

## Signature by Shelley Alexanian takes flooring to a new level

Signature by Shelley Alexanian is an open and airy showroom for flooring with high-tech touches.



“Flooring is fashion,” says Shelley Alexanian. Her new store, Signature by Shelley Alexanian, is 12,000 square foot location on Ronald Ave. near Castlefield Ave. in Toronto. (VINCE TALOTTA / TORONTO STAR)

By **DIANE PETERS** Special to the Star  
Thu., Sept. 14, 2017

Warning: if you say hello to Shelley Alexanian and, just casually, mention marmoleum or vinyl flooring, the conversation quickly goes deep.

She will start pulling samples at the newly opened Signature by Shelley Alexanian, toss them on the floor, and cover off installation, colour, water-resistance and wear.

No question: she loves flooring.

“Flooring is fashion,” Alexanian says, and that idea inspired the look and content of this 12,000 square foot store on Ronald Ave. near Castlefield Ave. It’s boldly right across the street from high-end carpet and design company Elte.

Alexanian came up with the idea for the store about five years ago. As a buyer and spokesperson for Alexanian Carpet and Flooring — a brand that dates back to 1925 and runs 19 other retail outlets across Ontario — she saw a gap in the market.



Signature features products with bolder colours, more innovative designs and a wider range of price points. (VINCE TALOTTA)

While traditional flooring stores are often stuffed with product, she envisioned a place that was open and airy, and where customers could see choice items from anywhere in the store. Bolder colours, more innovative designs and a wider range of price points — she felt no one was doing this.

“It was a vision,” she says of her idea. She shared it around the company, but not much happened.

Then, last summer, the owners of the flooring store at this location decided to move out, and contacted Alexanian to see if they were interested.

“We’re always looking for space,” says Alexanian. This prime spot in the middle of the design district was ideal, so they signed the lease just 24 hours later.



While traditional flooring stores are often stuffed with product, Signature is open and airy, and where customers can see choice items from anywhere in the store. (VINCE TALOTTA)

As soon as Alexanian walked in the store, she saw how her idea could be made real. Thus began a “super intense” year of renovations and sourcing materials.

Most of the products on the floor here are branded “Signature,” and Alexanian helped set up those deals, and chose the fashion-forward selection of hardwoods, tiles, carpets (expect lots of colour) and area rugs.

The store, with a freshly finished concrete floor and bright white walls, opened in July. Alexanian and her team went for a crisp, boutique look, but on a large scale.

And they added in some unique features.



Shelley Alexanian and her team went for a crisp, boutique look for Signature, but on a large scale. (VINCE TALOTTA)



iPad minis are scattered around the store — on large, white tables ideal for designers and other shoppers to spread out samples — and they’re preloaded with the Signature app. The app — which you can also upload to your own device — takes a shot of bar codes around the store and then calls up the price, materials and other specs. (If you have it on your own app, you can take a screenshot and save the info for later, as a bonus.)

As well, you’ll likely be offered a cappuccino upon arrival. And you’ll probably see Alexanian herself. “A huge part of this will be people coming in and see I’m here, on the floor,” she says.



Shelley Alexanian chose the fashion-forward selection of hardwoods, tiles, carpets and area rugs. (VINCE TALOTTA)

After all, over the last 15 years she spent considerable time working directly with customers at retail locations. They sometimes invite her to their homes to see the finished product — and she goes.

She says that means she’ll be working serious retail hours, including Saturdays and Sundays.

“My kids are all grown up, I don’t mind,” she says. “I’m ready for another challenge.”



iPad minis scattered around the store are preloaded with the Signature app. The app takes a shot of bar codes around the store and then calls up the price, materials and other specs. (VINCE TALOTTA)