Each carpet tile includes a first portion having a background pattern of at least two colors. Each carpet tile further includes a second portion having a contrast pattern intermixed with a portion of the background pattern. The contrast pattern has at least one contrast color that is different from the colors of the background pattern. The second portion of each carpet tile is positioned proximate a selected side edge of the carpet tile. In exemplary aspects, the ratio between the width of each carpet tile and the width of the second portion of each carpet tile ranges from about 2.5:1 to about 20:1. The carpet tiles disclosed herein can be positioned on a flooring surface to define a floor covering. Methods of forming a floor covering using the carpet tiles disclosed herein are also provided.

[0005a] According to an aspect of the present invention, there is provided a carpet tile having first and second end edges and first and second side edges, the distance between the first and second end edges of the carpet tile corresponding to a length of the carpet tile, the distance between the first and second side edges of the carpet tile corresponding to a width of the carpet tile, the carpet tile comprising:

a first portion and a second portion, wherein the first portion of each carpet tile has a width and the second portion of each carpet tile has a width, wherein the second portion extends inwardly from a selected side edge of each carpet tile to an interior edge, wherein the respective widths of the first and second portions of each carpet tile combine to define the width of each carpet tile, and wherein the ratio of the width of each carpet tile to the width of the second portion of each carpet tile ranges from about 2.5:1 to about 20:1;

wherein the first portion has a background pattern comprising at least two colors applied uniformly thereto; and

wherein the second portion has the background pattern and a contrast pattern intermixed with the background pattern, the contrast pattern comprising at least one contrast color different than any one color of the at least two colors of the background pattern and at least one color of the at least two colors of the background pattern; and

wherein the combined first portion and second portion cooperate to form a carpet tile having a side edge-oriented contrast pattern region.

[0006] One skilled in the art will appreciate that tile-forming cuts cannot easily be positioned with precision relative to features on the face of a floor covering web. However, as a practical matter, it can be predicted (in the sense that it is reasonably possible to insure) that the cuts in a tufted or fusion bonded face floor covering web, and therefore the tile edges produced by such cuts, will fall within predetermined longitudinal and cross-web bands or regions of the formed carpet web. By utilizing these bands or regions to define what will become “design” or “contrast” carpet tile areas

(which have the more prominent design elements), and by producing webs with relatively uniform appearance in the bands or regions outside the “design” or “contrast” carpet tile areas, it is possible to produce attractive carpet tiles with prominent, generally edge oriented design elements and to produce visually attractive installations of such carpet tiles that differ significantly in appearance from prior installations of carpet tile. In one aspect, while such installations can have visually prominent modularity in that there is a one-to-one correspondence between visually prominent design elements and the carpet tiles, the appearance of the installation can mimic a broadloom carpet or an area rug having relatively large scale. Such an attractive installation is particularly possible utilizing, together with the carpet tiles of this invention, “plain” tiles, the entire surfaces of which are a background design such as the design that appears in the frame bands in “background” or “field” or regions of tiles having other design elements.

What is claimed is:

1. A carpet tile having first and second end edges and first and second side edges, the distance between the first and second end edges of the carpet tile corresponding to a length of the carpet tile, the distance between the first and second side edges of the carpet tile corresponding to a width of the carpet tile, the carpet tile comprising:

a first portion and a second portion, wherein the first portion of each carpet tile has a width and the second portion of each carpet tile has a width, wherein the second portion extends inwardly from a selected side edge of each carpet tile to an interior edge, wherein the respective widths of the first and second portions of each carpet tile combine to define the width of each carpet tile, and wherein the ratio of the width of each carpet tile to the width of the second portion of each carpet tile ranges from about 2.5:1 to about 20:1;

wherein the first portion has a background pattern comprising at least two colors applied uniformly thereto; and

wherein the second portion has the background pattern and a contrast pattern intermixed with the background pattern, the contrast pattern comprising at least one contrast color different than any one color of the at least two colors of the background pattern and at least one color of the at least two colors of the background pattern; and

wherein the combined first portion and second portion cooperate to form a carpet tile having a side edge-oriented contrast pattern region.

2. The carpet tile of Claim 1, wherein the first portion of the carpet tile extends the entire length of the carpet tile.

3. The carpet tile of Claim 2, wherein the second portion of the carpet tile extends substantially the entire length of the carpet tile.

4. The carpet tile of any one of Claims 1 to 3, wherein the carpet tile is substantially rectangular.

5. The carpet tile of any one of Claims 1 to 4, wherein at least a portion of the contrast pattern region is spaced from the selected side edge.

6. The carpet tile of any one of Claims 1 to 4, wherein at least a portion of the contrast pattern region extends to the selected side edge.

7. The carpet tile of any one of Claims 1 to 6, wherein the at least two colors of the background pattern comprise a majority color and a minority color.

8. The carpet tile of Claim 7, wherein the contrast pattern comprises the minority color and at least one contrast color different from the majority color and the minority color.

9. The carpet tile of Claim 8, wherein the contrast pattern is formed from a plurality of yarn tufts, and wherein at least some of the yarn tufts of the at least one contrast color have a height greater than at least some of the yarn tufts of the minority color proximate the yarn tufts of the at least one contrast color.

10. The carpet tile of any one of Claims 1 to 8, wherein the contrast pattern is printed on the carpet tile.

11. The carpet tile of any one of Claims 1 to 8, wherein the carpet tile has a tufted face.

12. The carpet tile of any one of Claims 1 to 8, wherein the carpet tile has a woven face.

13. The carpet tile of any one of Claims 1 to 8, wherein the carpet tile has a fusion-bonded face.

14. The carpet tile of any one of Claims 1 to 13, wherein the contrast pattern comprises a plurality of substantially parallel stripes.

15. The carpet tile of Claim 14, wherein the carpet tile has a warp axis extending between the first end edge and the second end edge and a weft axis extending between the first side edge and the second side edge, and wherein each stripe of the plurality of stripes has an elongate length extending parallel to the warp axis and a width extending parallel to the weft axis, wherein the elongate length of each stripe is greater than the width of each respective stripe.

16. The carpet tile of Claim 15, wherein at least one pair of adjacent stripes of the plurality of stripes have a substantially equal length.

17. The carpet tile of Claim 15 or 16, wherein at least one pair of adjacent stripes of the plurality of stripes has a substantially equal width.

18. The carpet tile of Claim 15, wherein the respective elongate lengths of the plurality of stripes are randomized among the plurality of stripes.

19. The carpet tile of Claims 15 and 18, wherein the respective widths of the plurality of stripes are randomized among the plurality of stripes.

20. The carpet tile of Claim 15, wherein at least two adjacent stripes of the plurality of stripes are spaced apart along the weft axis.

21. The carpet tile of Claim 15, wherein at least two adjacent stripes of the plurality of stripes are staggered along the warp axis.

22. The carpet tile of Claim 14, wherein the carpet tile has a warp axis extending between the first end edge and the second end edge and a weft axis extending between the first side edge and the second side edge, and wherein each stripe of the plurality of stripes has an elongate length extending parallel to the weft axis and a width extending parallel to the warp axis, wherein the elongate length of each stripe is greater than the width of each respective stripe.

23. The carpet tile of Claim 22, wherein at least one pair of adjacent stripes of the plurality of stripes have a substantially equal length.

24. The carpet tile of Claim 22 or 23, wherein at least one pair of adjacent stripes of the plurality of stripes has a substantially equal width.

25. The carpet tile of Claim 22, wherein the respective lengths of the plurality of stripes are randomized.

26. The carpet tile of Claim 22 or 25, wherein the respective widths of the plurality of stripes are randomized.

27. The carpet tile of Claim 22, wherein at least two adjacent stripes of the plurality of stripes are spaced apart along the weft axis.

28. The carpet tile of Claim 22, wherein at least two adjacent stripes of the plurality of stripes are staggered along the warp axis.

29. The carpet tile of any one of Claims 1 to 28, wherein the contrast pattern comprises an abstract pattern.