

GENOA: A SAFE CITY

A space for kids that combines play with science and technology

In a part of town that figured importantly in the history of Genoa, the Old Port, some former cotton warehouses have been converted into a space where children can develop their creativity by learning through play. La Città dei bambini (the City for Kids) is the largest space ever developed in Italy for children aged 3 to 14 where learning and play are combined in a new dimension. The idea was adapted from the concept developed in the Cité des Sciences et de l'Industrie in Paris La Villette, France. La Città dei bambini features several itineraries and is animated by specialized guides. It offers younger children the opportunity of experiencing group play and developing their powers of observation, while the older ones can discover science, physics, communications and motion with the help of technology and interactive games (Photos 1 and 2).

There were two challenges to be met in designing the complex: the former warehouses, remodeled by the Renzo Piano Building Workshop, were completely open spaces. They had to be subdivided into different smaller spaces through which the various itineraries would wind. At the same time the design had to come up with an overall unifying spatial concept that enveloped play areas, learning areas, and other sections that were very different the one from the other.

Dividing up the space led to the design of an itinerary whose starting point leads to a large area for 3 to 5 year olds. This segues into the "Experiences" and "Wonders" sections for the 6 to 14 year olds. A unifying visual and spatial concept was expressed through the selection of the interior design materials.

A bold color scheme for the flooring created a recognizable itinerary (Photo 5). The carpet's background color is blue, the color of the sea, to inspire tranquility and well-being. On this background big orange bubbles of inlaid carpet define

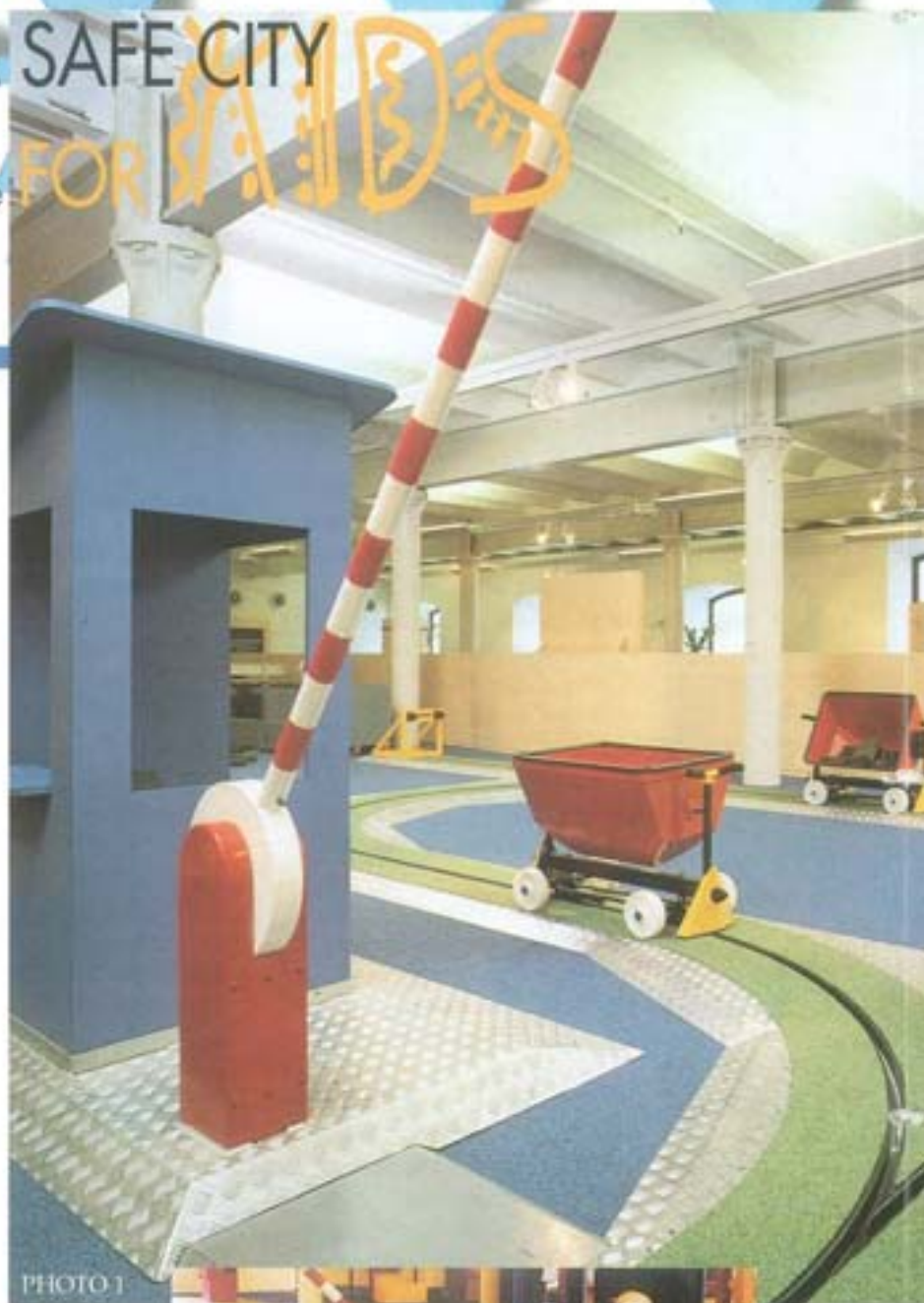


PHOTO 1



PHOTO 2

areas where the children can pause and socialize. Little paths, also orange, branch out from these, marking other turnings. The play of colors is an effective means of visual communication that simultaneously organizes and unifies the space.

Carpet tiles were selected for the flooring. Using carpet in a heavily trafficked space like this one might seem a dubious choice. But an examination of

Photos 1, 2 and 5
The space in the Città dei bambini designed for younger children





Photos 3 and 4
Installing the carpet tiles with MAPEFIX permanent tack adhesive in water dispersion. When the adhesive dries, the carpet tiles can be pulled up and replaced as many times as needed.



the flooring a few months after the opening (and 2,000 children a week) proved the decision to have been the right one. The floor always looks terrific because the carpet tiles can be replaced as soon as they are damaged or wear out. Nothing could be easier, because the carpet tiles were installed with MAPEFIX (Photo 3). After it dries, this adhesive in water dispersion doesn't lose its tack, so the tiles can be replaced at will. (Photo 4). And so easily, in fact, it's child's play. □

The Technical Data Sheets for the products mentioned in this article are contained in Mapei Binder No. 2, "Resilient Flooring Installation Products".



TECHNICAL DATA

Project: Città dei bambini, Genoa, Italy

Year of construction: 1992

Year of carpet installation: 1997

Architects: Renzo Piano Building Workshop

Carpet installers: Paviservice srl, Milan, Italy

Project Manager: Alessandro Riboli

Coordinator: Enrico Grassi - Mapei

Material: Interface Heuga carpet tiles

Carpet installation adhesive: MAPEFIX*

*MAPEFIX is part of Mapei's European product lines.



PHOTO 5