds seeks to disclose the potential for tactile stimulation of floor design. Arriving home and taking off our shoes is not a random impulse. Walking barefoot is an ancestral human experience. In the shoeless paradise of the domestic environment, alternating rugs, wood boards and tiles: softness and hardness, warmth and cold, the floor plane is already a celebration of tactility. If we strategically reconsider the way we apply material and form in the design of floors and floor coverings, we can radically increase the performance of these surfaces to include restorative properties and amplify the sensory experience of domestic circulation.

There are multiple therapeutic advantages to walking barefoot on uneven surfaces, such as: reduced blood pressure, stimulation of the immune and endocrine systems, increased absorption of vitamin D, improvement in the mental and physical activities of the body, and increased resilience to stress. In the context of health, one can average a sedentary population can take from 1000-3000 steps per day. A lot of this walking can take place in the domestic environment, the goal of Domestic Grounds is to take full advantage of our household walking routine to invigorate our damaged feet.

As an ideal site for a case study, we chose a corner unit in one of the high-rise towers of 860-880 Lake Shore Apartments in Chicago by Mies van der Rohe. Located at the heart of the dense urban Chicago center, and therefore surrounded by miles and miles of heavy traffic, pavement and asphalt, this site, automatically draws attention to the home floor as a secluded oasis for the feet in the midst of the city.

Since the completion of the two 26 story glass and steel apartment towers in 1958, multiple interior renovations have taken place with the exception of the main floor, which remains in its original condition. This floor is the one where the users spend most of their time. Underneath it, the concrete floor slab is directly poured and casted in place to fit the shape and needs of the space. This floor is the original floor slab. This site is a perfect example of how the floor slab and the floor covering engage directly with the body.

We chose to work with stamped concrete for its ubiquitous availability, readiness and low cost. Often called textured or imprinted concrete, stamped concrete is an outdoor paving choice mimicking stones such as slate, tile, brick and even wood. We opted for an abstract pattern of varying sizes corresponding to the ranging scales of the feet’s sensory capability. The design was first modeled digitally and later partially casted at full scale (two tile samples). We chose to work with stamped concrete for its ubiquity availability, readiness and low cost. Often called textured or imprinted concrete, stamped concrete is an outdoor paving choice mimicking stones such as slate, tile, brick and even wood. We opted for an abstract pattern of varying sizes corresponding to the ranging scales of the feet’s sensory capability. The proposed pattern forms a field of half cylinders of four different radii. These radii vary by quarter inch increments from 1/4” being the smallest to 1” being the largest. To determine the location of the pattern, we first looked at the movement of the users within the unit and noticed most circulation takes place at its central axis.

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Color coded pattern. Darker tones correspond to higher cylinders.