

Labyrinth Enterprises

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Our Lady of Victory Hospital Stanley, Wisconsin



Medium

Polymer concrete

Completion date

September, 2003

Technique

The labyrinth pattern was cut into the concrete using specially adapted diamond-bladed tools and then hand-colored with polymer concrete, producing a durable all-concrete labyrinth.

Despite difficult conditions (dust storms followed by rain, flood, and mud) we achieved an excellent result.



Labyrinth Enterprises crew: Robert Ferré and Vernon Lynn

A Visit to Our Lady of Victory Hospital . . .

By Robert Ferré

In August of 2005, I went to St. Paul to install a public labyrinth in Como Park. Returning to St. Louis, I decided to go slightly out of my way to visit Stanley, 24 miles east of Eau Claire, Wisconsin. (Two years earlier, I had single-handedly installed the labyrinth there, with only one laborer to help.) Walking around to the back of the hospital, I found that they had planted trees around the labyrinth and added large boulders on which to sit. A sign near the entrance explained walking procedures.

The labyrinth looked gorgeous. The color was deep and the surface texture uniform. It had a slight shine. I went in and talked to the administrator, to see if they had just resealed it. "No," she said, "It's just as it was when you drove away. All we do is wash it with the hose." This was a confirmation to me that what we offer is absolutely unique. No one else in the world has this technology. It takes considerable skill, with specially designed tools. As a result, I instantly raised our prices by 15% for 2006. We now charge \$23,000 for our polymer concrete labyrinth installation. The fact is, at twice the cost it would still be a good value.



In the photo above, notice the effect of the cuts into the concrete. The scoring is not deep, less than one-fourth of an inch. Yet, being on the edge of the colored areas they have two effects. First, they make the pattern look as if it has been inlaid into the concrete. Secondly, the cut throws a shadow, which outlines the pattern in a thin line of black. It is quite visible, making the pattern almost three dimensional, with a crispness that cannot be achieved by stain, sandblasting, paint, or other methods.



Our Lady of Victory Hospital joins a small group of hospitals that paid for the labyrinth from general funds. In most cases, labyrinths at existing hospitals are paid by non-profit support organizations, grants, or as donated memorials. With new construction, however, labyrinths are more and more often included as part of the plan. Labyrinth Enterprises is currently under contract for several labyrinths at hospitals to be constructed in 2006 and 2007 – and in discussion for numerous others. We feel that no progressive health care facility should be designed without a healing garden and a labyrinth.

Stone and terrazzo have been used as the media for hospital labyrinths, as well as pavers. In some cases, concrete has been stamped and stained to resemble stone. In our experience, however, stone – real or imitated – is rather uneven and makes walking the labyrinth difficult for people with balance or vision problems. We don't believe that terrazzo is a suitable material for outdoor labyrinths. It is meant for indoor flooring. Exposed to the weather, it is slippery when wet, and doesn't hold up very well. Pavers offer some excellent design possibilities. Labyrinth Enterprises has installed a number of paver labyrinths. Yet, they are bumpy and irregular for people pushing IV stands.

The most practical, cost-effective, durable, low-maintenance medium is concrete. The flat and uniform surface is excellent for wheelchair access. The paths of the pattern, incidentally, don't need to be wide enough for wheelchairs to fit within them. Were that done, the labyrinth would become so large that it would be too long for the disabled to navigate. Rather, wheelchairs simply straddle the paths, with the wheels in adjacent paths. For example, the labyrinth shown here is an exact-size replica of the one in Chartres Cathedral in France. The pattern is 42' 3 3/8" in diameter, with the concrete being 44 or 45 feet across. Even with the paths 13 5/8" wide (much less than the span of a wheelchair), going in to the center and back out again comprises a journey of almost one-third of a mile.

Labyrinth Enterprises is a small company, with an 8,000-square-foot studio in St. Louis (where we make portable canvas labyrinths) and a traveling on-site installation crew. We have personally made more labyrinths than anyone else in the world. Each portable or permanent labyrinth is a unique work of art. Besides offering design and consulting services to architects and labyrinth committees, we also have artists who can enhance the labyrinth setting, indoors or out, with murals, one-of-a-kind art work, stainless steel sculpture, water features, fountains, feng shui, and more. To learn more about Labyrinth Enterprises, please visit our extensive website: www.labyrinth-enterprises.com.