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OF DECORATIVE  
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Vol. 11 No. 1 January 2011



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# publisher's LETTER



## Dear Readers,

If this is your first issue of *Concrete Decor*, I want to personally welcome you to our pages and to the industry of decorative concrete. If you're one of our many subscribers, you have already noticed a significant change in both the look and feel of *Concrete Decor*.

Why this change? It's *Concrete Decor* magazine's 10th anniversary. It's our ambition to celebrate this successful benchmark for our industry while at the same time setting the industry's sights on another decade of progress.

Truth be told, decorative concrete has been used in places like Disney World and other public venues for quite some time. However, it's only been in the last 10 years that the industry has become widely recognized as a trusted alternative to other building solutions. Despite pressure from an extended recession, decorative concrete today represents an industry with products that are increasingly sold in more places, specified by more designers and installed by a growing number of artisans of varying backgrounds.

Unique to this culture is a healthy and growing need for more. This is what I find so exciting as well as challenging about this industry's ongoing success. The diversity of applications and individuals coming from other trades and creative backgrounds to decorative concrete is what keeps this industry innovative and in demand. In my honest opinion, I don't know of another trade anywhere that offers such diverse and exemplary solutions for new construction or renovations.

When you begin turning the pages of your redesigned issue of *Concrete Decor* you'll see that our information is better organized. Nearly all aspects of decorative concrete interrelate, and our readers generally involve themselves in mastering many different types of decorative concrete applications, so the redesign enables advanced artisans to find what they are looking for faster while enabling others to begin the creative process of building their own skill sets. The redesign also shows off a number of new ways we've created to cover the industry's accomplishments on projects of all sizes.

As founder and publisher of *Concrete Decor*, I know that this magazine would not be the rich resource it is today without your involvement. So, let's get busy once again and make 2011 the pacesetter year for this industry. Significant market improvements are anticipated for 2011. Let's use this time to your advantage by showing an attentive new customer base what the combination of great products and creative and passionate people can muster.

From all of us at *Concrete Decor*, we wish you a very blessed and happy New Year. And we'll see you in Nashville!

Enjoy!

Sincerely,

Bent Mikkelsen  
Publisher



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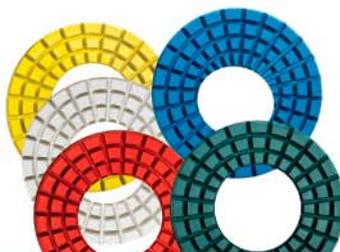
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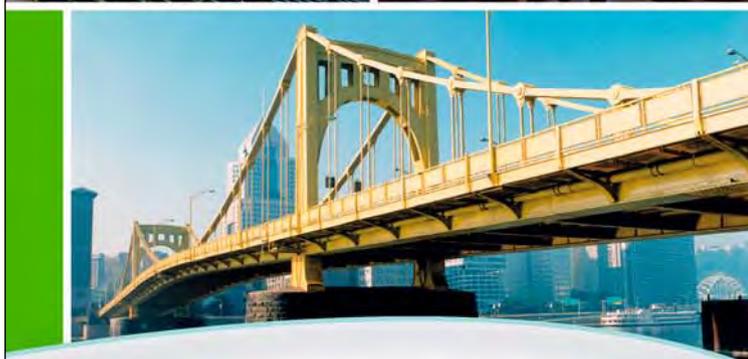
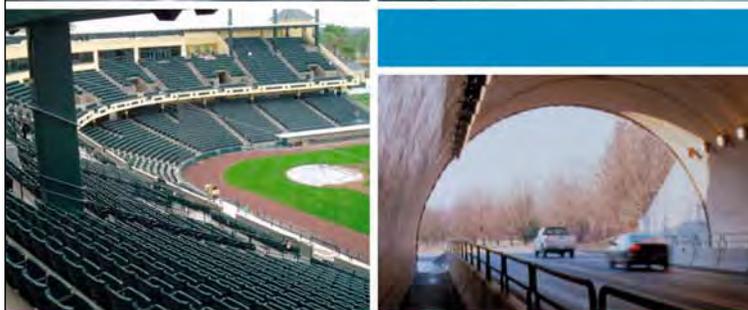
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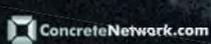


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## When Contractors Assume the Role of a Design Consultant

**S**avvy contractors can gain greater project input and can secure more work for their companies by becoming involved with design professionals during the early stages of project design.



by Howard Jancy,  
CSI, CDT

Architects, landscape architects and interior designers are key members of the project team for commercial and high-end residential installations. They design the project and are involved with product research and selection. By assuming a proactive role as their design consultant, a contractor gains greater insight into how to bid projects more knowingly and successfully and can assert greater influence on installation outcomes.

### Breaking down a design team

First, let's get to know the various members of a design team and their roles. After you determine which design firms to contact, whom you speak with in the office becomes important. Office staff sizes and personnel vary, but will typically include individuals performing the following functions:

- **Project manager (PM)** – manages design budget, schedule and staffing
- **Project architect (PA)** – selects consultants, oversees project designers

■ **Project designer** – designs functional solutions for the owner's needs

■ **Staff positions or consultative (contractual) personnel:**

- **Interior designer** – selects interior finishes, designs interior space
- **Landscape architect** – selects paving materials, designs exterior space
- **Specifier/specification consultant** – initiates product research, develops construction documents, writes project specifications

Assuming you are contacting a design firm about a particular project, each of the design professionals will require different types of information, depending upon the project stage.

Project stages are chronological project development phases and indicate or direct specific project delivery activities, ultimately leading to the project's construction. Project stages are standard benchmarks of activity and are generally the same for all construction projects (and construction design firms). Understanding the activities and the individuals involved at each project stage will make your consultative sales call on the design firm more valued by the designer and more productive for you.

### Which stage is what

The five stages of project design and construction include project conception, design, construction documentation, bidding and construction. There are specific activities and contractually

required deliverables, i.e., graphic and written documentation, associated with each project stage:

### ■ Project Conception

- Activities: feasibility studies, project goal-setting, budgeting, site selection
- Documentation: preliminary cost estimates, preliminary scheduling

### ■ Design (Two Phases)

#### • Schematic Design

- Activities: developing a site plan, determining elevations and exterior finishes, conceptual design of structural, mechanical and electrical elements
- Documentation: conceptual plans illustrating relationships between building components, preliminary material selections, revised costs and schedules

#### • Design Development

(Commonly referred to as DDs)

- Activities: identifying constructability issues, selecting specific systems, materials and products
- Documentation: drawings (including plans, elevations and typical details), technical data from manufacturers, revised cost estimates and schedules

### ■ Construction Documentation

(Commonly referred to as CDs)

- Activities: final design
- Documentation: contracting forms, specifications, contract drawings

## ■ Bidding

- Activities: reviewing bids, negotiating, evaluating substitutions
- Documentation: addenda

## ■ Construction

- Activities: performing work in accordance with contract
- Documentation: contract modifications

In general, you will be most influential when calling upon a design firm during the project design stage, when the design team is undertaking schematic design and design development activities. It is at this point of a project's design when designers and owners are evaluating specific material and product choices. Contacts made during project conception may be too early, and contacts made during bidding or even construction documentation stages may be too late.

Depending on the size of the project, unforeseen problems and the owner's direction, the project stages could be many weeks to many months in duration, with occasional stops and starts.

If your architectural call coincides with the project conception stage, determine when the later design stage will start, schedule a future call to coincide with that predicted time, then move on to another design firm that is doing more stage-relevant work. By keeping track of projects and design firms in this manner, you can ensure focused and productive meetings with designers while creating a significant pipeline of future projects.

## Helping the design professional

In addition to timing your office visit or telephone call to a project's stage, providing the most relevant information for the stage and design professionals involved is equally important. The schematic design and design development stages generally require the most detailed information from you and your suppliers or manufacturers. While members of the project design team may have overlapping needs and involvement during project delivery, a basic understanding of their roles or responsibilities is critical:

### ■ Project Manager

- Project stage involvement: project conception, schematic design, design development
- Relevant information: general cost estimates, general product information, project references of similar scope or difficulty, scheduling impacts

### ■ Project Architect

- Project stage involvement: design development, construction documents
- Relevant information: refined cost estimates, project references, specific product or manufacturers' information, scheduling impacts

### ■ Project Designer

- Project stage involvement: design development
- Important information: color charts, pattern selection guide, cast samples, color chips, installed costs

### ■ Specifier/Specification Consultant

- Project stage involvement: construction documents
- Relevant information: product technical data, guide specifications, installation requirements

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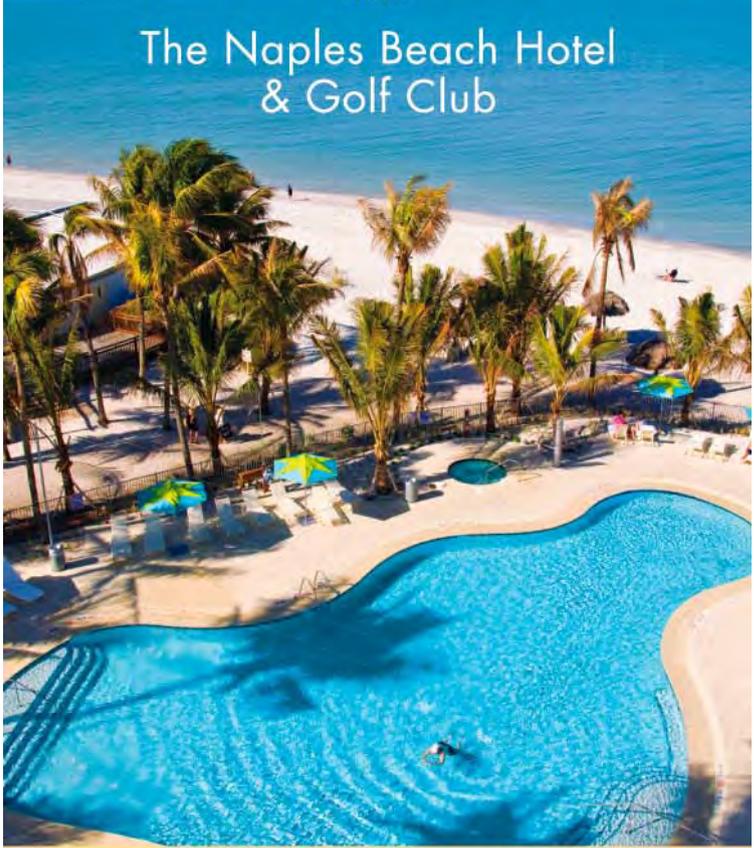
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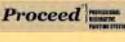


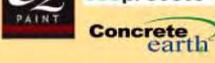
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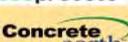


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You will notice that as a project's development progresses, the informational requirements of the design team members become more differentiated and precise. For example, the project designer tends to need detailed aesthetic information, while the specifier tends to require more detailed technical information.

As you meet with the design team, ask questions and take notes. What is the budget (so you can offer multiple relevant options)? What are the design professional's and project owner's experiences and expectations (so you can offer solutions and establish realistic expectations for aesthetics and maintenance)? Will the project be LEED-certified (allowing you to discuss the sustainable advantages of concrete and related installation technologies and materials)?

## The specifier's influence

Your conversations with the project designer during design development are about product options and recommendations. Generally, you base your recommendations on experience with a particular manufacturer or system. This is quite typical and an acceptable way of incorporating products into a project's documentation.

The specifier will usually draft the construction documents — specifications — based on the project designer's selections. However, if the specifier is not familiar with the product or manufacturer selected by the project designer, the specification writer may substitute a system with which he is more knowledgeable or has had successful outcomes on previous projects. The specifier may even rely on an existing office master guide specification and simply cut and paste the necessary information into the current project's

specification — again, bypassing the project designer's input.

So no matter how well you have educated and impressed other members of the design team, if you don't understand the specification process in an architect's office or meet with the specification writer before the specification writing process begins, you may find your earlier efforts diminished. This is an even more critical issue if a design firm relies on an outside or independent specification consultant. Consultants often rely on a master specification to expedite documentation production, since they are producing specifications for several projects and clients.

## Product discussions

As you evolve into a consultant's role, knowing the system you're recommending, as well as those that compete with it, is important. Your ability and willingness to discuss the qualities of your recommended products compared to alternate or even competitive systems will be appreciated by the architect, since most project specifications require a minimum of three brand names or contain "or equal" and other nonproprietary language.

It is important to note, when discussing your product versus competitive materials, to do so within the context of features and benefits, not by bad-mouthing the competition. Negative selling should never be used to promote your talents or products. The more informed an architect is about product options, the more likely he or she will be to write a specification that is clear, correct and complete. Sharing your knowledge and experience with project designers supports the creation of construction documents without ambiguity, which improves the project bidding and installation process. Sharing your expertise makes the architect look good and elevates your stature in the eyes of the architect.

## Architectural marketing

Architectural consulting is a long-term process. It is a form of marketing, with success dependent upon three elements: timing, receptive audiences and relevant stage-specific messages. Implementing your architectural calls in accordance with these three marketing elements provides a framework for successfully bidding and securing more projects, as well as establishing your credentials as a reputable and reliable design consultant.

*Howard Jancy, manufacturers' representative and architectural consultant, is principal of Jancy & Associates and has 27 years of experience with materials for concrete repair, maintenance and decorative enhancement. He belongs to the Construction Specification Institute (CSI) Chicago Chapter and chairs the chapter's industry round table that provides professional development for building-material manufacturers and suppliers. He is also a CSI-certified Construction Document Technologist (CDT). Jancy can be reached at [howard@jancyassociates.com](mailto:howard@jancyassociates.com).*

*Howard Jancy will teach two courses at the Concrete Decor Show & Spring Training in Nashville: "Marketing Decorative Concrete to Design Professionals" on March 16 at 8 a.m. and "Designing and Specifying Decorative Concrete" on March 17 at 3 p.m. For more information, go to [www.ConcreteDecorShow.com](http://www.ConcreteDecorShow.com).*



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## event calendar

### World of Concrete

Jan. 18-21, 2011  
Las Vegas, Nev.

[www.worldofconcrete.com](http://www.worldofconcrete.com)

### Surfaces

Jan. 24-27, 2011  
Las Vegas, Nev.

[www.surfaces.com](http://www.surfaces.com)

### The Society of Protective Coatings: SSPC 2011 featuring GreenCOAT

Jan. 31 - Feb. 3, 2011  
Las Vegas, Nev.

[www.sspc2011.com](http://www.sspc2011.com)

### Western Washington Cement Masons' Polishable Overlays Symposium

March 3-5, 2011  
Seattle, Wash.

(206) 762-9286

### Concrete Decor Show & Spring Training

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## INDUSTRY NEWS

### ARXX Corp. recognized as leading Cleantech company

Corporate Knights Magazine has included ARXX Corp. on its 2010 Cleantech Next 10 list, which identifies the top 10 emerging Cleantech companies.

The website of Cleantech Group LLC defines Cleantech as follows: "Cleantech is new technology and related business models that offer competitive returns for investors and customers while providing solutions to global challenges."

ARXX is a leading supplier of insulating concrete forms for green, energy-efficient residential and commercial construction.

"We have added almost 500 new distributors across North America this year, growing our business despite the difficult economic climate, and we continue to penetrate new markets and sectors with our energy-efficient and cost-effective building solutions," said ARXX president and CEO Gael Mourant in a news release.

Corporate Knights Magazine covers "clean capitalism." The Next 10 companies are selected by an advisory panel of some of Canada's foremost authorities on Cleantech.

[www.arxx.com](http://www.arxx.com)

### Allen to build Miller Power Buggies

Allen Engineering Corp. has entered into an agreement to acquire the Miller Power Buggy line from The Miller Spreader Co.

Upon completion of the acquisition, AEC will begin manufacturing both the walk-behind and ride-on Miller Power Buggies in their factory in Paragould, Ark. The Miller Power Buggy line will join the Allen Concrete Equipment and Allen Concrete Pavers lines, which are currently

designed, engineered and manufactured by AEC in Arkansas. Other Miller products, including its lines of curb extruders and aluminum hand tools, will continue to be manufactured at Miller's facility in Youngstown, Ohio.

[www.alleneng.com](http://www.alleneng.com)

### A concrete mixer for Haiti

Haiti produces some of the poorest concrete in the world. They skimp on cement and mix the materials on the ground using shovels.

Following the January 2010 earthquake in Haiti, Cart-Away Concrete Systems Inc. took up the challenge to improve the quality of concrete in the country. A five-man team designed a mixer for Haiti that will improve the strength of Haitian homes.

The new mixer for Haiti is called the Concrete MD and is touted as a cure for the world's poorest concrete. The functions of the machine are designed to fit within the culturally accepted building methods of Haiti. "They use shovels and buckets to move material, so we built a mixer that works within that system to improve the measuring and blending of the materials," says project manager Scott Crist.

The Concrete MD is a batch-fed mixer that uses two calibrated batch buckets to create a consistent blend of sand and rock in the mixing chamber. By using four 94-pound bags of portland cement and eight dumps from each batch bucket, a Haitian construction crew can produce a half-meter of strong concrete. Consistency is what is greatly lacking in the current practice of mixing concrete on the ground with shovels.

A dual-rotating auger allows the wet

materials to be easily dispensed into buckets from a 6-inch door in the bottom of the mixer.

The mixer is powered by a hydraulic power system that provides the torque to mix large batches every 15 minutes, yet the unit is small enough to be wheeled around the job site by a small crew.

[www.theconcretemd.com](http://www.theconcretemd.com)

### MIT research sets new life-cycle assessment model standard

The Massachusetts Institute of Technology has released preliminary research findings that will help set a new standard in life-cycle assessment modeling.

The studies, which are part of an ongoing research initiative at the MIT Concrete Sustainability Hub, will quantify the cradle-to-grave environmental costs of paving and building materials and will ultimately result in the most comprehensive LCA model produced to date.

MIT is set to release a follow-up study in 2011 that will examine economic costs to provide a comprehensive analysis of the total costs of building and paving materials.

Interim reports on the LCA of pavements and the LCA of buildings are available at the Foundation's website.

The MIT CSH was co-founded by the Portland Cement Association and the RMC Research and Education Foundation.

[www.rmc-foundation.org](http://www.rmc-foundation.org)

### SASE updates website

SASE Co. Inc. has launched an improved website.

The website offers many of the same features as before, but now includes complete diamond line listings, accessory information, news and expanded product descriptions. Accessibility has also increased, as the new site is HTML-based instead of utilizing Flash programming. The "Downloads" section features a complete listing of all product literature and SASE forms.

In addition to these changes, a new shopping cart option and a detailed listing of used equipment is scheduled for rollout in early 2011.

[www.sasecompany.com](http://www.sasecompany.com)

### Mapei adds features to website

Mapei has retooled its United States website. The recent launch highlights the

results of careful listening to the needs of customers combined with state-of-the-art website design.

Mapei has added a tutorial for contractors and architects that helps them better understand the components of the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) rating and certification system. A LEED calculator keeps track of the contributions that products and initiatives contribute to LEED certification points, and contractors can

print letters certifying the LEED point contribution of Mapei products directly from the website.

Mapei's "Tools for Architects" takes design professionals directly to ARCAT and other systems where they can easily choose complete Mapei systems in BIM format to add to their designs.

In addition, Mapei has linked project references to each of its products. The references expand at the click of a mouse to provide data on how the products were used

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in systems, as well as names of architects, owners, contractors, installers, engineers and others who worked on the project.

The company's Canadian website Mapei.ca is also being updated and will soon feature Green Initiatives similar to those on the United States site.

☎ (800) 426-2734

🌐 www.mapei.com

### Cemstone adds safety/environmental coordinator

Cemstone has hired Patrick Murphy as its safety/environmental coordinator.

Murphy will help manage safety and environmental program initiatives. Key responsibilities will include conducting environmental and safety inspections at Cemstone plants and mining sites, as well as satisfying compliance and reporting requirements using best management practices. Murphy will update storm-water pollution protection plans and emergency protocol guidelines, and he will work with site personnel and regional managers on the latest Spill Prevention, Control and Countermeasure rules and requirements.



🌐 www.cemstone.com

### Regional sales manager joins Aztec

Aztec Products Inc. has hired Mike Chiango as regional sales manager.

His focus will be on growing his territory with large building-maintenance contractors, janitorial companies and a select group of product distributors. His region includes New York, New Jersey and Illinois.



🌐 www.aztecproducts.com

### NewLook hires Midwest territory reps

NewLook International Inc. has hired Specrete-IP Inc. of Cleveland, Ohio, to support and manage its Midwest territory. Specrete is a team comprised of John Anderson and Bill Wittlinger, highly qualified sales representatives with extensive experience in the building materials and decorative concrete industry.

Specrete will be primarily supporting customers in Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky and western Pennsylvania. 📞

🌐 www.getnewlook.com

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Photos courtesy of The Concrete Impressionist Inc.



# Dominick Cardone

## The Concrete Impressionist Inc.

Brooklyn, N.Y.

by Kelly O'Brien

**S**tarting a business is a challenging process no matter what the circumstances, but starting a business at 19 years old, while holding down two other jobs and working on a degree? Now that's a challenge

And it's also precisely how Dominick Cardone, owner of The Concrete Impressionist, got his start.

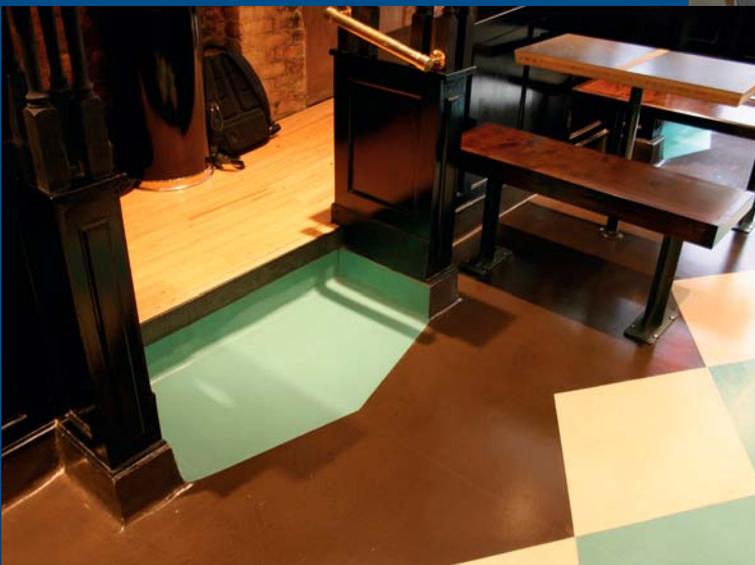
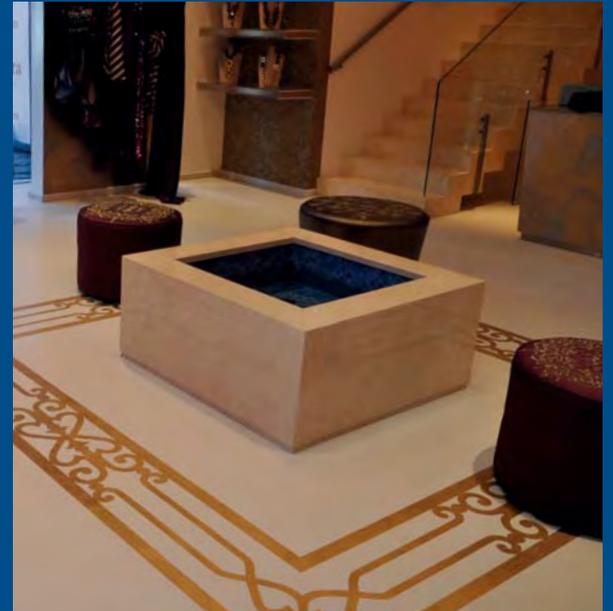
Cardone, now 46, has a come a long, long way from his days as a 19-year-old flatwork finisher, and the journey has been an interesting one, to say the least. In the early '80s, when he was just getting his start, Cardone says the industry was incredibly competitive. There were a lot of people in the business who weren't licensed, weren't insured, and were underbidding Cardone left and right, he says. Rather than try to beat their prices, Cardone's solution was to change gears entirely. For the first decade of his career, this soon-to-be concrete artisan did pretty much everything except concrete.

"From '85 to the mid-'90s I was a general contractor," Cardone says. "High-end residential interiors, retail, restaurants, you name it." His company, which he managed, then as now, with his wife, Janine, relied a lot on renovation work and even had annual contracts to construct and maintain some of the big Manhattan Christmas installations. "I had really made the transition to the construction world,"

Cardone says of his first decade.

Then, one fateful day, Cardone was talking to a client for whom they were doing a high-end residential renovation in the fashionable TriBeCa neighborhood. The client had a chic stainless steel kitchen that he wanted to finish off with limestone countertops, but Cardone had been experimenting with polished concrete and pitched a concrete countertop as an alternative. Cardone's mock-ups were enough to convince the client, and the Concrete Impressionist crew proceeded





to install 90 square feet of cast-in-place polished concrete countertops. “That was it, I was bitten by the bug,” Cardone says. “Now I was a concrete countertop fiend.”

Cardone’s zeal for countertops was enough to pull his company firmly back into the realm of concrete, and it wasn’t long before other decorative techniques caught his attention. Cardone connected with Bob Harris, of Decorative Concrete Institute fame, and the two quickly became friends. Harris helped Cardone broaden his decorative concrete horizons, and more and

more services, such as acid staining, pattern stamping and microtopping application, found their way onto The Concrete Impressionist’s list of services. Thus equipped, the company — comprised of the Cardones and their crew of half a dozen concrete craftsmen — set about making a name for themselves as trailblazers in the decorative concrete world.

### **Making a splash**

Take for example, the company’s custom concrete tiles. For years, the company’s

bread and butter was countertops and other concrete elements (with a healthy portion of stamped concrete and interior floors as well). Working on so many kitchen counters, Cardone saw an opportunity to offer clients some added value by manufacturing and installing custom concrete tile backsplashes. In a kitchen with big monolithic countertops, a big monolithic backsplash can be “a little much,” he says. Concrete tiles let them continue the concrete theme without weighing down the design aesthetic.



Although Cardone says there's not a huge market for the tiles (yet), they've come in handy for more than just backsplashes. For example, when he worked on a nightclub in West Hempstead, N.Y., back in 2003, he says the owners really took to the Concrete Impressionist team and gave them a pretty free hand with the renovation. "It turned into a concrete playground," he says. In addition to concrete floors and tables, Cardone sheathed one of the club's walls in charcoal-gray concrete tiles. The concrete bar top was also a high point — it was one

of the first, if not THE first, bar top done with embedded fiber optics.

### Discovering gold

Although the company's fiber-optic work has definitely become a trademark — Cardone has taught several fiber optics classes, both for the DCI and for the American Society of Concrete Contractors' Decorative Concrete Council — they have one other specialty that rates even higher on the extravagance scale: gilded concrete.

Going back to the Cardones' days

maintaining Manhattan Christmas installations, one of their responsibilities was to keep the displays in good condition. Because many of the decorations involved gilt, Janine mastered the craft, studying, in fact, with a world-renowned gilder. After some experimentation to find a topcoat that wouldn't discolor the gold leaf, gilded concrete was born, and the technique has turned into, if you'll excuse the expression, quite a gold mine.

Doing most of their work in Manhattan, The Concrete Impressionist boasts a



clientele that is pretty upper-crust for both their residential and commercial projects (they do about half and half). It was this experience with high-end clients, combined with their gilded concrete specialization, that landed them the contract for Reem Acra's Fifth Avenue boutique. A world-renowned fashion designer, Acra produces a line of luxury bridal and evening wear and is known for incorporating real gold fibers into the embroidery of her garments. The Concrete Impressionist's gilt floors were a perfect fit. Using a custom Modello Designs

stencil, Cardone and his team installed 22-carat gold leaf in a design over an integrally colored floor.

Little did they know four years ago when they did those first floors that Fifth Avenue was only the beginning. This fall, Cardone and his crew flew to Beirut, Lebanon, Acra's hometown, to install the now-signature gilt floors in her newest showroom. Although Cardone has worked on projects all over the States, this was his first international job — and boy, was it a doozy.

Reem Acra had contracted them

just to finish the floors, while a local contractor was going to do the actual pour. Unfortunately, when Cardone and his team arrived, the floor wasn't done, the products on hand weren't the ones he said he would need, and the local contractor had added almost 200 grams of integral color to the mix when Cardone's instructions had been to use 6. After two days trying desperately to save the floors, Cardone and his team hatched a plan (at 2 a.m., at their hotel's rooftop bar). A coat of properly colored 100-percent solids epoxy would get their floor



back on track. But where to find it?

The following morning, Cardone met with the project's GC, who took him to a local hardware store.

"In the middle of a place where a paper towel is a luxury," Cardone says, "we went into this store, and up on the wall are gauge rakes and spiked shoes. I wanted to cry." The fates smiled on them further — the store happened to carry the exact integral color Cardone had used in the Fifth Avenue store.

After losing four days to rescuing

the floor, Cardone and his team finished the job just in time for the boutique's grand opening.

"It was a great experience," Cardone says. "I said I wouldn't, but I'd do it again in a heartbeat."

Good thing too, because Cardone's adventures aren't over. Reem Acra has more international locations in the works, and Cardone is on the books for all of them.

But whether Cardone is halfway across the globe, doing luxurious floors for the fashion elite or installing a simple, well-

poured, hand-finished floor in a West Village walk-up, you can be certain of one thing: He's sure to leave an impression. 📱

🌐 [www.concreteimpressionist.com](http://www.concreteimpressionist.com)



# An Integral Role

An outdoor lounge at the Sheraton Hotel in Overland Park, Kan., stamped and integrally colored by Artistic Concrete Surfaces Inc., based in nearby Olathe.

Photo courtesy of Murray Decorative Concrete Supply Inc.



How integral color has continued to establish itself in a down economy — and what's next



Photo courtesy of Davis Colors Inc.

by Kelly O'Brien

The first decade of the 21st century has been pretty huge for integral color. For one thing, decorative concrete as a whole has taken huge strides in terms of market share, and more decorative concrete means more integral color. Another key factor in the rise of integral-colored concrete is the fact that the quality of regular concrete has gone up significantly. Terry Fenelon, owner and president of Prism Pigments, says this has been a real boon for integral-colored concrete. When you're working with higher-quality concrete, says Fenelon, "the end product is more consistent and more likely to be specified."

But perhaps the biggest game-changer for integral colors in the last 10 years has been what Fenelon describes as "a strategic alliance" between color manufacturers and ready-mix companies around the country. As a result of that alliance, automated color mixing systems have become a common fixture at ready-mix plants. These systems consist of large tanks (usually four) of base colors that use a weight-batching system to automatically dispense the correct doses of pigment right into the truck. "The color is on-demand," says Fenelon. "It's just like going to the paint store where they mix the paint for you while you wait."

These on-demand systems have become more and more common over the last 10 years, though that's truer for some regions than others, says Nick Paris, vice president of marketing for Davis Colors. The western United States, Paris says, is pretty saturated with automatic color-dispensing systems, with the Southeast as runner-up and the Northeast not far behind. People in the rest of the country still do most of their color-mixing manually, he says.

Integrally colored concrete is by no means recession-proof. The product has



AAA Construction LLC, out of Overland Park, Kan., used integral color in a medium buff for this residential pool deck and finished it with a walnut antique release.

Courtesy of Murray Decorative Concrete Supply Inc.

## Secrets to Maintaining Color Consistency in Large Integral Installations

### ■ Keep track of the details.

The most important thing with maintaining good color across a large job is consistency. From the obvious factors (color, admixture and water-to-cement ratios, temperature, humidity) to the less-tangible ones (soil type and moisture content of the subgrade, amount of time the concrete and color spend in the mixer, slump at the time of placement), document everything thoroughly and keep it the same from batch to batch.

■ **Go for a low water-to-cement ratio.** Opting for a mix design with high cement content and a water-reducing admixture will help keep your colors evenly distributed.

■ **Build a relationship with your ready-mix supplier.** Getting to know them not only enables you to check that their consistency is reliable, but also gives you the chance to work with them to develop just the right mix for your needs.

■ **Pay attention to your subgrade.** Mike Murray, of Murray Decorative Concrete Supply, says that a uniform, evenly compacted, well-drained subgrade can be almost as critical to color consistency as a good water-to-cement ratio.

■ **Don't overtravel.** One of the most frequent causes of discoloration in integrally colored concrete is an overtravelled surface, says Paris. Troweling the surface to a too-tight finish can seal in moisture, which may wreak havoc on otherwise good color.

■ **Choose your curing method carefully.** Most liquid curing membranes aren't designed with integrally colored concrete in mind and can sometimes discolor the surface of the concrete or interfere with moisture content. Look for a curing method that's designed specifically for integrally colored concrete.

## "The use of integral-colored concrete is on the upswing."

—Terry Fenelon, owner and president, Prism Pigments

taken a hit in this down economy, but a lot of color manufacturers and suppliers see reasons to be hopeful. For example, Paris says that Davis Colors has seen sales start to climb in the last year.

And Mike Murray, owner of Murray Decorative Concrete Supply in Shawnee, Kan., says that in their region, colored concrete is also ahead of the curve, mentioning an effort to pitch integral-colored concrete to public-works project specifiers as a more sustainable and creative alternative to pavers and other alternatives.

Fenelon says that while it's "difficult to identify any trends in this down economy, certainly the use of integral-colored concrete is on the upswing."

### What colors are popular?

Not only did the economic downturn have an effect on color sales, but it's also

had an impact on color choices. "People are going with lighter colors with smaller dosage rates, so they don't have to put as much color in," says Dave Frasca, a salesman and trainer for Arizona-based Cohills Building Specialties Inc. Out east, Bart Sacco, owner of Concrete Texturing Tool and Supply, in Throop, Pa., says they're seeing the same trend. "For the past season, mainly of the lighter shades of grays and light tans have been dominant," Sacco says. "With the way the economy has been the last two years, generally the less-expensive dose rates are being used."

Still, the popularity of lighter shades isn't solely due to their affordability. Dale Keller, marketing director for Solomon Colors, says that their best-selling colors are always the buffs and tans, because they look good with the widest variety of exterior paints and finishes. "That's why we have 16 different



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A combination of integral color in buff and a darker release over the top was used to finish this stamped patio and fire pit, done by AAA Construction LLC, of Overland Park, Kan.



The dock of the Oceanside Outrigger Canoe Club, in Oceanside, Calif. The project utilized Davis Colors' Euroblue in a wave pattern along with Davis' Brick Red.

shades of buff or light tan in our colors," Keller says.

Frasca says the buff and tan colors are also among their most popular, especially in the Southwest. In fact, many local communities will specify a particular color of concrete for all of their driveways and sidewalks to create a uniform look for the neighborhood. Some neighborhoods in Paradise Valley and Carefree, two desert communities in Arizona, require sidewalks and driveways to be Cohills' sand-colored Oatmeal Buff, while Desert Mountain, a community farther up into the mountains, specifies a darker custom shade called Cochise Brown. This demonstrates very clearly another factor in color trends — terrain.

When it comes to color trends, says Paris, "almost always it correlates to the general terrain of the region." In Sunbelt states, for example, he says that brick reds and desert buffs are very prevalent, while in the east, darker browns and clay-like colors are more in vogue to match the soils of the region. Another great example of this is in coastal locations, such as beach communities in Florida and California, where creams, pastels and "beach-type" colors are more common, Paris says.

Finally, Fenelon notes that he's seen brick red pigments recently become more popular near Prism Pigments' home base of St. Paul, Minn., because they can be used in a lot of public works and stimulus projects, such as on crosswalks and the insides of roundabouts.

### The color of green

All that said, the integral industry's biggest trend has more to do with preserving the environment than dressing to match it. Frasca says that as a result of the architectural community's increasing

focus on LEED certification, pigment manufacturers are consistently being asked which of their pigments qualify for LEED credits. In order to answer that question, the manufacturers must ascertain the Solar Reflectance Index (SRI) of each of their pigments. An SRI number will tell you how much of the heat from the sun's rays the pigment will reflect. This is of interest to architects because a surface with a high SRI can earn a project LEED credits for reducing the heat island effect.

What this means for color trends is that lighter colors, which naturally have a higher SRI, are more in demand than darker colors.

But be aware that just choosing a reflective pigment for your concrete doesn't necessarily mean you're saving the planet. Paris says to keep in mind that the important measurement is not just the SRI of the pigment alone, but the SRI of the finished surface — so make sure the concrete mix to which you're adding the pigment has a high SRI on its own. (Paris advises contractors to watch out in particular for concrete mixes with fly ash — often added to boost the recycled content of the concrete for additional LEED points — because it's usually darker in color than the cement and can drag down the SRI of the concrete surface.)

With as many exciting developments as the integral color industry has seen in the last few years, you can be sure its future will be a bright one indeed. 📱

For more information about integral color manufacturers:

- 🌐 [www.cohills.com](http://www.cohills.com)
- 🌐 [www.daviscolors.com](http://www.daviscolors.com)
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Mike Branch (right) and Carmin Parisi from Chicago Brick Oven monitor a pizza in a working decorative-concrete display oven at The Rental Branch.

Photos courtesy of The Rental Branch

# Branching Out

## A decorative concrete supply store dazzles with its new showroom

by Lori Zecca

**P**repare yourself — you are about to enter the ultimate decorative concrete showroom zone.

Mike Branch, owner of The Rental Branch in St. Joseph, Mich., had a vision to create the most concentrated display of decorative concrete anywhere. Mission accomplished. Mostly finished as of late 2010, it's been nearly a year in the making, though it felt more like 10 years, according to Mike, considering the business remained open during the extensive reconstruction. The end result was worth it all.

When Branch opened his business in 1996, decorative concrete was virtually nonexistent in his southwest Michigan waterfront community. Exclusively an equipment rental business at first, The Rental Branch started small in decorative concrete supply, selling only finishing tools and equipment. It evolved in 2004 when it began selling color and renting stamps. With the new additions, decorative concrete started catching on, as the stamp rentals provided contractors with the opportunity to offer a variety of stamped patterns without making a large investment. It wasn't long before contractors were even sending their clients to The Rental Branch to look at samples and get ideas.

As demand continued to grow, it made sense for The Rental Branch to become a full-service DC facility. "It's been a nice way to combine our core business, renting stamps, shotblasters, grinders, polishers and so on, with the actual materials," says Branch. "People used to come in and ask if we sold decorative concrete products. Now they look around and ask if we still rent equipment."

Before you even enter the store there is so much to see, as nearly every surface is covered with decorative concrete, including the building itself. Dan Foytick, area sales manager for



Brickform at the time, hand-delivered the Paladiano texture mats that helped create a walkway of exterior decorative concrete samples, an almost quilt-like pattern of colors and textures that lead you to the building's entrance. But don't go inside just yet — to the left of the store is a massive outdoor kitchen with state-of-the-art appliances, ample counter space and a Chicago Brick Oven. The Rental Branch is a distributor for the Brick Oven, a specially designed wood-burner. They have embedded one in a DC chimney facade, and they actually use it to bake pizza for their customers. "If you see smoke coming from the chimney, stop by and get a slice of pizza," Branch says.

**The Rental Branch**  
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Owner: Mike Branch  
Years in business: 14  
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Branch doesn't like to do anything small. In order to achieve the vision he had for his showroom, there were some alterations to the building that were necessary first. With Branch acting as the general contractor, a local contractor was hired to tear off part of the old building and frame the addition. His own crew and contractor customers did the bulk of the ensuing work. "Troy Lemon of Cornerstone Decorative Concrete (of Fennville, Mich.) helped with countertops, floors, vertical, stamping, advice and design," Branch explains. "We traded work for product, which worked out well for both of us."

Where the old building and the addition met, there were several support posts that Branch wanted to incorporate into his overall decorative concrete showroom plan, so he hired Nathan Giffin of Vertical

Artisans, a creator and teacher of vertical decorative concrete techniques, to help them achieve a stone-arch wall. "The design was meant to push the limits to show the versatility of vertical concrete," Branch explains. "The only place you will find columns and arches of this girth is in ancient Rome or Greece, but you can duplicate them with cultured stone." After framing, meshing and applying a scratch coat, it was on-the-job training for Branch and his staff with Giffin teaching them how to use Vertifaux to design the stones, adding and removing product to create depth, adding texture with skins, rollers and trowels, and finally coloring it all with water-based stains.

As of late 2010, the 3,162-square-foot showroom is mostly complete. As you enter, a winding blue river greets you, leading

**Branch**  
doesn't like to do  
**anything**  
small.



you to a clear pond complete with colorful rocks, fishing lures, and pieces of driftwood. This is decorative concrete, of course: As Branch likes to say, “At The Rental Branch, our customers walk on water.”

To create this colorful, powerfully detailed effect, shapes were cut into the existing concrete and filled with Buddy Rhodes Concrete Countertop Mix tinted light blue to depict a submerged island. Surrounding that is the river, which was developed with a layer of Cohills Building Specialties’ metallic epoxy in Caribbean Blue and interspersed secondary colors of Cohills metallic epoxy in Teal and Galaxy Blue. Within the river are the ponds, which were textured and colored with Smith Paints water-based stain and given metallic highlights. Actual fishing lures, river rock and driftwood pieces were embedded using a clear casting epoxy. Much of the work was very labor-intensive, as many of the products had to be added in several layers or “lifts,” but it was worth the realistic effect.

The Rental Branch showroom is filled with every opportunity to learn, visualize and be inspired by a plethora of microtoppings, stamped overlays, stenciling, acid stains, dyes and epoxies. Showpieces throughout the vast space convey a multitude of available decorative concrete finishes geared toward both the contractor/customer and potential end users. Branch believes his customers will want to learn more about decorative finishes, and on top of that, contractors already practicing the craft now have a place to send their clients for more definitive design ideas.

Tucked into its own little alcove is “the workshop,” where the walls were stamped to match vintage wood planking from a neighbor’s barn that was used for beams in the store. The workshop is located in a “dream garage” and includes a workbench where texture rollers, skins, texture trowels



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Mike Branch gave this show-floor compass a unique touch. Rather than keeping the "S" in the same font as the other directional letters, he used the Michigan State University logo.

and other tools are displayed. The dream garage itself has an 8-foot glass garage door and a chip floor that was created by Steve Grimm, sales rep for Citadel Floor Finishing Systems, during a demonstration of the RockSolid Floors Polyurea Floor

Coating System.

The sample area provides an even greater sampling of products and techniques. Jim Mullins, area sales rep for Butterfield Color, helped install the red-brick stencil wall and the stampable overlay that became the brick

facade, part of a nice little urban oasis for exploring sealers and sundries. This area also features 18-inch samples of vertical carved stone, stenciled brick, plaster over brick, BOLDgranite and stampable overlays.

The showroom boasts an elaborate



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fireplace, a media room, a bar/sales counter, and a multitude of decorative floor sections, pathways and verticals, all illustrating decorative finishes ranging from the basic to the elaborate.

Branch and his team of five employees do not do installations themselves, but they feel their hands-on experience gives them credibility when it comes to teaching others the craft. They offer workshops on all their products, believing that training is the key to sales. They are working with the local community college to teach a countertop training class, and they plan to offer job-site training during which students walk through every step of a project.

In-house, Branch foresees another type of workshop in the near future, using products such as Buddy Rhodes furniture molds. "These craft-type workshops would be geared toward anyone, not just contractors, and everyone would create a concrete piece to take home with them." 🛠️

For more information on some of the products used in the showroom of The Rental Branch:

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For more about two of the decorative concrete artisans who worked on the showroom of The Rental Branch:

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## The New Green Building Code

The state of Rhode Island and the city of Richland, Wash., recently adopted the International Green Construction Code (IGCC) as part of their building codes for commercial

buildings. That might not sound all that important if you don't happen to work in either of these small markets, but it's the tip of a big green iceberg that your company's ship is sailing toward at full speed. As the IGCC becomes more recognized, many other states, counties and cities are sure to adopt it as part of their building code.

Let's start by reviewing just what a building code is. There are lots of documents out there called codes and yet most of them are not really building codes in and of themselves. The only real building code is the one that has been legally adopted by the local jurisdiction where the building is being built. For example, the International Residential Code (IRC) is a *model* code that carries no weight until a particular jurisdiction legally adopts it. Likewise, the American Concrete Institute's Building Code Requirements for Reinforced Concrete is not a building code until it is adopted *by reference* into the International Building Code (IBC) or the IRC, which is in turn adopted by a jurisdiction. After that, the sections of ACI 318 that the model code references become enforceable and the designer and builder are liable to meet those requirements — and remember that ignorance of the requirements is not a defense.



by William D.  
Palmer Jr.

The International Code Council (ICC) is the organization that developed the up-and-coming IGCC — and also the IRC and the IBC, which are pretty much the law of the land in the United States today. The ICC was founded about 15 years ago, and it developed the IBC to replace three then-existing model codes. The ICC began to develop the IGCC in 2009 when it became apparent that the demand for “green” buildings wasn't going away anytime soon.

The IGCC is available for adoption into local building codes now, although it is still technically a draft and won't officially be published until early 2012. The current edition is Public Version 2.0, which was finalized in November 2010 following lengthy hearings on all the changes proposed to Version 1.0. If you have any arguments with the current IGCC, now's the time to submit comments.

Now, much as I hate to, let's make this a little bit more complicated. The Portland Cement Association, feeling that the IGCC did not go far enough in emphasizing the need for durable and disaster-resistant buildings, developed their own sustainability code requirements called the High Performance Building Requirements for Sustainability (HPBRS), formatted to be adopted as modifications to the IBC. The high-performance buildings they have targeted are government buildings, especially schools. Obviously, PCA's goal is to promote the use of concrete, so they argue that durability *is* sustainability, because the lowest-impact building of all is the one that doesn't get built. Concrete buildings last longer, so they are more sustainable.

As much as I like the HPBRS, decorative concrete contractors are more

likely to be faced with the provisions of the IGCC. The IGCC is a very complex document. It starts with a large list of minimum requirements, and then each jurisdiction has the option of selecting additional requirements to meet local goals. Finally, there's another set of project-specific “electives” that add even more requirements. I'm not going to get into the jurisdictional requirements or project electives here, but be aware that these provisions could apply to your project.

For this article, I have very briefly (on the following page) listed the IGCC requirements that are most likely to apply to decorative concrete. Look these over, download a copy of the IGCC and get familiar with it. If you don't like something you see here, submit your comments to the ICC or send them to me and I will submit them. We can have more impact together. 📧

*William D. Palmer Jr., P.E., is with Complete Construction Consultants, where he develops technical and educational resources for the construction industry. He can be reached at [wpalmer@cee3.com](mailto:wpalmer@cee3.com).*

*The IGCC is available at the ICC website:*

[www.ICCsafe.org](http://www.ICCsafe.org)

*The High Performance Building Requirements for Sustainability are available at the PCA's website:*

[www.cement.org](http://www.cement.org)

## How the International Green Construction Code Affects You

Most of the requirements in the IGCC that could apply to decorative concrete are not really that new, and often they are things you already do.

### 402.3.2 Stormwater management

— This requires all rainfall to be managed on-site, which will give a big boost to pervious concrete hardscapes. There are some interesting decorative options emerging for pervious.

### 402.3.6 Building site waste management plan

— This requires recycling or salvaging of not less than 75 percent of land-clearing debris and excavated soils.

### 403.1 Walkways and bicycle paths

— These must connect to existing paths or sidewalks, and they must support storm-water management infrastructure, including pervious pavement.

### 404.2.1 Site hardscape materials

— Hardscapes must have a Solar Reflectance Index of 29, which light-colored concrete does. Pervious concrete pavements are automatically deemed to comply.

**406.6 (2.4) Landscape, soil and water quality protection plan** — This requires contractors to prevent runoff from leaving the construction site, including concrete wash water.

**502.1 Construction material and waste management plan** — At least 50 percent of construction waste must be diverted from landfills.

**503.2 Material selection** — At least 55 percent of the total *building* materials used in the project, based on mass or cost, must be recycled materials or locally produced.

**505.1 Building service life plan** — This requirement provides concrete with an advantage because of its long service life. IGCC requires a minimum service life of 60 years with an option to upgrade to 100 or even 200 years.

### 601.3 Minimum requirements

— Buildings need to comply with the International Energy Conservation Code. Concrete is a good choice for its airtightness in walls and thermal mass as flooring.

**608.7.1 Buried piping** — Domestic hot water pipes in or below a slab must be insulated.

**804.2 Radon mitigation** — The IGCC has a long section on radon mitigation and a table of the counties where the section applies. If you work in one of those counties, you'll need to install a radon mitigation system under any slabs, consisting of a minimum 6-mil

polyethylene membrane (I recommend 10-mil minimum) on top of the subbase materials, polyurethane caulk around any slab penetrations (such as pipes), sealing of all joints (control, isolation, construction), and vent pipes within the subbase that terminate above the roof.

**805.1 Scope (in Asbestos Use Prevention section)** — Any materials containing asbestos are prohibited.

**806.2 Adhesives and sealants** — The VOC maximum for architectural sealants is 250 grams per liter.

**806.3 Architectural paints and coatings** — The VOC maximum for concrete curing compounds is 350 grams per liter and for concrete and masonry sealers is 100 grams per liter.

**806.4 Flooring** — Here's where concrete floors have an advantage, since 85 percent of an interior floor area must meet VOC requirements, but concrete flooring is simply "deemed to comply." The same goes for concrete wall systems in section 806.5.

**807.1 Sound transmission** — This section offers another advantage for concrete, since concrete walls are naturally more sound-resistant than wood-frame walls.

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## CARLTON'S CORNER

### Settling on a Design Ahead of Time

Raise your hand if your current projects are chock full of profit with plenty of room for labor overruns. Put your hand down if you raised it because you are just showing off. You don't need me



by Doug Carlton

to tell you how tough today's market is for contractors, and few will disagree that the ball is in our customers' court. Razor-thin margins allow no room for error in one of the many things we used to pay little attention to.

I was on a job the other day when a young contractor, not in our trade, battled with the homeowner and her indecisiveness. The contractor was very patient — in fact, so patient he spent all his profit doing and then redoing his work until finally satisfying the customer. While this young contractor was losing money on this job he could have been making money on another.

I'm going to commit my next few columns to finding ways to put more cash into your pocket. Some may seem simple, but I can tell you from contracting in decorative concrete for 20 years that it is the little details that keep us from profit.

The profit process is threefold. You must sell work, complete it on time and under budget, and then collect. If one of these steps is derailed then you have a severe leak in the profit bucket. If your customer can't make up their mind then this three-step process is in jeopardy.

#### When not to design

Most contractors or at least all new ones confuse being an installer or contractor with being a designer. They assume they must be both to be in the decorative concrete trade. Let's look at both jobs.

If a potential customer calls your firm

looking for ideas for staining at their new retail business, you most likely will be asked to be part of the design phase. Your first meeting will be on-site and you will quickly figure out that a vague design must be determined before you can quote the project. Your next contractor-to-customer contact will be face-to-face as you present how much the project will cost and maybe one simple option. At this point, you are the designer and the decorative contractor, at least if the job is awarded to you. In fact, the only way you can start the three-step process discussed above is to corral your customer into a design.

If this process is rushed, you can almost guarantee yourself a job delay while the customer makes real-time decisions in the field. While you and your crew stand and watch, I might add. If you find yourself both designer and contractor be sure to look ahead at each decision-making issue and have these issues decided upon before starting the project.

Now let's compare this scenario to one that starts with a customer calling who already has a sketch that shows design and stain color. Do not redesign the project even if it differs from your taste. What you may not know is how hard the designer had to work to get the decision-maker, the customer, to this point. Confusing the

situation will only delay the process and possibly keep your firm from landing the project. Remember, you are the installer at this point and the design is out of your hands.

I vividly remember installing a pink driveway for a customer and asking Frank, my foreman, to park our work trucks around the corner. The customer loved it and I loved cashing his check. Taste is different for all of us and your job is not to critique design. The only exception is if the design is lacking in long-term functionality.

I still recommend the standard steps like job-site samples, grout options, sealing options and a maintenance plan. Most decorative concrete designs don't include everything, so be sure to answer questions before they come up. Remember, the profit margin is thin, so there is no reason to leave decisions unmade.

#### They're still waffling?

I can't remember ever quitting a decorative job, but there have been a few times I wanted to. Some customers just take us to this point, and my feeling is that they are just complicated folks.

If you have worked the process as described but still find yourself with the undecided customer, you must understand one important thing. You cannot keep

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throwing things against the wall in hopes they will see something they like. Nothing will burn the profit pile quicker than in-field trial and error.

Sometimes customers will go into a panic, talking about job delays and pressuring you into moving forward even if the forward motion is unknown. Don't fall for this, because our work is extremely permanent and very expensive to change in most cases. I recommend slowing the process down, calmly. I will usually move my crew off the job, and then either a major player within my company or I will meet after hours with the customer to work through the issue. Meeting after hours will create a one-on-one uninterrupted atmosphere where decisions can be made. 📞

*Doug Carlton operates Carlton Concrete Inc. in Visalia, Calif. He can be reached at [carltondoug@comcast.net](mailto:carltondoug@comcast.net).*

## PRODUCT NEWS

### New line of industrial HEPA vacuums launched

Dustless Technologies has expanded their line of dust control systems to include industrial-grade HEPA vacuums for large-scale concrete construction and wood flooring applications.

The new line of vacuums includes three models: the Pro Series 200, Pro Series 300 and Pro Series 600. Each model number reflects the cubic feet per minute handled by each vacuum.

The Dustless Pro Series vacuums provide improved productivity and reliability with a filter system that prevents the vast majority of dust from ever reaching the HEPA filters. The cyclone design captures 98 percent of dust particles before they reach the HEPA filter, greatly extending cleaning intervals. During heavy dust collection operations, cleaning is typically required once an hour. In lighter dust collection operations, the

vacuum can retain peak performance for three to six hours before pulse cleaning.

The Pro Series vacuums can be run off of 120-volt current. The motors are cooled by an air bypass system that keeps dust out of the motor. There are no solenoids to malfunction, making the vacuum very reliable. Guesswork is removed by having a gauge that tells the operator when airflow has dropped and it is time to press the pulse-cleaning button.

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### Hand tile cutter from DeWalt

DeWalt has introduced a 4 3/8-inch Wet and Dry Hand Tile Cutter (DWC860W), a portable saw designed to handle a variety of cuts in stones, tile ceramics and other materials. Ideal for tile installers, pavers, remodelers and masonry and concrete professionals, the DWC860W has the versatility contractors demand with its ability to make crosscuts, beveled or angle cuts and miter cuts in addition to plunge and other compound cuts.

At slightly more than 6 pounds, the DWC860W Tile Cutter features a 10.8-amp motor that delivers 1,300 watts and 13,000 rpm, giving professionals the power and speed they need in a lightweight package. The Tile Cutter also comes equipped with a 13-foot water tube and water nozzles for wet cutting in addition to a GFCI cord, a steel shoe and 45-degree bevel capacity for precise cuts.

The Extended Performance 4 3/8-inch blade that comes with the tool features an aggressive diamond matrix design for cutting porcelain and granite. The 1 3/8-inch depth of cut allows contractors to cut countertops up to 1 1/4 inches thick.

A lock-on button is conveniently located near the trigger, which allows end users to hold the trigger on for ease of use during extended cuts. For durability, dust seals have been incorporated into the handle and trigger to reduce the chances of dust and debris damaging the tool. 

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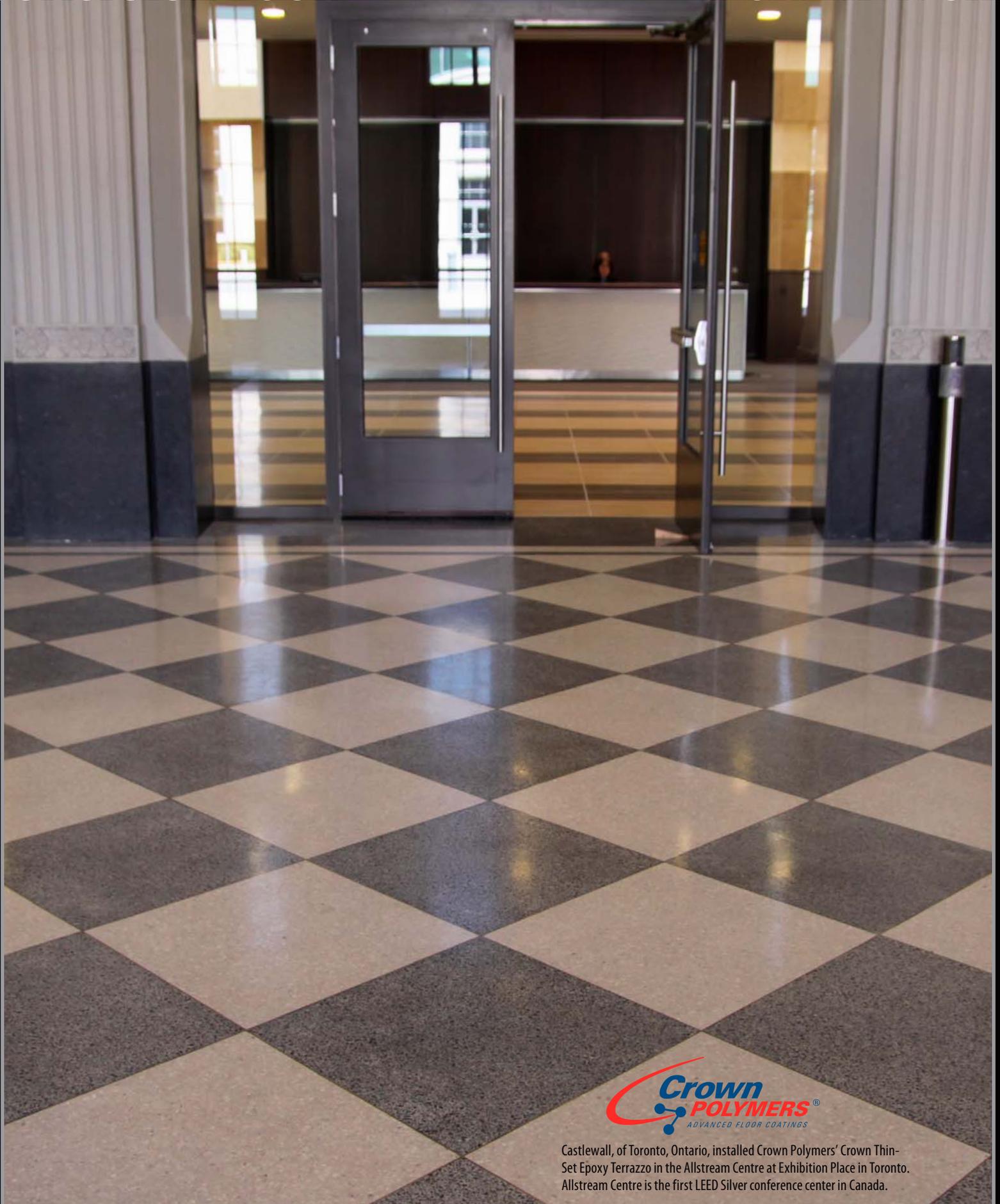
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Castlewall, of Toronto, Ontario, installed Crown Polymers' Crown Thin-Set Epoxy Terrazzo in the Allstream Centre at Exhibition Place in Toronto. Allstream Centre is the first LEED Silver conference center in Canada.

## TROWEL & ERROR

### The Nanotechnology Trend: Hype or Reality?

Is it me, or is nanotechnology everywhere? It seems to be the new buzzword in the decorative concrete industry. I remember the first time I saw the term. It was in a marketing piece for a high-performance coating a few years back. It caught my eye, since I was not familiar with this cool word that conjured images of “Star Wars” and the jump to light speed. Now, nanotechnology seems to be everywhere, and it has become the magic ingredient in any number of sealers, coatings and stains. My fascination quickly turned to investigation, as I wanted to know what exactly nanotechnology is and what the benefits it brought to the decorative industry.



by Chris Sullivan

My first stop, as with most of my research projects, was Google. Amazing what you can find on the Internet. The definition for nanotechnology reads something like this: Nanotechnology is the study of manipulating matter on an atomic and molecular scale. Also referred to as “nanotech,” it generally deals with structures sized between 1 to 100 nanometers in at least one dimension, and involves developing materials or devices within that size. For those of us who do not deal in nanometers on a daily basis, a nanometer is 1 billionth of a meter. For some perspective, a human hair is said to be 80,000 nanometers thick. Bottom line, nanotechnology deals with extremely tiny stuff, far smaller than anything we can see without powerful microscopes.

After gaining a better understanding of what nanotechnology was, my next step was to find someone who deals in the “nano” world on a regular basis. I wanted to know if nanotechnology truly was improving

products used in the decorative concrete industry. I contacted Steven Reinstadtler, who is market development manager — construction for the Coatings, Adhesives and Specialties (CAS) division at Bayer MaterialScience AG. He has spent the last 20 years developing polyurethane and polyurea systems for the construction industry.

Reinstadtler says there are three key areas where nanotechnology has led to improvements in the coating and stain industry. The first includes advances in the use of silver at the nano level to improve the biocide properties of coatings. The element silver is a strong biocide. Recent breakthroughs allow it to be incorporated into a coating at a nano level, providing a built-in biocide. Imagine a coating that never needs to be disinfected and that on its own kills any germs that come in contact with it.

The second area involves nanocarbon tubes that allow for greater static discharge.

This is important for coatings that are being applied on floors in laboratories and manufacturing facilities where sensitive equipment and research is taking place.

The third area in which nanotechnology developments have impacted the coatings industry is with nanoaluminum oxide, which helps increase abrasion resistance. The ability to manipulate metallic-grit aluminum oxide at such a small scale allows for more of the product to be dispersed into coatings that increase abrasion resistance, resulting in longer service life.

OK, those are all great developments, but what does any of that have to do with the decorative industry? In my opinion, nothing at all! In all my research I could not find one technical paper or any research that relates developments in nanotechnology to any products used in the concrete industry in general. What I did find was that most all coatings and sealers used in our industry are considered nano — not as a result of any

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recent developments, but rather in that the size of the resin particles in acrylics, polyurethanes, polyureas, polyaspartics, epoxies and so on all fall into the 1-nanometer to 100-nanometer size that defines nanotechnology. One can then surmise that most all coatings, sealers and stains used in the decorative industry use some type of nanotechnology.

This brings me back to where we started. The question still stands. Is the buzz surrounding nanotechnology in the decorative industry real or just a marketing ploy? That is for you to answer. But keep this in mind: Back in the late '80s the manufacturers of 7UP soda developed a national marketing campaign that touted their product as "caffeine-free." It was designed to compete against the big cola manufacturers. The campaign was designed to give the impression that 7UP is *now* caffeine-free. What most people missed was that it had always been caffeine-free. Marketing and advertising is a powerful tool.

What I will finally say is that all of us in the decorative industry have a responsibility to research the products being promoted to make sure they actually perform as promised. 🛠️

*Chris Sullivan is vice president of sales and marketing with ChemSystems Inc. He has presented seminars and product demonstrations throughout North America. Contact him with technical questions at [trowelandererror@protradepub.com](mailto:trowelandererror@protradepub.com).*

*Chris Sullivan will teach "Taking the Mystery out of Sealers" at the Concrete Decor Show & Spring Training in Nashville on Wednesday, March 16 at 8 a.m. For more information, go to [www.ConcreteDecorShow.com](http://www.ConcreteDecorShow.com).*



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## PROJECT PROFILE

# Cleveland Cavaliers Team Shop Floor Cleveland, Ohio

By *Natasha Chilingirian*

If someone wanted to prove that decorative concrete is the ideal way to create a show-stopping floor, mentioning the Cleveland Cavaliers Team Shop would be a great way to do it.

A crew from PDM Concrete LLC, a Cleveland-based decorative concrete contracting company owned by Patrick Maloy, completed 6,000 square feet of epoxy floor coating work in the NBA team's renovated multimillion-dollar team shop in September 2010. In this two-story space are epoxy-coated floors that sport the rust-orange color and black lines of a basketball.

This wasn't the first time Maloy worked

### Project at a Glance

**Client:** Cleveland Cavaliers, Cleveland

**Decorative concrete contractor:** Patrick Maloy, PDM Concrete LLC, Cleveland

**Architect:** Phillip Badalamenti, Herschman Architects Inc., Cleveland

**General contractor:** Kurt Heinicke and Don Harley, Albert M. Higley Co., Cleveland

**Project manager:** Ellsworth Grimsley, Rock Companies, Livonia, Mich.

**Timeline:** 80 days

**Project specs:** 6,000 square feet of epoxy flooring in a two-level NBA team shop (4,000 square feet on the first floor and 2,000 square feet on the second floor)

**Materials supplier:** Düraamen Engineered Products Inc., Newark, N.J.

**Düraamen materials used:** Perdüre E02 primer in copper, Lümiere epoxy coating in bronze, Perdüre E20 in jet black, Perdüre P70 topcoat



Photos courtesy of PDM Concrete LLC

with the Cleveland Cavaliers — four years ago, he was hired for a stained floor project at the Cleveland Clinic Courts, a practice facility used by the team. After he had been hired for the team-shop floor job, Maloy approached his client with samples of the Lümiere Metallic Epoxy Flooring System from decorative flooring products manufacturer Düraamen Engineered Products Inc. He had used it in the past, but this was the first time Cavaliers officials had seen it. “I took it upon myself to do a sample of the Lümiere system and showed it to the owners in a meeting, and they loved it,” Maloy says.

Ellsworth Grimsley, senior vice president of construction for Rock Companies (a management and construction company that owns a stake in the Cavaliers) managed the team-shop floor project. He says decorative concrete was chosen for its economical, durable and low-maintenance

qualities. “(Decorative concrete) gave us the opportunity to create a unique and distinctive look and to create a design in the floor that we couldn’t generate with any other flooring product,” he says.

The Lümiere flooring system in particular allowed them to achieve an eye-catching result, Grimsley says. “It’s an epoxy, so it’s hard and durable, and it offers a color selection that has metallic aspects.”



# “They wanted to create a **WOW** factor with this floor.”

— Victor Pachadé, general manager, Düraamen Engineered Products Inc.

Compared to an acid stain, Lümiere has more reflectivity and dimension, and it looks like it has texture even though it's on a completely smooth floor, Grimsley says. “We were able to create a look of depth and movement that wouldn't be available in a floor (acid) stain.”

Düraamen general manager Victor Pachadé calls Lümiere a “designer epoxy flooring system” and says that unlike with some single-tone epoxies, contractors can mix different hues of Lümiere products to create unique colors. “Because of the reflectivity of the epoxy, it gives you a three-dimensional look,” Pachadé says. “You can get creative by combining different pigments and create some really cool looks.”

Lümiere creates variations in color, just as acid stains do, Pachadé says. However, application of Lümiere results in less residue and offers a more predictable result.

“Here on the East Coast, we've been noticing stained concrete in a lot of high-end apartments,” Pachadé says. “You can create the same look with Lümiere, but with less residue management. And your end result will be the same color as the sample — there won't be surprises or variation.”

In the team shop, Lümiere gave the Cleveland Cavaliers owners the luxurious look they were going for, Pachadé says. “They wanted to create a wow factor with this floor,” he says. “They wanted a very rich, high-end look.”

Maloy and a crew of seven began the installation process by applying a joint filler to fill the saw cuts in the cured concrete, which had been poured by the general contractor 30 days prior. “We did that so when you look at the floor, you don't even realize it's concrete,” Maloy says. “You would have no idea where the saw cuts were.” Then, he sanded the entire surface.

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Next, the basketball-pattern seams were etched into the floor with a 4-inch grinder. Responding to a high reading on a moisture-vapor emission rate test, workers applied a moisture vapor treatment product to quickly bring the surface’s emission rate down from eight pounds to below three pounds (per 1,000 square feet in 24 hours). This ensured the epoxy coating would not peel off the surface once it was applied.

Maloy and his crew then applied Düraamen’s Copper Lumiere as a primer, followed by the Lumiere epoxy coating in Bronze. The combination of the two colors helped Maloy achieve the “orangeish leather color” of a basketball, he says. The coating was topped off with two coats of Perdure P70, a durable, chemical-resistant, clear topcoat.



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To create the "orangesish leather color" of a basketball in the Cleveland Cavaliers Team Shop, PDM Concrete LLC applied Düraamen's Lumière in Copper and Bronze colors. The team was so happy with the outcome that PDM Concrete will redo the floors in the Cavaliers practice facility.

To make the basketball seams, the crew filled the lines that had been etched into the floor with Perdüre E20, an epoxy in Jet Black, followed by another coat of the Perdüre P70. Pachadé says this particular topcoat was chosen for its curing speed — it cures in just three to five days.

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Perdure P70. The face of the team shop building is comprised of glass, but before the glass was installed, tarps were hung to protect the shop from exterior elements. Unfortunately, thousands of bugs called midges made their way through the tarps one day and got stuck in the epoxy material on the first floor of the shop.

As a result, Maloy says he had to sand the entire floor to remove the bugs and reapply the Bronze Lumiere epoxy coating. "We were on a really tight schedule, so we had to coordinate," Maloy says. "Scheduling was a big part of it."

Fortunately, the strict schedule was abided by, and the floors were complete in just 80 days.

"It's pretty amazing — I don't know of another multimillion-dollar project that was done in that amount of time," Maloy says.

The finished result is an awe-inspiring floor that's received a flood of attention.

(Maloy says the new team shop has "been in the news like crazy.") If you stand on the top level, which has a giant oval-shaped opening in it, and look down past the glass railings to the first floor, you might notice the basketball seams on the first floor are perfectly aligned with those on the second floor.

"That's the neatest thing," Maloy says, adding that "the Lumiere almost looks 3-D. It has depth and it really looks like leather. It's not a stain, it's a coating, but it still has the dimension of a stain."

Now, the Cleveland Cavaliers facility Maloy first worked on — the Cleveland Clinic Courts — will be getting the Lumiere treatment as well. Maloy will be installing 4,000 square feet of the flooring system in the team's new colors (deeper, brighter versions of their original wine and gold) at the facility in the near future.

"I feel so fortunate to have built this relationship with the Cleveland Cavaliers," Maloy says. "They've given us great opportunities."

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## TruNano Sealers & Coatings from Evolution Surface Solutions

Inspired by a desire to develop and utilize responsible chemistry for the environment, a group of scientists and chemists teamed up to create Evolution Surface Solutions. Now, after seven years of product testing, Evolution Surface Solutions has released their line of TruNano Sealers & Coatings, which is made up of five sealers, six coatings and two additives.

Four of the TruNano products have been created specifically for use with concrete applications. TruNano Multi-Surface Sealer can be used with concrete, and the TruNano Concrete Floor System is comprised of TruNano Stone and Concrete Enhancer Plus, Creative Color Dyes, and TruNano Concrete Armor.

Each of the products has been created with nanotechnology to help them repel water, dirt, oils and acids. The products' particles create a tight bond with each other, making it difficult for substances to penetrate the surface.

Although the term "nanotechnology" typically describes anything that is less than 100 nanometers in size, Evolution Surface Solutions has managed to use molecules that are less than 30 nanometers in size, making the bond even harder to penetrate. This also helps prevent the coatings from chipping, flaking and peeling.

What sets TruNano Sealers & Coatings apart from other nanotechnology products is their green properties. The sealers are water-based and emit zero VOCs, while the coatings are low-VOC. In addition they are biodegradable. Evolution marketing director Valerie Behrendt says the company followed the "12 Principles of Green Chemistry," displayed on the website of the Environmental Protection Agency and credited to Paul Anastas and John C. Warner, to ensure that the products were ecofriendly.

TruNano Multi-Surface Sealer is a breathable sealer for concrete that is both



Photo courtesy of Evolution Surface Solutions

moisture- and stain-resistant, and it can be applied with a sprayer or roller. The invisible sealer is dry to the touch within 15 minutes, when a second coat can also be added.

The TruNano Stone and Concrete Enhancer Plus is another sealer, which is designed to protect concrete surfaces from moisture damage and stains. It won't break down in sunlight. It is also ideal for use in decorative applications as it enhances the color of the concrete.

Best of all, it can be mixed with Creative Color Dyes, allowing users to apply color and sealer in one step. The dyes are currently available in 13 colors, and custom colors can be created through mixing or layered application.

Rounding out Evolution's line for concrete is TruNano Concrete Armor. Created with nanotechnology based on quartz molecules, it creates a rock-hard topcoat that protects against moisture, acids, oils and wear from heavy traffic. When applied over color, it helps prevent dyes from oxidation.

Another big benefit of using the TruNano Concrete Floor System is the time it can save contractors thanks to fast dry times and combining steps.

"You can put down a sealer and a color in the same step, and it's dry to the touch within 10 minutes. After waiting two hours, you can apply Concrete Armor on top," says Behrendt. "To achieve those three steps in one day, when it typically takes up to four days, gives contractors a substantial labor cost advantage."

Kinloch USA manufactures all of the TruNano products. 

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# coating & topping CONCRETE

## PRODUCT NEWS

### New Bello Imperial flooring system from Engrave-A-Crete

Engrave-A-Crete Inc. has added the Bello Imperial Flooring system to its line of products.

The Bello Imperial system is a pigmented epoxy flooring system that delivers a highly polished floor. The finished surface can be marbled or made to look like authentic polished granite, and it can either be used alone or incorporated with concrete engraving or other decorative techniques.

Engrave-A-Crete currently offers monthly seminars on the system.

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🌐 [www.engageacrete.com](http://www.engageacrete.com)

### Arizona Polymer releases Castorcrete urethane mortar

Arizona Polymer Flooring has introduced their latest innovative product

line, Castorcrete.

Castorcrete is a heavy-duty, thermal-shock-resistant urethane mortar that is designed to resurface moderately deteriorated concrete and withstands extreme physical and chemical abuse.

Castorcrete provides an unmatched level of performance in both durability and ease of use, giving contractors a competitive advantage. It allows for superior workability and longer set time, which equates to more time for project completion and better overall aesthetics for your finished flooring system.

🌐 [www.apfepoxy.com](http://www.apfepoxy.com)

### Green Umbrella debuts sealer

Green Umbrella is releasing Green Umbrella Outdoor Microfilm, an environmentally friendly hybrid surface treatment that creates a durable microthin

layer to seal concrete floors. Green Umbrella Outdoor Microfilm is perfect for broom-finished, porous and consolidated concrete surfaces, improving slip and abrasion resistance. When properly applied, the microfilm forms a breathable, dense, protective layer.

Green Umbrella Outdoor Microfilm will not peel or flake, and it stands up to heavy abrasion and high-foot-traffic areas. It resists acids both organic and inorganic as well as other chemicals it is exposed to, and it does not support mildew or fungus growth. It forms a protective shield against UV rays, extending the color retention of a decorative concrete slab, and it will withstand temperature extremes. Treated concrete is highly resistant to aviation oils and boasts a beautiful gloss finish.

Green Umbrella Outdoor Microfilm is designed for outdoor decorative concrete or

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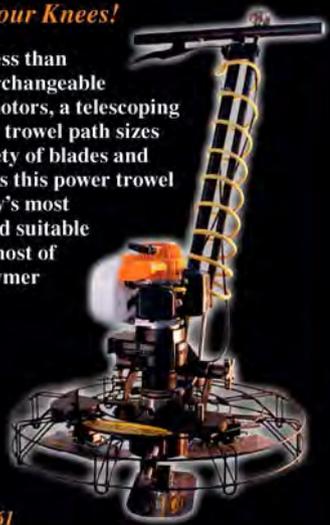
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### Automated spray system from Fas-Trak Industries

Fas-Trak Industries has released the Ultra-Spray, an automated spray system that is fully pressurized and designed to save both time and labor dollars.

The Ultra-Spray can be used for a number of applications, including curing and sealing compounds, form treatments, finish coats, emulsifiers, dyes and stains. It is ideal for use in schools, educational facilities, medical centers, convention centers, retail stores and even outdoors.



Featuring an adjustable nozzle, the Ultra-Spray is capable of spraying up to 20,000 square feet per hour and can operate for three hours at a time on a 12-volt battery. It can house a 5-gallon bucket, which can be changed out quickly, and it weighs just 25 pounds.

[www.fastrakind.com](http://www.fastrakind.com)

### New Graffiti Shield Coating at Quest

Quest Building Products is now offering its newest product for graffiti defense, Graffiti Shield. Graffiti Shield from Kretus is a two-component hybrid polymer that graffiti cannot adhere to. It is applied as easily as any paint by rolling or spraying and can be applied to almost any surface.

The permanent, fast-drying, VOC-free formula is applied thin, at a rate of 600 square feet per gallon.

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[www.questbuilding.com](http://www.questbuilding.com)

### Corotech coating brand unveiled

Complementary Coatings Corp. has unveiled a complete portfolio of superior industrial maintenance coating systems with the creation of Insl-x-branded Corotech High Performance Coatings. The new line represents years of research, development and field experience with high-

performing products from Insl-x Industrial Maintenance and Coronado Industrial Coatings.

The Insl-x brand, which is well-known in the industrial maintenance market, will now distinguish its line of industrial paints, primers and coatings under the Corotech sub-brand. In addition, the company's Coronado industrial line has been integrated into the new label. The combined portfolio includes waterborne acrylics systems, aliphatic urethane systems and an extensive array of epoxies, enamels and corrosion protection primers.

A complete selection of support materials is also under development, including new product guides, ready-mix and custom-color cards, and custom fan decks. Some Corotech High Performance products are available now, and the full line of Corotech products is expected to be available by early 2011. Plans to expand the line are also scheduled for 2011.

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Kurt Geiger

Jeff Kudrick and Concrete Design Studio teamed up to create eight concrete display tables for the shoe department at Selfridges department store in London, United Kingdom. Photos courtesy of Jeff Kudrick

## PROJECT PROFILE

# Selfridges Shoe Department Display Tables London, United Kingdom

by *Natasha Chilingirian*

In the women's shoe department of a Selfridges department store in London, decorative concrete and fashion make a fine pair. Eight concrete display tables in one of the six rooms of The Shoe Galleries show off the latest shoes from brands like Carvela, Nine West and French Connection. Their angular shapes are interesting enough to catch the eye, but their colors are neutral enough to ensure the shoes are the main event.

The tables' journey from the United States to London was far from simple. Jeff Kudrick, a decorative concrete artisan out of Randolph, N.J., crafted the tables for the London location of the high-end, UK-based Selfridges chain in conjunction with Rockaway, N.J.-based Concrete Design Studio (CDS). Kudrick says he and his project partners were presented with a tight deadline, and due to the tables' unusual shapes (seating platforms and long overhangs give the platforms something like a truncated "S" shape when viewed from the side), thoughtful and precise design was required.

In the end, the client's vision was fulfilled, and Kudrick calls the finished result a look into the future of decorative concrete.

"This is a testament to what decorative concrete can do," he says. "The architect knew no bounds and designed something really radical, and we were able to deliver the product with this material based on what they had in mind."

Eddie Miles, who works for Selfridges and served as the project manager, says Jamie Fobert of London-based JFA Architecture, who designed the store's Shoe Galleries in their entirety, chose decorative concrete for the display tables because it's a material that's not usually associated with shoe displays or retail shops. Fobert chose



other unexpected materials throughout the galleries as well, such as Corten steel and pewter. "The materials chosen have a very interesting, sensuous quality in their own right without recourse to decoration or pattern," Miles says.

The project began when architects from JFA Architecture created preliminary drawings to demonstrate Selfridges' vision for the tables. Then, working with JFA Architecture, Kudrick created a shop drawing of the table parts (20 in all, for eight tables). Designer Brad Jenkins of Morristown, N.J.-based Brad Jenkins Inc. Interior Design produced 3-D computer models of the table parts, which were used to build "masters" — exact-size wood replicas of each table piece.

The masters were sanded, polished and waxed. Then, modeled off the

### Project at a Glance

**Client:** Selfridges, London

**Decorative concrete contractor:** Jeff Kudrick, Randolph, N.J., and Concrete Design Studio (CDS), Rockaway, N.J.

**Project manager:** Eddie Miles, Selfridges

**Architect/designer:** Jamie Fobert, JFA Architecture, London, England

**3-D modeling designer:** Brad Jenkins, Brad Jenkins Inc. Interior Design, Morristown, N.J.

**Wood masters supplier:** John Earle, Sienna Woodworks, Rockaway, N.J.

**Timeline:** 2 months

**Project specs:** Eight decorative concrete department store shoe display tables. Tables are approximately 20 feet long, 3 feet high and range in width from 40 inches to 8 feet.

**Material suppliers:** Infinicrete, Cheng Concrete, Surecrete Design Products

**Materials used:** Custom-made Infinicrete fiberglass molds, Cheng NeoMix system, Surecrete ARS 400, Surecrete SureFinish

# countertops & precast CONCRETE :



The display tables were created in New Jersey, shipped to London and assembled. They are approximately 20 feet long, 3 feet high and range in width from 40 inches to 8 feet.

**“This is a testament to what decorative concrete can do.”**

— Jeff Kudrick, decorative concrete contractor

masters, custom molds were crafted out of fiberglass at the shop of Infinicrete (a company co-owned by Kudrick). To form the actual table pieces, Kudrick used the NeoMix system from Cheng Concrete. He sprayed in a face mix, hand-placed layers of a fiber-rich backer mix and added reinforcement with fiberglass scrim fabric.

Most table pieces were removed from their molds after one day, except for one, which required three days of curing.

“The largest section needed a longer cure time to support its own weight,” Kudrick says. “Then we could make the flip without causing any damage.”

Next, Kudrick checked over the concrete pieces for pinholes. (He says a mild amount of porosity was acceptable on the surfaces.) The tables were to be assembled on-site at Selfridges. To ensure smooth assembly, Kudrick put the pieces together in his shop to make sure they were perfectly aligned. He drilled holes and inserted bolts in the pieces to hold them together, then pulled them apart. Finally, he sealed the pieces with Surecrete’s ARS 400 and waxed with Surecrete’s SureFinish surface wax.

Assembling the pieces in the shop was difficult due to their large size and weight, Kudrick says. Also posing a challenge were the pieces’ corners, which form sharp points. “It was tedious and problematic pulling such large sections together without chipping corners,” he says. “We used foam with 2-pound density, wood blocks, shims and levers to slide them together. The end sections, which weighed up to 1,000 pounds, were placed against 1,500-pound sections, and they had to be perfectly level and flush with one another.”

As workers began crating the pieces for their voyage overseas, every second counted. And before the pieces were sealed, a problem occurred that slowed their progress — a fluorescent lamp ballast overheated in the shop, causing a brown ooze to leak onto one of the pieces. Luckily, Kudrick successfully removed the stain with acetone. He says if anything else had gone wrong, he likely would not have met the project deadline. “The last pieces were being finished up as the crates were arriving. Our time frame was down to the minute.”

The pieces arrived in London in perfect condition and were assembled for placement in the largest shoe gallery.

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# countertops & precast CONCRETE

Miles says Kudrick accomplished something that could not have been achieved by a contractor in the UK. "The sheer scale of the pieces is truly impressive, as well as the quality of finish and the finesse of detail that has been achieved."

The tables hold shoes that are priced lower than other shoes in the galleries, and Kudrick says the natural gray color of the concrete matches the "street" vibe of the room's merchandise.

"The raw gray look is like the street," Kudrick says. "The room has a really rustic, raw feel, which is why they wanted the gray

color."

The tables were built to last, and they have received an amazing response from Selfridges customers, Miles notes.

"Even with such high customer numbers and the anticipated wear and tear, the pieces look very sharp and clean," he says. "Clearly the material has a very good inherent durability. Personally speaking, I feel that the size and solidity of the pieces have a calming presence in what might otherwise be a chaotic space when the store is trading flat out."

[www.cdsconcrete.com](http://www.cdsconcrete.com)

## PRODUCT NEWS

### New styles from Federal Brace

Federal Brace has released 10 new styles in its family of countertop support and bracket products.

The company has added five new shapes to its gusseted L-shaped countertop support brackets. Four styles utilize a decoratively shaped gusset cross plate between the support flanges, while the fifth adds a plate gusset with a round rod gusset.

Added to the elevated counter supports line is the San Juan, which is similar to the company's popular San Marino. The San Juan has a round rod gusset with a plate gusset.

The Carrier Countertop Support Bracket is a design that utilizes the features of Federal Brace's hidden countertop products while adding the strength of a support gusset that runs the length of the bracket.

The new Enterprise Support, Foremont Support and Perrine Decorative Support are countertop-mounted support brackets.

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## SUCCESS WITH CONCRETE COUNTERTOPS

### Understanding Water

In this series of five articles (with this being the first) I will talk about some of the important factors that can help you be more successful with your concrete countertops. This first article starts with a fundamental ingredient: water. We've all worked with concrete and water, but working with a material isn't the same as knowing how it works.



by Jeffrey Girard

Before getting into the nitty-gritty of making "good" concrete, let's step back and consider the final product we're making. If we're making a concrete countertop, then the two broad characteristics we are most interested in are looks and strength. Looks are important because we don't get paid for concrete that doesn't look like what the client wants. Strength is important because cracked concrete is seen as a failure and a problem.

#### The importance of water

Many of the characteristics of concrete that are important to our clients and us are dictated and directly affected by water. The proportion by weight of water used relative to the weight of cement in the concrete is called the water-to-cement (w/c) ratio. Factors like early and ultimate strength, color, set time, porosity, durability, shrinkage and curling tendency are all controlled by the w/c ratio. Too much water makes for weak, pale, crack-prone concrete.

As we all know, concrete gets stronger when less water is used, yet many times excess water is added to the concrete (for example, to improve workability) with no regard for the consequences. Think of the new concrete as trying to grow crystals. If there's too much water keeping the crystals apart, they can't knit together, and therefore the whole structure is weak and porous.

Knowing that water plays a critical role is the first step. Starting with a low w/c ratio is important, but maintaining that ratio is also just as important. Good quality concrete countertop mixes often use w/c ratios ranging from 0.30 to as high as 0.38. It does no good to arbitrarily add more water simply to improve workability. Not only does the amount of water increase, the exact quantity you've added is unknown.

#### Water and color

Water plays a big role in the appearance of the concrete. The more water that's added, the paler and more washed-out the color will be. Think of grape Kool-Aid. If you add more water, it gets paler. Aesthetics are critical, and if two batches of concrete look different your clients won't be happy and even may refuse to pay. That's why it is so important to measure your water carefully, by weight, and record the amount of water used in your color formulas.

Use superplasticizers, not water, to add workability. Superplasticizers can turn concrete that looks dry and crumbly into

something smooth, creamy and pourable. The concrete will be better-consolidated, and the resulting casting will be crisp, precise and have significantly fewer pinholes or voids.

#### Water's role continues with curing

Water still plays a critical role even after casting. Over time, the water and the cement react. This is called hydration, and it continues for as long as there are water and unreacted cement particles present. We all know concrete takes time to gain strength. The longer concrete's internal moisture levels are high enough, the stronger it will become.

Curing is very important early on when the concrete is young, weak and prone to losing the internal moisture it needs to get strong. Typically concrete countertops are wet-cured under plastic while still in the molds for one to four days. Afterwards, wet processing to grind, hone or polish the concrete maintains the moisture levels and prolongs wet curing. Only after five to seven days do most concrete countertops begin the drying process so that they can be sealed.

Good curing means covering the concrete with plastic and trapping evaporated moisture. All of the water the concrete will ever need to fully hydrate is added to the concrete during mixing. When the concrete is wetted down with water during curing, we're not putting more water into the concrete. The added water simply acts as a buffer, preventing evaporation from drawing moisture out from inside the concrete.

As concrete cures, it gains strength and gets less porous. Denser, more mature concrete retains its internal moisture better than new, porous concrete. That's because the internal crystalline structure that's growing and developing is denser in older concrete and looser and more open in newly cast concrete.

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# Knowing that water plays a critical role is the first step.

When concrete dries out, hydration eventually stops. Adding water will restart hydration for the areas that have access to that added water. Letting your concrete dry out is an eventual necessity for sealing, but premature or uneven drying can cause problems that include color variations, cracks, curling, low strength and porosity.

While plastic sheeting is a simple way to keep concrete moist, other means are used too.

## Water and GFRC

Glass-fiber reinforced concrete (GFRC) uses specialized acrylic polymers to aid in retaining moisture. The polymer slows evaporation by reducing porosity, effectively acting as an internal curing membrane. Typical curing methods still help, but because the concrete loses moisture more slowly, GFRC is typically covered with plastic only for the first day.

Conventional concrete mixes that don't use polymer must rely on external curing methods to maintain high internal moisture levels, so good curing practices become very important.

Regardless of the type of concrete, the longer it wet-cures the stronger and better it will be. 🛠️

*Jeffrey Girard is founder and president of The Concrete Countertop Institute and a pioneer of engineered concrete countertops. He can be reached at [jeffg@concretecountertopinstitute.com](mailto:jeffg@concretecountertopinstitute.com).*

Jeffrey Girard will teach "A Solid Foundation for Great Concrete Countertops" at the Concrete Decor Show & Spring Training in Nashville on Thursday, March 17 at 8 a.m. For more information, go to [www.ConcreteDecorShow.com](http://www.ConcreteDecorShow.com).



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In March 2008, Ken Heitzmann of Decorative Concrete Services hosted a two-day event in Milton-Freewater, Wash., featuring live demos such as this one.

Photo by Wendy Ardolino

## Getting Creative with Finishing Brooms

by Chris Mayo

Consider the broom finish. Because steel trowel finishes are “slippery when wet,” the broom finish has been used for years to create nonskid surfaces on driveways, garage floors, sidewalks and loading docks. It’s not necessarily pretty, but it works — it’s a utilitarian texture.

But what if you want texture and style too? Can a broom finish provide both?

“A broom finish isn’t unattractive,” says Gary Bolden, president of Marion Brush Mfg. “Most contractors tend to go at right angles, and that can be, well, kind of boring. An approach as simple as dividing the substrate into sections and brooming them with opposing diagonal patterns can create a more aesthetically pleasing look. It’s a subtle alternative, but it can make the difference between a driveway or sidewalk that looks like all the rest and one that people notice.”

What about as a means to spread a secondary coating, like a stain or sealer? Can a broom do that without leaving telltale marks? Yes, according to Anthony Jones, business development manager at Riviera Brush Co.

“We realized a long time ago that brooms and brushes can be used for much more than to create a simple nonskid

surface,” he says. “Contractors can use brooms to apply water-based solid colors, acid stains and some sealers. You may choose to use a broom that leaves a distinctive bristle mark and alternate directions for an interesting pattern, or you can use a specialized broom that leaves no lines to massage the product into the concrete surface. This technique can be particularly useful in stamped or other rough applications where the secondary coating tends to pool in the lower areas. Smaller brooms, like a 4-inch round hand-held, can be used to achieve a faux finish.”

Choosing the right broom for your needs requires some thought. The kind of push broom you might pick up at the local home improvement or hardware store will almost never work well for laying down a quality broom finish on concrete. They tend to be too heavy and too stiff. They have more body than a finishing broom — five or six rows of bristles versus the two rows that are typical of most finishing brooms. As a result, they tend to pull away the cream and exposing the aggregate. Generally, finishing brooms for concrete have softer bristles than do standard construction brooms.

Brooms with stiffer bristles may be appropriate when a truly rough nonskid

surface is desired — for example, in areas where ice is a persistent concern.

Finishing-broom bristles may be made from a variety of materials, ranging from horsehair to plastic fiber to an array of synthetic fibers.

Contractors should also consider the handles on their brooms. Unlike standard brooms, many finishing broom handles bolt to the broom head, allowing the operator to adjust the angle at which the bristle meets the concrete surface. Some brooms are designed with no handles at all, the idea being that the operator will pull them across the surface with a rope. These are useful on concrete pours that are too large to reach with a typical broom handle or in tight areas where a handle would be difficult to manipulate.

With some simple care, a finishing broom can last a long time. Bristles should be thoroughly cleaned after each use (a good hosing should do the trick) to keep excess concrete paste from accumulating. After cleaning, the broom should be allowed to dry completely.

To risk stating the obvious, the key to being satisfied with your finishing broom lies in doing a little research and choosing the broom that fits your needs.



### Bon Tool Co. — The Weigh-Less Concrete Finishing Brush

Weigh-Less Finishing Brushes from Bon Tool Co. provide a simple and efficient way to texture concrete. The brushes are available with bristles that are either medium in thickness or coarse, and they come in a variety of widths from 24 inches to 60 inches. Brushes with smaller widths are easier to manipulate and will give the user more finishing options. Replacement bristle fiber strips are available in all widths.

☎ (724) 443-7080

🌐 [www.bontool.com](http://www.bontool.com)

### Kraft Tool Co. — Concrete Aluminum Finishing Broom

This lightweight aluminum broom offers three styles of bristles to choose from: medium/general purpose, extra soft, and natural horsehair and poly blend. It’s available in five sizes ranging from 24 inches to 72 inches. All bristles are epoxy-glued for strength and



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## Kraft Tool Co. — Hand Curb & Concrete Finish Brush

This lightweight curb brush has a built-in comfortable wood handle for finishing newly laid concrete. It's 12 inches long with soft poly horsehair-blend bristles.



☎ (800) 422-2448

🌐 [www.krafttool.com](http://www.krafttool.com)

## Kraft Tool Co. — Pool Finish Brush

This lightweight 12-inch brush is designed specifically for pool finishes. It has a comfortable wood handle, custom Nylex fiber bristles, and is billed as being good for exposing aggregate on areas surrounding pools.



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## Marion Brush Mfg. Co. — Auto Glide with Brush Inserts

The Auto Glide is designed to be used with handles. It automatically tilts on both push and pull passes, eliminating the need to lift your brush across your pour. Available in 2-, 3-, 4- and 6-foot widths, it offers five separate color-coded texturing brush inserts, with textures ranging from soft-bristle to coarse.



☎ (800) 930-9062

🌐 [www.marionbrush.com](http://www.marionbrush.com)

## Marion Brush Mfg. Co. — The Chameleon Single Brush

The Chameleon Single features a unique adjustable push-pull design that allows you to adjust the degree of angle on both push and pull passes. It uses the sides of the bristles instead of the ends to produce a superior brush finish. It's available in 4-, 6- and 8-foot widths and with five separate texturing color-coded brush inserts.

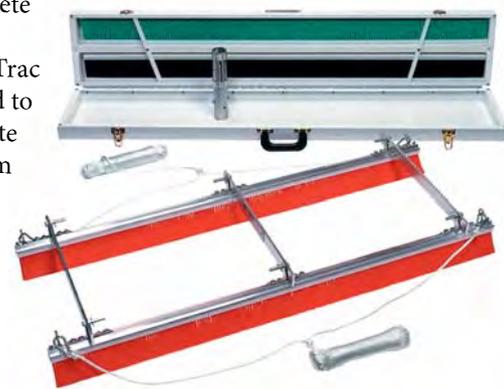


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## Marion Brush Mfg. Co. — The Chameleon Trac II Kit

This handleless concrete finishing system (which features the Chameleon Trac II rope brush) is designed to be pulled across a concrete surface, leaving a uniform textured finish in its wake. The rope brush converts easily from its handleless twin-brush form into two individual brushes to be used with the Marion Multi-Use adapter and handles. It also converts into a bull float with brush or a fresno trowel with brush by adding Marion adapter bar kits. It's available in 4-, 6- and 8-foot lengths. A standard kit includes: Chameleon Trac II soft (black) brush inserts, two medium brush inserts (orange), two stiff brush inserts (green), Multi-Use adapter and carry case.



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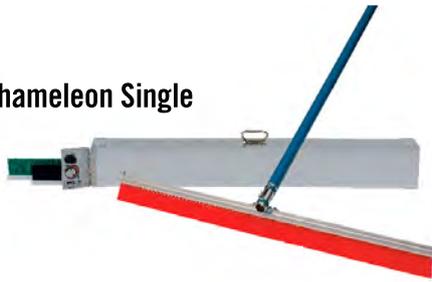
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**Riviera Brush Co. — Orange-Crete Medium Applications Blocks**

The blocks come in three sizes, all of which feature standard thread holes and flagged fiber bristles 2 1/2 inches in length. The blocks come in 8-, 9- and 10-inch widths.

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## Five Ways to Make Pervious Concrete Decorative

Here are five ways that decorative concrete contractors can adapt decorative techniques to pervious concrete.

- Ensure there is enough hydration-stabilizing admixture (HSA) in the mix to allow an appropriate time to perform the stamping process. An average dose of HSA for 70 F to 80 F is 10 to 14 ounces per 100 pounds of cementitious material. I typically add at least 6 to 8 more ounces per 100 pounds of cement. This addition usually buys me another one to two hours of extra working time. It is critical to not disturb the pervious material once hydration begins.

- Alter your staining processes. All stains will work on pervious, provided soybean oil is not already on the surface. That said, the



by Jim Miller

use of acid stain on pervious will require a lot of neutralizing material due to the nature of the pervious surface.

Typically, both acid and water-based stains will require some sort of sealer to hold the color permanently. The problem is acrylic sealer applied by normal methods will clog the slab. Bean oil with a pigment pack (like the kind I sell) colors and seals all at once.

If you're not using a pervious-specific colorant, once a color is chosen from any color chart, the contractor needs to buy a color two hues darker for application. Pervious concrete has so many pores in it that the texture of the concrete essentially absorbs light rather than reflecting it back to the eye, and colors don't deepen like they would normally. Colors appear lighter on pervious than they do on normal concrete.

When staining to achieve a Solar Reflectance Index number of 29 or higher, the contractor applies product as the pervious slab is being placed and again



(from a different direction) after the plastic is removed.

- Choose your aggregate carefully when staining. In Indiana, we have excellent river gravel. Its absorption is such that it won't accept stain. In these cases I choose our crushed limestone, which can be stained.

- Aggregate choices can make a stamping job, too. The aggregate that works for a parking lot may be too coarse for stamping. Also, smaller rounded aggregate stamps the easiest.

- When staining a stamped slab where all the "pavers" I've created will be the same color and the joints are clean, I'll grab a mortar bag and fill it with play sand. I then apply the play sand in the joint as desired. I straighten the sand with a paintbrush and then spray the stain over the entire slab. The sand won't let the stain penetrate. After the proper color is achieved, I shop-vac the sand from the joints.

Jim Miller is founder of C2 Products Inc., which makes sealers and other materials for concrete. More tips can be found at [C2products.com](http://C2products.com).

Jim Miller will teach "Decorative Pervious Concrete Methods" at the Concrete Decor Show & Spring Training on March 15 at 10 a.m. For more information, visit [www.ConcreteDecorShow.com](http://www.ConcreteDecorShow.com).



Photos courtesy of Jim Miller

## PRODUCT NEWS

### Allen introduces new riding trowel in Super Pro series

The Allen MSP 445 is a new mechanical-drive riding trowel in the Mechanical Super Pro series from Allen Engineering Corp.

Features include a 40-horsepower engine, a new torque-converter clutch system and an improved weight-to-horsepower ratio. The machine also offers manual steering and pitch controls, rotor speeds of up to 165 revolutions per minute, an electronic powered spray system for application of retardant, and two five-blade nonoverlapping rotors with 46-inch diameters.

[www.alleneng.com](http://www.alleneng.com)



### New Mongoose Air unveiled

Engrave-A-Crete has announced the arrival of the Mongoose Air, brother to the original decorative concrete engraving saw, the Mongoose 411.

Both make radial and straight cuts in endless patterns on concrete surfaces, and both can be attached to a center pivot circle-cutting kit for perfect arc and circle cuts. Unlike the original, the Mongoose Air is powered by compressed air instead of electricity and is equipped with a vacuum port. Attach a dry-vac for excellent dust control, or combine a wet-vac with the Mongoose Air's optional water-mist dust-control system for the ultimate ability to engrave beautiful designs into existing concrete with zero dust.

The saw comes with wide high-traction wheels and blade-changing tools. 

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**New Technologies and Decorative  
Treatments for Pervious Concrete**  
(Panel Discussion)

Richard Smith, Richard Smith Custom Concrete, Inc.; Jim Miller, C2 Products, Inc.; Alan Sparkman, Tennessee Concrete Association; Scott Erickson, Evolution Paving Resources. Moderated by John Strieder, Concrete Decor.



For more information, visit  
[www.ConcreteDecorShow.com](http://www.ConcreteDecorShow.com).



CSolutions polished more than 16,000 square feet at the new Turner Elementary School in Gray, Ga. CSolutions worked with architects to develop a custom blend of aggregate, which was broadcast by hand and floated into the finished concrete slab.

Photo courtesy of CSolutions, a division of Middle Georgia Concrete Constructors Inc.

## Why Narrow Margins are Plaguing Polished Concrete Contractors

Polished concrete has changed more than any other concrete segment in the last 10 years. It has grown from a fledgling industrial flooring type into a juggernaut in the architectural and retail world. It has been embraced by retailers, schools and hospitals and has an increased presence in the industrial world.



By David Stephenson

The problem is that as time has gone along, polished concrete has picked up market share and damaged contracting companies at the same time. If the profit margins of this industry do not rebound soon I am afraid that polished concrete will become an extremely rare and specialized process.

While there are a lot of reasons for the loss of margin in this business, I will go into some that are easily controlled and share what I feel is causing them.

I looked at 15 jobs that were bid and sold in the South in 2008. These were decorative projects, not large industrial. The jobs were spread across multiple market segments including retail, educational, hospitality and small industrial. New construction or remodel, all the prices came in between \$4.75 and \$6 per square foot.

Then I looked at similar jobs done this year. The results were staggering. For basically the same size jobs in the same market segments the prices were between \$2.25 and \$3.75 per square foot on the high end. This is a decrease of 63 percent on the low end and better than 35 percent on the high-end jobs.

Now here is the question. Has the cost of doing these jobs gone down this much in 24

months? Has the labor cost gone down? No. Has the cost of our materials gone down? Not that much. So did we have 50 percent or better margins in this business two years ago? No. All my job cost reports showed an average of 20 percent net profit.

So you ask yourself "How are we doing this work for that cheap and making any money"? The answer is that we are not making money.

In today's market there are very few jobs that make any profit. Most break even at best and if one thing goes wrong then they are losers. One really bad job (assuming that you make it right) can eat all your

company's profits for half the year.

The problem that allows us as contractors to fool ourselves is twofold. We don't have great cost accounting processes in place yet because we are a newer industry. Also, in our industry most of our projects are spread out over multiple months, or even over a couple of years on the larger projects. This allows us to get distracted by the day-to-day sales, marketing and operational concerns of our business, and we do not see the jobs for what they are. We bill in pieces, and as the saying goes, we rob Peter to pay Paul.

This is compounded by new polishing

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## concrete DECOR® product focus

### LCP 1703 VR Planetary Three-Headed Polisher from Flex North America Inc.

by Natasha Chilingirian

**F**lex North America Inc., a tool manufacturer with a history dating back to 1922, has built a presence in the decorative concrete industry with its selection of German-made grinders, polishers, grinding discs and concrete mixers.

At the 2010 World of Concrete show, Flex jumped into the planetary grinder market with its first planetary machine, the LCP 1703 VR.

For many decorative concrete contractors, a planetary polisher is a toolbox essential

— it's portable, contains multiple polishing heads and gives surfaces a super-flat finish. A number of tool manufacturers offer a planetary polisher, but Flex president Bob Eichelberg says the LCP 1703 VR stands out in the crowd.

The 29-pound machine has a 12-inch platform made of Duralimin, a very durable type of aluminum, and runs on a 10-amp, GFCI protected motor. It can be used wet or dry (the polisher's water feed can be turned on for wet applications and off for dry applications) and comes with a brush-style slurry guard. It also has a belt-driven design, which allows it to produce minimal noise, heat and

vibration, Eichelberg says.

The machine has three polishing heads that are intended for use with 3-inch and 5-inch diamond polishing pads. Eichelberg says three is the perfect number of heads for a planetary polisher, as they allow workers to polish large surface areas at once without making the machine too cumbersome.

"With three heads, it's still portable — you can pick it up, you can put it on a countertop, you can carry it around," Eichelberg says.

It's ideal for use on concrete countertops, stairs and small floor areas, such as around pillars and in walkways. Results depend largely on the grit of the polishing pads used. (Workers can use pads with grit levels as low as 50 and as high as 3,000, and the higher the grit level, the less material workers will take off as they polish.) And while planetary polishers are not meant to polish surface edges, this one can get pretty close to them due to the wide positioning of its heads. "We get as close to the edge as possible — more so than others do, based on what I've seen lately," Eichelberg says.

Tom Fischer, who owns Illinois-based Fishstone Studio as well as Concrete



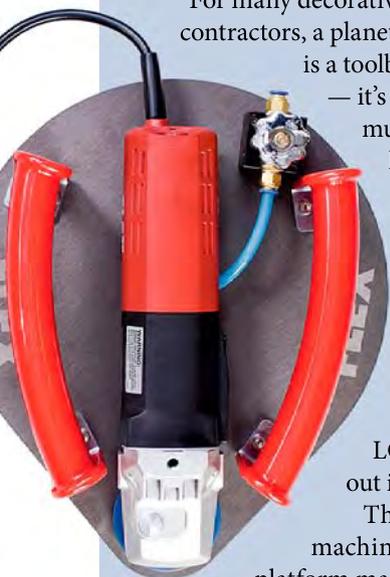
Countertop Supply by Fishstone, which sells Flex equipment, has been using the LCP 1703 VR for about a year and says he highly recommends it to other contractors. One unique aspect of the machine, he says, is that helical gears (gears with teeth that are set at an angle) power each one of the heads. Since helical gears operate more smoothly than spur gears, which have straight teeth, the polisher is comfortable to operate, won't wobble much and lasts longer.

"The internal gearing system is similar to the transmission in a car," Fischer says. "Many other polishers have internal gearing systems that are similar to bicycle gears."

Fischer adds that the LCP 1703 VR is easy to transport and smoothes surfaces quickly.

"It has a quiet and easy operation," he says. "With its three heads, it speeds up polishing time and gives me a swirl-free finish. And it's very portable. I can throw it in the back of the truck if I need to, but it's not too light. If it were too light it wouldn't polish properly."

[www.flexnorthamerica.com](http://www.flexnorthamerica.com)



companies coming in and getting low-cost contracts. Due to their general lack of knowledge as start-ups and their getting pricing from suppliers (whose main goal is to sell their product) that do not always know what goes into a job. That, along with the burning, all-American desire to win work at any cost, creates a perfect storm where the prices keep going down and down until they are below the labor and material cost of doing the job.

How can we change this in our industry? Guys like myself and



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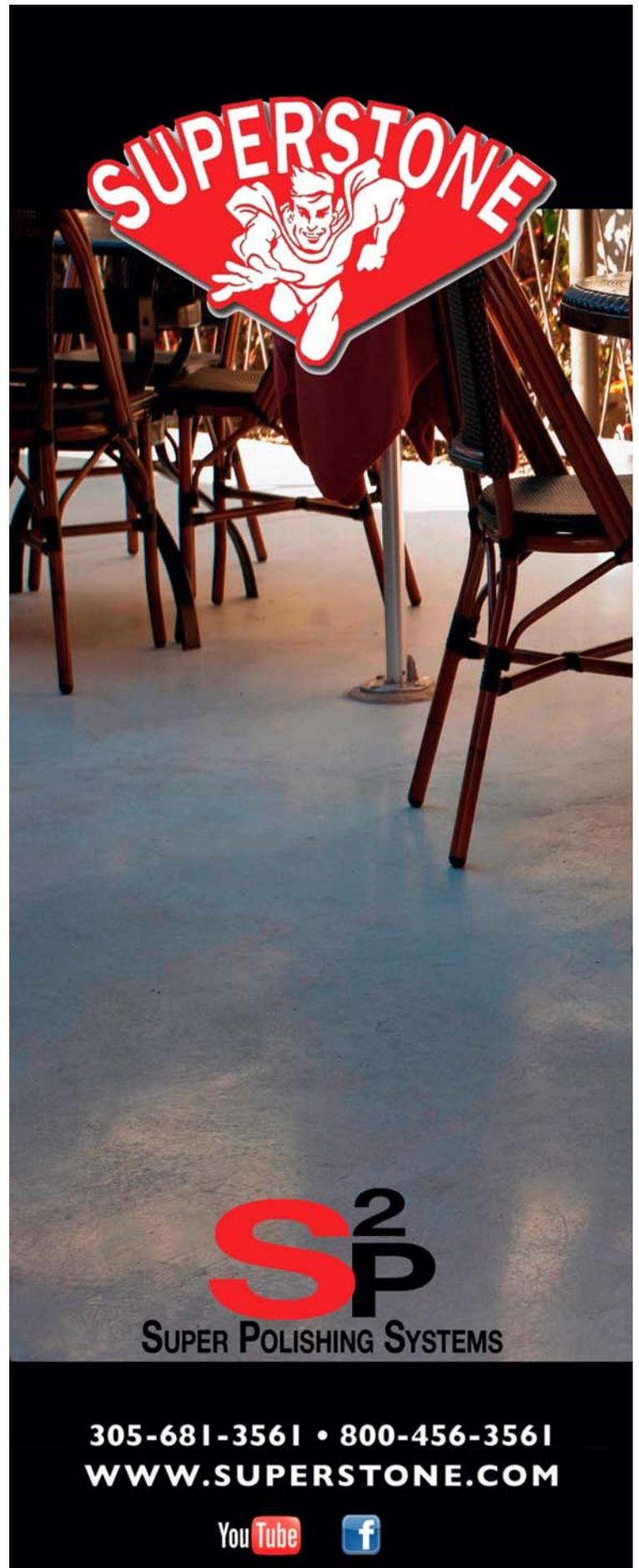
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other industry leaders from the contracting side need to educate our suppliers, contractors and architects about the true cost of doing work and stand by it. On average, on a one- or two-color school job of 20,000 to 30,000 square feet where we charge \$4.00 per square foot, the breakdown is 60 to 75 cents per square foot in pure material cost (diamonds, densifier, color, stain protect), including ancillary costs such as paper and tape or blades for scoring saws and so on.

Then you get to the labor. I am only talking about the guys that will actually

work on the project, not sales or operations management. This is the most expensive section of our work, running about on average \$1.80 per foot on that same \$4-per-square-foot floor. This includes labor at \$10 to \$14 per hour plus the taxes on that labor. So to bring us up to speed we are at \$2.55 on labor and materials before we go any further.

Next we consider items like insurance, fuel, phones, truck payments and all the other things that make our business run. This should come in at around another 75 cents or so per square foot, pushing us up to \$3.30 per square foot. We haven't paid the owners of the company anything yet. No maintenance has been accounted for yet. We haven't figured in the fact that 10 percent of that \$4 will be held for up to a year in retainage. We haven't taken into consideration any travel costs back and forth or shipping for those materials that we need, or any advertising to try to get more work, and we are already at less than 20 percent remaining.

Just so that you don't think that I am making these numbers up, I looked at more than 20 jobs from three different companies to get these average numbers. You can drop your costs 20 percent to 30 percent by doing jobs 50,000 square feet or larger in one deployment, but there aren't a lot of those jobs out there anymore.

We need to communicate these facts to our suppliers, so that when they are talking to new companies they are able to give them fair information. I talked to an architect last week on a project. He says that he went to a supplier's training class to learn more about polished concrete and that in the class they cited polished concrete prices starting at 75 cents per square foot.

When the bids come in low it is a double hit for every company in our business. You don't make any money, and the low price given sets the new standard for pricing.

*David Stephenson is president of American Concrete Concepts Inc., based in Springdale, Ark. He has been polishing concrete for eight years and has been involved with several companies in developing products related to the decorative and polished concrete industry. Contact him at dtstephenson@acci-us.com.*

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## PRODUCT NEWS

### Metabo offers angle grinder kit

Metabo Corp. now offers a compact, lightweight 5-inch Angle Grinder Surface Prep Kit for grinding in smaller areas and on vertical applications. The new system includes a Metabo WE14-125 Plus variable-speed small angle grinder and a dust-control shroud. The kit is ideal for heavy-duty grinding and finishing of concrete floors and walls as well as concrete countertops.



The WE14-125 Plus angle grinder included with the kit features a lock-on switch, encapsulated auto-stop carbon brushes and switch, a quick wheel-change system, an antivibration side handle, electronic speed stabilization, electronic soft start and a unique dust-deflecting winding protection grid to protect the motor and internal components. Safety features include a toolless guard adjustment, spindle lock and "S-Automatic" safety slip clutch to protect the operator from kickback by absorbing the torque created if the wheel binds or snags. Power interruption protection prevents restart in the event that power is lost.

With a 12.2-amp motor, the small angle grinder offers 1,400 watts of power, 29.2 inch-pounds of torque and a variable, no-load speed of 7,000 rpm to 10,500 rpm.

When used with a vacuum such as the Metabo ASR 2050, the Surface Prep Kit helps protect users from silica dust exposure.

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## PRODUCT NEWS

### New polishing system from Concrete Earth

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The Ecoguard Concrete Polishing system represents a viable alternative to solvent-based systems. It promotes high LEED credits and is environmentally safe. It can be applied in any environment with no vapors or flammability concerns. 🛠️

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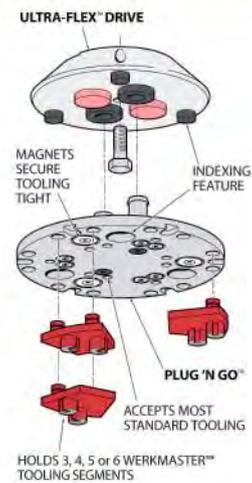


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## Thinking Outside the Firebox: Fireplaces in Outdoor Rooms

by Scott Cohen and Amy Johnson

People have enjoyed sitting outside around a fire since, well, since they discovered fire. Besides the practicalities of fire for warmth, light and cooking, the comfort and romance of fire make us want to pull our chairs up to the hearth and turn our backs on the daily grind.

So it's no surprise that in the landscape design trend toward outdoor rooms, one of the most popular is the living room, anchored by the mass of a fireplace. Today's patio furnishings, with their deep seating, ottomans and double loungers, are just about perfect for arranging in front of the fire.

Outdoor fireplaces are as individual as homeowners. They range from simple cast concrete or GFRC to fancy custom structures with decorative concrete hearths and surrounds. Budgets cover a wide range as well, from as little as \$3,500 to 10 times that and more. But there are some common considerations and requirements for any fire feature, so before you jump on this bandwagon and decide to build fireplaces, there are some things you need to know.

### Where does it go?

First, to decide where best to place a fireplace, you have to understand some design parameters. What do local building codes require? Is wood burning allowed or will the fireplace have to be gas? What are the requirements for setbacks from property lines and distances from buildings, decks or patio covers?

Keep in mind that a fireplace is going to significantly change the view, so it needs to be placed where it can be a focal point, not an obstruction. In fact, fireplaces are great for dressing up a blank courtyard wall or creating privacy.

Weather matters. Besides hiding an undesirable view, a fireplace can be placed to

help screen prevailing winds or breezes. Also consider traffic patterns. How will people move from one area of the garden to another? The fireplace should be inviting, not in the way. Above all, people need to be able to walk past the fire safely. This concern is especially important when placing fire pits.

Next, what kind of fireplace do the homeowners want? Talk through how it is going to be used. Do they picture themselves next to the hearth, sipping wine and planning their next vacation? Or do they envision drinking beer with their buddies around the campfire? The answer to this question will inform the choice between a fireplace, fire pit or other fire feature.

For those who don't want a vertical structure, fire pits are a great choice for the right style of patio. I like to build them into "conversation pits" with built-in seating and backrests, all out of concrete.

Try thinking beyond the pit. Fire in the garden is becoming more and more popular. Fire bowls or permanent gas-fed torches can be used to add lights throughout the yard. Natural gas is inexpensive to install and to use. Fire gives a softer, more natural-feeling light and ambiance than harsh electric bulbs.

### Crafting the fireplace

A traditional fireplace is a firebox surrounded by a concrete or masonry structure. One of the big challenges is building it correctly so it can function as a fireplace. Size, temperature variations and air currents create different challenges for outdoor fireplaces than for indoor ones. The bottom line is, the chimney must draw the smoke.

Contractors are not always familiar with fireplace terminology. You need to do some research on words such as "draw," "draft," "flue," "buoyancy," "smoke shelf" and "spark

# pools & hardscaping :



Photo courtesy of GreenSceneLandscape.com

arrestor.” Understanding the Rumford firebox — including the proper ratios between the fireplace opening, the chimney and flue — is key to delivering maximum heat with minimum smoke.

With these fundamentals firmly in place, you have lots of room for creativity in design. Almost any decorative concrete technique can be incorporated in a fireplace or combined with stacked stone, tile or brick.

For maximum impact, I like combining the two powerful opposing forces of fire and water. I often place fire features next to spas or illusion pools — flames just dance across

the reflective surface of the water. One of my favorite fire/water combinations has water cascading 12 feet down a cut-stone wall behind an 8-foot fire trough. You hear the water splashing, see the flames rising and feel the warmth radiating from the crushed glass bed.

Whatever style is chosen, one important point I see often overlooked is that the interior of any masonry structure that contains fire must be protected with refractory brick. This brick is kiln-fired and can handle the heat.

I’ve seen fire pits built with cinder block

and a gas ring. The aggregate gets too hot — it can explode and send superheated debris flying.

For the same reason, never use river rock in a fire pit or bowl. These rocks will explode. Lava rock has long been the industry standard for gas fire features. It is porous and allows a mix of gas and oxygen that creates a warm yellow flame. It retains heat for a warm glow, but withstands high temperatures without threat of exploding unless exposed to water. Water on hot lava rock creates steam that can make the rock crack or explode.

**I like combining the two powerful opposing forces of fire and water.**

Near water features that might splash, I prefer to use crushed glass, which withstands heat and water safely. Crushed glass is available in various colors and gives a more contemporary look.

Fire features can be used as structures in outdoor rooms, garden lights or elements in a larger artistic installation. They can be traditional or contemporary, formal or casual. But even with all the talk about design trends and fashions, I believe the number one reason for the popularity of outdoor fires is that basic human longing to create ... s'mores. 🍷

Scott Cohen is a landscape, general and swimming-pool contractor. He has been featured on several shows on HGTV and is the author of eight books. He can be contacted at [scott.cohen@greenscenelandscape.com](mailto:scott.cohen@greenscenelandscape.com).

Scott Cohen will present two courses at the Concrete Decor Show & Spring Training in Nashville: "Fireplaces & Fire Features From Design to Completion" on March 15 at 1 p.m. and "Outdoor Room Boom" on March 16 at 3 p.m. For more information, go to [www.ConcreteDecorShow.com](http://www.ConcreteDecorShow.com).



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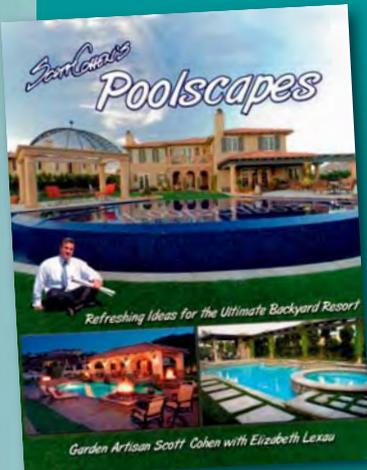
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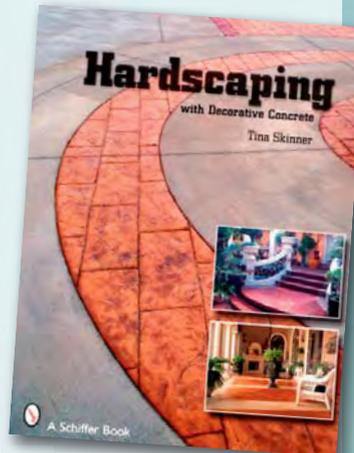
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Photo courtesy of CSolutions

# staining & coloring CONCRETE

## THE CONCRETIST

### Patina Stains and Embedded Fish in Wyoming

Most places that I've traveled to, the concrete has taken me there. And when I've returned, sometimes it's been because of the concrete. And sometimes, it's been because of the people.



by Michael Miller

Just east of the Cascades, between Ellensburg, Wash., and Yakima, is one of those places. As the concretist, we've worked both internationally and nationwide. You might find us working just about anywhere. But we've done more jobs in a 30-mile radius between Ellensburg and Yakima, than just about anywhere else. Believe me, this is no major population center. But the concrete there has been sweet, and the people have been warm even while the weather has often been not so warm. We love this place — the Washington wine country.

I've just been back to another such place,

where my fondest personal and sensory concrete memories mingle. We haven't done quite as many jobs in Casper, Wyo., as in central Washington, but we've done enough. They love their concrete in Casper, and they know how to do it right. And people who love concrete are my kind of people.

#### Going Mobile

Art Boatright is the president of Mobile Concrete, a ready-mix producer in Mills, Wyo., just outside of Casper. He was born and raised there but attended college in California. This must have tweaked him just enough to allow him to develop certain unusual tastes: proclivities and fantasies involving variegated patina stains and



Michael Miller uses a found object as inspiration, template and simple mechanical guide.

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Work done for the offices of Mobile Concrete, Casper, Wyo. Cast-in-place concrete elements: natural gray walls, brown-pigmented reception desk. Precast elements: dyed and stained art panels with found objects from the North Platte River embedded and imprinted in them.

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sensory concrete.

It's the late '90s and Art's building new offices for Mobile. Some glass, some steel, but mostly concrete. When we arrived in Casper, our primary scope of work for him was to stain some 10,000 square feet of suspended and basement-slab concrete. It was now time to indulge Art's fantasies. Our job was the interior slabs, but so often, we arrive, meet the folks, take a look around and see what more needs doing, what is truly appropriate for both the client and the site.

In the case of Mobile, Art was interested in having a really special reception lobby. He was in the process of completing a totally cool (deep and massive)

purple-brown integrally colored receptionist's desktop. This was out of precast, and it was to be integrated within low walls of cast-in-place natural gray.

He also had an equally massive concrete fireplace in the middle of the lobby as a focal point. Square block-outs above the firebox were stacked vertically, two on each side. These were there ... for what? Really boring! They begged for something more.



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# We filled the ho-hum square voids in the fireplace with art panels.

The bulk of the floors had minimal jointing, but this lobby had been jointed with something like a 2-foot grid. It was obvious that it was an area of special emphasis, and Art would want us to spend more attention on color and details there. Can do!

Leading to this interior lobby was an exterior sidewalk. Nice, but kinda plain. This seemed a natural place to begin clients' introduction to the "Mobile Concrete Experience" and their sensory concrete journey.

The North Platte River is a wonderful resource and a distinctive part of Casper. It also runs smack dab through the middle of the Mobile Concrete property. So, we began our journey at the river (a bit icy in December) to look for site-specific clues, inspiration and elements we might incorporate in what we were about to do.

## Dyes and colors — and fish for stamps

And this is what we did: The bulk of the slabs were patina-stained and dye-washed in a variegated "iron-y" (as is ironlike, not ironic) purple-brown, with Ironite spotting. These were similar in color to an old rusted railroad trestle.

We filled the ho-hum square voids in the fireplace with art panels that were stained and dyed Sgraffino-skimmed cement board. The Sgraffino was imprinted and embedded with found objects from the North Platte River, such as grasses, pebbles and even fat brown trout. The fish were caught in the river and placed in the wet Sgraffino overlay. Slime on the fish acts as its own release agent. Wait 'til the next day, when the skim is hard, and the fish are easily removed. Scales and all details are perfect, like a Japanese fish print! If they were removed earlier (as in a stamp), the details are



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smudged and not crisp.

This is a hybrid application, where the fish are impressed like a stamp, but left in place until the mud is hard, more like a form liner.

The same is true with the grasses. They were harvested from the riverbank, scattered on the wet mud, impressed, and removed the next day. Pebbles from the river's edge were inlaid and left in place

permanently.

The 2-foot grid on the lobby floor at the base of the fireplace was stained and dyed in much brighter and more saturated colors: reds, oranges and yellows. The occasional corner was flashed with a shading lacquer containing metallic pigments.

As for the front sidewalk, we sealed the on-grade, cast-in-place, natural gray sidewalk with a solvent-based acrylic (which

would also, later, act as a resist). We then sandblasted through a plasma-cut steel template. Blasted graphics were based on aggregate shapes, ancient alluvial deposits from Mobile's quarries, with the very occasional stray leaf and rattlesnake thrown in for fun and shock-value.

Where sealer (acting as a resist) was blasted away, the graphic was subsequently patina-stained.

## Meet the Lowers

We've been back to Wyoming several times since the '90s: once to visit Yellowstone and Jackson Hole with Art and his wife, Lynette, once to stain floors and walls for a new Boys Club. And once with our youngest daughter and her boyfriend, who was attending college in Laramie at the time, for a blizzardy Thanksgiving with the Boatrights.

It's now early November 2010. I arrive in Casper and am picked up at the airport by a guy whose e-mail address begins

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## PRODUCT NEWS

### Walt Tools unveils water-based semitransparent pigments

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with “fatbob.” And I’m a bit surprised and confused, as structural engineer Bob Lower isn’t really fat at all. But he is warm and jolly.

We pass fat antelope grazing at the airport, too numerous to count, and make our way to Lower’s downtown residence. I meet his wife, Teresa, and their two lovely daughters. I get a tour of the house (where I’m looking for their pendants in colors and other design clues). Eclectic bright colors. Edgy, funky art and lots of crosses. This tour also includes the patios and sidewalks I’m about to stain.

Wow ... sophisticated construction! Cast-in-place and precast. Old and new concrete. A new suspended deck. Wild structural shapes, including lots of circles. This guy may be a structural engineer but he’s no square.

Father, forgive me for what I am about to do! I say this before just about every new job. HA! It helps me settle that familiar queasy feeling, the one that I’ve come to terms with, that I now recognize and even enjoy. The one that comes with the start of

each new sensory concrete journey working without a map.

Neighbor Art Boatright shows up. The cork comes out of the bottle, and we start talking concrete. 🍷

*Michael Miller is managing principal of the concretist, an association of artists, craftspeople and others producing sensory-concrete art and architecture in cement, stone, glass and steel. the concretist is headquartered in Benicia, Calif., with additional locations in north central Nevada and Southeast Asia. Miller can be contacted at [miller@theconcretist.com](mailto:miller@theconcretist.com).*

Michael Miller will present “Producing Sensory Concrete for Fun & Profit” at the Concrete Decor Show & Spring Training in Nashville on Wednesday, March 16 at 10 a.m. For more information, go to [www.ConcreteDecorShow.com](http://www.ConcreteDecorShow.com).



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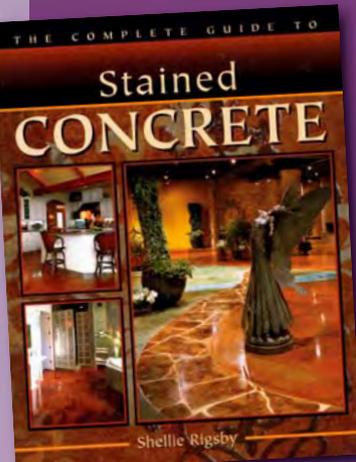
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The concretist's client, Teresa Lower, relaxes on her lower patio, composed of stained and dyed on-grade cast-in-place and precast circular elements.



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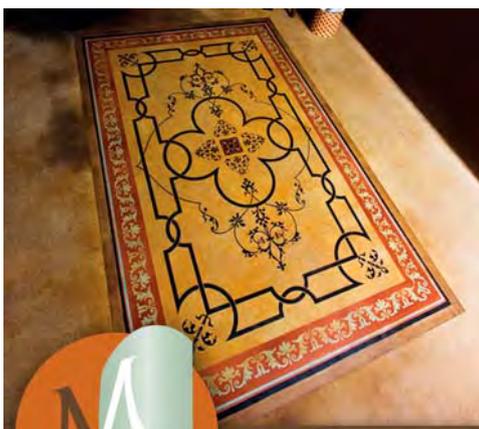
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## PROJECT PROFILE

# Flooring at Tilted Kilt Pub & Eatery White Marsh, Md.

by Emily Dixon

Greg Hryniewicz isn't a man who sits around and says "better luck next time."

The general contractor to whom he submitted a proposal for a flooring job at a Tilted Kilt Pub & Eatery in White Marsh, Md., was not awarded the contract. Rather than sit idly by, Hryniewicz got in touch with the franchise owner to see if he could still be involved. As luck would have it, the owner was already a fan of Hryniewicz and his Annapolis, Md., company Hyde Concrete. After a meeting at the project site, Hyde Concrete had the gig.

The Tilted Kilt, one of a growing chain of restaurants that Hryniewicz describes as "Hooters with an Irish twist," needed to have its floor colored. Unfortunately the floor was severely damaged after the previous tenant's tile floor was removed. Repairs were in order.

Hyde Concrete only had five days to complete the job. The first two days were dedicated to repairing cracks, divots and other damaged areas. The final step for preparation was to prime the entire surface.

On the third day, it was time for the overlay. Hryniewicz wanted a thick overlay because of the floor's damage, so he chose



Photos courtesy of Hyde Concrete

white DT, a quarter-inch, self-leveling topping from CMP Specialty Products Inc. "It's rapid-setting and a large area, so we needed a well-oiled crew to help move materials," he says.

The crew split up into three teams, each with dedicated jobs: mixing, transporting, and raking and finishing. They were able to apply more than 6,000 square feet of overlay in just a couple of hours.

With photos from other Tilted Kilt restaurants for inspiration, it was time to apply the color. Concerned about the time constraint, Hryniewicz chose water-based dyes from AmeriPolish. A brown base coat was put down first, and additional colors were applied using sprayers, sponges and other application techniques.

After a long day, the floor was given two

### Project at a Glance:

**Contractor:** Hyde Concrete, Annapolis, Md.

**Client:** Tilted Kilt Pub & Eatery, White Marsh, Md.

**Scope of project:** Repair, overlay and color 6,000 square feet

**Timeline:** Five days

**Products used:** CMP Specialty Products DP overlay in white, AmeriPolish dyes, National Polymers Inc. polyaspartic sealer

coats of polyaspartic sealer from National Polymers Inc., with a nonskid additive added to the mix near the entrance.

Despite the challenges and short deadline, Hyde Concrete delivered a floor loaded with detail and character the Tilted Kilt chain could be proud of. In fact, the franchise owner has already contacted Hryniewicz about doing a floor for another new location. 📄

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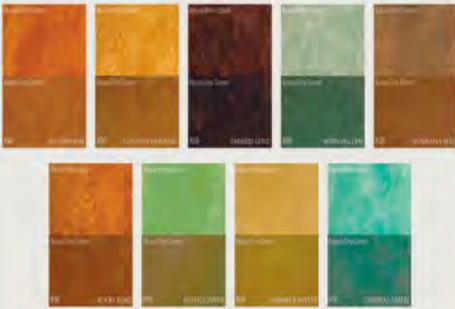
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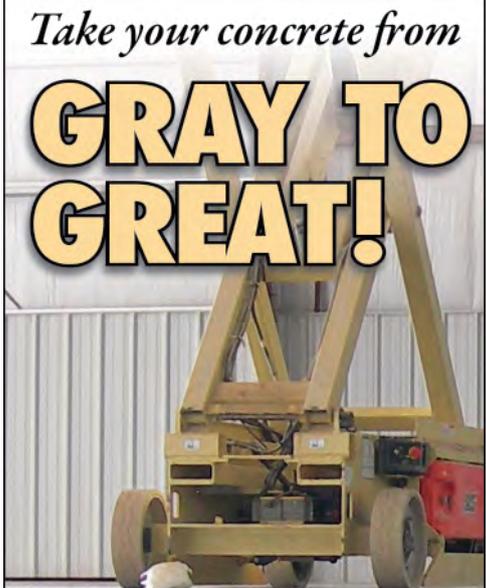


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# staining & coloring CONCRETE :



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## Coloring Recipe

by Kelly O'Brien

### Easy on the Eyes and the Earth

Ray Anger & Gene Jordeth – Decorative Concrete Staining & Scoring Inc., Scottsdale, Ariz.  
[www.decorativestaining.com](http://www.decorativestaining.com)

The finish on this water feature was achieved using a handful of soy-based products. It's a great way to get a more earth-friendly surface that boasts deep, rich colors to boot. As an additional plus, the concrete is profiled with garnet abrasives, which not only ensure a low-dust blasting experience, but also give the finished surface a reliably nonslip surface.

#### Ingredients

Ecoprocote Eco-Etch Pro

Ecoprocote SoyCrete: custom espresso-colored blend

Ecoprocote Acri-Soy

Special equipment required: media-blaster, 80-grit washed garnet abrasive, grout sponge with a white scrub pad on the backside

#### Directions

► Using professional media blasting techniques and 80-grit washed garnet abrasive, profile your surface to open up the concrete and give it a good level of porosity. This will not only allow for the best staining and sealing results, but it will also provide a nonslip surface, making this an excellent application for floors as well.

Note: If you've never done this type of media blasting before, consult with an experienced professional or the product manufacturer before jumping in.

► Once you've finished blasting your surface, apply a coat of Eco-Etch to small areas of the surface at a time. It will begin to fizz as it works. Scrub it across the surface with a nylon

bristle brush. This will clean and descale the concrete, remove any excess lime, protect against efflorescence, and make the concrete even more receptive to the stain.

Note: If excess lime is not a concern for your surface, you can omit this step.

► Let the Eco-Etch rest until it ceases fizzing or for up to about 10 minutes — be careful not to let it dry!

► Pressure-wash the surface thoroughly.

► Once the surface has dried completely, use the grout sponge to apply a thin coat of SoyCrete. Rub the stain into the concrete with the spongy side, being very careful not to oversaturate the surface. Go over the surface again with the white scrub pad to help minimize any application marks.

Remember that soy-based stains should not be put on too heavy or they will oversaturate, which can lead to longer drying times and uneven color and will prevent the sealer from penetrating the substrate. In some cases you might need to change sponges and wipe off any excess material. The key to this effect is thin applications.

► Once your first coat of stain has dried, which usually takes about 4 hours, apply a second coat in the same manner.

► Let the stains cure overnight.

► The following day, seal the surface with two thin coats of Acri-Soy, also applied using sponges.

► Let cure completely. 🚗

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Photos courtesy of Tom Ralston Concrete

## PROJECT PROFILE

### Beach House Floor with Seaweed Patterns Monterey Bay, Calif.

by Chris Mayo

It makes sense to involve customers in the decisions leading up to a job. By that standard, Tom Ralston, president of Tom Ralston Concrete, is a sensible man.

His philosophy on involving customers? “You could almost write a mathematical theorem about equal and opposite reactions when it comes to involving the customer,” he says. “The more you involve the customer from the job’s start to finish, the fewer problems you encounter in regard to his or her satisfaction with the end result. When customers are truly involved in as many aspects as possible, they have a better understanding of what it takes to create the end product — the planning and coordination involved, the intricacies of the materials you use, what you can and can’t fully control.”

A case in point is a beach house floor Ralston’s company recently refurbished in Monterey Bay, Calif. The floor’s crown jewel from a decorative standpoint is a pattern created when randomly placed seaweed stamps, made from real seaweed, were laid in a 3/8-inch fast-setting overlay.



#### Project at a Glance

**Contractor:** Tom Ralston, Tom Ralston Concrete, Santa Cruz, Calif.

**Client:** A longtime resident of Monterey Bay, Calif., with a love of the sailing and the ocean. (He declined to be named.)

**Project description:** As part of an overall facelift of an older beach home, remove existing linoleum over concrete and install a new unique floor that captures the essence of the ocean.

**Challenge:** Emboss images of real seaweed in a 3/8-inch fast-setting overlay and stain it to match the colors of the water in Monterey Bay.

**Products and materials:** L.M. Scofield, Kemiko and Floric Polytech acid stains; Ardex SD-T self-drying cementitious topping

“The owner had lived in this house for about 25 years and, to be blunt, it looked it. The floor in the kitchen and living room was ugly linoleum on concrete. The kind of thing you saw 25 years ago. The linoleum had to go, but the slab was in good enough shape.”

Each of Ralston’s jobs starts with a brainstorming session with the customer. “I ask them to picture their ideal. A lot of the time they don’t know what their ideal is when we start talking. But with a little pushing and prodding we usually get there.”

This customer knew he wanted a facelift on his home. The home sits on the north shore of Monterey Bay — water on one side

of the property, mountains on the other. The beach reaches to the back patio.

“We started out talking about a combination of mountains and beach, combining the feeling of the two into the floor,” says Ralston. “I’ve done something like that before, so I was able to show him pictures of something similar to what we were talking about.”

As they talked, Ralston realized that the man had a true passion for the ocean. “This guy loves the water. He sails once or twice a week and swims almost daily. So we shelved the idea of including the mountains and started concentrating on the water.”

“I kind of wondered out loud — what

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After the seaweed stamps were placed, workers used paint rollers on a pole to make the seaweed impressions.



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would happen if we had a huge storm that attacked the house? What would it look like when the water receded? There would be seaweed and shells and ocean debris," recalls Ralston.

"When I mentioned seaweed he lit up."

## Seaweed becomes stamp

With the ideal identified, Ralston went to work. He took to the bay and snapped pictures of seaweed in its natural state. "The customer loved the contrast in the seaweed and the natural colors of the water."

So the customer's part was done, right? Not as far as Ralston was concerned. "The customer harvested a bunch of seaweed and participated in helping us decide how we were going to put it all together. We laid the clusters out on a brick patio so we could get a good perspective of them all. We had to decide how many to use and how big each one should be. We didn't want a pattern that repeated, but we didn't want it to be too busy either. We finally decided on five different good-sized clusters, about 3 feet wide by 4 feet long on average."

Arriving at the concept for the job was only the first challenge. The limitations presented by the existing house created additional challenges. Ralston planned to expose the concrete floor by pulling up the

linoleum and shotblasting the slab. After that, there was only enough room for a 3/8-inch overlay, in which he needed to press the seaweed patterns.

"We had to think about how we would make seaweed stamps, as we had never made stamps before, let alone stamps made from real seaweed. We also had to figure out how we were going to leave a recognizable and natural-looking image of the seaweed leaves without pushing the seed pods all the way through the thin overlay."

Ralston and his crew went to the shop to work out how they were going to fashion workable molds. By carefully rolling the seaweed into troweled clay, using a variety of different-sized rollers, they were able to create a thin mold that worked well. They then poured polyurethane rubber into the molds to make workable stamps.

Another challenge was to recreate the colors of the water in the bay. "I had to experiment with different stains and stain ratios to finally arrive at a color that matched," Ralston says. He experimented with a combination of L.M. Scofield, Kemiko and Floric Polytech acid stains applied with a pump sprayer, spraying one color on top of another still-wet color. "It took half a dozen samples and well over 16 man-hours before we got the colors right."



A worker carefully stains around the seaweed impressions. A combination of blue and green acid stains was chosen to mimic the colors of nearby Monterey Bay.

There was one more issue to resolve before the pour: The overlay (Ardex SD-T self-drying topping) had a set time of about three and a half to four hours, and the 550 square feet of floor needed to be coated monolithically. How were they going to get to the center of the two rooms to lay down the stamps?

“Catwalks,” says Ralston. “The design called for the seaweed impressions to be randomly embossed. They’d look basically as you would see in a storm, strewn about on the floor. We would not be able to use the stamps ordinarily ganged together so a finisher could ‘walk’ from one area of the floor to the other on them. We set up a series of catwalks and did a dry run of laying the stamps in a random pattern. We practiced lightly rolling the stamps with paint rollers and carefully pulling the stamps up without leaving indentations from our fingers.”

### Planning is everything

Ralston likes to leave as little as possible to chance on the day

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“When I mentioned  
**seaweed**  
he lit up.”

— Tom Ralston, artisan



The finished floor.



A crew member applies green and blue acid stains after the seaweed imprints have been stained and sealed.

of a pour. "On this job, I needed to draw out a map beforehand and pre-position the stamps nearby so we wouldn't be trying to remember where everything was supposed to go while the concrete was setting up."

It took a coordinated, almost choreographed, effort to manage everything on the day of the pour. The crew only had about 30 minutes to set up the catwalks and set the stamps before the overlay dried. "To have enough time to get the stamping done on this job, we had to have the new overlay down and ready in no more than an hour and a half. We had one guy mixing, two guys running buckets in, one guy spreading with a gauge rake, and another guy with a spreader to knock down the bubbles and flatten and smooth the overlay. Then we had to set up the catwalks, set the stamps, carefully roll them and finally carefully remove them. We did the staining the next day."

To Ralston, this was close to the perfect job. "I had a customer that wanted something unique, the challenge of creating something distinctive and out of the box, and ultimately a great end result. Moreover, since this was a very difficult job to bid, our client was willing to pay us on a time and material basis which turned out to be fair to both parties." 📄

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# stamping & texturing CONCRETE

## PROJECT PROFILE

### Monte Carlo Resort and Casino Flatwork Restoration Las Vegas, Nev.

by Emily Dixon

After 15 years of heavy tourist traffic along Las Vegas Boulevard, one of the first seamless texture projects in Las Vegas was ready for a facelift.

Originally stamped by Ron Garamendi of Vegas-based Contri Construction Co., the Monte Carlo Resort and Casino features roughly 30,000 square feet of textured concrete flatwork surrounding the exterior of the building. Over its lifetime, other contractors had applied a myriad of both colored and clear coatings to the surface, and they were starting to peel.

Wanting to restore the area to coincide with the 2009 opening of the nearby CityCenter complex, the Monte Carlo contacted Garamendi to see if he could

return the concrete to its original beauty.

"They asked me what the options were to restore it," he says. "We definitely couldn't reseal over it anymore."

With the help of Concrete Accessories Inc., another Las Vegas outfit, Garamendi was able to come up with the perfect solution. After the hotel signed off on a 10-foot by 10-foot test section, it was time to start work.

To begin the restoration process, Garamendi first had to remove layers of sealer through sandblasting. With the original work exposed, it was time to revitalize the original colors. He applied Proline Concrete Tools' EZ-Tique, a water-based antiquing wash, in Java

and Black colors. The area was then sealed with Arizona Polymer Flooring's Polyurethane 250.

Unfortunately for Garamendi, the Monte Carlo wanted to keep the area open

#### Project at a Glance

**Contractor:** Ron Garamendi, Contri Construction Co., Las Vegas, Nev.

**Client:** Monte Carlo Resort and Casino, Las Vegas, Nev.

**Project description:** Approximately 30,000 square feet of textured concrete needed a major facelift after 15 years of sealers began to peel.

**Products and materials:** Proline Concrete Tools' EZ-Tique, Java and Black colors. Arizona Polymer Flooring's Polyurethane 250.

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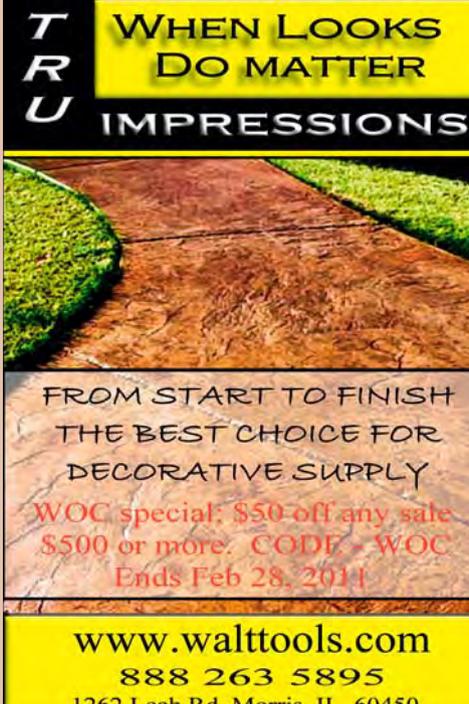
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Ron Garamendi at Contri Construction Co. came back 15 years after stamping the exterior concrete at the Monte Carlo Resort & Casino to restore the surface to its original beauty.

to tourists and pedestrians as much as possible, so he had to complete the process in phases. The workers would have to do the work inside a tent between 11 p.m. and 9 a.m. to be as unobtrusive as possible. They had to be finished with work each week before the area was opened to weekend visitors.

In all, the project took six weeks to complete.

Garamendi is quick to note the important role that other companies had in the restoration. "The Monte Carlo was great, Proline was great and Concrete Accessories was great," he says. "They were instrumental in the job going so smoothly."

📞 (702) 289-1190 (Contri Construction Co.)



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# CONCRETE walls & homes

## The Home Planned for the "Concrete Nation" TV Show

by Dave Berry and Wes Vollmer

Imagine building your dream home. All of the right elements are in place: hardwood floors, granite countertops, marble tile in the bathrooms and kitchen, exterior brick siding, flagstone pool deck, rock retaining walls and exposed aggregate driveway. Now imagine taking that plan and replacing all those elements with concrete.

That's what the new TV show "Concrete Nation" is all about. It shows people who are building or remodeling that there is another way to build that will last longer, look better and ultimately be more cost-effective. In Season One of the show, we will go through the step-by-step drama of building a home with those concrete elements, making concrete the star of the show.

To be built in Fountain Hills, Ariz., the

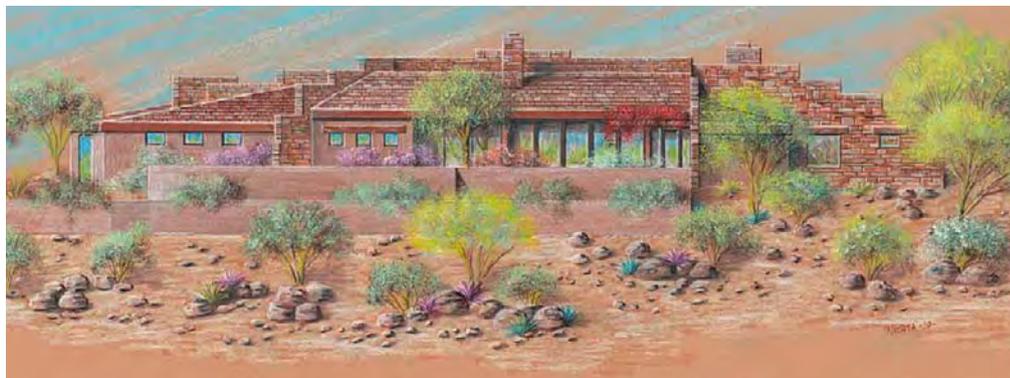


Image courtesy of Terry Kilbane

A drawing by architect Terry Kilbane of the Fountain Hills, Ariz., home to be built during Season One of the TV show "Concrete Nation."

"Concrete Nation" house will feature many types of creative styles of concrete and decorative concrete. Strong. Safe. Beautiful.

Because of the steep slope of the building lot, one of the first episodes will showcase a

concrete retaining wall that is made to look like desert rock. The strength of the concrete wall will hold back the massive backfill, and the look of desert rock is beautiful and blends better with the surrounding landscape than

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would a plain flat concrete retaining wall.

The next several episodes will show forming and placing the concrete for the foundation. At this stage we will be slab-stamping (slab-texturing) the same day the slab is placed. The concrete will cure for three to five days, and then we will clean and seal the decorative areas. We will take extraordinary precautions to protect the slab, safeguarding one of the most important decorative features of this home.

The "Concrete Nation" producers will then capture the craftsmanship and expertise of installing the interior and exterior wall systems. The exterior walls will be coated with decorative products that create the effect of desert rock to match the retaining walls, while the inside walls will have a coating that resembles traditional plaster.

We will feature a "Wow Wall" in the entry foyer that is a one-of-a-kind hand-sculptured art deco masterpiece by renowned concrete sculptor Nathan Giffin of Vertical

Artisans. Nathan will also sculpt intricate wine racks in the wine cellar and create decorative features around the outdoor living and kitchen areas. The remaining floors and patios will be stained, dyed and polished by some of the best manufacturers and contractors in our industry.

In almost every episode of "Concrete Nation," decorative concrete expert Wes Vollmer, one of the show's founders, will expose the viewers to unique methods of designing, building and installing decorative concrete sinks, bathtubs, countertops — and the Diamondback Bar. The Diamondback Bar countertop will start inside the home and wind in and out of the indoor and outdoor living areas like a snake. It will be a single-pour piece featuring imprints of desert dwellers and plants. Imagine a scorpion and snake imprint with exotic cacti and palm foliage impressions that dot the length of the countertop and are highlighted by fiber optic lighting.

Moving toward the back of the property, you will find the concrete swimming pool surrounded with stamped concrete flagstones that feature cool step prints for bare feet when the summer temperatures top 112 degrees. The pergola by the pool will feature decorative concrete posts and be surrounded with stained planters.

As you will see, "Concrete Nation" is a TV show that showcases the passion for concrete home building and remodeling while inspiring transformational thought about how concrete can be used in modern times. Look for the show to debut this fall on Fox and affiliate station groups. 📺

*Dave Berry owns Arizona-based Impact Marketing Co. and is in charge of marketing the TV show "Concrete Nation." Wes Vollmer is a decorative concrete veteran and an executive producer of "Concrete Nation."*

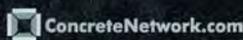
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# FINAL pour



Photos by Demian Feldman

## Wild Walls in Argentina

We here at *Concrete Decor* always welcome submissions of photos from concrete artisans around the world. When we received a particularly attractive batch from an artist in Argentina, we decided to share them with you.



To date, Miriam Alba Romano has only worked in the Argentine city of Roldan. Her son, Demian Feldman, sent us these photos of her concrete wall art to help her get attention and jobs in the United States.

Feldman describes her process for concrete wall-carving as follows: "Miriam begins by creating a pencil sketch of the desired design. After the sketch is approved, the handyman builds a wooden frame on the wall.

"The handyman then spreads the mix on the wall about an inch and a half thick. When the concrete begins to dry and take hold of the wall, Miriam starts to reproduce the sketch by carving out the concrete with metal tools. This is done freehand.

"After the mural dries, the wooden frame is removed. When the concrete is completely dry, she sands the roughest surfaces.

"She paints the murals with diluted oil paint. This paint is effective at soaking into the deep lines of the concrete, creating the rustic look. The washed colors emphasize the low relief of the designs.

"Miriam reproduces and enlarges the



original paper image directly into the concrete before it dries. She does not use molds, projectors or stamps in any of her work. Concrete has become her favorite medium because she is highly skilled at working at the fast pace that the concrete demands." 

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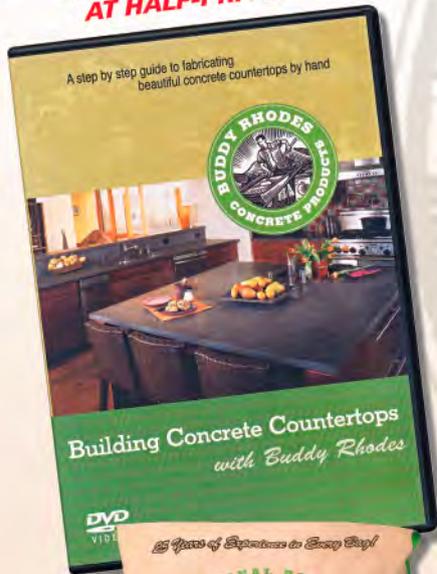
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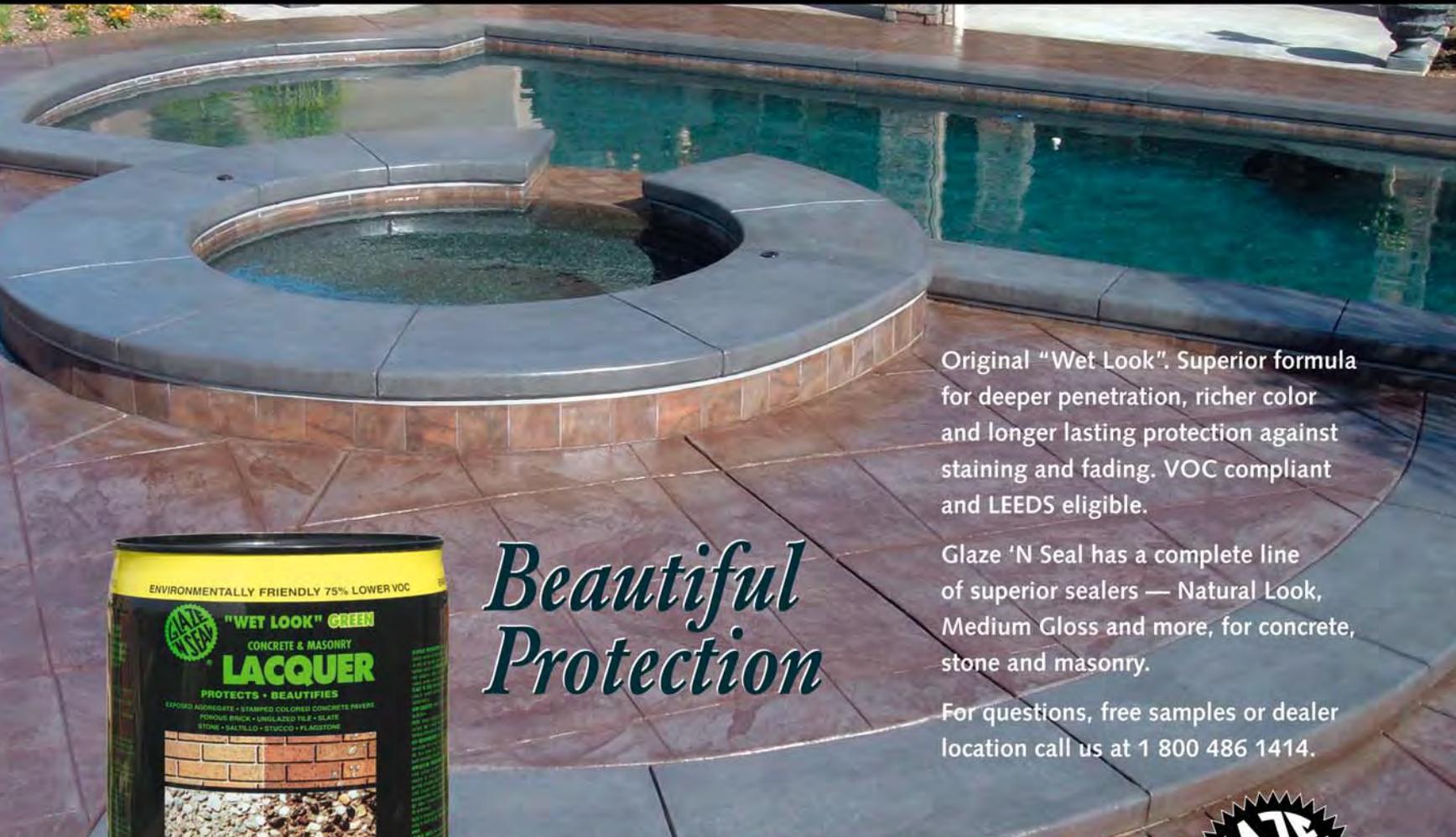


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