

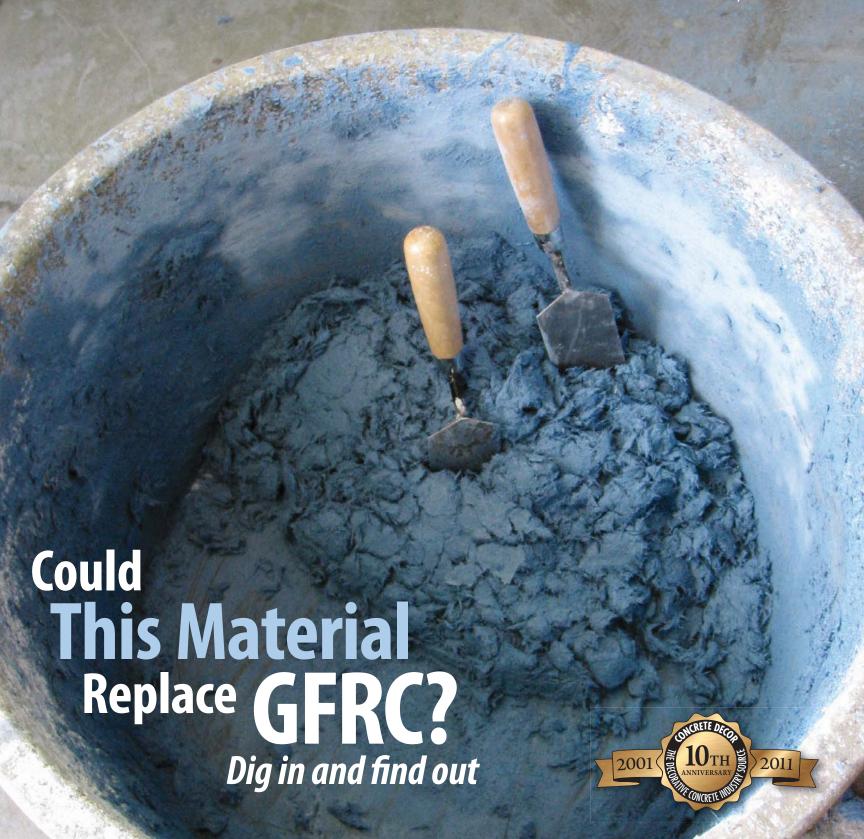
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Vol. 11 No. 2 February/March 2011





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publisher's

Dear Readers,

The launch of *Concrete Decor* and the ensuing years have left me filled with enthusiasm and anticipation for what lies ahead. The past 10 years and the latest economic recession have only solidified my vision for this industry and its potential for the future.

The tremendous influence of decorative concrete on the larger concrete market has only grown in scope because of ongoing improvements in products and workmanship, along with its potential for a global market. As many would agree, decorative concrete as we know it today is only the tip of the iceberg.

Having said this, it's clear that much work remains to be done if we want to realize our full potential. I have always had the opinion that nothing should stand in our way, not even a recession. However, I say this with some humility, because I remember well the early days of this magazine and the endless amount of work that went into getting it to where I wanted it to be.

My family has without a doubt been the area of my greatest compromise because of the time and energy I have put forth at work. I don't blame anyone for this, but I want to share this with you because I think we all suffer in our own unique ways to achieve our goals while searching for that "happy balance" with family and friends. I've learned over time that imbalance in my life always leads to unhappiness and is mostly a result of things I could have done differently.

Working harder is the answer for anyone that wants to be successful in both career and family. But I have also realized that working harder doesn't always mean "more hard work." Whether it's simply getting down on my knees at the end of a tough day to gain a perspective that my 6-year-old son has on things, or putting my thoughts on the sideline so I can better understand what my older son is telling me, or simply texting my daughter to say "I love you," I am rewarding myself with relationships that are ultimately the most important part of life.

And, believe me, it is happiness in life that makes us good at everything else we do, including occupationally.

Having said this, I simply want to encourage you, the readers of *Concrete Decor*, to work hard in 2011. First and foremost, work to be successful in your relationships, because it is here that you will ultimately find success. And your success is ultimately the driver for this industry's success.

God bless you and yours.

Sincerely,

Bent Mikkelsen Publisher





February/March 2011 Volume 11 · Issue No. 2

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Subscriptions: USA (one year): \$22.95

Canada (one year): \$32.95 Other countries: \$64.00 All prices in U.S. dollars

Subscriber Services: (877) 935-8906

circulation@protradepub.com

Fax: (541) 341-6443

U.S. Postal Service Professional Trade Publications Inc.

Mail Address: P.O. Box 25210

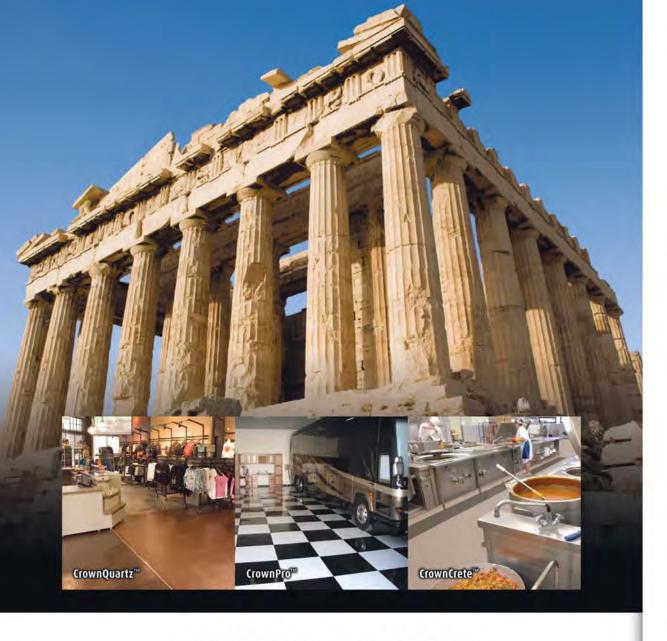
Eugene, OR 97402

Other Shipping: Professional Trade Publications Inc.

228 Grimes St. Eugene, OR 97402

Concrete Decor™ The Journal of Decorative Concrete is published eight times a year by Professional Trade Publications Inc. Bulk rate postage paid at Lebanon Junction, Ky., and additional mailing offices.

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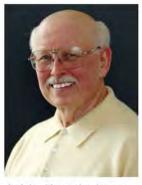
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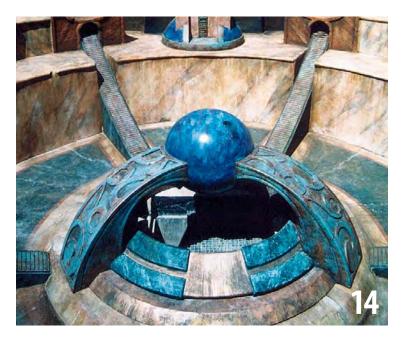


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On the cover: The blue stuff is NeoMix D-FRC, a Cheng Concrete product designed as an alternative to GFRC. Photo by John Strieder

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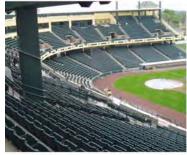
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Doug Carlton operates Carlton Concrete Inc. in Visalia, Calif. He can be reached at carltondoug@comcast.net. See Doug's column, "Carlton's Corner," on page 39.



Mark Celebuski is partner in Pennsylvania-based Concrete Countertop Plant and Pinnacle Cast Concrete. He holds monthly concrete countertop training sessions for industry professionals. Reach him at mark@pinnaclecastconcrete.com. See Mark's article on page 66.



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Jennifer A. Faller is business development manager for Vexcon Chemicals and lead trainer for the Certi-Shine brand of polished concrete materials. Contact her at jfaller@vexcon.com. See Jennifer's article on page 84.



Trevor A. Foster, regional sales manager and principal trainer for Miracote Products, a division of Crossfield Products Corp., is a regular contributor to industry trade publications and training events. See Trevor's article on page 52



Jeffrey Girard is founder and president of The Concrete Countertop Institute. He can be reached at jeffg@concretecountertopinstitute.com. See Jeffrey's column, "Success with Concrete Countertops," on page 68.



Greg Jazwinski is director of sales for Warmly Yours, a company that manufactures and sells radiant-heat systems. He can be reached at gjazwinski@warmlyyours.com. See Greg's article on page 72.



Michael Miller is managing principal of the concretist, an association of artists, craftspeople and others producing sensory-concrete art and architecture. Miller can be contacted at miller@theconcretist.com. See Michael's column, "the concretist," on page 102.



Todd Rose is a consultant for Granicrete Interntational. He aids product development and trains distributors to work with architectural and commercial markets. He can be reached at trose@toddrosedecorativeconcrete.com. See Todd's article on page 106.



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 his industry. Contact him at dtstephenson@acci-us.com. See David's article on page 78.



Chris Sullivan is vice president of sales and marketing with ChemSystems Inc. He has presented seminars and product demonstrations throughout North America. Contact him at trowelanderror@protradepub.com. See Chris' column, "Trowel & Error," on page 82.

Talk back! Weigh in online at ConcreteDecor.net



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business & INDUSTRY

INDUSTRY NEWS

Precast Show attendees sense recovery

While an economic recovery in the construction industry may still be several months away, there was a renewed sense of optimism on the trade show floor during The Precast Show 2011 in Charlotte, N.C., Jan. 27-29. Trade show attendance topped 2,600.

Both exhibitors and precast plant owners reported rising expectations for increased business during the second half of the year, according to the National Precast Concrete Association. The NPCA sponsored the trade show with the American Concrete Pipe Association.

The Precast Show 2012 will be held March 1-3 at the Orange County Convention Center in Orlando, Fla., and will include the National Concrete Masonry Association as a co-sponsor.

www.theprecastshow.org

New Autoclaved Aerated Concrete manufacturing facility announced

Carolina AAC and Wehrhahn GmbH have announced that Carolina AAC will open its first plant to produce Autoclaved Aerated Concrete, an innovative energyefficient building material.

The project will be located in Bennettsville, S.C., providing area architects, engineers and contractors with access to a sustainable, fire-resistant and environmentally friendly material that provides excellent temperature-controlling insulation. The location will also allow

shipping to reach 80 percent of the United States market within 24 hours.

AAC, used to create internal and external wall systems in residential and commercial structures, has been a predominant structural material around the world for several decades but is relatively new to the United States. The Carolina AAC plant will supply AAC blocks suitable for projects seeking LEED or similar certification.

www.carolinaaac.com

www.wehrhahn.de/en

NewLook, Modello team up

NewLook International Inc. and Modello Design Group LLC have teamed up to establish a co-sponsoring partnership. NewLook manufactures and distributes a range of premium decorative concrete solutions. Modello manufactures and supplies premium custom-made stencils.

Among other things, the co-sponsoring partnership entitles both parties to promote each other's brands. Modello stencils and installation methods will be introduced to NewLook customers through NewLook's comprehensive Certified NewLook Installer training program.

www.modellodesigns.com

www.getnewlook.com

Tygar Manufacturing expands opportunities in Canada

Tygar Manufacturing LLC has expanded services in Canada with new demonstrations, seminars and training classes in several provinces.

In February and March, Tygar offices will provide curbing demonstration and seminars in: Winnipeg, Manitoba; Edmonton and Medicine Hat, Alberta: Montreal, Quebec; and Vancouver, British Columbia.

© (888) 398-9427

www.tygarmfg.com

event calendar

Concrete Sawing & Drilling Association's 39th Annual Convention

March 10-12, Bonita Springs, Fla.

- **(**) (727) 577-5004
- www.csda.org

Concrete Decor Show & Spring Training

March 15-18, Nashville, Tenn.

- © (877) 935-8906
- www.concretedecorshow.com

The Professional Seminar and Hands-On Demo — Installing Polished Concrete Floors

March 23, Knoxville, Tenn. May 25, Dallas, Texas Aug. 24, Seattle, Wash. Nov. 2, Lawrence, Kan.

- ⊠ scottmetzger@metzgermcguire.com
- www.sasecompany.com
- www.metzgermcguire.com
- www.prosoco.com

American Society of Concrete Contractors CEO Forum

June 16-19. Pinehurst, N.C.

- © (866) 788-2722
- www.ascconline.org

DuraSet 1000/1001 receives facelift

Concrete Coatings Inc. has given a facelift to its DuraSet 1000/1001 polymer/modifer label. This is the same product that has been used for years by contractors throughout the decorative concrete industry. The new appearance gives it a superior shelf presence.

DuraSet 1000/1001 polymer/modifer binds cementitious overlays, mortars and grouts. It is available in 5-gallon pails and 55-gallon drums.

(0 (800) 443-2871

www.concretecoatingsinc.com

Nebraska decorative concrete contractor receives award

Todd Rose Decorative Concrete, of Lincoln, Neb., has received an Award of Excellence - Outstanding Achievement from ACI Nebraska.

Todd Rose Decorative Concrete served as the concrete contractor for the award-winning Duncan Residence project in Lincoln. Brester Construction Inc., also of Lincoln, served as the general contractor, and concrete was supplied by Lincoln-based Ready Mixed Concrete Co.

www.acinebraska.org

Concrete Classroom winners announced

The Tilt-Up Concrete Association has announced the winners of The Concrete Classroom 2010, an international design competition.

The winners were judged in the following areas: creative/ aesthetic use of tilt-up concrete in the design solution; tilt-up concrete design contribution to sustainability; quality of overall concept, design and layout; and overall sustainable solution.

The first-place winners were Jong Lee Fung and William Ng from the University of Malaya, based in Malaysia. Their solution includes a building comprised of several free-standing planar pieces that seemed to interlock with each other. It's intended to change the perception that tilt-up buildings are boxy.

Second place went to Josh Robbins of the Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture at the University of Houston. He focused his design on three points — program needs, site conditions and design goals.

The team of Matt Garippa and Trevor Roeske from Alfred State College, based in New York, earned third place. Incorporating curved wall panels with various textures and colors, their building was orientated so that people viewing the building from a major road would be able to focus on the massive sculptural curved wall.

Honorable mention winners were Martin Henning and Kurt Schrader, from Alfred State College, and James Allen and Matthew Mott, also from Alfred State College.

www.tilt-up.org

Lafarge's Kansas City Ready Mix operations receives award

Lafarge North America's Kansas City Ready Mix operations recently received six 2010 Excellence in Concrete Awards from the Concrete Promotional Group, a Kansas City-area trade association, for projects completed in the Kansas City area.

Among the six projects recognized was one of Lafarge's sustainable construction projects. It was recognized in the Pervious Pavement Category for Lafarge's work on KCATA Troost MAX bus service improvements. This project utilized one of Lafarge's Ultra Series concrete blends — its pervious "tri-blend" concrete. The Kansas City Area Transportation Authority needed a lowmaintenance, aesthetically pleasing, space-saving alterative to standard concrete or asphalt. Lafarge worked with the city and proposed a pervious concrete alternative. The project was redesigned to incorporate the green alternative in areas best suited for it.

Lafarge North America also won the Overall Concrete award for its work on the Kansas City Zoo's Polar Bear exhibit. This project utilized all of Lafarge's value-added mixes: Agilia, Chronolia, Artevia and Ultra Series.

www.lafarganorthamerica.com

Mapei expands into Mexico

Mapei, a manufacturer of adhesives, sealants and chemical products for the building industry, has opened Mapei de Mexico S.A. de C.V., with headquarters in Santiago de Queretaro, Queretaro,

The regional distribution center in Queretaro will serve floorcovering installers and concrete restoration contractors. The company already has manufacturing facilities in Venezuela and Argentina.

Robert Ash Jr., an experienced sales representative who has sold Mapei products in the Latin American markets for the past 13 years, will serve as the sales director for Mexico.

(0 (800) 426-2734

www.mapei.com

Sakrete launches mobile website

Sakrete recently launched a mobile-device-compatible website. The mobile website differs from the regular Sakrete website by paring down information and putting it onto a more accessible



business & INDUSTRY

platform for users to access from smart phones and PDAs.

One big difference is the elimination of Flash-enabled graphics, which can't be viewed on some mobile phones and will in many cases block user access.

The mobile-friendly website features a quick calculator so the consumer can quickly and easily figure out exactly how many bags they need for their project while they are in the store aisle. Quick-response codes also link directly to the mobile site, providing users with instant access to information that could save them money and time. Technical data is also easy to access on the mobile site.

www.sakrete.com/mobile

ACI launches mobile website

The American Concrete Institute has launched mobile.concrete.org, a mobileoptimized version of its award-winning website. The mobile site transforms the most popular areas on ACI's website into a format more convenient for users with mobile devices.

The mobile website contains contact information, certification information and verification, an ACI committee directory, convention information and access to the concrete terminology database.

nobile.concrete.org



New Lafarge North America website

Lafarge North America has expanded the company's online presence with the launch of its redesigned, user-friendly website. Users can obtain educational information on specific building materials and how each Lafarge product can optimize their project.

👣 www.lafargenorthamerica.com

Dur-A-Flex names president, COO

Dur-A-Flex has appointed Peter V. Ferris as president and chief operating officer.

Ferris comes to Dur-A-Flex with more than 30 years of business experience. Since 2006, he served as president of Charter Medical Ltd. There, he successfully built and led the team that returned the company to profitability.

www.dur-a-flex.com

Surface Gel Tek hires sales manager

Surface Gel Tek recently hired Barry Boyd as sales manager. Previously, Boyd has started his own company, Boyd Concrete Inc., and worked in home construction, road building, power plant construction and decorative concrete.

- © (888) 872-7759
- www.surfacegeltek.com

NewLook hires two new territory managers for California

NewLook International Inc. has hired two territory managers for California.

Superior Solutions has been hired to support and manage the northern California market. Lisa Grossjan-Carter, owner and manager of Superior Solutions, is a sales representative with extensive experience in the building materials and decorative concrete industry. Her territory includes all California counties north of Bakersfield.

G2 Sales LLC has been hired to support and manage the Southern California market. Grant Gardner, owner and manager of G2 Sales, is a former Brickform sales representative. His territory includes all

California counties south of Bakersfield.

www.getnewlook.com

Scofield names Western business development director

L.M. Scofield Co. has announced that Jeff Washburn has been appointed director of business development, Western division.

Washburn began his industry career with Master Builders. Prior to joining Scofield, he served as the Western region sales manager for Sika Corp.'s admixture division.

Washburn will be leading the way in connecting ready-mix and manufactured concrete product producers in the Western division with Scofield's Chromix-IT Liquid Color Systems.

www.scofield.com

Concrete Coatings names Northern California sales representative

Concrete Coatings Inc. has named Allen Quesada as its Northern California sales representative.

Quesada has nearly 30 years of experience in the field of wholesale construction materials. He began his own hardware distribution company, New Enterprises, 17 years ago. New Enterprises presently serves masonry supply stores, retail lumberyards and construction supply companies. Quesada's new responsibilities include developing new customers in Northern California. He will assist in product demonstrations as well as technical support.

- **(**0 (800) 443-2871
- www.concretecoatingsinc.com

CORRECTION

The website for Argentine concrete artist Miriam Alba Romano is www.concretemural.com.

Operations manager to oversee Nawkaw's Southeast territory

To oversee Nawkaw's customer service and project management throughout Georgia, Alabama and Florida, Nawkaw's operations manager, Mike Honeyman, will be taking over the Nawkaw Southeast territory.

Honeyman has worked in many capacities for Nawkaw since 1996. He has been Nawkaw's top crew chief, and most recently, operations manager for staining, cleaning, restoration and training.

((866) 462-9529

👣 www.nawkaw.com

Worldwide names sales manager

Worldwide Superabrasives LLC has announced that Dan Herzog will serve as sales and business development manager.

Herzog previously served as Midwest regional sales



manager. He will now serve a much broader list of Worldwide customers globally and take an active role in business development activities.

www.worldwidesa.com

Bonsal American welcomes new director of sustainability

Meredith Ware has joined Bonsal American Inc. as director of sustainability. Ware will marshal and expand the company's sustainability initiatives. She is a LEED Accredited Professional (LEED AP).

Ware is charged with helping Bonsal design sustainability principles into its full complement of Sakrete, ProSpec, AmeriMix and GemSeal branded products. She will also work with other product and process sustainability initiatives underway across other divisions of Bonsal's parent company Oldcastle.

Previously Ware served as sustainability director for Serious Materials Inc., a developer and manufacturer of sustainable green building materials, and as COO of Clean Concrete Technologies Inc.

👣 www.bonsalamerican.com

Hyde Tools promotes VPs of sales

Hyde Tools has promoted sales directors Robert B. Clemence and Louis A. Oleksy

Jr. to vice president of sales in their respective channels.

Bob Clemence, currently president of the American **Edged Product** Manufacturers Association, has worked for Hyde for

20 years, most recently as sales director

for the Co-op and Paint Manufacturers channel in North and South America.

Lou Oleksy most recently served as director of sales for Hardware and Industrial Distribution.

www.hydetools.com





ASTM names new board chair

Catherine (Kitty) H. Pilarz, senior director of product safety at Mattel/Fisher-Price, has been named 2011 chairman of the board of directors of ASTM International.

Chairman of the board is the highest elected position at ASTM International.

Pilarz has served on the ASTM board of directors since 2006. She is a member of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers and the American Society for Quality. She has also served as symposium chair for the International Consumer Product Health and Safety Organization and as president and board member of that group.

www.astm.org



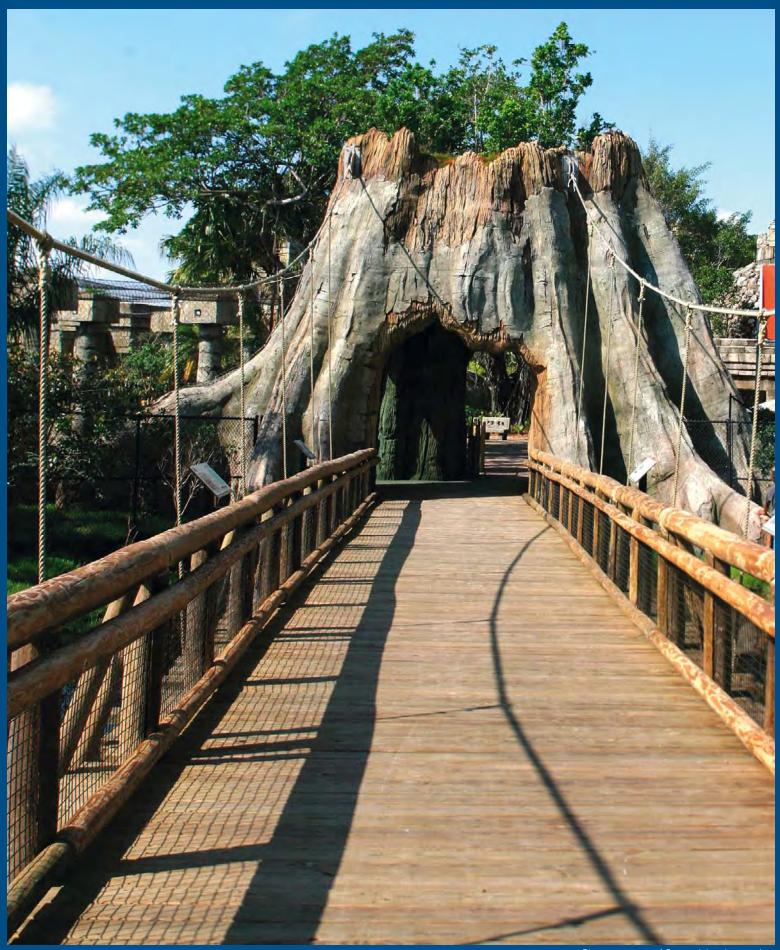


Husqvarna's PG 820 planetary grinder competed in the CPM Concrete Polishing Rodeo on January 22-23, 2011 and took top honors in the Large Platform Grinder Category. Overall, Husqvarna beat out fellow competitors to take Best of Show!

The PG 820 is equipped with Dual Drive Technology™ - an exclusive and patented twin motor drive system which allows the operator to selectively control speed or direction of either the planetary head or the discs. This results in unlimited potential speed and direction combinations.

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Photos courtesy of Cemrock Landscapes Inc.



Brian Olson Cemrock Landscapes Inc.

Tucson, Ariz.

by Kelly O'Brien

ou might think that rappelling from cliffs, learning about orangutan habitats and studying the prehistoric skeleton of a triceratops are activities without much relevance to decorative concrete. But for the folks at Cemrock Landscapes Inc., they are all just another day at the office.

"When the phone rings around here you just never know what somebody's going to ask you to do — that's part of the fun," says Brian Olson, president of the Arizona-based company.

Specializing in concrete landscaping, Cemrock was founded in 1975 and is among the biggest names in the zoo and aquarium market for exhibit construction. They also do a steady trade in erosion

protection along highways and coastlines. With 80 employees and two offices — one in Tucson and the other in Seattle — the company has done work in all 50 states, not to mention four different continents (North American, South America, Asia and Europe).

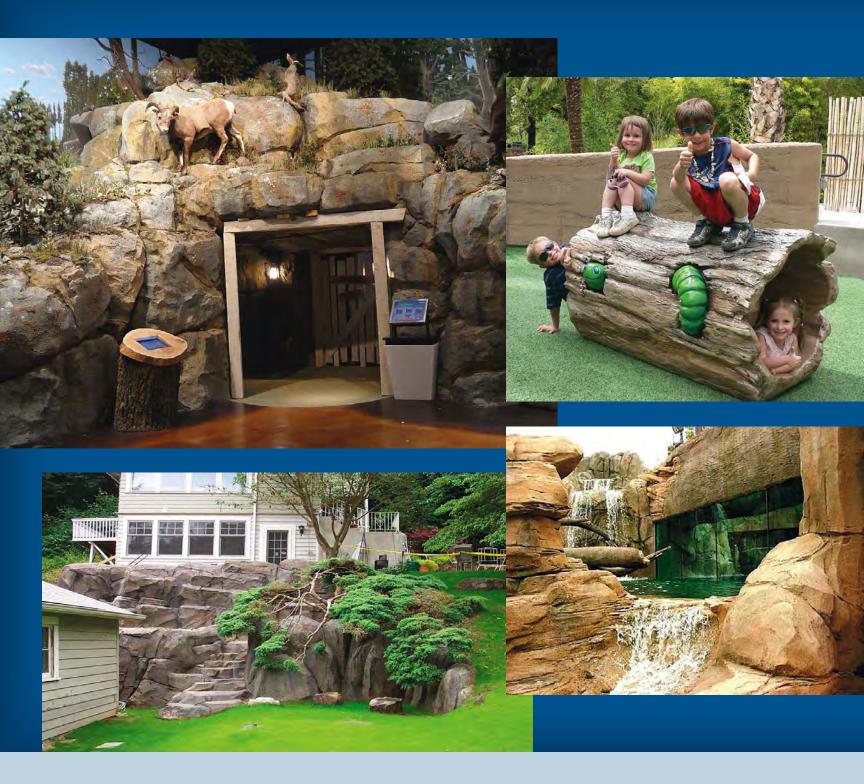
Cemrock was not always the globetrotting decorative concrete powerhouse it is today, nor was Olson, now 49, always its president. Back in the early '80s, Olson, armed with a newly

> minted degree in structural engineering, came to Tucson from Montana and found a job as a superintendent for a general contractor. His very first project was for the Arizona-Sonoran Desert Museum, and the GC he worked for had subbed out the artificial rockwork to Cemrock. Before that project, Olson hadn't been exposed to much decorative concrete work, and he was captivated, watching the Cemrock team

come in and sculpt detailed, realistic natural environments out of bare concrete. "I'd never seen anything like it," he says.

Over the course of that first project, Olson





became friends with Cemrock founder Rick Dyson and got a glimpse of what the work was all about. However, the pair lost touch when the project was completed. Olson didn't have anything more to do with decorative concrete until 13 years later. When Olson caught wind of the fact that Dyson was thinking about retiring and selling Cemrock, he called him.

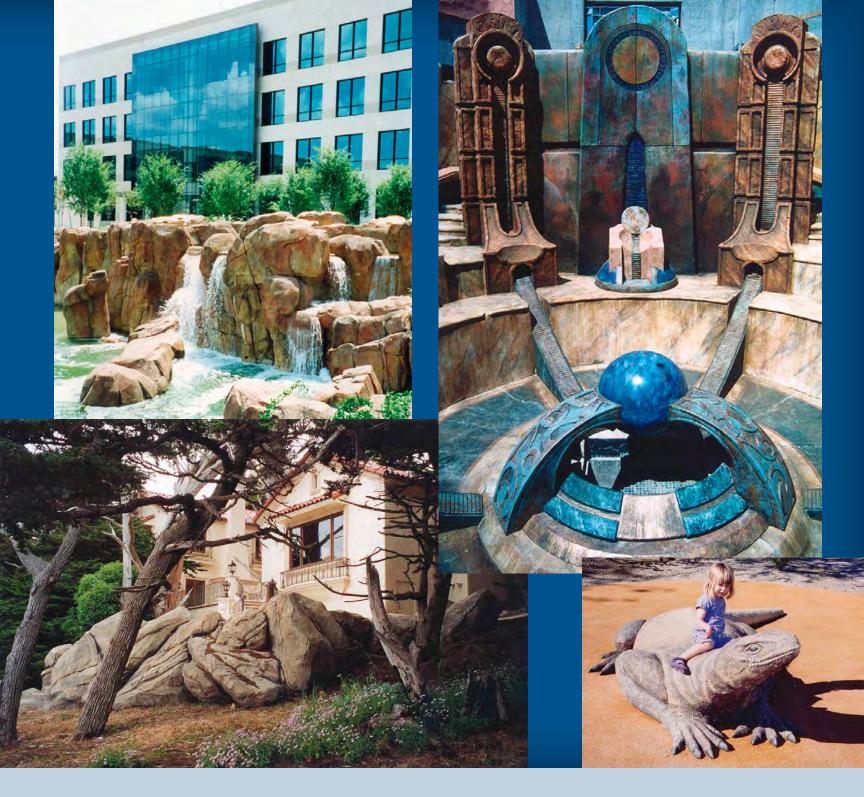
"We went out to lunch," says Olson, "and two weeks later we had a handshake deal — my wife and I were going to buy

the company." Two years of red tape later, in 1997, it was finally official, and Olson wasted no time getting to work.

When Olson bought Cemrock, it was pulling in about \$1.2 million a year doing exclusively zoo and aquarium habitats, which served as a great foundation to build from. And build Olson did. Just eight years after he bought the company, it had added a full-service fabrication shop and a second branch in Seattle (by buying out a competitor), and annual revenues had

increased tenfold.

This description of the company still holds pretty true today, although Cemrock has continued to evolve. In addition to growing in size and sales, Olson has also expanded the types of services the company offers. Concrete landscaping — for not only zoos and aquariums, but also resorts, museums, golf courses and others — still accounts for 75 percent of their projects, but around 10 percent to 15 percent of their workload is erosion control projects,



and the remainder is fabrication work for playgrounds and parks.

The diversity of their services has proved to be quite an advantage, says Olson. Although the on-site work — the artistic landscaping and erosion control — certainly comprises the bulk of their revenue, it also has a lower profit margin than the fabricating work. With the former, you have to account for travel, lodging, per diems and on-site complications. The latter, on the other hand, is all done in-house in a

controlled environment, where schedules are much easier to keep and costs much easier to control. Their fabrication work not only makes for a great low-overhead counterpoint to the higher-cost on-site work, but also keeps their in-house artisans busy and creatively challenged. From a GFRC triceratops skeleton for a dinothemed playground to authentic-looking logs and trees for an orangutan enclosure, their fabrication work really runs the creative gamut.

Extreme concreting

That said, it is Cemrock's erosion control and landscaping work that have earned the company an international reputation for artistry and high quality.

Look at the Seattle-based erosion control crew, which does many of its projects in the Pacific Northwest. Often, their task is to protect mountainsides from future mudslides (a considerable risk, in such drizzly climes). In order to accomplish this goal, the Cemrock crew places soil nails, 30-



foot to 40-foot bolts that go straight into the slope, and uses those as a framework for a concrete facade, which is then hand-carved to simulate a native rock face.

What happens if that mountainside is a straight drop, hundreds of feet high? Armed with the drill and bolts for soil nails, plus rebar and framing supplies, a complete shotcrete rig and a whole arsenal of carving tools, the Cemrock crew will rappel from top of the bluff in question and do the job suspended from ropes and climbing

harnesses. "They're a little crazy like that," Olson says, with obvious pride.

But while these auxiliary markets have added to Cemrock's portfolio, it's still artistic landscaping work that really showcases the full range of the company's decorative concrete skills.

Their portfolio includes a huge variety of techniques: rock faces, trees and other landscape elements created using either hand-carved shotcrete or GFRC fabrication and precast molds. There are installations

that employ a specially formulated concrete mix, fiberglass rebar and plastic lath and are designed to hold up indefinitely underwater. Sea walls preserve the coastlines at parks and golf courses and can withstand saltwater and crashing waves.

No matter what they happen to be creating, the aesthetic bottom line remains the same. "The commodity that we sell is realism," Olson says.

Achieving that realism is something for which the Cemrock team has earned



a reputation. Take, for example, the \$5 million Russia's Grizzly Coast exhibit project that Cemrock did for the Minnesota Zoo. "The director is very knowledgeable about exhibits and what can be achieved," Olson says. "He made it known that he expected the very highest level of realism."

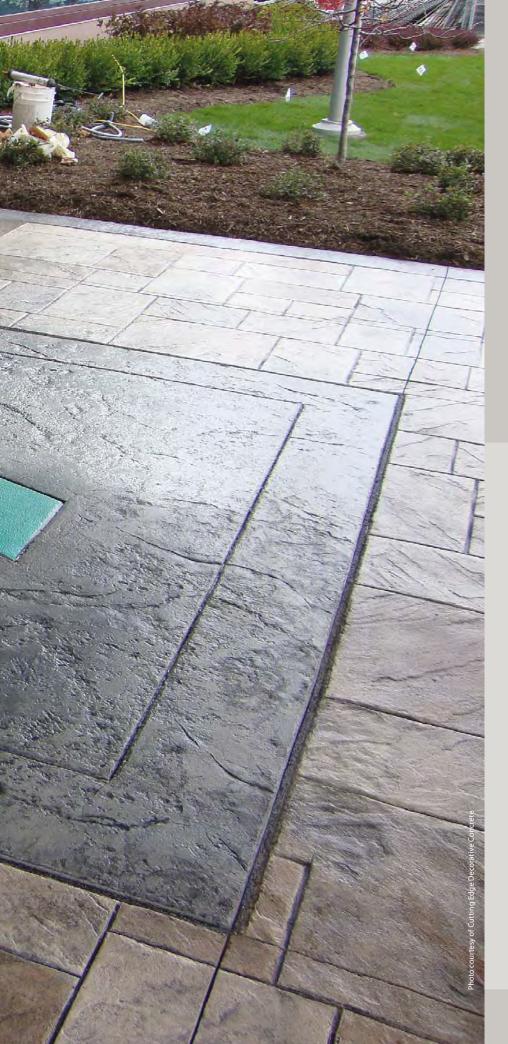
Cemrock was selected on the basis that they could deliver that, and deliver they did. The exhibit included habitats for bears, otters, leopards and boars. So the Cemrock team set about sculpting

trees, geysers, beaches and many varieties of rock to mimic aspects of the animals' native environments. Thanks in part to the Cemrock team, Russia's Grizzly Coast has won multiple awards, including Top Honors in the 2009 Exhibit Awards from the Association of Zoos and Aquariums. "Even people in the industry struggled to distinguish it from real rock," Olson says.

Olson has no intention of letting Cemrock rest on its laurels. "We're constantly looking for ways to improve what we do," he says. "We're going to continue to grow the company and be there to provide unique solutions to people's problems." And with rappelling, orangutans and dinosaurs already part of the company's day-to-day, it will be exciting to see what else those unique solutions might entail.

www.cemrock.com





by Natasha Chilingerian

ECORATIVE concrete contractors know having multiple tricks up their sleeves can lead to steadier, more lucrative work. But with so many types of decorative concrete applications out there, from coating to precasting to staining, mastering not just one, but several or all of them is a momentous feat.

Nevertheless, great numbers of contractors, craftspeople and artisans around the world have done exactly that.

How do contractors figure out how to expand their arrays of services offered and which skills to choose to master next? Does being a jack-of-all-trades pay off in the end? And does having certain skills mean learning new ones will be easy?

Here, five veteran contractors and artisans provide insight by explaining where their decorative concrete journeys began, how their skill sets grew and how diversification has affected their careers.

Passion-Driven Expansion

Gregory Mata, Cutting Edge Decorative Concrete, Richfield, Ohio

When Gregory Mata first discovered colored, stamped concrete in the mid-'90s, he was hooked. Since then, he's explored and perfected other facets of decorative concrete, such as overlays, staining and countertops. He says intrigue — not dollar signs - spurred his motivation to learn.

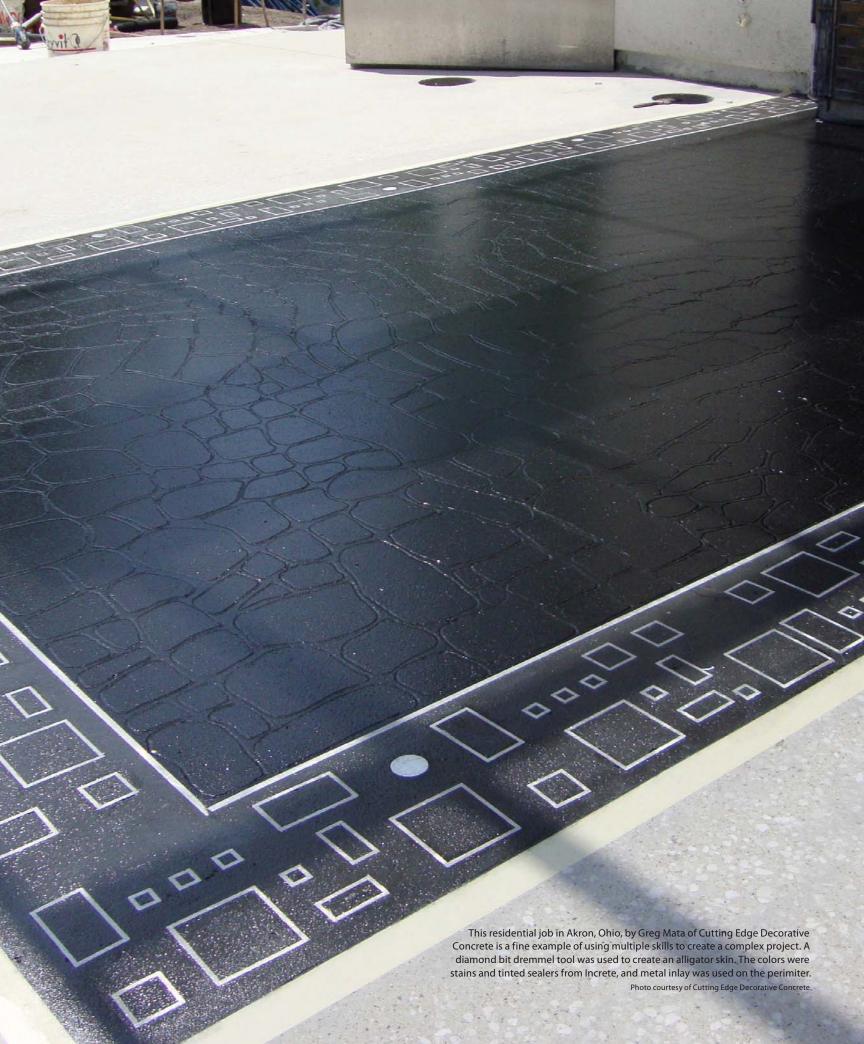
"It was really just all about the material," Mata says. "The expansion came naturally. It was more of a drive to learn more, get more information and get good quality training."

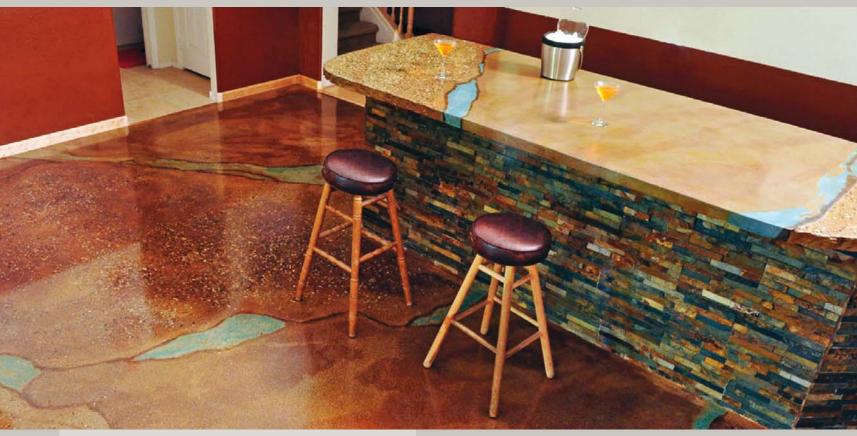
However, Mata believes there's a limit as to how many branches of decorative concrete someone can successfully practice. He says that perfecting multiple skills can be costly and time-consuming. "When I first got information about countertops, I was so enthralled that I almost forgot everything else I was doing. I realized it's impossible to do everything perfectly."

He adds it's important to build relationships with other decorative concrete industry professionals who can be called on if their skill is needed on a project.

Mata says the advantages of offering a diverse list of services are the same as they'd be in any industry — when you know more, you're more likely to land high-profile work in your field.

"Because of the time that we've invested, we can handle very complex projects and stimulate the client to go a little further with concrete products," he says.





Mike Meredith, who created this matching bar and floor, took on countertop and kitchen work when business slowed at his artificial-rock and waterfall business. Photo by Bruce D. Kaplan

From Rockwork to Kitchens

Mike Meredith, Arizona Falls Inc., Las Vegas, Nev.

Mike Meredith didn't plan on working with decorative concrete when he first launched his artificialrock and waterfall business 20 years ago. But when the recession hit, business slowed. He decided to expand his services to include decorative concrete work such as countertop, kitchen and barbecue installation.

"I had to diversify," Meredith says. "There is not enough work in one trade alone."

To develop his decorative concrete skills, Meredith took a course and met with industry veterans. He said learning the new trade posed challenges. For example, he found that while a carving mistake in a jagged rock formation is easy to fix, the slightest goof could ruin a concrete countertop.

But his rockwork background also gave him advantages. "Working with colors and knowing which ones go together helps, and so does knowing how weather conditions affect when you can work," he says.

Meredith's expansion has helped him build his clientele, but he says it still takes work to get work.

"With countertops, it's all about networking and meeting people," he says. "You have to work hard on the sales."



Being Selective

Doug Carlton, Carlton Concrete Inc., Visalia, Calif.

Doug Carlton and his crew bill themselves as experts in three branches of decorative concrete — colored concrete, stamping and staining. They've developed skills aside from these core three over the years, but because they were just good at them — not great — Carlton chose not to practice them professionally.

When a project calls for a skill not related to colored concrete, stamping or staining, they bring in an expert from their networking pool of contractors. Carlton says this process has been a smart business move because it leaves his clients with the highest-quality results.

"Each and every facet of decorative concrete must be installed by the best you have available," Carlton says. "By forming a networking team, it's easy for us to match the client's expectations, because every one of us is skilled at what we do."

Colored concrete installation was the first skill the Carlton Concrete crew mastered. Carlton says his decision to add stamping and staining to his repertoire was business-related.

"We were looking for a way to separate ourselves, and it was the best move we ever

crew's three core services cross over with one another in that they each start with a design and follow a similar work process.

"They are all interwoven," he says. "Each one has to be put into the same machine of educating the client, seeing if decorative concrete is a good fit for them, giving the information to your crew, and ordering the products."

made," he says. Carlton says the skills required for his

Creating Spaces

Chris Becker, Becker Architectural Concrete, Woodbury, Minn.

One secret to Becker Architectural Concrete's success is its diversely skilled staff. Each member of Chris Becker's 10-man crew has a specific talent, and together, they complete full-service projects using a spectrum of decorative concrete applications from floor coatings to precast furniture, Becker says.

"We place a high emphasis on design and look at a project knowing we have different tools to work with," he says. "We're known for helping our clients create a space."

Becker began in the staining and traditional stamping branches of decorative concrete, then explored concrete countertops, overlay systems, stamped overlays and microtoppings. (Cold Minnesota weather forced him to focus on indoor applications, he says.) Today, he and his crew offer a range of services and produce high-quality results, which has led to many referrals and a coveted reputation in the industry.

"It's about being very skilled and successful at all of these things, and for me, it developed over time and took years," Becker says.

Of course, it's not just an impressive skill set that leads to success in the decorative concrete industry, Becker says — it's passion.

"We're really concrete addicts," he says. "This material gets you hooked."



A One-Stop Shop

Zac Coletti, Coletti Concrete Studio, Sebastian, Fla.

Acid staining was the first skill Zac Coletti perfected as a decorative concrete contractor, and shortly thereafter, he began applying overlays and microtoppings and coloring them with stains and dyes. "It was really a necessity," Coletti says. "Not all slabs were going to fit the bill to be acid-stained."

He also learned to install epoxy coatings and polished concrete, as well as a skill that would become his favorite type of work — concrete countertop formation.

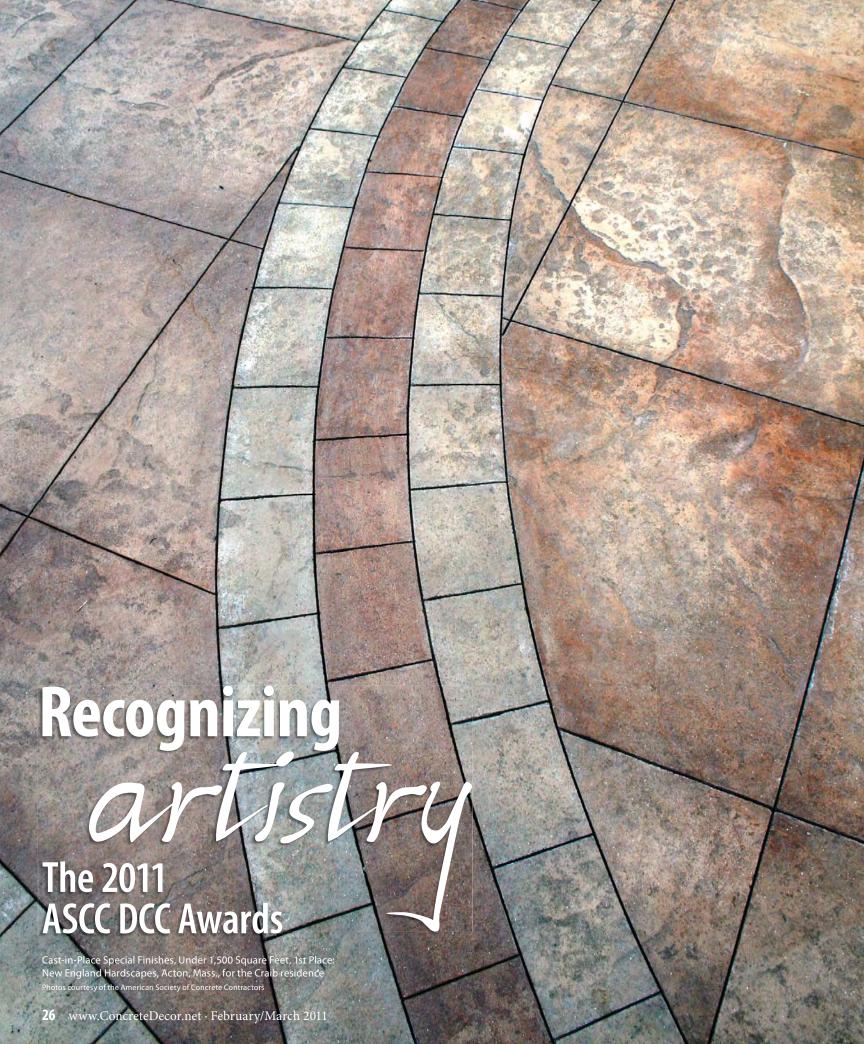
While formed concrete is his focus, Coletti offers a range of services, making his business a versatile one-stop shop. "We oftentimes have clients who want us to make their countertops or vanities and are at the same time looking for a polished concrete contractor or someone to acid stain and seal their floor," he says. "When they find out we do that too, it's really a no-brainer."

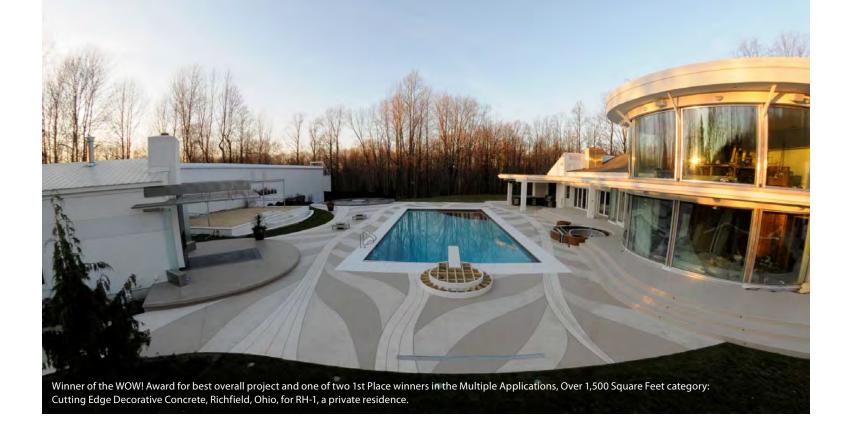
Coletti says his versatile skill set helps ease the learning curve when he attempts something new. He says many applications, such as polishing concrete countertops and polishing concrete floors, require similar skills. So do fixing spider cracks in a microtopping and applying slurry to a countertop, he adds.



"If I'm trying a new or different technique — something I do all the time — I can always draw from similar applications to get an idea of what's going to happen," he says.







he **Decorative Concrete Council**, a specialty council of the American Society of Concrete Contractors, St. Louis, Mo., has announced the winners of its third annual decorative concrete awards competition. The winners were recognized at a ceremony at the World of Concrete, Las Vegas.

The entries were judged by *Concrete Decor* publisher Bent Mikkelsen, Tilt-Up Concrete Association executive director Ed Sauter, and consultants Dan Dorfmueller and Howard Jancy. Concrete Decor magazine salutes the winners of what was an extremely competitive competition.

The Decorative Concrete Council membership includes contractors, manufacturers and suppliers of decorative concrete products.

The winners are:

WOW! Award for best overall project: Cutting Edge Decorative Concrete, Richfield, Ohio, for RH-1, a private residence

Cast-In-Place Stamped, Over 1,500 Square Feet, 1st Place: Rockworx, Wichita, Kan., for Spirit Aerosystems

Cast-In-Place Stamped, Over 1,500 Square Feet, 2nd Place: Increte of North Florida, Jacksonville, Fla., for the Britt residence

Cast-In-Place Stamped, Under 1,500 Square Feet, 1st Place: Rockworx, Wichita, Kan., for Hampton Inn

Cast-In-Place Stamped, Under 1,500 Square Feet, 2nd Place: Creative Construction by Design, Danville, Ill., for the Burnett residence

Stained, Over 1,500 Square Feet, 1st Place: Hyde Concrete, Annapolis, Md., for Tilted Kilt Pub & Eatery

Stained, Over 1,500 Square Feet, 2nd Place: Lloyd Concrete, Forest, Va., for Northcote Farms







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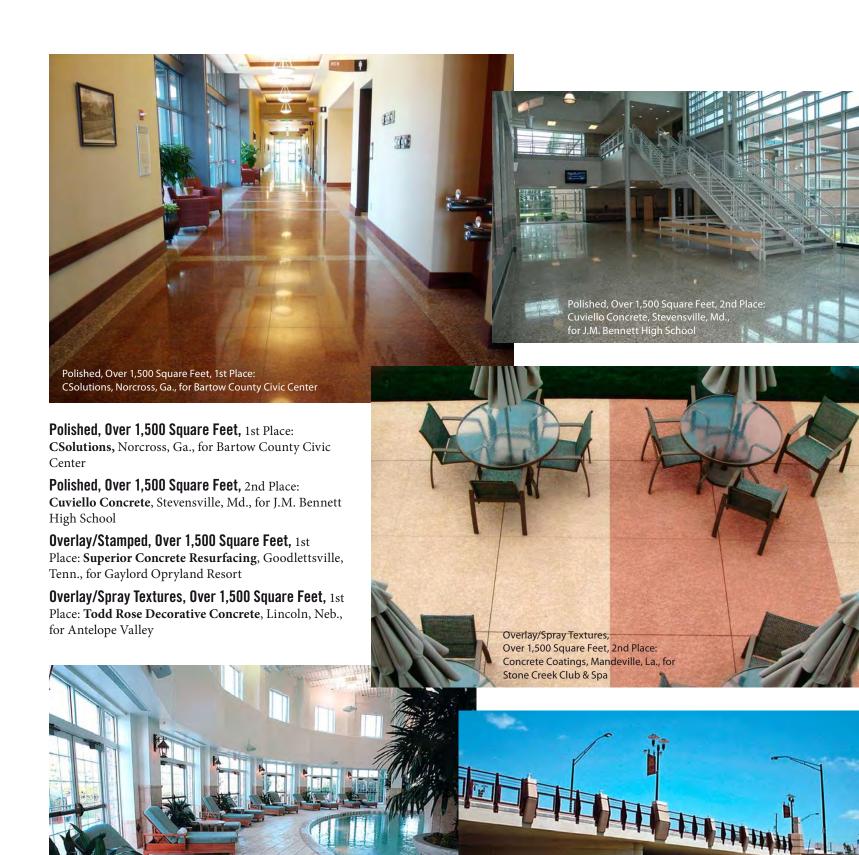
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Overlay/Stamped, Over 1,500 Square Feet, 1st Place:

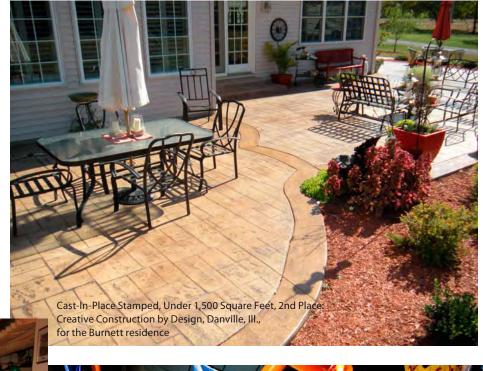
Superior Concrete Resurfacing, Goodlettsville, Tenn., for Gaylord Opryland Resort

Overlay/Spray Textures, Over 1,500 Square Feet, 1st Place: Todd Rose Decorative Concrete, Lincoln, Neb., for Antelope Valley











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Overlay/Spray Textures, Over 1,500 Square Feet, 2nd Place: Concrete Coatings, Mandeville, La., for Stone Creek Club & Spa

Cast-in-Place Special Finishes, Over 1,500 Square Feet, 1st Place (tie): Tom Ralston Concrete, Santa Cruz, Calif., for Rockview House; and T.B. Penick & Sons Inc., San Diego, Calif., for FRWA Intake Facility

Cast-in-Place Special Finishes, Over 1,500 Square Feet, 2nd Place: Morley Construction, Santa Monica, Calif., for Getty Villa museum

Cast-in-Place Special Finishes, Under 1,500 Square Feet, 1st Place: New England Hardscapes, Acton, Mass., for Craib house

Vertical, Over 1,500 Square Feet, 1st Place: Morley Construction, Sant Monica, Calif., for Getty Villa museum

Vertical, Over 1,500 Square Feet, 2nd Place: T.B. Penick & Sons Inc., San Diego, Calif., for Sunset Park

Artistry, Over 1,500 Square Feet, 1st Place: T.B. Penick & Sons Inc., San Diego, Calif., for Sunset Park







Artistry, Over 1,500 Square Feet, 2nd Place: Bella Landscaping, Sturtevant, Wis., for American Legion Star at Kilbourn Reservoir Park

Artistry, Under 1,500 Square Feet, 1st Place: T.B. Penick & Sons Inc., San Diego, Calif., for Venice Beach Skatepark

Artistry, Under 1,500 Square Feet, 2nd Place: CSolutions, Norcross, Ga., for Fellwood Park

Countertops, 1st Place: The Green Scene, Northridge, Calif., for Tiki Bar & Fire Pit

Countertops, 2nd Place: The Green Scene, Northridge, Calif., for Zamani

Multiple Applications, Over 1,500 Square Feet, 1st Place (tie): Cutting Edge Decorative Concrete, Richfield, Ohio, for RH-1, a private residence; and Morley Construction, Santa Monica, Calif., for the Getty Villa museum

Multiple Applications, Over 1,500 Square Feet, 2nd Place: T.B. Penick & Sons Inc., San Diego, Calif., for Sunset Park







RUAABLE FROM THE JUNGLE

How a California contractor and distributor found success with decorative concrete



by Lori Zecca

ET'S GET THE QUESTION out of the way that you undoubtedly are itching to ask: Is it a jungle out there for California transplant Steve Kroo and Concrete Jungle, his Northridge decorative concrete business? Of course it is, but that's never stopped this auto painter turned concrete mastermind before. If anything, this just gives the 45-year-old visionary a reason to crank up his innovative radar and center on what he can control.

It's true, Kroo once painted cars for a living. It wasn't until he bought his first home in California that his bittersweet love affair with concrete began.

The bitter: With a definitive vision in mind, Kroo wanted to transform his home and yard using various decorative concrete finishes. Certain he could save money doing so, he attempted to do the work himself. To his credit he attended any seminar he could find, limited and simplistic as they were eight years ago, to help achieve this goal. As you might imagine, Kroo fell prey to some of the pitfalls common to this industry when proper product knowledge is lacking.

The sweet: Kroo's quest to create something different and unique for his home resulted in a passion for decorative concrete, the possibilities of which he learned are limited

only by his imagination. That passion drove him to locate the best products available, become proficient in their usage, and to educate and inform every installer he crossed paths with.

Through Concrete Jungle,

Concrete Jungle
Northridge, Calif.
Owner: Steve Kroo
Years in business: 9
Number of employees: 5
www.concretejungledistribution.com

Examples of decorative concrete work by Steve Kroo and his team at Concrete Jungle.



concrete materials, he conducts roughly eight workshops a year teaching concrete countertops and floors, and he offers a product expo that provides a sampling of decorative concrete finishes, including microtoppings, overlays, stamping and sprays.

Kroo has built a thriving business from the ground up that includes a 2,200-square-foot warehouse, five employees and the house that originally served as his concrete classroom but now does double duty as his showroom. "I had an actual showroom at one point," Kroo explains, "but neither the location nor the product we sell was conducive to off-street foot traffic." In fact, he tended to take clients to his elaborately ornamented home anyway, simply because it contained 5,000 square feet of decorative concrete, representing eight years worth of trial and error and even some unprecedented creativity.

Having built a solid customer base on reputation, referrals and strategic marketing, Concrete Jungle the contractor is now the goto place for many high-end decorators, architects and contractors alike. Flexibility is key, Kroo says. "Strive for perfection, know your products, build relationships and work your market." Concrete Jungle targets higher-end businesses and homes ranging from \$800,000 into the millions.

"We are fortunate to have what we consider to be the best products available," says Kroo. That includes products that are recognized by LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Development), a set of rigorous guidelines for the construction of environmentally sustainable buildings, as well as products specified on ARCAT, which provides building product information for architects and contractors.

But it's the hard work and dedication to his craft that sets this installer and reseller apart from the rest. "We are not salesmen, but we are individuals that are passionate about the business and are hands on. We are also a small enough company that we can make

decisions and execute them faster."

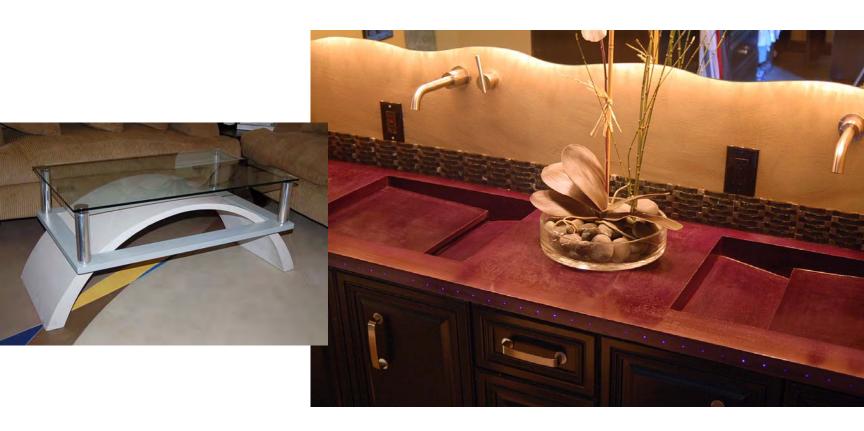
Product diversity is also important, but not to the point of confusion, says Kroo. "I already feel there are too many products on the market, especially sealers, but of those, the good ones all serve different purposes, so they are all needed." He's carefully chosen only products he has successfully used himself, including those sealers that have passed his own rather unconventional testing processes, which include driving over them, dragging chairs and furniture across them, and pressure-washing them.

Wanting to comply with strict California environmental laws and eager to decrease his own carbon footprint (the total amount of greenhouse gases produced to directly and indirectly support human activities), Kroo strives to do what he can to protect our natural world by streamlining "green" decorative concrete products while maintaining the integrity of the finished product. This is not an easy balance at times, but it's one that has become far easier to achieve as less harmful, nontoxic products make their way to the marketplace.

The contracting side

Only 25 miles northwest of Hollywood and Los Angeles, Kroo's contracting service specializes in custom and difficult applications. Partly because of the many unusual requests he receives operating in the land of glam and glitz, he is able to stretch his imagination and create boundless, one-of-a-kind works of art. "We collaborate with anyone who is interested, often partnering with other installers to complete large projects that might not be attainable otherwise," he says. "We cover a wide range of applications and enjoy a challenge."

Kroo continues to supervise many of the contractors he has trained in his studio on actual job sites, admitting that this kind of attention didn't always occur when business was booming. However,



now that he has had the opportunity to do so, he sees the trend continuing. "Training invested with an installer is repeat business. These customers deserve special attention, especially compared to the one-time customer."

Kroo is of the mindset that all of his products need to be fully understood prior to application. Many contractors believe a twohour crash course is training enough. That's not the case with the complex and somewhat caustic products necessary to construct extraordinary concrete finishes. The mishandling of product can easily lead to financial damages, and worse, cause serious bodily harm.

The Internet is often an underutilized selling and informational tool for the decorative concrete professional, but not by Kroo. "Customers should be able to have 95 percent of their questions answered on either the reseller's or installer's website and the rest clarified by the manufacturer's site," he says. His site features an extensive photo gallery, a product guide that specifies prices, warranties and buying procedures, workshop information and registration, and informative article reprints.

Overall, Kroo and his crew (no pun intended) are excited to face the challenges of each new day. They are always looking for new and inventive ways to grow their business and use decorative concrete products. Kroo has been experimenting with concrete furniture and has created pieces that are featured in furniture showrooms in his area. His unique coffee, sofa and end tables are just a few of his offerings — their sleek lines and complex finishes bring an entirely different spin to conventional furniture items. All it took was a little creative manipulation, something every DC professional knows a thing or two about.





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LEASE take a second to answer this question, because ignoring it could very well cost you a lot of money. Are you a well-kept secret? I was thinking back at the number of customers we've



by Doug Carlton

had the pleasure of installing decorative concrete for and came to a sobering conclusion. I admitted a fact that has probably cost me thousands in sales. They don't remember me.

Now, this wasn't a big deal when the housing market was strong and the commercial market was stronger. And sure, some of my customers call when it's time to reseal or add to the improvements of the past. But most have moved on with their lives, and my lack of interaction with them has contributed to my being a well-kept secret.

So how to get the word out? Network online.

I'm going to admit I was very skeptical of social networking at first. Facebook, Twitter, e-mail marketing, e-commerce, mcommerce — I thought they were for people with way too much time on their hands. Boy, have I been wrong. In the right hands these networks are without equal. No other source of contacts compares, especially when you factor in the low cost of social networking and e-mail. Anyone looking to generate more sales and leads should be developing a social networking presence.

Getting started

The best place to start is by building a contact list of clients, builders, interior decorators, developers and other prospects by way of e-mail, Facebook and Twitter contacts. Signing up for Facebook and Twitter is free. The old way of finding

business by placing an ad in your local newspaper is in the past. Completed projects, new ideas, fresh designs, accomplishments and discounted services can be shared with prospective customers at the push of a button. Most of these types of contacts are qualified leads that have some form of interest in what you are doing.

Have you noticed how busy people are

In the right hands, online social networks are without eaual.

today? You ask them how they are doing and they simply say, "Busy." Website blogging has been around for years but is being replaced with Twitter. Twitter started out as a networking system where folks could let other folks know what they were doing in real time. It has evolved into a quick 140-word way for a businessperson, you, to keep in contact with your customers. Think of it as an opportunity to tell folks about a sale or a new product or service.

Facebook allows more interaction than Twitter, with more conversation and pictures. Both of these services keep you in constant contact with the best source of new work possible, your prior customer. I realize we are just scratching the surface of this subject, so feel free to check out some other sites with potential too, such as SocialMarker.com, WordPress. com, Squidoo.com, Trumpia.com, Marketinginthemomentbook.com and YouTube.

(continued on page 41)



construction SERVICES

PRODUCT NEWS



Decorative waterproofer from UGL

United Gilsonite Laboratories has announced Designer Drylock, a new product in the Drylock line of masonry



waterproofers.

The new Designer Drylock Masonry Waterproofer is formulated with an advanced color system. The granite-like filler system with multicolored specks is an economical alternative to solid surface color.

A brush is recommended for application, but a sprayer or roller will also work. The system is ideal for use on masonry walls, cinder and concrete blocks, stucco, brick, fieldstone foundations and retaining walls. It is available in two designer introductory colors: Misty Gray with Midnight Specks and Natural Sand with Brownstone Specks.

Flooring app for BlackBerry

The Building Systems business of BASF has released a Flooring Installation Solution Application for use with BlackBerry smart phones. The application is designed to bring immediate, accurate answers to flooring installers on the job site, where computer access and reference materials may not be readily available.

The tool allows users to find product information, locate a BASF distributor, calculate flooring needs, and utilize the Flooring Wizard to select the appropriate product. The "Get Product Info" function provides customers with instant access to product data sheets, MSDS information and LEED product information letters. When a state is selected in "Find a Distributor," the program provides a list of local BASF

distributors along with contact information. Users can call or e-mail the distributor directly from the application. The Flooring Calculator allows for square foot, square yard, pitch and metric measurements to help you calculate product needs instantly.

The Flooring Wizard recommends a BASF product solution based on a short series of questions. The Wizard will ask questions regarding substrate and product needs and make a recommendation based on the user's answers. From the product page, users can obtain product literature.

www.buildingsystems.com

Tactile warning system is easy to install

Ramp Up is a new ADA-compliant tactile warning system that can be installed on both concrete and asphalt in as little as 10 minutes. Developed by SafetyStepTD, it is based on the same technology as their older Tactile Warning System — however, Ramp Up uses prefabricated cementitious mats to reduce installation time compared to the other system.

Optimized for use on curb ramps and other areas where a single tile is needed, Ramp Up comes in many prefinished sizes. Adhesive, slip-resistant materials, and one of several colors of topcoat are factoryapplied to the flexible cementitious mat. Prefabrication ensures a uniform finish across the entire project and substantially reduces the amount of employee training required for installation.

Furthermore, the prefab process is more efficient than on-site assembly, reducing the cost of materials. Application is reduced to a single step: Peel the backing off the mat and stick it to the pavement.

www.safetysteptd.com

New strobing LED signal light

Larson Electronics' Magnalight has introduced a strobing LED beacon that produces an exceptionally brilliant and attention-getting light signal in a small and durable package.

The Magnalight Generation III 10 Watt LED Strobing Beacon is a powerful LED beacon light that uses a 10-watt LED bulb to

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CARLTON'S CORNER

(continued from page 39)

produce a strobing flash that is brighter than typical LED beacon lights.

Although powerful, the highintensity LED strobe light is also very small and versatile. The entire unit measures 2 1/2 inches wide by 2 inches tall and is only 1/2 inch thick.

The 10-watt LED is paired with a specially designed clear optical lens to generate 360 degrees of flashing light that is visible several thousand feet farther than most other LED strobes. The cast-aluminum flush mounting base offers excellent mounting versatility and ease of installation. The unit is waterproof and offers a wide variety of strobing flash patterns that can be set by the operator.

Unlike typical beacons, this LED beacon light produces colored illumination without colored lenses or optics that can fade or discolor over time. This LED beacon is solid state and no filaments or glass are used in its construction, resulting in an extremely durable light that can withstand far more abuse than regular filamentbased beacons.

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It's not just about you

I bet you see hundreds of advertising e-mails monthly, and many go unread. So what can make your company's online communications different? Regardless of what form of social networking you choose, please don't fall into the trap of sending out information only about you and what you're doing. Create interesting and informative pieces about how your services can benefit readers. Instead of "Hey everyone, we now offer water-based stain application and we're ready for you to call for pricing," say "Please ask how new ecofriendly stains can brighten your existing concrete with 10 new colors" or "15 percent off our new service for past customers only." The possibilities are endless here.

It's not just a phone

Smart phones are as much a part of everyday life as a computer is. In fact they are slowly replacing the PC for businesspeople, aka your customers. It is rare that e-mail doesn't come straight through to a personal phone.

Have you noticed how some websites don't look right on your phone? You may want to convert your website to a more phone-friendly design, seeing as the phone is where business is being done today. Think of the new design as a simple version of your site with the same logo but fewer layers and less content. I truly feel this is the next big movement in commerce.

Lastly, look into ways you can promote your business through your website. Your website could include a registration box that allows you to build a base of e-mails from qualified leads. Offering something free or discounted will create more interest in customers sharing their e-mail addresses with you — a free discount e-coupon for any service worth more than \$500, a contest, or whatever it takes for leads to register. An Internet newsletter, maybe? Imagine combining these ideas with a mobile-friendly website where customers could participate on the fly.

Give all of this some thought, because keeping your talents a secret is not benefiting anyone.

Doug Carlton operates Carlton Concrete Inc. in Visalia, Calif. He can be reached at carltondoug@comcast.net.





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PROJECT PROFILE

Nashville Dinner Theatre

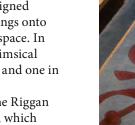
Nashville, Tenn.

by Natasha Chilingerian

THE historical structure that now houses the Nashville Dinner Theatre has always attracted attention. During Prohibition times, people slyly used a tunnel in the building to transport alcohol to area nightclubs. Today, it attracts crowds for its dinner shows and performances by local vocalists. And thanks to a group of decorative concrete professionals and artists who donated time and materials, the building's floors and bar tops are attracting a lot of attention too.

Last fall, Concrete Mystique Engraving's Rick Lobdell, EPO Floors' Ryan Samford, The Design Center's Mike Samford, self-employed contractor Joe Drake and Brad Wells of the mural and design company Imagination Transformations designed and installed theater-inspired decorative concrete coatings onto the building's approximately 5,000 square feet of floor space. In addition, Mike Samford (Ryan's father) created two whimsical decorative concrete bar tops — one in the main theater and one in Randolph's, the theater's piano and wine bar.

Last summer, Nashville Dinner Theatre owner Kaine Riggan wasn't sure what the fate of his venue's worn-out floors, which



Project at a Glance

Client: Nashville Dinner Theatre, Nashville

Decorative concrete designers/artisans: Rick Lobdell, Concrete Mystique Engraving, Nashville; Mike Samford, The Design Center LLC, Franklin, Tenn.

Decorative concrete contractors: Ryan Samford, EPO-Floors LLC, Franklin, Tenn.; Joe Drake, Nashville

Designer/artisan: Brad Wells, Imagination Transformations, Nashville **Timeline:** Two and a half weeks

Project Specs: Approximately 5,000 square feet of decorative concrete floor coatings in a three-level theater: two lobbies, a hallway and a twolevel piano bar, plus two decorative concrete bar tops.

Material and tool suppliers: All in Concrete LLC, Elite Crete Systems, H&C Concrete Coatings, Sherwin-Williams, SkimStone, Surface Koatings Inc., Werkmaster

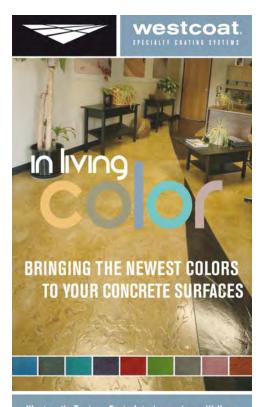
Materials used:

- **H&C Concrete Coatings:** Heavy Traffic Resurfacer Texture System, Semi Transparent Decorative Stains, High Performance Industrial Clear Coat
- Elite Crete Systems: Thin-Finish and Micro-Finish overlays, E100-PT1 Fast Clear Epoxy, E100-PT4 Colored Epoxy Coating, Reflector Enhancer
- Surface Koatings Inc.: Kolour Dye, Poly 250 Clear
- SkimStone: Type I Solution, Powder, ColorPaks, Protective Sealer, High Gloss Select Finish





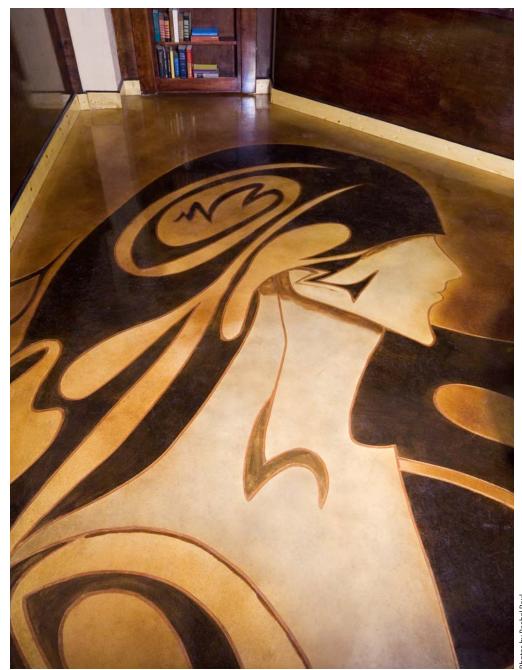
had last been treated with a wood laminate product, would be. But in September, staff of Professional Trade Publications Inc. (which publishes *Concrete Decor* magazine) were in Nashville to plan the 2011 Concrete Decor Show & Spring Training. They stopped by the soon-to-open theater and noticed that its floors could use an overhaul. Looking to coordinate a project that would generate buzz for the upcoming trade show, Concrete Decor publisher Bent Mikkelsen proposed a theater floor makeover to Riggan. Mikkelsen then connected Riggan with Lobdell and Ryan, who agreed with enthusiasm to complete the job, and found



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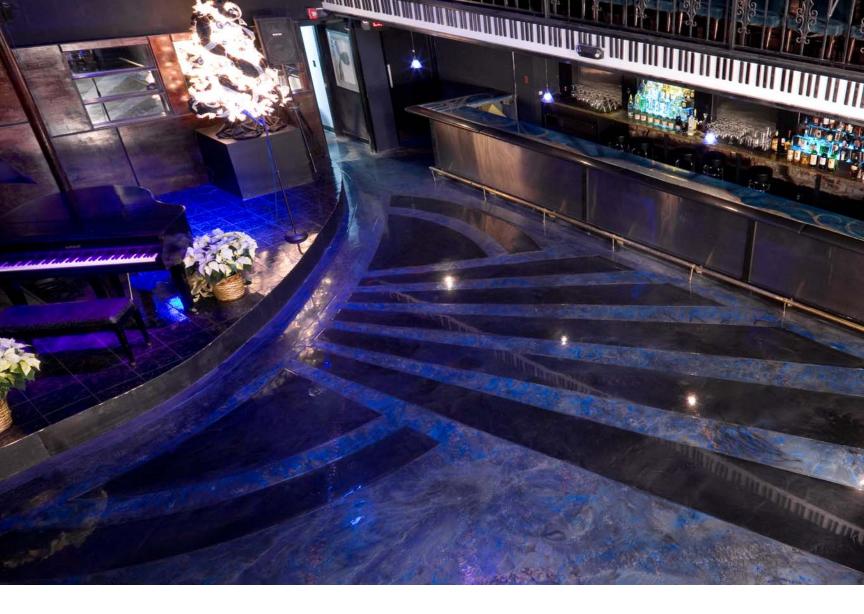
them some suppliers for materials. Each one of the project's workers and suppliers provided time and products free of charge.

"I had been waiting for a chance to give Nashville national exposure, so when Bent called me, I didn't hesitate to jump on the opportunity," Lobdell says.

The project's timeline posed a challenge to workers — in order to meet the theater's scheduled opening date of Nov. 12, 2010, they had just two and a half weeks to complete installation.

Floor show

First, leftover residue was removed from the theater's entire floor surface with a Werkmaster grinder and diamond tooling. Next, using products donated by H&C Concrete Coatings, Lobdell, Ryan and Drake took three days to overlay, design, stain and seal the floor of the main theater. The floors of two balconies located in the main theater were coated with products from H&C Concrete Coatings, SkimStone, Elite Crete Systems and Surface Koatings Inc.



Drake installed H&C's Heavy Traffic Resurfacer Texture System on the main theater floor, and Lobdell then etched designs into the floor using a hand grinder. The theater floor was stained with H&C's Semi Transparent Decorative Stains (which were chosen for their fast-drying quality) in Poppy Bloom, Dahlia Red, Cordovan and Obsidian, and it was sealed with three coats of H&C High Performance Industrial Clear Sealer.

The focal point of the main theater floor is a giant fleur-de-lis design, which Lobdell said he chose after considering existing elements in the space. The design portion of the project wasn't so challenging for Lobdell. A graduate of the Savannah College of Art and Design with an M.F.A. in painting and background in theater, he knows a thing or two about art — and about the type of client he was working for. "I understand how theaters run and the







mentality and feel of a dinner theater," he says. "The main theater has wrought iron railings with fleur-de-lis medallions, and when I saw them I thought, 'That has to be one of the main images in the room."

The main theater's bar received artistic treatment too. Mike created an image of a dancing figure and vines by embedding wire,









glow-in-the-dark aggregate and other materials into H&C's Heavy Traffic Resurfacer Texture System. He coated the concrete bar top with the H&C High Performance Industrial Clear sealer.

Let's all go to the lobby

The next floor space workers tackled was the theater's front lobby. With input from Mike Samford, Lobdell designed an art deco-style image depicting the profile of a woman with flowing brown hair. Drake first installed two layers of Elite Crete's overlay system (one layer of Thin-Finish and one layer of Micro-Finish). Then, Lobdell used a hand grinder to carve the design into the floor, and with help from Ryan Samford, added color with Surface Koatings' Kolour Dyes in Sun Buff, Taupe, Caramel,



Chocolate and Walnut. Finally, Ryan filled in the engraved lines with Elite Crete's E100-PT1 Fast Clear Epoxy mixed with Elite Crete's Reflector Enhancer, an Elite Crete admixture that produces shimmer and texture, in Brass to make the epoxy nontransparent. He finished the entire floor with a topcoat of the same epoxy mixed with a hint of the Brass Reflector Enhancer. The front lobby was completed in three days.

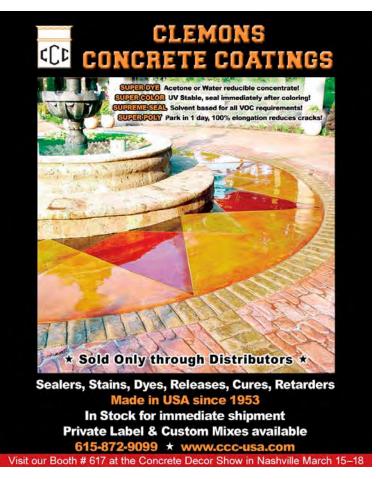
The climax

With just one and a half weeks of time remaining, Lobdell and Ryan split up the next portion of the job to complete two rooms simultaneously. Lobdell got to work on the building's lower lobby, which is located at the base of a staircase. Wells and Lobdell designed detailed images of an attention-drawing "Phantom of the Opera" character and a three-dimensional spiral staircase, which creates the illusion that the lobby's staircase goes on longer than it really does.

"The first thing I saw in the lobby was the staircase, and I thought, 'Wouldn't it be cool if the staircase were bigger?'" Wells says. "It had to look believable, so I had to draw the image at just the right angle."

Drake first installed SkimStone's Type I and Powder (the two components that comprise its overlay system) in the lower lobby. Then, Lobdell and Wells hand-painted the cloaked phantom character and spiraling staircase onto the floor using a mixture of SkimStone's Type I Solution, Powder and ColorPaks in a variety of shades, including Minoan Red and Sapphire Blue. They sealed the floor with three coats of sealer and two coats of high-gloss finish, both by SkimStone.

In the meantime, Ryan got moving on the two levels of flooring



in Randolph's. Using Elite Crete's E100-PT4 Colored Epoxy Coating and Reflector Enhancer, the bar's floors were brought to life with thick curves, swirls and lines in brass, coffee, blue and silver hues. Mike echoed the vibe of the floors on Randolph's bar top — he created a fun, flashy look with materials such as marble chips, brass wires, and wooden rods that were soaked and bent into curves.

"The idea for Randolph's was 'obnoxious, art deco flashiness," Ryan says. "We wanted glitz and glamour, and it looks awesome now. It needed more pop."

The final piece of the puzzle was to

overlay, stain and seal a hallway that connects the lower lobby to the main theater. After Drake installed a Surface Koatings overlay, Ryan and Lobdell created a diamond and square motif pattern using Surface Koatings Kolour Dye in colors found on the lower lobby and main theater floors, such as blue, red, brown and tan. "We created a strong transition between the lower lobby mural and the browns and tans found in the theater," Lobdell says. They then sealed the hallway floor with a Surface Koatings urethane.

Lobdell and Ryan agree the project's demanding schedule was a challenge, but

so was working with a long list of materials, some of which they had never used before.

"We were out of our comfort zones with some of these materials, and on top of that, we were doing some of the hardest designs you can think of," Lobdell says.

Rave reviews

The hard work artisans and contractors put into the project resulted in much praise. Nashville Dinner Theatre owner Kaine Riggan says he keeps a stack of the artisans' business cards handy because people often ask him who did such a nice job on the floors.

"It's gorgeous work, and it's very artistic," Riggan says. "When you walk inside, you're not just walking through the halls of a historic 1880s building. There's a canvas under your feet."

Because of the publicity the project gave to each contractor, artisan and material supplier involved, not one of them viewed working or supplying materials free of charge as a burden. H&C account executive Thad Bradley says H&C was happy to participate when offered the chance.

"I've been getting to know Rick over the past few years, and when he called, we pressed the button immediately," Bradley says. "We knew it would be a high-profile job and were able to hop all over it. It says to people in the industry that we're in business, we have a great product line, and this is the kind of service we can give to the customer."

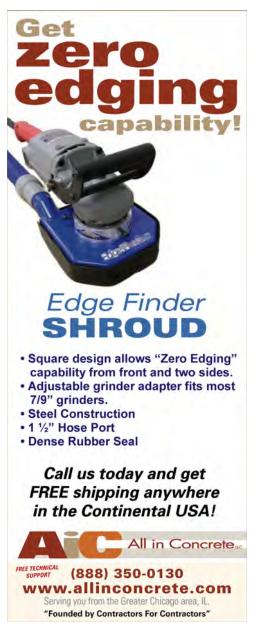
Lobdell notes that one of the project's most rewarding aspects was creating a work of art that will be recognized and enjoyed as a Nashville landmark for years to come.

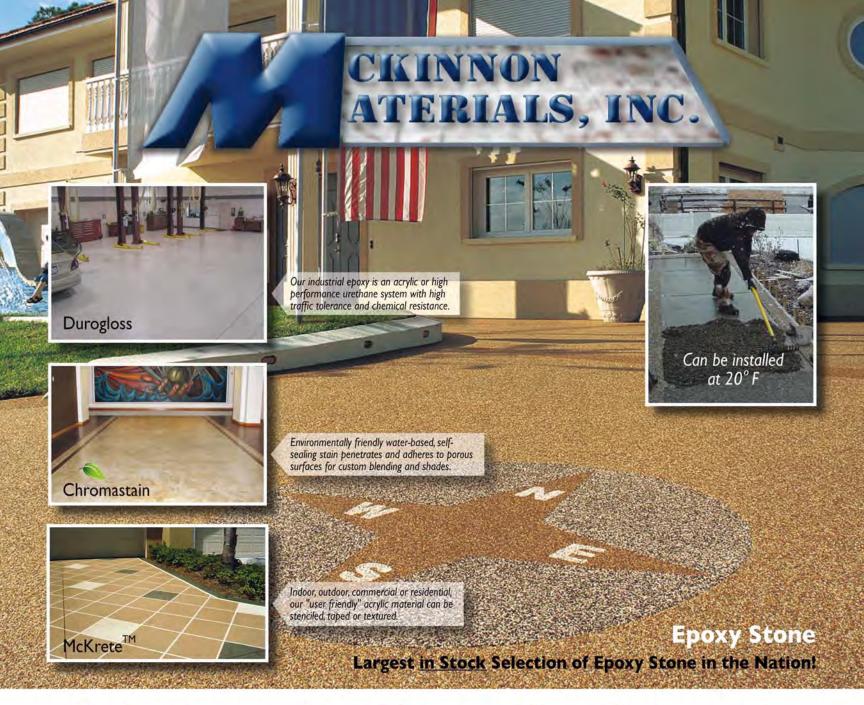
"We got the opportunity to make a new icon for Nashville," Lobdell says. "I'm hoping these floors will survive the test of time and that people will love the place itself, not just the shows that are performed there."

- www.concretemystique.com
- www.epofloors.com
- www.imaginationtransformations.com
- www.thedesigncenter.org

A project unveiling at the Theatre will be held Wednesday, March 16, at 6:30 p.m. For details, visit www.ConcreteDecorShow.com.







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Successful Resurfacing: Going From Good to Great

by Trevor A. Foster, with Amy Johnson

ET me start by being blunt. Almost anyone can squeegee down a couple of coats of topping. But overlays and microtoppings are handcrafted, not generic flooring you buy on a roll. How do you go from doing what anyone can do to creating your own distinctive look and giving customers exceptional projects?

My advice for moving from good to great resurfacing boils down to two things. First, get the basics right. Maybe anyone can do it, but bad fundamentals will quickly convert into bad results, and that brings down the reputation of the whole industry. Second, become an artist. Use your creativity and all the color technologies and finishing techniques available today to really make your work stand out.

Here are a few specific tips for taking resurfacing projects beyond good to great. I've divided them into "basics" and "extras."

First, the basics

Customer expectations: Sample, sample, sample! Be sure your customers know what a topping can and can't do. Educate them on different options. Once, one of my customers was sure he wanted an acid-stained floor, but when he saw what else he could have, he chose an integral color instead.

If you show a customer a manufacturer's sample, be sure you understand exactly what materials and techniques were involved, and be sure you can duplicate it.

Also, don't let customers dictate conditions that are not compatible with your materials and practices. It's not unusual, for example, for a general contractor to try to compress time frames or value-engineer materials. Stand up for what you need to install a quality job.

Materials selection: In order to educate customers about their choices, you need to be a materials expert yourself. Make sure you understand the benefits and limitations of any material you plan to install. Get

familiar with suppliers' literature, attend trainings, and above all, practice on samples, your own driveway, your friend's patio. Make sure you have some experience at the scale you'll be working at — a 2-by-2 sample is different from a 30,000-square-foot plaza.

Understand the parameters of your project. Is it outdoors in a place subject to freeze-thaw and thermal expansion and contraction? Is it a commercial renovation that has to get back into service quickly? Is it adjacent to other tenants who will be impacted by odors if you use a solvent-based color or sealer material?

Surface preparation: Some contractors never progress beyond believing that "if it's clean, it will stick." Then when an overlay delaminates or aggregates pop out they don't know what went wrong. A simple

acid etch is a common prep technique, but will that really give the performance you need? It may be all right for a thin build, but I believe the investment in a walkbehind grinder and vacuum system or a shotblaster that achieve a better profile and keep the concrete dry will pay off for most contractors.

Sealing: Sealers or topcoats almost always get the least attention of any factor that goes into a project, but they can mean the difference between an outstanding installation and a premature failure. This coat comes between the traffic and the actual overlay, so you have to understand what materials are available, how they will perform and, above all, what kind of abuse they will be expected to take.

Cost and durability are the two features most obvious to customers. It's up to you





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to dig deeper. What type of wear will it be exposed to? Constant foot traffic? Tables and chairs? Trucks or forklifts? Does it need to be repairable or can it be resealed periodically? How will it be maintained? Does it need premium scratch or stain resistance? Does it need to be slip-resistant? Make sure the customer knows what is needed, why it costs what it does and what the value will be.

One note: Don't add metallics or sparkling additives to the sealer — they'll get walked off. Add them to the stain or to a clear base that you then seal over.

Now, the extras that make it great

Texture: One of my tips for successful coloring is adding texture to the floor. The word "texture" makes people cringe sometimes because they think it means the floor will feel rough and collect dirt. However, I'm talking about a very subtle texture, one you almost can't feel. You can add visual texture even to a thin microtopping by using good trowel technique or lightly sanding. A microtopping lightly sanded with a piece of sandpaper takes a stain in a completely

PRODUCT SHOWCASE







different way because it is more porous.

Barely exposing cement, aggregates and calcium hydroxide also changes the look of the color. Texturing the surface this way gives the color more depth and dimension.

Integral color: Integral color looks different in an overlay than it does in a poured-in-place slab. Integrally colored microtoppings look softer and more variegated because of different rates of hydration from the substrate below. (Note: a self-leveling overlay will come out looking more uniform like a new concrete slab.) I like to skip-trowel the first layer of an integrally colored microtopping, then dilute the color for the next layer and pull it tight, skimming off the high points so the lighter color only stays in the low voids. This gives a deep, rich look.

Water-based stains: Acid stains are most commonly applied with a pump sprayer, but a high-volume, low-pressure gun (HVLP) can be used with water-based stains. This means you can aim the color with pinpoint accuracy, fogging it for a large area and then getting low and close to add a shadow or blend light and dark. These stains lend themselves to mixing techniques, so mix it up — try misting and blending with an HVLP gun, spraying with a pump sprayer, sponging with sea sponges or rolling with a textured roller. Just practice, practice in your own studio before experimenting on a customer.

These are just a few ideas for making an overlay look great. There are many more options for artisans willing to get creative and try new things. In the end, it is the combination of good basic practices and bold finish techniques that move resurfacing jobs from functional to fabulous.

Trevor A. Foster, regional sales manager and principal trainer for Miracote Products, a division of Crossfield Products Corp., is a regular contributor to industry trade publications and training events.

Trevor A. Foster will teach "Successful Concrete Resurfacing" at the Concrete Decor Show & Spring Training in Nashville on Tuesday, March 15, at 8 a.m. For more information, go to www.ConcreteDecorShow.com.



The combination of basic practices and bold finish techniques can make any resurfacing job look fabulous.





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Pigment Peculiarities

How to combat pigment float when working with self-leveling concrete and powdered integral color

by Kelly O'Brien

NY time you're dealing with integral color, the key to success is getting a nice, even distribution of pigment. The key to that, in turn, is managing the water-tocement ratio in your mix.

Keeping that ratio low is very doable with most concrete, but things get a little more complicated when dealing with selfleveling mixes. When adding powdered integral colors to a self-leveling mix, you run the risk of excess pigment floating to the top. The result is a finished product with a higher concentration of pigment at the surface than deeper in the concrete.

Pigment float is an issue you can run into any time you're using powdered integral colors with concrete, says Ed McLean, sales engineer for CTS Cement Manufacturing Corp., but the risk is much higher with self-leveling concrete because of its fluid consistency. "The pigment particles that don't get into the solution in a fluid mix tend to float to the top of the surface because there is nothing resisting them," he says, "whereas in a traditional 4-inch slump portland cement concrete the particles tend to stay where they are in the mix because they have no easy path to get to the surface."

A vibrantly colored surface may not seem like the end of the world, but the color difference between the surface and the underlying concrete can pose problems not only in the case of damage somewhere down the line, but also just in the process of finishing the slab. Bart Sacco, owner of Concrete Texturing Tool and Supply, a Pennsylvania-based supplier, warns that when gauge-raking a slab suffering from pigment float, you'll end up with a striped surface, as the tines of the rake will drag lines through the floating pigments. If you're stuck with pinstriped pour, Sacco

recommends using a smoothing tool (of the sort that resembles a giant spackle knife) to even out those stripes of color. If you find yourself in this situation, act fast — as soon as the concrete is down, and you're done with the gauge rake, it's time for the smoothing tool. Keeping the blade of the tool at the same angle throughout and using even, unidirectional passes, a contractor can, with some practice, get the surface pigment back to a uniform finish, he says.

But that's treating the symptoms, not the disease. Unfortunately, there's no single cure to the pigment-float problem, but there are things you can do to minimize the risk. An easy one is to avoid it altogether by using liquid pigment. Because these pigments are already suspended in a liquid solution, they're much more likely to stay put in selfleveling mixes.

If you are going to use powdered pigments, says Dave Frasca, a salesman and trainer for Cohills Building Specialties Inc., of Phoenix, Ariz., mix the pigment with the water first, before you add the self-leveling mix to the bucket. The goal is to get the pigment fully suspended in the water — when mixing self-leveling concrete you are adding a lot of water to the mix. Whenever you overwater colored concrete, the pigments can float to the surface and you'll see ribbons of color.

McLean says there are a number of things to be focused on when mixing your pigments with water. "Each color requires a different amount of water to get the pigment into solution," he says. So contractors will need to experiment not only with the amount of water, but also the type of mixer paddle and the mixing angle and speed. (Rule of thumb: Contrary to expectation, a slow, even mix is better than fast and

aggressive in this case, McLean says.)

Because there's no way to look at a batch of integral color and tell when it's fully suspended in the water, the only real way to protect yourself against pigment float is to do some thorough testing and make careful notes of what works and what doesn't. And remember to do another round of testing any time you change the color you're using or the self-leveling mix you're adding it to.

Is there any important difference regarding this issue between using integral color in a self-leveling overlay and integral color in a self-leveling concrete mix that is not an overlay? "There is not much difference," Sacco says, "except for the pigment dosage rates will change from product to product depending on the amount of cementious content in each."

Happy mixing!





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PRODUCT NEWS

Kemiko, DCI team up on skimcoat line

The Decorative Concrete Institute and Kemiko have teamed up to introduce a new skimcoat line, Terra Fresco Microtopping by Bob Harris.

Terra Fresco Microtopping is a highperformance cementitious topping that can be integrally colored using Terra Fresco "color paks" for color consistency.

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The toppings can also be acid-stained or dyed. This versatile product can be used for both interior and exterior applications and can transform worn and distressed concrete. When installed following Kemiko's product technical guidelines, Terra Fresco Microtopping will provide a long-wearing, architecturally pleasing surface.

The dissolving color paks integrally color the microtopping without the need to weigh or measure pigment. Simply pop one bag of Terra Fresco color pak (bag and all) into the polymer and mix for roughly 30 seconds. Next add the Terra Fresco powder and mix for an additional two to three minutes, and you have an integrally colored microtopping that is consistent from batch to batch.

Training workshops for the new skimcoats, as well as a new line of dyes released by this partnership, are held at the Decorative Concrete Institute.

- www.kemiko.com
- www.decorativeconcreteinstitute.com

Joint venture releases overlay system

Smith Paint Products has established a joint venture with Ultra Concrete Coatings resulting in the launch of Smith's Ultracrete overlay system. Smith's Ultracrete is a single-bag formula dry mix requiring only the addition of water to produce a permanent bonding cement overlay for

interior and exterior installations.

This product does not require a primer, bond coat or liquid polymer. Simply following the directions regarding how much water to add allows the applicator to create the desired product consistency for a stamped overlay, spray texture, trowelable substrate or vertical surface.

Smith's Ultracrete is suitable for applications ranging from vehicular traffic to residential flooring and countertops.

www.smithpaints.com

New terrazzo system includes antimicrobial agent

New from Flowcrete, Mondeco TZ is a joint-free polyurethane terrazzo flooring system that combines hard-wearing silver granite and white flint aggregates with a powerful silver ion-based antimicrobial agent. It has been designed to deliver the highest order in durability, resistance and hygiene for the most demanding industrial environments.

The system's base is resilient polyurethane concrete that offers excellent resistance to abrasion, substantial impact and thermal shock as well as severe chemical attack.

The material, which is 1/4 inch thick once ground, can withstand temperatures from minus 40 F to 221 F and is well-suited to harsh steam and hot-water cleaning processes as well as aggressive cleaning





agents.

The system incorporates tough granite and flint aggregates that enhance the product's durability and longevity while providing a surface that offers the natural beauty of traditional Italian terrazzo.

Also, included within the resin matrix is Polygiene, a powerful silver-based antimicrobial additive that eliminates bacterial growth at ground level. The science is based on a natural amino compound, which emits a constant stream of silver ions that destroys any bacteria that settles on the surface of the floor.

www.flowcrete.com

Resurfacer for concrete and asphalt

Gulf Synthetics LLC has introduced UCF-30 for resurfacing concrete and aging asphalt. The tintable coating allows contractors to resurface existing indoor and outdoor living areas.

UCF-30 is a water-based polymer coating that fills cracks and creates a durable, stain- and slip-resistant walking surface. The coating can be tinted to any color by adding two quarts of exterior latex paint to the kit. It is ideal for patios, porches, pool decks, sidewalks, driveways, concrete floors and docks.

UCF-30 can be applied with a brush or roller, and everything cleans up with water. It offers a high build and dries much faster

than paint. UCF-30 costs the contractor about \$1 per square foot.

An added advantage of UCF-30 is its ability to adhere to aging asphalt. For a fraction of the cost to resurface with asphalt, old asphalt surfaces can be decoratively finished and transformed into attractive outdoor multipurpose spaces.

UCF-30 also protects consumers from coal tar, a harmful surfacing agent used on asphalt. UCF-30 is a benign coating that encapsulates coal tar, protecting the environment from coal tar leachate. www.gulfsynthetics.com

New antimicrobial surface treatment works with UV-cured coatings

HID Ultraviolet LLC has released HygeniCure, an innovative antimicrobial surface treatment designed specifically for use with site-applied UV-cured coatings.

HygeniCure helps to defend surfaces against the growth of bacteria, mold and other microorganisms by use of the inherent antimicrobial properties in silver ion release.

HygeniCure uses IonArmour, an advanced particle-embedding technology. When applied to the surface of an uncured (wet) UV coating, the HygeniCure particles



become embedded within the top layer of the coating. Once the coating is cured by exposure to UV light, the particles are permanently locked into the surface layer. The finished surface provides continuous antimicrobial protection that will last for the life of the coating. HygeniCure is available in two sizes: 12-ounce aerosol cans, which will effectively cover approximately 50 square feet of surface, and large canisters, designed to fit an automated delivery system for covering larger areas. www.hid.com

More UV-cure coatings from DSM

DSM's expanded line of UVolve Instant



Floor Coatings now includes both highgloss and matte finishes, as well as clear and pigmented coatings, all of which can be successfully applied under a wider range of application conditions than was previously possible with most UV floor-coating products.

UVolve Instant Floor Coatings cure immediately via a UV light, providing fast return to full service and a floor surface that has greater durability, less slip and better chemical resistance than traditional floor coatings. UVolve coatings are 100-percent solid, single-component systems. They can





be successfully applied in cold temperature environments and boast low odor and nearzero VOCs.

www.uvolvecoatings.com

New moisture mitigation primer

Dur-A-Flex has added Dur-A-Glaze MVP (moisture vapor protection) moisture mitigation primer to its line of resinous flooring products.

The new epoxy-based primer effectively reduces moisture vapor emissions in concrete slabs, allowing resinous floor systems to be installed on concrete slabs as soon as five to seven days after it's placed. It is also ideal for existing concrete floors where moisture vapor emissions exceed allowable limits for epoxy floor installations. In addition to its time-saving performance, Dur-A-Glaze MVP offers a 10-year warranty.

Dur-A-Glaze MVP is a two-part epoxy system available in 1-gallon, 5-gallon and 50-gallon containers. In most cases, a single coat will provide full-performance protection.

(0 (800) 253-3536

www.dur-a-flex.com





and is diluted with water. Since it is waterborne, cleanup is easy.

AquaShield does not alter concrete's appearance and is virtually invisible. Even when wetted, the concrete does not darken because water rolls off it. However, the slab remains breathable, allowing water vapor to escape. and is protected against liquid infiltration.

www.adcsc.com



BonWay adds sealers, other materials to its line of construction chemicals

The BonWay division of Bon Tool Co. has expanded its line of construction chemicals to include sealers, cure-and-seal products and specialty chemicals designed for professional use.

These products provide unique benefits when used for concrete, masonry and hardscape applications.

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www.bontool.com

Waterproofing treatment from **American Decorative Concrete**

A new, longer-lasting waterproofing treatment for concrete is now available from American Decorative Concrete Supply Co. The new AquaShield Waterproofing Treatment makes water bead up and roll off concrete surfaces, helping to protect against water damage and freeze-thaw problems.

Fast-drying AquaShield Waterproofing Treatment is designed to minimize downtime for the treated slab. It is easy to apply by spray, roller or mop. Its high coverage rate, approximately 400 square feet per gallon, saves on materials cost. AquaShield is formulated to dry in 30 to 60 minutes depending on weather conditions. A low-VOC, low-odor, nonflammable product, it comes in a concentrated form









countertops & precast

PRODUCT FOCUS

NeoMix D-FRC from Cheng Concrete

by Emily Dixon

ORN out of frustration with the long learning curve for mastering GFRC, Cheng Concrete's NeoMix D-FRC is designed to not only shorten that learning curve for contractors, but also to outperform traditional GFRC in regards to flexural strength and abrasion resistance.

"Most businesses or artisans do not have the luxury of a six-, 12- or 24-month learning curve before 95 percent of their castings are fit for sale," says Cheng Concrete president Mike Heidebrink. "In order to succeed they must achieve proficiency within 90 days or risk serious damage to their business."

With fast learners in mind, D-FRC, which stands for Decorative-Fiber Reinforced Concrete, has been developed with dependable mix consistency and a simple two-part approach to blending. It is a portland cement-based material that includes what Heidebrink refers to as a

"matrix of multiple fibers," only one of which is glass. He likened the fiber mix to the aggregates typically found in concrete. "Glass would be similar to the coarse aggregate, and the fine aggregate would be the other fibers," he says.

Additionally, unlike traditional GFRC, NeoMix D-FRC doesn't rely on acrylic polymers to facilitate the curing process. This makes it cheaper to ship in winter and allows it to achieve 12-hour cure times in temperatures as low as 40 F without heat or protection.

Jeff Kudrick, of New Jersey-based J&M Lifestyles LLC, has been working with GFRC for 18 years but appreciates D-FRC too. "It's so simple to use," he says. "The orientation of the fiber and the chemistry of the mix allows you to do so much with it." He also likes that it comes in a bag, eliminating the need for storage of sand and other materials and making the task of





Left and below: Workshop participants hand-apply D-FRC at the Cheng Concrete warehouse in Berkeley, Calif.

Right: A D-FRC bar top crafted by J&M Lifestyles LLC for a New York City restaurant.



tracking material expenses easier.

Heidebrink claims that D-FRC exceeds the performance of traditional GFRC, noting that its compressive strength exceeds 10,500 psi and its flexural strength consistently exceeds 1,450 psi. He also noted that GFRC does not handle abrasion as well as traditional wet-cast concrete, so Cheng wanted D-FRC to perform at least at the level of abrasion resistance that poured wet-cast concrete achieves. "We have succeeded in doing that with NeoMix D-FRC," he says.

Gulfstream Manufacturing GFRC Pump

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Three different mixes make up the NeoMix D-FRC line, allowing for more than just countertop applications. NeoMix D-FRC CastingBlend and D-FRC SprayBlend are designed for the creation of countertops, fireplace surrounds, wall panels and floor tiles. Both come in a gray or white base and can be sprayed through a hopper. They differ in that the SprayBlend is designed to act as a face coat, while the CastingBlend can also be cast and polished or used as a structural backer to SprayBlend. Also part of the NeoMix D-FRC system is D-FRC BackingBlend. "It has the consistency of clay and is designed for hand layup in vertical applications as a structural backer to a face coat," says Heidebrink. "The biggest

www.ConcreteCountertopSupply.com



GFRC) for the contractor is that there is no risk of delamination between the structural layup and face coat due to water content."

Rounding out the system is D-FRC SlurryBlend, which is ideal for filling voids that appear after polishing or releasing concrete from a mold, and D-FRC SmartColor, a collection of 14 popular colors that can be blended into CastingBlend, SprayBlend or BackingBlend.

Each of the blends is part of a two-part system: the mix and an activator (D-FRC Activator). Simply dilute the activator in water, blend, and add the mix. Because both parts are premeasured, D-FRC can achieve consistent results every time. This makes it ideal for architects and designers, because they are able to specify a job and know the exact outcome. "You don't have the random mix variation from artisan to artisan that prevents architects and designers from confidently specifying custom precast concrete," Heidebrink says. "Now you have an exact product with knowable performance that they can specify."

In about one year on the market, D-FRC has been used by artisans to make custom floor tiles, wall panels, furniture, sculpture, fireplace surrounds, door trims and door panels. In addition, it has been used in both interior and exterior applications.

Because of D-FRC's numerous capabilities, some contractors who use it are achieving remarkable upsells with their clients. For example, Kudrick was hired to do a simple countertop, but ended up working on 1,000 square feet of concrete

pieces for the client as well, thanks to the wide range of projects D-FRC is capable of creating.

"NeoMix D-FRC empowers the artisan or contractor to expand their opportunities for business," Heidebrink says.

www.chengexchange.com





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Preparing Your Countertop for Topical Sealers

THE steps you take with your wetcast or GFRC countertops prior to sealing them will affect sealer success more than the actual application of the sealer. It's important to gain an understanding



by Mark Celebuski

of what your concrete is doing, or more importantly, what you are doing with your concrete. Concrete does what you want it to do very predictably. Once you understand this fact, you're on your way to successfully sealing your countertops.

Understanding curing and drying

To make quality concrete you need enough water to hydrate the cement. All excess water is used to gain fluidity. Excess water not needed for hydration (or that wasn't used for hydration if you didn't cure your concrete properly) will eventually exit the slab through evaporation.



When you place a piece of foam on day-old concrete you end up with a dark spot under the foam. The trapped escaping moisture darkened the concrete. This is why you should not seal your concrete the day after casting. The escaping moisture may compromise the sealer. Time is not the best judgment of when you can seal, moisture transmission is.

Here are a few tips for lowering your concrete's vapor transmission rate sooner:

Start with a quality concrete mix with a low water-to-cement ratio. Wet-cast 10,000-psi concrete is fairly easy to make. GFRC should have a very dense, almost water-repellant surface when designed and cast properly. (I offer mix-

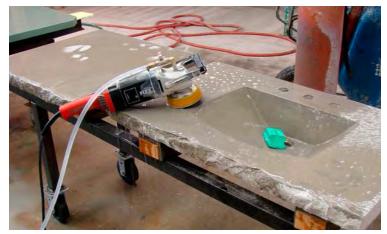


A Process for Curing and Drying Countertops

- Day one: Cast, heat overnight to 120 degrees for 16 hours
- Day two: Strip, initial polish, slurry
- Day three: Final polish
- Days four and five: Days of rest for the tops in a room with low humidity and an ambient temperature of at least 70 F.
- Day six: OK to seal in general. See next two steps ...
- Add two to three days for acid-stained concrete.
- Add more time for unheated concrete, a high-humidity environment or lower ambient temperatures.
- I built a climate- and dust-controlled room for sealer application to gain more control over the process.



The steps you take with your wet-cast or GFRC countertops prior to sealing them will affect your long-term success more than how you apply the sealer.



Profiling your concrete only to 200 grit saves both time and money. Stopping at 200 grit leaves you with an effective bonding surface for a sealer.

design software that makes this process painless.)

- Accelerate the curing of your concrete with heat. You can equal the seven-day strength of concrete cured at 70 degrees in one day when you heat your concrete to 120 degrees for 16 hours (using portland type I cement.)
- Moist-cure your concrete properly prior to allowing it to dry. Curing and drying are two different things. During the curing process you must maintain the concrete in a moist environment to assure there is adequate moisture available for hydration. During the drying process you are allowing excess moisture to exit the slab. What seems like a dichotomy is also a matter of timing. Cure your concrete long enough for adequate hydration to occur, and dry it long enough for excess moisture to escape.
- Allow extra time for drying when you acid stain.
- Take the elements into consideration: If your shop is 50 F your concrete's curing and drying rate will almost come to a halt.

Preparing your surface for sealing

Another important aspect to consider is the preparation of your surface. You may be needlessly overworking yourself and your concrete, or worse, you may be causing sealer failure due to improperly preparing your surface.

■ Fill all the pinholes completely. I've developed a method for power-filling pinholes that I teach in class.

- Don't polish to more than 200 grit. Following this step gives the sealer a mechanical as well as a chemical bond with the countertop. You'll also be saving a lot of time and money by stopping at 200 grit.
- Profile the surfaces of unground pieces and GFRC pieces prior to sealing. I use a 10-to-1 muriatic acid wash to lightly etch and clean the surface, followed by a 10-to-1 ammonia wash to neutralize.
- Clean any wax, oil, or any other contaminates off the countertop surface, and clean prior to sealing.

By exercising some control over your process you can expect to have quality predictable results with your sealer.

Mark Celebuski, partner in Pennsylvania-based Concrete Countertop Plant and Pinnacle Cast Concrete, has worked in the precast concrete field for the past 30 years in capacities ranging from day laborer to general manager. He holds monthly concrete countertop training sessions for industry professionals. Reach him at mark@pinnaclecastconcrete.com.



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SUCCESS WITH CONCRETE COUNTERTOPS

Dealing with Wastewater and Sludge

THE previous issue's "Success With Concrete Countertops" article dealt with the role of water in your concrete. This issue's column concerns the water produced during concrete countertop production.



by Jeffrey Girard

Concrete-making uses water. Cleaning concrete-covered mixers, tools and buckets uses even more water. Add to that the sludge that's rinsed out and you're often left with a big mess. Everyone who makes concrete faces this dilemma: what to do with all that dirty water and gritty sludge. Managing

this mess is essential to maintaining a safe, productive shop.

Most concrete countertop shops have mixers that can make between 200 pounds and 500 pounds of concrete. Cleaning these mixers uses about 15 to 30 gallons of dirty water and generates roughly 5 to 30 pounds of sludge,

which is a mixture of sand, gravel, cement and pigment. Concrete wash water is a slurry of cement particles, pigments and admixtures.

Dealing with the wash water and sludge is a challenge for every concrete countertop



maker. One can't simply dump it. Not only does this make a big mess, it is irresponsible and environmentally unsound. Sludge aside, concrete wastewater is a cocktail of sediment, alkalinity and dissolved metals and minerals that can damage water

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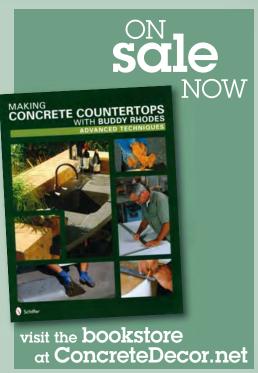
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Typical DIY settling basins.



Using three stackable chambers to filter wash water, The Sludge Buster provides particle separation as well as chemical treatment.

supplies and pollute the environment.

Concrete wash water typically has a pH of over 12, making it almost as caustic as drain cleaner. The EPA limit for wash-water discharge is 9.0, much lower than the typical pH of concrete wash water.

If wash water is discharged onto grass or other vegetation, the high pH can damage or kill the plants and may alter the chemistry of the soil, affecting their ability to grow back. If discharged into a storm drain that leads directly to a stream, river or lake, such high alkalinity can cause death or serious harm to aquatic life.

Independent tests of conventional concrete wash water show that it is a highly alkaline soup of suspended solids, dissolved minerals and other contaminants. Some of the contaminants contained within concrete wash water include: hexavalent chromium (chromium 6), copper, magnesium, manganese, nickel, potassium, selenium, sodium, vanadium and zinc. The wash water may also contain trace elements of petroleum products, admixtures and other materials from processing or treating the material.

In-shop solutions

So how do you deal with your washwater problem? One simple solution is to collect all the water and sludge in some form of waterproof container, where the water is left to evaporate. The container gets emptied or hauled away when it is full of sludge. Many companies sell concrete washout berms or metal bins that are designed for concrete truck washout. However, the metal

bins are too expensive for use in a concrete countertop shop. Plastic berms are generally inexpensive, but they take up space, require time for evaporation and don't allow for recycling.

Another solution would be to create a homemade water treatment system. It's common for concrete countertop shop owners. Typically a floor trench drain is used as the collection point, and the murky water is then pumped into a series of barrels where the finer sediment settles out. Often two or three plastic 30- to 55-gallon barrels are plumbed together so that the water gradually flows from one barrel to the next. Dirty water is dumped or pumped into the first barrel, where the larger particles rapidly settle out. Water flows from the first barrel into the second through a piped overflow.

Each barrel is constructed so that water flows smoothly and gradually from one barrel to the next. Since the water in each barrel remains still and quiet, the fine particles settle out over time and collect at the bottom of the barrel. As the barrels fill up they are swapped out for empty ones. The full barrels are then emptied into a dumpster or landfilled directly.

The water that flows out of the last barrel often looks clear and is free of sediment. However, separation is not treatment, and the clear water that flows from the final barrel is far from clean and shouldn't be dumped down the drain. It still is highly alkaline and contains dissolved contaminants.

True treatment involves not only



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separating the solids but also chemically treating the water to strip it of the contaminants and reduce the alkalinity. Only when the water is chemically treated can it be responsibly disposed of or reused.

Chemical treatment isn't as easy as dumping a cup or so of acid into the water. Proper clarification and neutralization depend on the right products applied so they are most effective. Municipal drinking water and wastewater treatment plants use both sedimentation and tailored chemical treatment to clean and purify water.



A new tool for the task

Recently a simple and effective system called the Sludge Buster was developed that provides both particle separation and chemical treatment of the wash water. (Full disclosure: I was so excited when I found this product that I now sell it.)

The Sludge Buster is small, lightweight and portable, so it doesn't take up valuable shop space. It's easy to move it to where you need it, so your shop work area can remain flexible. And the Sludge Buster is easy to use and easy to clean.

The Sludge Buster uses three stackable chambers. The top chamber separates and cleans the coarse aggregates, and the middle chamber separates and cleans sand. The bottom chamber is where a chemical treatment lowers the pH and neutralizes and captures suspended solids and dissolved contaminants so they quickly settle out into an extra-fine sludge, also known as "flocs" in the water treatment industry.

The only part that must be disposed of in a dumpster or landfill is the extra-fine sludge. The aggregates (if there are any), sand and water can be recycled. Or, the water can safely be disposed of down the drain or outdoors. The water meets EPA standards for storm-water discharge.

By rapidly separating and treating wastewater from each project, the Sludge Buster amortizes the time needed to deal with sludge. You deal with a small amount of sludge project by project, rather than a large amount of sludge built up over multiple projects. The Buster also minimizes the amount of sludge you deal with. It separates out reusable aggregate and sand, resulting in only a small volume of extra-fine sludge to dispose of. Collection barrels do not separate out aggregate and sand, so they produce much larger volumes of waste that consists of mixed aggregate, sand and extra-fine sludge as well as untreated water.

The main disadvantage of the Sludge Buster is the initial cost: \$548 for the unit with occasional filter replacements also required. Another disadvantage is that it does not make the extra-fine sludge disappear. You still have to scoop or dump the material out and dispose of it. However, no solution makes the extra-fine sludge just disappear. The Sludge Buster allows maximum recycling and minimum waste, shop space and time.

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.

Jeffrey Girard will teach "A CONCRETE OCCO SHO 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.

PRODUCT NEWS

Buddy Rhodes Bone White Spray Mix includes fine aggregate

Buddy Rhodes' newest bagged mix, Buddy's Bone White Spray Mix, provides all the benefits of Buddy's original Concrete Countertop Mix but with even finer aggregate.

Buddy's Bone White Spray eliminates the weighing, measuring and experimentation that is typically required for a sprayed face coat application. The mix answers fabricators' need for a mix design that can be used

in a spray application straight out of the bag. Buddy's Bone White Spray Mix can be used for the sprayed face coat as well as the glass-fiber reinforced backup coat.

The Bone White Spray Mix is much stickier than homemade mixes, which means it really grabs hold and doesn't slide down the mold. The fabricator saves time and has a more versatile mix, which allows for unique creations.

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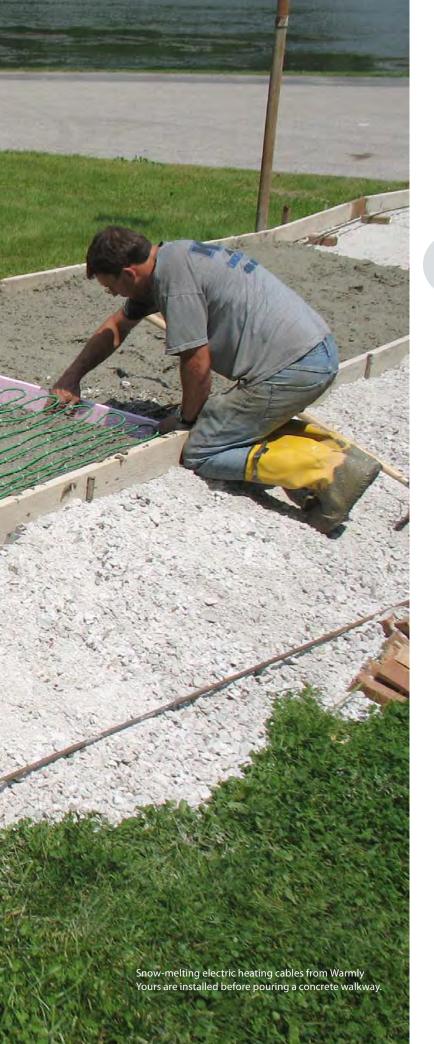


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Two Ways to Get Radiant Heat

By Greg Jazwinski

AVE you come across clients who are considering polished, stamped or stained concrete flooring, but who hesitate because concrete is a naturally cold surface? How about clients that love the look of stamped concrete for a walkway, patio or driveway, but are worried about the potential havoc that a snowplow or melting agents can have on a stamped surface?

There are two kinds of radiant-heat solutions available to address these issues: hydronic and electric heating systems. Either solution can be a perfect way to satisfy your client's needs, adding revenue and profit to a project.

Hydronic heating systems are best suited for large areas. To install them, workers embed specialized tubing in a concrete slab or in a thin concrete mixture over an existing subfloor. Water (or an antifreeze mixture) is heated by a boiler and pumped through the tubing, warming the concrete. A hydronic heating system is an excellent choice for a very large area or when there is an existing boiler that can be utilized for heating the water. It is not economical in small areas, it can be very complicated to install, and it requires long-term maintenance. In general, hydronic systems require a professional design and an experienced crew to install.

When heating smaller areas such as a bathroom, kitchen, patio or sunroom, an **electric heating system** may be the best solution for your clients. Electrical heating systems tend to be much simpler to install and do not require long-term maintenance. Electric heating cables can be designed by the company you decide to purchase from, and they can be installed easily with a little help from an electrical contractor.

Once you've decided which system is best for your client, you have one more hurdle to jump. There are a myriad of additives, stains, sealers and coatings that you could use during your project. Which of

these are compatible with the heating solution you are working with?

The simple fact of the matter is that most decorative concrete products and methods are compatible with both hydronic and electric heating systems. That being said, there are so many choices available that it makes sense for you.



fresh CONCRETE

or the supplier of the heating system you choose, to spend some time talking to the manufacturers of the decorative products



you use. Once you have decided on the combination of products that you need to give your client the perfect look, it's time to pick up the phone. Most manufacturers are very responsive when you call their technical line with questions, as they want their products to be used in as many projects as possible.

Next time you come across clients who are interested in decorative concrete but concerned about the natural coldness of concrete indoors or the complications of removing snow outside, hopefully, you can turn those concerns into an opportunity. Your clients will enjoy the beauty of their new floor with the added enjoyment of the warmth that radiant heat brings. Or, they might get a stunning new walkway and

drive that they never have to shovel or plow.

For your part, you'll enjoy some added profit margin and the satisfaction of a job well done. 🗪

Greg Jazwinski is director of sales for Warmly Yours, a company that manufactures and sells radiant-heat systems. He can be reached at gjazwinski@warmlyyours.com.

Keith Knorps of Warmly Yours will teach "The Inner CONCRETE Decor SI Workings of Radiant Heat Systems" at the Concrete Decor Show and Spring Training in Nashville on Tuesday, March 15, at 10 a.m. For more information, go to www.ConcreteDecorShow.com.

product

Orange-Crete Decorative Concrete Brushes from Riviera Brush Co.

iviera Brush Co. has been a leader in the concrete brush industry since 1989. They started out by developing their line of Orange-Crete wash brushes for the ready-mix industry. The brushes were designed to stand up to the harsh conditions inherent to the industry lime, abrasives, muriatic acid and other cleaning agents. They were ideal for cleaning trucks and equipment.

"The key to our original design is that the fiber in our brushes remains in the block and don't dissolve or clump even under the harshest conditions," says Riviera vice president of sales Michael Goyne.

Though Orange-Crete Brushes were designed as cleaning brushes rather than for the typical broom finish, Goyne says the flagging style and the fiber crimp they developed as a means for the brush to retain more liquid lent itself to broom finishes as well. "The continued industry interest in broom finishes compelled us

to develop brooms of different sizes and with different handle attachments," he says.

And now they've done it again — adding a line of cutting-edge applicator brushes to their Orange-Crete repertoire. These brushes are engineered for the decorative concrete industry, specifically to apply stains, sealers and other coatings on a concrete surface.

What sets the new Orange-Crete applicator brushes apart?

"We utilize a distinctively designed fiber in these brushes," says Riviera director of business development Anthony Jones. "The diameter, crimp and flagged tips of the polystyrene fibers are constructed in a manner that allows the broom to hold more liquid and not leave telltale broom marks. An additional advantage is that these brooms are just as resistant to harsh chemicals as our others,

Photo courtesy of Riviera Brush Co.

so they don't lose fibers as they move across the substrate.

Jones says that contractors are developing all kinds of techniques for using these brooms to achieve their desired outcomes. "An ideal use for this line of brooms is to spray stain or sealer onto the surface and then use the broom to massage the product into the concrete. We've seen wonderful results when that method is used."

Orange-Crete brushes are available in a wide variety of shapes and sizes, from small hand-held brushes to larger brushes that attach to handles.

www.RivieraBrush.com



by Kelly O'Brien

Controlled Erosion

Intended to mimic the look of travertine, this microexposure finish leaves the surface with a subtle texture that complements integrally colored exteriors beautifully.

Hyde Concrete LLC, Annapolis, Md. www.hydeconcrete.com

Ingredients:

Any air-entrained concrete mix

Prism Pigments Five for Twenty Concrete Colors: Wheat Light Grace Construction Products Top-Cast 05 top-surface retarder Elite-Crete Systems CSS Emulsion sealer

Directions:

- Combine your air-entrained concrete mix and Wheat Light integral color and mix thoroughly.
- Place the concrete in the desired area. (This finish is best for exterior projects such as patios, sidewalks or paths.)
- Once you've placed the concrete, finish the surface with a steel trowel. Be careful not to overwork the surface, so your concrete retains as much of the entrained air as possible. You want an even surface without too tight a finish.

- To get the slightly eroded, natural stone look you're after, the next step is to apply a surface retarder. As soon as the concrete is strong enough to walk on, spray a coat of Top-Cast 05 across the surface. You can experiment with your spray pattern and coverage rates to achieve different effects, but the look pictured here was done by spraying an even coat across the entire surface at a coverage rate of about 50 percent.
- Let the retarder sit on the surface overnight, and then come back and power-wash the surface thoroughly. At this point you'll also want to saw-cut your control joints and any other decorative cuts you desire.
- Let the surface dry thoroughly, then seal with two coats of the CSS Emulsion sealer.





fresh CONCRETE

PRODUCT NEWS

New moisture meter from Proceq

Switzerland-based Proceq has introduced the Hygropin moisture meter for concrete. Its small and fast sensor makes diagnosing moisture according to ASTM standards quick and easy.



The ASTM test procedure requires placing a measuring sleeve at a specific, well-defined depth in the concrete. After moisture equilibrium is achieved, the relative humidity can be measured easily inside the sleeve. The in situ probe of the Hygropin is specially designed for this application. Its small size minimizes damage to the surface and reduces installation efforts.

Besides the dry application, the Hygropin also offers an installation solution for fresh concrete that avoids drilling and allows tracking of relative humidity during the curing process. In addition, Proceq is also offering an ambient probe to simplify

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capturing environmental parameters. The humidity test tube allows a fast and easy on-site functional and calibration check of the instrument and the in situ probe as recommended by ASTM.

www.proceq.com



Mixing paddles from CS Unitec

CS Unitec's mixing paddles are now available with a new hex shank design. The 5/8-inch hex shank provides a universal fit for use with traditional mixers as well as with geared chucks on drill motors.

CS Unitec's mixing paddles can be supplied in a variety of helical configurations and other designs for mixing an assortment of materials. The paddle's blade design mixes the product from the bottom up, eliminating the possibility of air entering into the material. They are made of robust welded steel and are galvanized for protection against corrosion and resistance against abrasion.

All paddles are 24 inches in length, and extensions are available in 9-inch or 15-inch lengths. They are available for low-, medium- and high-viscosity materials. Diameters range from 4 1/2 inches up to 9 1/4 inches.

www.csunitec.com

New line of precasting vibrators

Vibco Vibrators has announced the new AL line of lighter-weight, high-frequency concrete vibrators. These lighter designs

feature durable, cast aluminum housings that weigh less than comparable cast-iron models without sacrificing performance.

There are four new models available. The US-450TAL is ideal for concrete countertops, while the US-700AL is ideal for medium-size precast forms, include steps and manholes. Both operate off of 115volt power. The BVS-250 and BVS320-AL operate off of a pneumatic power supply. Both models are ideal for small to mediumsize precast forms for ornamental features, countertops and cultured stone.

www.vibco.com

Affinity Tool announces new diamond-blade division

Affinity Tool Works has launched the Dtec Diamond Blade product division. Dtec offers three lines of diamond blades, providing a solution for every type of construction cutting application and budget. The Dtec blades are engineered to perform and built to meet the demands of a variety of applications and are intended to fit a wide range of both gas- and electricpowered saws.

Dtec's Superior series offers more than 10 blade sizes and is available in segmented and turbo configurations. With either a 12 mm or 15 mm segment height, the segmented blades offer faster and cleaner cuts along with a longer blade life. Featuring a modern design combining a segmented and continuous rim, the turbo blades are an ideal solution for fast, precise cuts. Superior blades are able to cut through steel easily, making them an ideal choice for applications where steel rebar may exist within the material.

Consisting of more than 15 blade sizes, the Contractor series' three different



configurations are available to suit a wide range of applications: segmented, continuous rim and turbo. The segmented blades have a 10 mm segment height. With a smooth edge design, the continuous rim blades provide the cleanest, most precise cuts. Offering the best of both worlds, the turbo blades combine the speed of segmented blades with the smoother cutting ability of continuous-rim styles. They are intended to cut material such as concrete. masonry block and brick.

Featuring a continuous rim design, the Barracuda series is a premium line that offers the smoothest, thinnest cuts for wet or dry applications. S-slots in the blade prevent heat buildup, extending blade life. Furthermore, the S-slot design keeps the blade from warping and allows straighter, more precise cuts. It is designed exclusively for beauty cuts.

(0 (866) 588-0395

www.affinitytool.com

Allen introduces mechanical rider

The new Allen MP 315 is a complete redesign of the MP 305 Mechanical Drive



Riding Trowel from Allen Engineering Corp.

The MP 315 is an entry-level riding trowel with the popular features found in Allen's larger riders. The higher-horsepower gasoline engine and heavy-duty drive train are packed in an easy-to-service frame, and the standard-duty gearboxes and two 46inch-diameter four-bladed rotors are proven performers in the field. In addition, the MP 315 is now equipped with a torque converter clutch, which gives the operator full variable speed control of the rotors.

www.alleneng.com

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grinding & polishing

Pitfalls to Avoid When Bidding for Arena Work

RENAS and stadiums are a market that is gaining momentum in polished concrete. Between high schools, colleges and professional sports teams, there are a lot of these venues around the country.



by David Stephenson

As they come up for remodel, polished concrete is a great option for the flooring on concourses and even under seats.

Venue management looks at the cost to remove whatever flooring type they have currently (usually some version of

epoxy) and replace it. Polished concrete does a double duty in removing the old and replacing it with something lowmaintenance.

We have done several of these projects over the last couple of years. I want to discuss some of the pitfalls that we have run into while pricing out and the solutions that will help you with this important revenue source.

The first thing that you need to look at is **history.** What surface is installed currently? If it is colored epoxy flooring or tile of any sort, then you need to ask what prior renovations have been done to this building. A lot of times, no one knows exactly what has been done over the years. My advice

if you can't see the floor is to price your project with a standard per-foot cost and specifically include the process that you are planning to use. Include diamonds and chemicals. This will protect you later if you have to do a significant amount of extra work. You have the trail already marked to explain your change order.

Another important issue is **patching**. My recommendation is that you include a line in your bid that specifics an amount of material. An example is: "Included in our price is 100 pounds of patching material." This shows the customer that you are aware of their potential problem and that you are proactively offering a solution, but only to a point. As you are going through the job and



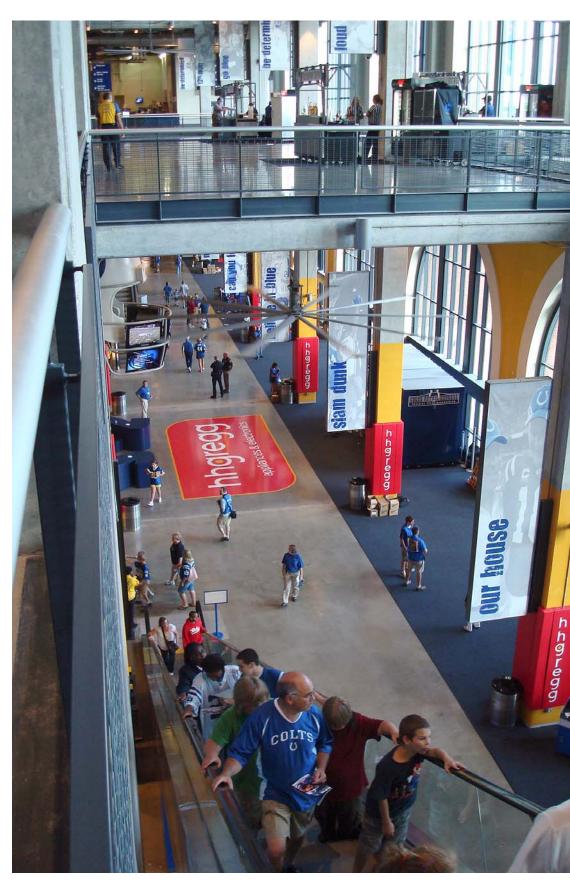
grinding & polishing

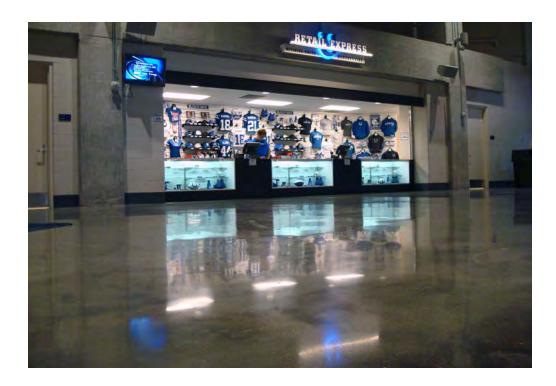
you start to get close to your 100 pounds, go talk to your customer, explain where you are at and discuss the change order for the additional patching that might be above your quote.

Finally, the biggest pitfall that can ultimately affect your profitability with arenas and stadiums is **steps and areas under seating.**

On a recent project we charged \$10 per foot on the steps and \$4.50 per foot to remove the epoxy under the seats and spray clear sealer. My bid for the breakdown of







these areas was \$160,000 for about 35,000 square feet. Our cost for this portion of the project came to \$185,000!

The steps and areas under the seats took extensively longer that we planned. We used two HTC 650s on the under-seat areas, but as I have figured out the hard way, the horizontal spaces in this type of building are not usually wide enough to get a power trowel on at the time of construction, so they are very wavy. These areas are also the hardest on your guys, because they are doing most of the work on their knees.

So just make sure that you are considering these factors on your future projects.

With these considerations, there is a huge potential opportunity in picking up this type of work. The concourses are standard flooring that wears exceptionally well as polished concrete. The maintenance and replacement savings easily sell these projects for you.

David Stephenson is currently the president of American Concrete Concepts Inc., based in Springdale, Ark. He has been polishing concrete for eight years and has been involved in developing products for several companies related to the decorative and polished concrete industry.



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grinding & polishing

TROWEL & ERROR

The Allure and the Reality of Polishing Concrete

F World of Concrete 2011 was any indication, the polished concrete market will again see substantial growth in the coming year. It has become pretty clear that polished concrete is the hot



by Chris Sullivan

market in decorative concrete right now. There was no shortage of equipment and chemical manufacturers touting the latest and greatest at the show, with each making a case for why their system was the best option on the market.

Unfortunately, like almost every other previous hot decorative trend, the polishing market tends to move faster than the technology. It seems that polished concrete has become the new siren's song, so appealing that anyone getting close enough to hear it ends up getting caught up in the allure of easy money. Well, if sounds too good to be true, it usually is!

Yes, polished concrete is the hot market, and yes, we are seeing more of it being specified in large applications, but as with any other technical application, there is much more to polishing than meets the eye.

Over the last few years I have noticed a rise in the number of complaints and issues dealing with polished concrete. These issues

range from misunderstanding the market all the way to improper application. The biggest issue by far that I come across is the misconception in the marketplace that the polishing process is *easy*. The idea that buying the equipment is the hardest part of getting into polishing could not be farther from the truth.

Don't get me wrong — I am all about diversification and expanding into new markets, but at the right pace and with the right education. The new polishing contractor soon finds out that polishing concrete is more than dragging a big machine across the floor. Little things like blending the polish from main floor to walls, corners and edges all of a sudden become big issues.

The other reality that seems to hit home after the fact is the need to truly understand the science of concrete. Questions must be answered like: How flat is it? How hard is it? How will the diamonds cut into it? And how do you deal with cracks and bug holes?

Speaking of diamonds, which type to use and when to switch to the next grit level are two other areas that are often misunderstood by the novice polisher. The operator running the polish machine needs to be as much an artist as a technician.

Another major area of confusing or bad information comes on the chemical side of the polishing industry. There is no shortage of companies offering penetrating sealers, densifiers and hardeners. First, one must understand the chemistry behind what these chemicals do and the part they play in the polishing process. The market offers sodium-, lithium- and potassiumbased penetrating sealers. While lithium has a smaller particle size and provides deeper penetration, sodium and potassium densifiers tend to cost less. All three types perform the same basic function reinforcing and strengthening the top layer of the concrete through chemical bonds.

A note of caution! I have recently seen



some companies promoting high-end lithium-based products at very low cost. After looking into this I found that these chemicals were mostly sodium- or potassium-based systems with only a splash of lithium. As I have written previously, the decorative industry tends to market aggressively and can play loose with the facts. Always do you research and buy from a reputable source.

Lastly, answers to the question of when to color during the polishing process seem to run the gamut from early to late. In my experience, the top-end applicators who have been polishing for a long time keep this information close to the vest. What I was able to find out was that no two systems were alike, and each individual polishing company settled on its own formula of where, when and how when it comes to coloring during the polishing process.

There are numerous other misconceptions in the polishing market, more than can be covered in this piece. The key point I am trying to get across is that appearances of simplicity can be misleading. I can see where the idea of purchasing an expensive polishing machine can motivate an "I can do this now" attitude, while in reality buying the machine is the easy part.

Polishing decorative concrete is one of those trades for which you need to be an expert in many different disciplines — concrete, chemicals, color, and finally, the actual polishing process. I can't stress enough how education and experience are critical. Take advantage of training schools offered by equipment and chemical manufacturers, or take one of the many classes on polishing at this year's Concrete Decor Show & Spring Training in Nashville this March.

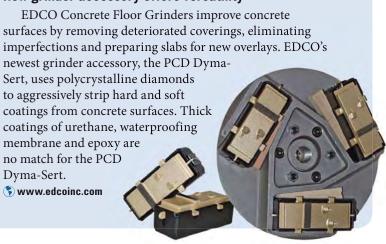
Chris Sullivan is vice president of sales and marketing with ChemSystems Inc. He has presented seminars and product demonstrations throughout North America. Contact him with technical questions at trowelanderror@protradepub.com.

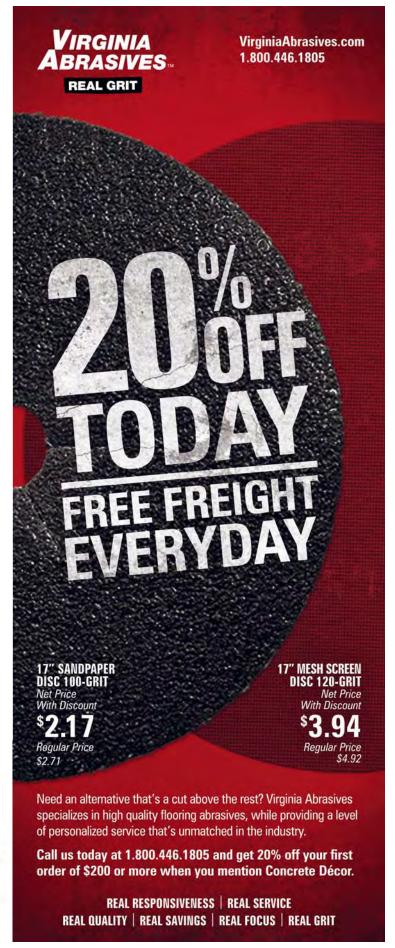
Chris Sullivan will teach "Taking the Mystery out of Sealers" at the Concrete Decor Show & Spring Training in Nashville on Wednesday, March 16, at 8 a.m. For more information, go to www.ConcreteDecorShow.com.



PRODUCT NEWS

New grinder accessory offers versatility





grinding & polishing

Transforming Poorly Polished Floors for Profit

LL concrete polishers are aware of the many subpar polished floors out there that are giving polished concrete a bad name. I get several calls each week asking how to fix a



by Jennifer A. Faller

bad floor, so I am sure that you are dealing with this as well.

I propose the "Profit & Transformation Challenge 2011" to all of the concrete polishers who consider themselves craftspeople in the industry. Let us call on

Stone Shield™ **Penetrating Sealer** for Polished Concrete PENETRATING SEALER Use Indoor/Outdoor Coverage: 1,000-1,500 Sq. Feet/Gallon Get the best prices every day at Braxton-Bragg Call NOW Toll Free 800-575-4401

all of the owners of the mediocre-quality polished floors in each of our cities and towns. Let us show them how their floors should perform and how they should look when properly polished by professional craftspeople. This could mean doing a mock-up (like the one I wrote about in the November/December 2010 issue of Concrete Decor) that would let them see for themselves. The proof will be right in front of their eyes.

This would accomplish two things simultaneously. First and foremost, it would create more opportunities for your company to make money. Second, it would transform and rejuvenate the reputation of polished concrete.

Accepting this challenge, with a lot of effort and hard work, would get rid of most of the lousy-looking, dull, accidentally stained and low-performing floors in your areas, which will translate into more people seeing high-performing, clean and beautiful polished concrete floors with consistent, long-lasting shine. Eventually, we could charge a higher price and halt the downward price spiral.

If you send me your successful transformation stories, then I will report on them throughout the year. Together we can alter history.

This begs the question: How do you go about fixing an existing polished concrete floor?

How to clean for a reboot

The inspection and evaluation process begins with a thorough cleaning. Use hot water and a slightly alkaline soap, scrub with a new brush made of medium-soft nylon bristles, then rinse thoroughly until the rinse water is clear, followed by extracting all residual water off the floor. This process allows the dirt and grime to float in a soapy solution, become diluted and be removed from the pores in the concrete. Think of cleaning a floor like

washing your hands — in warm water they get cleaner faster. So why use cold water when trying to clean a floor?

Why a brush instead of a pad? A pad rubs across the surface and can force the loosened dirt back into the open pores of the floor. A dirty pad can scratch the floor with trapped particulates as it is trying to clean. Brushes offer several advantages. Newer brush bristles are vertical to the concrete and can loosen the dirt from within the concrete pores as well as on the surface. Also, bristles are much easier to clean and water will flow between them. which allows for proper rinsing of the floor. And lastly, the brush can be reused.

Extraction of rinse water simply means using a wet vac or walk-behind scrubber. These are a must. Standard squeegees and mops push the dirty water back into the pores as they are moved across the concrete.

Use clean brushes. Remember, your floor is only as clean as the water that you remove from it, and equipment cleanliness can make all the difference.

Characterizing the floor

Now that you have a clean and dry floor, photograph the problem areas and take a closer look. Is the floor really etched or just stained? This is the time to consider and plan the work that will need to be done.

Sprinkle a few dime-sized water drops randomly around various parts of the floor, then watch and wait. Is the water sitting on the surface in a bead or a flat spot? Is it absorbing in and darkening the concrete? Is the water starting to spread like it does on a paper towel? Is it being repelled in some areas while being absorbed in others? What does all of this tell you anyway?

When water penetrates into the concrete surface, the floor will also absorb densifier in that same way. This is very good news. The more densifier you can get to penetrate into that piece of concrete before restaining, repolishing or recoating with "guard," the

better this restoration is going to look and perform. Redensification seems to be such a simple thing to do, but it is one of the most overlooked elements of restoring a polished concrete floor. Your floor will be denser, harder and more abrasion-resistant, and it will take on a shine with more clarity. You will be glad you took the time and did the job right.

If the floor will absorb water but is a mess, it probably needs to be reground to remove or repair a rough, etched, stained or worn spot. Discuss with the owners; listen, learn, and confirm the extent of the re-grind (which may reveal aggregate) and re-polishing desired. Will the owner be happy to just have the repairs completed, and then simply have the rest of the floor cleaned and burnished? Or does the owner want the entire floor to be richer and glossier? This may include running a set of 1,500 diamonds under an actual grinder or using a diamond-coated burnishing pad or brush. There are so many new generation polishing products hitting the market, and one of these may be just the right product for the job.

For a severely etched or damaged area, you might have success with one of the newer concrete-polishing repair fillers. In addition to my company's silicate-based Vexcon Fusion, there are other products that use acrylic latex binders or have similar approaches. These products mix with the concrete dust from grinding to refill the voids and cracks in the floor, resulting in a smoother, rebuilt, restored concrete surface.

Blending the results

Now, how should you blend the repaired area with the rest of the floor? First, strip any film-forming guard-type product from the area surrounding the repair and from any other areas that you and the owner previously agreed should be restored. Guard-type products disguise and enhance the floor, and they must be removed for the repair to match the surrounding area. Remember, do not just polish and put more guard on the floor unless you are sure that this is all that the floor will need. Once a film-forming guard (or a nonfilm-forming "finish coat") has been

applied over the repair or surrounding area, neither additional stain nor densifier will be absorbed.

After removing the guard, grind or repair the surface. Apply stain, dyes or pigments to the repaired area to blend it with the surrounding field. Densify "to rejection" by feeding the floor with densifier until no more will absorb. Ensure that the densifier penetrates into the slab instead of puddling on top. Proper densification is the foundation of a wear-resistant and shine-retentive floor.

Then, polish the repaired area with resin bond diamonds, overlapping onto the surrounding area. This way, the shine and reflectivity will look more even, diverting attention away from the repaired area.

Finally, either a film-forming guard or a nonfilm-forming finish coat can be applied evenly across the entire floor and burnished at a high speed.

That old and tired floor will have turned into a showpiece, and the owner will once

again be proud of and want to talk about his or her beautiful polished concrete floor.

Jennifer A. Faller has been in the surface preparation industry for the past 15 years as a decorative concrete contractor, technical consultant and owner of a distribution company. Currently, she is business development manager for Vexcon Chemicals and lead trainer for the Certi-Shine brand of polished concrete materials. Contact her at jfaller@vexcon.com.





grinding & polishing

PROJECT PROFILE

Lanier Charter Career Academy Culinary Arts Complex Gainesville, Ga.

by Elizabeth Gillette Offensend THE terms "polishing" and burnishing" are sometimes used interchangeably in the decorative concrete industry to describe two very different processes. "There are all sorts of ways to get a floor to look so you can say it's polished, but it's best for people to be forthcoming about what they are actually giving their clients," says contractor Mark Alicea, vice president of TCM Waterproofing of Suwanee, Ga.

A textbook example of a burnished floor that looks exactly like a polished floor is the culinary arts complex floor at the Lanier Charter Career Academy in Gainesville, Ga. Completed by TCM Waterproofing in July 2010, this 10,000-square-foot burnished floor was completed at a much lower cost for the client and in a shorter turnaround time than a polished floor, but with the same benefits as its polished equivalent.

"Polished concrete is a mechanical process, while burnished concrete is actually a chemical process," says Alicea. Polishing concrete involves opening the smooth top layer of the concrete surface to get down to the aggregate using a mechanical process. Burnishing involves a chemical process that does not require going past the cream, or the top layer, to get the polished-looking finish. This eliminates the many stages of a typical concrete polishing project, such as grinding with various grits (and cleaning in between) to get deep into the surface, thus reducing the project turnaround time and the cleanup involved.

Alicea initially quoted a polished floor for this project, but due to a tight timeline and budget, he proposed a burnished floor to the client.

He was familiar with the burnishing process, as he was a certified applicator of AmeriPolish products when he was approached by the culinary school. He had first tested the burnishing technique in a



garage. "You don't want to close the floor too much because if you do, you won't get color penetration," he explains. He suggests leaving the floor rough, applying the colorant twice, then running over the floor with a burnisher and a hogshair burnishing pad. The process produces a matte sheen.

Alicea met with Chuck Brunner of Smith Paints to entertain using their new products, which are similar to what Alicea had used in the past, on the burnishing job. They decided on Smith's Color Floor water-based stain in Bark Brown and Dark Brown, Smith's Base Boost and Smith's Surface Guard.

The floor was first cut wet with a 100grit metal bond diamond, then cut with a 50-grit and 100-grit resin, using a floor grinder. After drying the surface, Alicea

Project at a Glance

Client: Hall County Schools, Gainesville, Ga., who were constructing a culinary arts school as part of the new Lanier Charter Career Academy

Contractor: TCM Waterproofing LLC, Suwanee, Ga., Mark Alicea, owner

Materials supplier: WTS Decorative Concrete Supply Inc., Buford, Ga.

Project size: Approximately 10,000 square feet **Completed:** July 2010

Project description: A tight schedule and budget called for an alternative to the labor- and timeintensive concrete polishing process for this culinary arts school floor. Mark Alicea installed a burnished floor that that looks and is maintained exactly like a polished floor.

Products used: Smith's Base Boost, Smith's Surface Guard, Smith's Color Floor water-based stain in Bark **Brown and Dark Brown**



then applied resin, dry-sanded the floor with 100 grit, then vacuumed.

He mixed the Bark Brown densifier color system and applied it with a pump sprayer, worked it in, and repeated the step several times to get the desired richness of color. He burnished it as it dried with a 27-inch hogshair burnishing pad and swept the surface clean.

"The client took a look and decided they wanted to see more darkness on the edging, so we grabbed our electric sprayer, got with Chuck from Smith Paints, and they gave us a darker color to spray on," Alicea says. They applied that to the edges, then burnished and swept again. They applied the topcoat with a microfiber mop and went over it with a high-speed propane burnisher when it was dry. This produced the effect of a darker brown border around a lighter color in the middle.

There was some cracking in the surface due to settling and in areas where construction joints weren't properly installed. Alicea went back and filled cracks with redwood-colored caulk to match the brown. He says that while you could still see these areas if you looked close, the caulk really helped them blend in.

Now that the floor's done, the only maintenance needed is using a dust mop and occasionally going over the floor with an electric burnisher at 2,200 rpm or higher to get heat friction between pad and floor. No wax or chemicals should be used to wash the floor. Alicea will likely visit the school for initial maintenance burnishings to teach how it is done.

👣 www.tcmwaterproofingllc.com



grinding & polishing

PRODUCT NEWS

New buffer offers dust control solutions

Aztec Products has unveiled the Answer dust-control floor buffer and burnisher. It is certified under the EPA, CARB, LEED and GS42 programs for indoor use in approved areas.

The new Answer DC, with its vacuum system, improves indoor air quality by containing air particulates. It is available in 21-inch and 27-inch models and has work ratings of 25,000 square feet and 33,000 square feet, respectively.

The new Answer DC buffer offers all of the same features and benefits of Aztec's standard Answer buffer, including the

completely modular design, full-cast aluminum body with centered deck, and adjustable wheels for fine-tuning pad pressure.

www.aztecproducts.com



More Turbo Grinder accessories from EDCO

EDCO has expanded its Turbo Grinder accessory line. The Diamond-Dot accessories remove coatings and smooth rough concrete surfaces, while the new PCD accessories aggressively remove thick coverings.

The new Quick-Change accessories easily slide onto the Turbo Grinders, staying in place with magnets. Simply fasten the quick-change plate onto the machine and slide on various accessories as needed.



Diamond Blade brand from EDCO released

Equipment Development Co. has announced the new EDCO Diamond Blade brand.

The company now offers a wide range of diamond blades compatible with EDCO, CONTRx and competitors' saws.

There are also blades for walk-behind, masonry, tile and crack saws. Also part of the new line are accessories for core drill rigs, concrete grinders, circular saws, cutoff saws and angle grinders. The blades' labels display helpful information regarding blade compatibility, safety, installation and reordering.



Remove layers with new Pre Grind

Surface Gel Tek has introduced HD24 Pre Grind for the concrete polishing industry.

HD24 is a gelled acid that is designed to be used prior to the use of the diamond blades. It uniformly removes several layers of the top laitance. The patented gelled properties allow the applicator to profile along walls, around columns and in corners, areas that are typically hand-ground.

HD Pre Grind is environmentally responsible and in compliance with the LEED Green Building Rating System.

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- www.surfacegeltek.com

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- Least Damage to Edging: WerkMaster
- 5. Dust Collection, least dust on floor no airborne dust: WerkMaster
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grinding & polishing

PRODUCT NEWS

Single-disc machines from Amano Pioneer Eclipse

Amano Pioneer Eclipse has introduced two new single-disc machines — a corded polisher and a high-speed corded burnisher — to its high-performance line of electric, battery-powered and propane-powered floor machines.

The PE200BU is a 20-inch high-speed electric burnisher that generates a pad speed of 1,600 rpm. The 1.5-horsepower DC electric motor is powered by a 110-volt power supply. Rugged, but weighing a mere 101 pounds, this machine burnishes more than 15,000 square feet of floor space per hour. With a floating handle for easy operation, the PE200BU is designed to work efficiently and effectively with a variety of pads and floor finishes produced by Amano Pioneer Eclipse.

The company is also releasing the PE215FP electric floor polisher, available in 17-inch and 20-inch models. The one-piece construction, floating handle and soft-touch grip design makes the PE215FP an effective, easy-to-use polisher that withstands the rigors of daily floor care. Rotating at 175 rpm, the triple planetary drive is powered by a 1.5-horsepower high-torque motor that operates from a 110-volt





power supply. The 17-inch machine polishes more than 6,000 square feet per hour while the larger 20-inch unit produces 7,000 square feet of finished floor every hour.

(0 (800) 367-3550

www.pioneer-eclipse.com



Grinding and polishing module from Scofield

L.M. Scofield Co. has launched a new online American Institute of Architects Distance Education System module entitled "Architectural Concrete: Ground & Polished with Integral Color, Dyes and Stains."

This free module explains the basic principles behind the ground and polished concrete process and discusses LEED project qualifying, slip coefficient, coloring systems, maintenance and more.

Although created with the AIA's continuing education requirements in mind, the module can be useful for anyone currently doing or thinking about using ground and polished concrete. Users will gain insight into how to incorporate ground and polished concrete into their projects and understand how to select the proper grade and class for a polished concrete specification. They will learn about densifying concrete and how ground and polished concrete compares to other flooring materials. They will learn about floor flatness and light reflectivity. They will also learn how to properly color and maintain a ground and polished floor.

www.scofield.com/aia-distance-education.html

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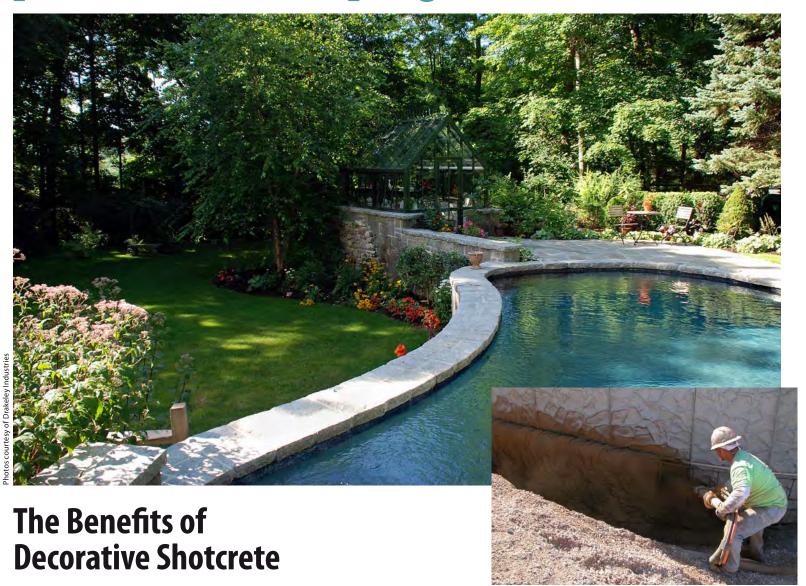
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pools & hardscaping



by William T. Drakeley Jr.

n HOTCRETE is not a physical product. It cannot be touched or held in your hand. Shotcrete is a process or verb. It is the action of placing concrete to achieve high strengths and low permeability.

Shotcrete is defined by the American Concrete Institute's ACI 506-R-05, "Guide to Shotcrete," as concrete (or sometimes mortar) conveyed through a hose and pneumatically projected at high velocity onto a receiving surface. While the material component of shotcrete is essentially concrete, the process of shotcrete application is unique. It involves pneumatic projection so that compaction is achieved on the receiving surface.

The shotcrete process is prevalent in many industries: pools, underground tunneling, infrastructure and building

trades. In fact, products of the shotcrete process are all around us but rarely noticed.

Using this application in a decorative manner combines all the benefits of castin-place concrete with higher strength and durability because of the in-place compaction.

Spraying concrete onto a surface at high velocity is, in theory, the perfect concrete placement method. Individual aggregate particles of various sizes, coated with cement paste, are driven into place to form a void-free mass of fully compacted concrete. This strong, dense, well-bonded material is ideal for most concrete applications, including decorative concrete.

Examples of shot product that are considered decorative are numerous. A family vacation in Florida will lead you (especially if you have young kids) to Walt Disney World. The Splash Mountain and Big Thunder Mountain Railroad features are structural concrete applied through the shotcrete process. Park specifications surely require the decorative concrete to have water-repellant qualities. Porosity issues, permeability and strengths are key issues that impact the long-term durability of the attractions.

Many underground rail tunnels are not only using shotcrete as rock or ground support but also as a finished exterior coating. For a contractor, this process will not only satisfy structural specifications, but also cause a huge cost reduction.

Other applications of decorative concrete through the nozzle include pool creation. Watertight, low-permeability structural

PRODUCT NEWS



Curb Fox offers conveyer for CF3000

A new optional belt conveyor increases productivity and improves quality for the Curb Fox 3000, from Curb Fox Equipment.

The 72-inch by 18-inch conveyor enhances overall efficiency of the slipformer in several ways. First, it allows continuous feeding of the CF3000 even when the concrete mixer is at a different level. The CF3000 can easily be fed during renovation work where the curb mold

must be spaced up to 18 inches away from the rear wheel. With the conveyor, the CF3000 can slip-form sections up to 24 inches wide in the offset position.

Secondly, the conveyor keeps a full "head" of concrete in the hopper, enabling the Curb Fox to maintain paving speeds of up to 35 feet per minute.

Finally, with the conveyor mounted the Curb Fox 3000 is still legal width with a standard mold.

www.curbfox.com

An electric option from Blastcrete

Blastcrete Equipment Co. is now offering a 5-horsepower electric motor on its popular AA020 Piccola Rotary Gunite Machine. Featuring proven Piccola technology for precise, effective operation, the gunite machine is ideal for a variety of applications, including dry and underground shotcreting, concrete repair and refractory installation.

Blastcrete's Piccola gunite machine is intended to be a simple solution for gunning applications, turning out up to 6 cubic yards per hour. It offers precise material output with the ability to deliver a maximum of 3/8-inch aggregate.

Designed for user-friendly operation, the Piccola machine features a simplified one-bolt clamping system. This simplified design makes it easy to adjust and ensures an excellent seal every time. The Piccola machine is also designed for trouble-free cleaning and maintenance. The entire unit can be taken apart easily.

Featuring a small, compact design, the Piccola machine is designed for easy transport and fits in the bed of a pickup truck. In addition to the new electric motor, the AA020 is also available with an air motor. Air requirements are dependent on power choice and range from 250 to 600 cubic feet per minute.

© (800) 235-4867

www.blastcrete.com

materials are essential to the success of the pool industry. One-sided forming with unlimited shape potential makes shotcrete a perfect material for pools.

In addition, home construction projects, renovations and commercial installations can all take advantage of the shotcrete process for retaining walls, faux rock, decking or high-rise facades.

Shotcrete is probably the best way to install concrete that is not only structurally superior but limitless in shape, size and use. As specifications demand more and more performance from decorative concrete, shotcrete will continue to get looks.

William T. Drakeley Jr. is managing member of Drakeley Industries and Drakeley Pool Co. LLC. He can be reached at Drakeleypoolsb@aol.com.

William T. Drakely Jr. will be a panelist for "Decorative Concrete and the Universal Solvent" at the Concrete Decor Show & Spring Training in Nashville on Tuesday, March 15 at 3 p.m. or more information, go to www.ConcreteDecorShow.com.



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PROJECT PROFILE

Rockview House Santa Cruz, Calif.

by Chris Mayo

TAKE an older home on the beach in need of radical change. Add a designer and a concrete contractor, both of whom are comfortable thinking outside the box. Give them carte blanche and as much time as they need. Allow their creative juices to simmer. What do you get? A dramatic award-winning remodel project that screams individuality.

The Rockview House remodel is the culmination of a collaboration between designer Dennis Britton and concrete contractor Tom Ralston. It is a stunning combination of unique concrete pours, cutting-edge acid staining, distinctive utilization of natural materials, eyecatching use of glass, and subtle exploitation of polished and unpolished steel.

"Rockview started as an idea," says Ralston, owner of Tom Ralston Concrete, Santa Cruz, Calif. "The only thing that was distinctive about the house before the remodeling was that it sits on a cliff right on the ocean. When the tide is high the water slams against the bottom portion of the structure. We wanted to bring the beauty of

Project at a Glance

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

Designer: Dennis Britton, Dennis Britton Residential Designs, Carmel, Calif.

Client: Owners of a beach vacation house in Santa Cruz, Calif.

Project Description: Completely renovate and transform a dated and closed-in structure (circa 1950s) into a modern and more open state-of-the-art house.

Challenge(s): Incorporate the feel of the natural surroundings (cliffs and ocean) into the entire renovation of the structure.

Products Used: L.M. Scofield Co. Lithochrome Chemstain Classic Acid Stains: Fern Green, Padre Brown and Antique Amber; Richard James Specialty Chemicals Corp. 200-Series epoxy primer and StoneLok 2K urethane sealer



the outside — the craggy beach-worn cliffs and the elements of the ocean — into the interior of the house."

"We wanted the house to look as though the ocean had once been inside it," explains Britton, owner of Dennis Britton Residential Design, in Carmel, Calif. "We wanted it to be part of its surroundings as opposed to an encroachment on them."

"The first, and maybe most obvious, challenge was that we knew what effect we wanted, but we didn't know how we were going to get there," says Ralston.

They started with mock-ups, both onsite and off-site, Ralston recalls. "We had never tried pouring floors, walls or steps quite like these," he says. "Everything we did on Rockview was a first and one-of-akind. We spent two or three weeks working on new techniques for pouring walls and

floors, seeding the concrete with beach materials and applying acid stains to mimic the natural colors surrounding the house."

The walls

Ralston, Britton and crew envisioned walls that reflected the surrounding cliffs - craggy-looking, with fissures, cracks and veins. Ralston used a technique in which they started by filling vertical wall forms about one third to two thirds full with concrete. The concrete was then lightly vibrated, leaving random air pockets. "We wanted to leave a bug-holed look, and too much vibration would limit the fissure effect," Ralston says.

After the initial pass in which the walls were partially filled, stones, beach glass, shells and aquarium sand were placed on top of the partially poured concrete, the



The visible craters in the bathroom floor were created by using a turkey baster full of retardant to create a random-looking pattern.

idea being to create the appearance of an irregular vein, or strata, in an eroded cliff. After about 30 to 45 minutes, when the concrete had partially set, they poured more concrete on top of the irregular veins.



Acid-staining vertical surfaces

At that point, they had walls that essentially looked like poorly placed concrete. Color was needed. "We didn't have much experience with blending acid stains on vertical surfaces, so we were very cautious," says Ralston. They used hand-held sprayers, brushes and rags (to minimize runs), blending the stains wet on wet to create a seamless color transition.

Ralston met with success by applying two acid stains — L.M. Scofield Co.'s Fern Green and Antique Amber. He also reduced the



"We wanted the **house** to look as though the OCECIN had once been **inside** it."

Dennis Britton, Dennis Britton Residential Design

strength of each with water. He used 3-to-1 ratios of water to stain in some areas and 1-to-1 ratios in others. "We had both stains ready to apply at the same time, especially when we were making the transition from one color to the next. If the green was too bright, we used the antique amber to mute it. None of the walls were sealed."

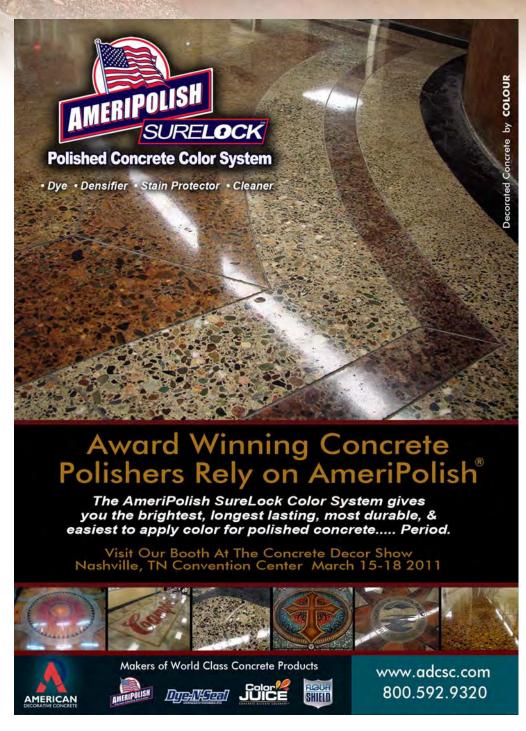
The floors

The idea for the floors was inspired by a trip to Alaska, says Britton. "When you fly over areas of the wilderness, you can see how water has carved channels in the landscape. We wanted that look, combined with the pockmarks and colors of the rocks surrounding the house."

So, again, they knew what they wanted but had to figure out how to get there. "The rocks surrounding the house have a pitted, pocked look with a combination of dark brown, light brown and green colors," Ralston recalls. "We thought we could embed aquarium sand, beach glass and seashells to attain the look of an ocean surround. We mapped out each room prior to seeding with these materials."

But how to create an appearance of three-dimensional channels on a flat surface? Ralston cut strips of 2-inch thick foam in random patterns to mimic channels and laid them on the subfloor. The concrete was poured around the veins of foam. A few days later they pulled the foam and filled the channels with a mortar mix laden with aquarium sand, seashells and beach glass. The mixture was rinsed off the following day with muriatic acid and water to expose the specialty aggregates.

And what about the pitted, pockmarked look? "I guess I was obsessing about that part," says Ralston. "I woke up at about





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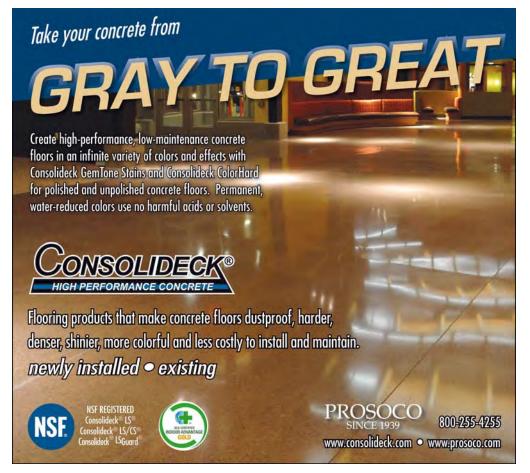


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Rockview House Wins ASCC Decorative Concrete Award

The concrete work in the Rockview House remodel project won recognition from the American Society of Concrete Contractors' Decorative Concrete Council earlier this year. The project was awarded first place at the DCC's 2011 Decorative Concrete Awards in the "Cast in Place, Special Finishes over 1,500 Square Feet" category.

ASCC executive director Bev Garnant says the group considered four categories when evaluating contestants: aesthetics, craftsmanship, functionality and creativity. "As with all our award winners," says Garnant, "the Rockview House project stood out in every one of our categories."

For more about the 2011 ASCC DCC Awards, see the feature story in this issue on page 26.

"The results were

Tom Ralston, Tom Ralston Concrete

three one morning wondering what would happen if I used a turkey baster to drip retardant in a random pattern. We did some mock-ups and it worked. At first we carefully dripped the retardant out, but as we became more comfortable with the technique we drew the liquid into the baster and randomly flicked it onto the floors. The results were excellent."

Staining the floors

To achieve the browns and greens that he wanted on the floors, Ralston used combinations of three Scofield acid stains — Fern Green, Antique Amber and Padre Brown. They began with Padre Brown around the aggregate channels and in the round areas that had been exposed with the turkey baster retardant application, allowing the stain to radiate to the edges of the treated areas. "A really cool effect happened when we did that," recalls Ralston. "Much of the perimeter had a dark shadow line that resulted from the pooling of the acid stain in the exposed areas,









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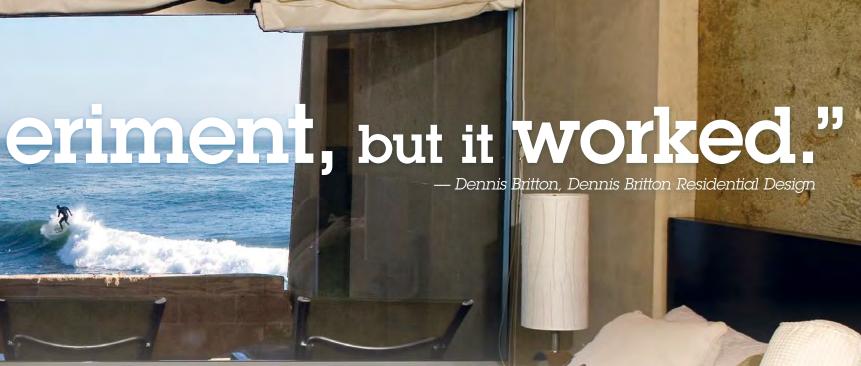
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levels," Britton says. "It was really a giant experiment, but it worked — fortunately we had owners who were willing to let us experiment and find our way as we progressed."

www.tomralstonconcrete.com

Tom Ralston will join Gary CONCRETE Decor SHO Jones of Colormaker and artisan Michael Miller in a panel discussion and presentation, "Acid Stains: Art & Alchemy," at the Concrete Decor Show & Spring Training event in Nashville on Tuesday, March 15, at 3 p.m. According to Miller: "Tom will speak primarily on staining residential work. I'll address mostly commercial. And Jones will cover the ins and outs of patinas over skims and overlays."







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THE CONCRETIST

Staining Was Never Easy, But Now It's Complicated

was once a much younger concretist, really impetuous and passionate. I was working for L.M. Scofield Co., and as my wife told me, I worked way too much. So she left me. To be more accurate, she left



by Michael Miller

me in charge of the kids for 10 days while she and her best girlfriend toured a bit of England and Scotland. We'd all get a welldeserved break from routine. I'd get a break from work, while our daughters, Kirsten and Karley, would get a break from Mom, with me. Kind of.

You see, it's hard for me to take a break.

Not so hard to take a break from work. Much harder to take a break from concrete.

I'd earned the vacation from Scofield and the industry, and I was looking forward to hanging out with the girls. But my wheels are always turning, same then as now. My mind and hands don't rest easily.

I dropped my wife, Neen, and her friend Carrie at the airport. With little Karley in the back in her car seat, I picked Kirsten up from kindergarten and headed to the local building supply stores. I was looking forward



Martin Webb stained over troweled integrally colored skims (overlays) on these mixed-media horizontal and vertical artistic architectural elements.

PRODUCT SHOWCASE







to hanging with the girls, while at the same time, surprising Neen by transforming our modest Benicia, Calif., condo. I was going to strip the carpet off the slab-on-grade first floor of our two-story home and go to work. What could be better than for Kirsten and Karley to bond with Dad while learning about what he does through a couple of weekends of stripping, saw-cutting and staining? A real character-builder! A real lesson! A golden opportunity!

This sounds like it was a pretty simple job, but not really. For those of you who have never tackled replacing carpet with patina stain, take heed. Veterans out there know what I'm talking about.

I mentioned that there was sawcutting. Intricate. And there were lots of color separations at these joints. But neither of these things was what made the job difficult. Rather, it was the prep — removing the carpet, pad and tack strips. Then, filling the spalled nail holes with anchoring cement. Then, removing the residual carpet adhesive, which I accomplished by applying Jasco waterrinseable paint stripper over the entire floor at one time. I had a broad scraper in my hands (kind of like a hockey stick) and would push off one wall while sliding with the scraper across the floor. This was a lot like skating on goose poop over ice. I fell more than once. That Jasco stuff really burns. It does a reasonable job on paints and adhesives, but I can't recommend it on skin.

Anyway, the job turned out great. Neen made it safely home, was surprised, and, lucky for me, quite happy with the result. I did get in a bit of trouble though, as the busybody gal-next-door commented to her on how Kirsten and Karley had seemingly spent an inordinate amount of time alone at the neighborhood park in the previous week

The stain job was one helluva lot of work, a lot more than either the girls or I had planned on or bargained for. The process wasn't that quick or simple. However, it was a simple stain job, in that it was patina stain only, stain over gray concrete.

Flash forward to December 2010. We're in the middle of a complex (mixed-media) job. It's residential, and remedial, and a tough one. The homeowner had contracted an inexperienced grind and polish guy to transform 6,000 square feet of posttensioned slab-on-grade gray concrete into white terrazzo, which to his credit he had busted his butt on, but he was just unable to do. Enter the concretist. We're now shotblasting and regrinding, patina staining, dyeing/tinting and sealing/

> finishing, in order to correct his work. We're no longer producing a white terrazzo, but rather, more of a stylized light beige travertine, with much nuance and subtle variegation.

> Rarely today is a stain job just a simple stain job.

So often now, we work in mixed media. Stain over gray concrete. Stain over white concrete. Stain under dye. Stain over integrally colored concrete. Stain over color hardener. Stain under tint. Or stain over overlays. This is especially true of me and my concretist group, who are working in themed graphic or art-oriented environments. On any given job, we're likely to have melded a combination of these to have achieve a

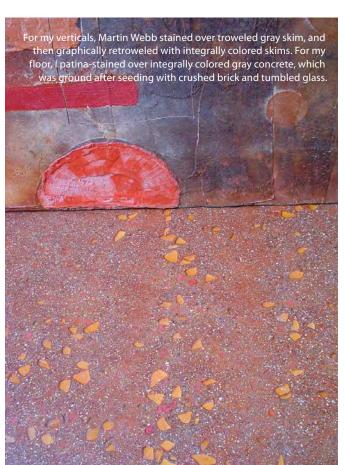
desired result.

And that's not to mention stains and dyes over exposed stone, glass or metals, which may have been incorporated into the concrete for additional effect.

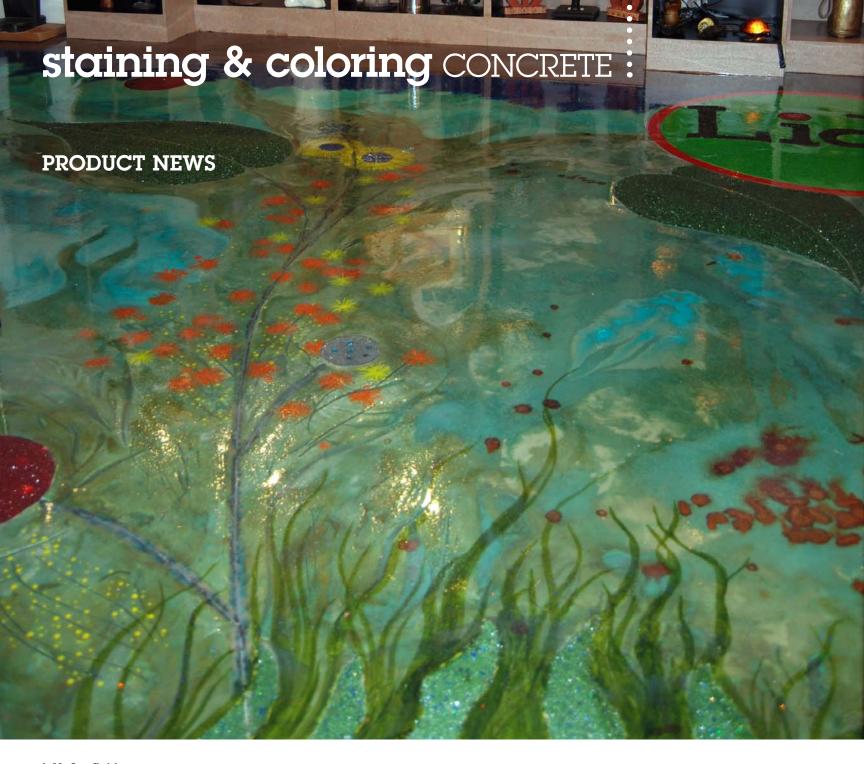
We not only mix it up like this in commercial work, but also, and often, in residential work as well, including in our own studios and residences.

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.

Michael Miller will join Gary Jones of Colormaker and artisan Tom Ralston in a panel discussion and presentation, "Acid Stains: Art & Alchemy," at the Concrete Decor Show & Spring Training event in Nashville on Tuesday, March 15, at 3 p.m. According to Miller: "Tom will speak primarily on staining residential work. I'll address mostly commercial. And Jones will cover the ins and outs of patinas over skims and overlays."







L.M. Scofield announces **Decorative Concrete Award winners**

L.M. Scofield Co. has announced the winners of its third annual Decorative Concrete Awards contest. This contest is open to any contractor, architect or designer who uses or specifies Scofield systems.

For the second year in a row, the Grand Prize was awarded to Lou DeCillis of Artistic Flooring Systems of West Bloomfield, Mich. He won for his innovative use of stain work on the floor for Lido Gallery & Gifts, in Birmingham, Mich. Even though this (the lobby and reception

area for a new art gallery) wasn't a large job, the owner wanted a very dramatic and stunning floor. "Art on the floor," was the way DeCillis described it.

Described as an impressionist painting on concrete, the floor was created with a combination of Lithochrome Chemstain Classic, Lithochrome Tintura Stain and Scofield Formula One Liquid Dye Concentrate, then sealed with Scofield Selectseal-S. Departing from the "graphic design" look of most decorative concrete artisans, DeCillis used the colors in a loose, painterly fashion, creating a floor that is as

much a work of art as the pieces that the gallery houses.

The first runner-up was Surfacing Solutions Inc., in Temecula, Calif., for its vibrant commercial-building entry patio for Camden Development Inc., in Irvine, Calif., using Lithochrome Tintura Stain.

Second runner-up was Donlon Coatings Inc., of Massachusetts, for its use of Lithochrome Tintura Stain on the state Department of Transportation's Millers River Bridge project in Athol, Mass.

www.scofield.com

New shades of Color Juice released

American Decorative Concrete's Color Juice is bringing a soft look to concrete. Twelve new opaque, pastel shades of Color Juice silicate colorant offer a palette that's expanded in both tint and texture.

The new colors are Aztec Gold, Dusty Rose, Tuscany Red, Almond, Desert Sand, Burnished Brown, Cinnamon, Polished Pine, Volcanic Ash, Copper Penny, Steel Blue and Ocean Blue.

In addition to the pastel colors, the company has also released Light Gray, Dark Gray, Translucent White and Opaque White.

Color Juice, a water-based pigment that can be applied to any cured concrete, penetrates like a dye but promises the staying power of pigment or acid stain. It uses nanotechnology for better and more even penetration of the slab surface and includes an integral hardener to protect the color and enhance surface durability.

Color Juice is designed to be userfriendly for top-quality results the first time. There is little or no cleanup, and the colored slab is simple to maintain. Colors are packaged as easy-to-mix concentrates, minimizing shipping costs as well as saving on transportation-related energy consumption. Color Juice is also available in ready-to-use solutions.

www.adcsc.com

Kemiko collaborates with Bob Harris and DCI on new dves

The Decorative Concrete Institute and Kemiko have teamed up to introduce Kemiko Dyes by Bob Harris.

Kemiko Dyes by Bob Harris, combined with DCI Dyes, are ideal for completing your decorative application. Training workshops for the new dyes, as well as a new line of skimcoats released by this partnership, are held at the Decorative Concrete Institute.

www.kemiko.com

www.decorativeconcreteinstitute.com







stamping & texturing CONCRETE

Five Facts Regarding the Business of Stenciled Concrete

OR years, it seemed to me that people thought stenciled concrete was the bastard child of decorative concrete. I never really understood that.

Back in those days the slightest mention of by Todd Rose stenciled concrete would bring up an argument about how somehow it was an inferior product compared to stamped or imprinted concrete. I never could figure this out. To me stenciled concrete appears more realistic than stamped or imprinted concrete, and I knew

it was less expensive than properly installed

pavers or natural materials like flagstone.



I would also see contractors engraving existing concrete and loving it. It looked liked stenciled concrete to me, but without any texture. I loved it engraved or stenciled.

A main benefit of engraving is that, if you stain concrete and then engrave it, the result will have a different-colored grout line because you engraved through the stain to the natural gray concrete. If you put down a stencil when a pour or overlay is fresh, you can get the different-colored grout line and texture too, which gives you a much more authentic, realistic look.

When I have a customer come to my shop to look at samples of say herringbone, I show both a stenciled and a stamped sample. I always point out the differentcolored grout or joint line, and I would bet that 90 percent of the time, she will say,

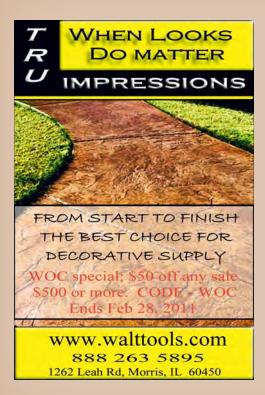
Don't just waterseal it .

"How much more for the stenciled sample with the different-colored grout line?"

I say, "About 75 cents or so per square foot." According to the psychology of pricing, this often tells the consumer the higher-priced item has more value. That extra 75 cents more than pays for your stencil and hopefully gives something back to you as well.

Stenciled concrete is conducive to many textures, whether smooth to seamless textured skins, a broom finish, or a texture roller. Gone are the days of getting 12 to 15 stamps at \$150 per stamp and nailing just the right timing to produce a constant texture through the pour. Gone are the days of different colors because this truck or load was stamped earlier or later, causing a color difference.

PRODUCT SHOWCASE







Here are five more things I've observed about the business of stenciled concrete:

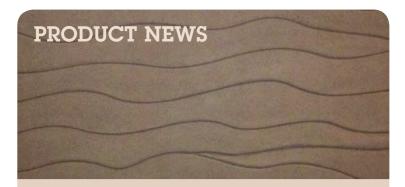
Stenciling helps you set yourself apart from the competition. If everyone in your market is stamping, then stenciling will immediately set you apart from everyone else. Stamping has been around for quite awhile, and architects, designers and landscapers are looking for something fresh and new. Don't just wait for them to discover stenciled concrete. Make samples, do architectural presentations and price a good discount.

At first, you want to put stenciled concrete where the public can see it and it will sell itself. Once you have done that, always price your stenciled concrete more than your stamped.

Municipalities and commercial establishments love stenciled concrete. It is not as slippery as a lot of stamped concrete. My number one complaint about stamped concrete is that it is often slippery when wet. Because stenciled concrete has a flatter plane than stamped concrete does, it is less slippery. We have all seen those specs of porte-cocheres with canyon or random-stone stamps that we know people often have difficulty maneuvering.

Lincoln, Neb., specs a lot of stenciled concrete for its crosswalks. Stenciled concrete crosswalks and landings are easier for the visually impaired and physically handicapped to get across. The city also loves them because the flatter plane allows for easier snow removal.

My second biggest complaint about stamped concrete is that it is sometimes fake or plastic-looking. Stenciled concrete often looks much more authentic than stamped.



Element series debuts with rippling sand stamp

Proline Concrete Tools has introduced the first in a new series of stamping tools representing the elements. The series is dubbed the Element Collection.

The first design in the new Element Collection series is Sand. Made to mimic a rippling sand dune or a sandy beach, this single-tool application is both beautiful and unique. With the look and feel of natural sand, this stamp works for pool areas, resort living and beach homes. A light etching to the concrete will add traction to prevent slippage.

Proline is currently working on more designs to add to the series.

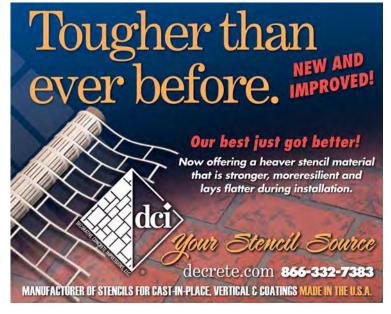
(0 (800) 795-4750

www.prolinestamps.com



Entering the stenciled concrete market costs less than becoming a stamper. You can enter the stenciled concrete market for a fraction of the capital needed to get into the stamped concrete market.

For each stamped concrete pattern, you as a contractor will invest a minimum of about \$1,500, depending on the manufacturer. I have access to 32 stencil patterns plus more for bands or borders — your count will depend on the stencil manufacturer you use. My cost is around \$300 for 1,000 square feet. If I were to have to invest in 32 different patterns in stamps I would be looking at investing tens of thousands of dollars, and in these times that is difficult.



Stamping Recipe

by Kelly O'Brien

I Shall Be Released

Larry Ross - Richard Smith Custom Concrete, Canoga Park, Calif.

www.richardsmithconcrete.com

This recipe is for those clients who call you complaining about a stamped or textured patio that's become lifeless and dull. With just a few steps and a freshly mixed batch of tinted liquid release agent, you can bring color and depth to those sad surfaces.

Ingredients:

W.R. Meadows Ultrite Degreaser White Mountain Wet Look Lacquer sealer Matcrete Liquid Release Agent Matcrete Dustone Antique Release Agent: Walnut (or whatever color you prefer) Special Equipment needed: hand-held buffing machine and a range of abrasive pads

Directions:

Clean the stamped or textured surface aggressively with your buffing machine. Depending on how the original surface was finished, use either a coarse abrasive (if you have to remove a substantial coat of sealer) or a fine one (if there's not much or any sealer left on the surface).

(NOTE: You may be tempted to clean your surface with a pressure washer rather than buffing it. The reason the Richard Smith team opts for the latter is because they prefer the way the buffer lifts material out of the surface, as opposed to the





pressure washer pushing it in, and because when using a pressure washer, you run the risk of leaving marks that can later be accentuated by the sealer.)

- Once you've buffed the surface thoroughly and you have a nice, open profile, apply the degreaser evenly across the surface, and scrub it with a stiff-bristled broom.
- Rinse the surface thoroughly and let rest for 24 to 48 hours, until completely dry.
- Using a pump sprayer made for solvents, spray a light coat of White Mountain sealer across the entire surface.
- Let cure for several hours or overnight until completely dry. (The cure time will depend on weather and temperature.)
- Mix 1/4 cup of Dustone release with 1 gallon of the Liquid Release Agent until well-incorporated, and pour it into a pump sprayer. The thickness of your coat will depend on the type of texture or stamp pattern your surface has. If you're spraying a stamped surface with very deep crevices, for example, you want a fairly heavy coat of release so it coats all the three-dimensional surfaces of the pattern well. On the other hand, for a surface with a low-profile pattern (like the one pictured) you'll want to spray a very fine coat of colored release, so it coats the surface lightly and evenly and doesn't pool in any low points. (If you're not sure which thickness you should be shooting for, do a small test patch.)
- Let the release set overnight and make sure it is completely dry before continuing to the last step.
- To finish the surface, add a final coat of the lacquer sealer and let cure completely.



www.PerformancePolymersLLC.com

You can pour more stenciled concrete with less labor. It is possible to pour more stenciled concrete with less labor compared to stamped concrete.

Pouring 600 square feet with color hardener and stamping with an ashlar slate pattern is pretty difficult and time-consuming. Pouring that same 600 square feet and stenciling requires much less skilled labor. Once the stencil is placed and color has been thrown, it takes about 15 to 20 minutes to texture. There is just no way stamping 600 square feet can be done as efficiently. I know these are lofty claims, but once you get the basics of stenciling you can really move. It takes years to get good at stamping.

With stenciled concrete you can complete in one day. It is possible with stenciled concrete to complete the entire operation, minus grading and forming, in one day. This is an advanced process. When using admixtures such as superplasticizers, midrange plasticizers, nonchloride accelerators, concrete delay admixtures and evaporation retardants to manipulate the concrete, you can easily pour, stencil, color, texture and seal in one day. The use of liquid release helps make this possible.

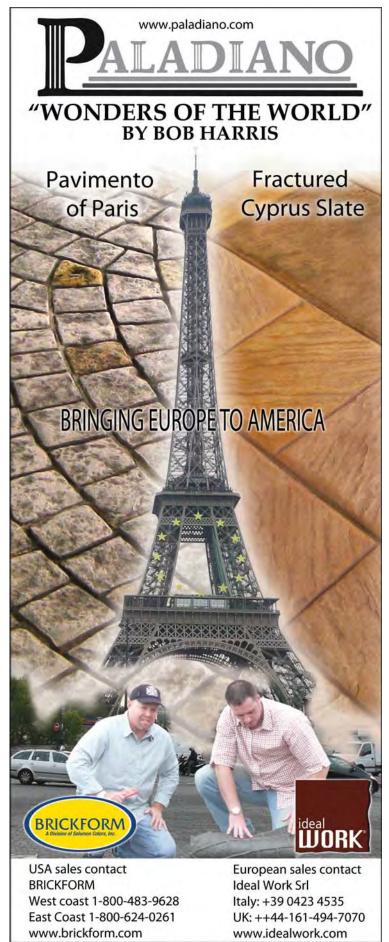
Another thing I like about stenciled concrete is I can often incorporate multiple colors and even textures into one pour without extra forming.

Todd Rose is a consultant for Granicrete Interntational. He aids product development and trains distributors to work with architectural and commercial markets. He can be reached at trose@toddrosedecorativeconcrete.com.

Todd Rose will present "Decorative Effects with Stenciled Concrete" 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.











walls & homes



Fu-Tung Cheng Plays with Walls

This house, built in San Mateo County, Calif., by Cheng Design, has the fingerprints of acclaimed precast-piece designer Fu-Tung Cheng all over it.

A press release from Cheng Design, Berkeley, Calif., calls this house "House 6." Here's what else it says: "House 6 was an opportunity to apply Fu-Tung Cheng's small scale, hands-on work with concrete as a finish material to the larger scale of a house. The concept was to (let us) create a building that, while minimalist, would convey integral tactile design and craft throughout by 'playing' with and controlling the mix design of the concrete walls as they were being poured.

"The concrete walls were poured using a formworkreducing slip-cast technique. Panels measuring 4 feet by 8 feet, each comprised of plastic laminate and plywood, were ganged together in single-height 4-foot 'lifts.' With each lift came the ability to



control how the concrete was performing by reaching into the forms to add subtle bands of color and to prevent any marring of the glossy smooth forms.

"This cannot be accomplished if the walls are created in a single pour from the top of 20-foot-high forms. With these tall forms, the wet mix splatters against the narrow form walls as it fills the form, producing the uniform color of a typical cast concrete wall."

www.chengdesign.com

Fu-Tung Cheng will present "Concrete at Home: Anatomy of Designing and Building A Modern Concrete Home" at the Concrete Decor Show & Spring Training in Nashville on Thursday, March 17, at 10 a.m. For more information, go to www.ConcreteDecorShow.com.



CONCRETE walls & homes



Left: The front entrance. Below: The finished house, from the front walk.







Now You Can Polish Concrete Wet or Dry, achieve a beautiful finish, and a gloss reading of 85!

Order Now and SAVE \$88.05 on the Complete Kit.

Polishing concrete can seem to be a daunting task. We've made it simple by providing quality tools that will assure you'll get the job done and still save you money!

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No Color Bleed

Viper MaxCrete pads do not color bleed like many other pads. Even when used dry, the

high-quality resins used in MaxCrete pads can also handle the heat without discoloring the concrete.

Speed and Long Life

Superior manufacturing control guarantees that Viper* MaxCrete polishing pads are consistently fast and durable. We recommend that the pads be run at 4,000 RPM for maximum life.

The Hercules Variable Speed Electric Polisher with Water Feed

The Hercules* Variable Speed Electric Polisher with Water Feed is one of our most pop-

ular hand polisher tools. This variable speed polisher (500 to 3,000 RPM) comes complete with water kit and ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) to allow you to run wet or dry. This polisher has a 90-day limited warranty.

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If you are not completely satisfied with the quality and dependability of this package, simply return it at our expense within 30 days to receive a complete refund.

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Item#	Description	Purchased Separately	Concrete Kit
17377	Hercules® Variable Speed Center Water Feed Electric Polisher, 500 to 4,500 RPM	\$175.00	Included
11048	4" Viper® MaxCrete Wet or Dry 7-Step Concrete Polishing Pad Set (50-3,000 Grit)	\$103.25	Included
1748	4" Viper® Flexible Back-up Pad with Hook and Loop Back	\$9.75	Included
80102	Viper® Back-Up Pads, MaxCrete Pads, and Hercules® Variable Speed Electric Polisher	\$288.00	\$199.95

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