

# concrete DECOR®

THE JOURNAL  
OF DECORATIVE  
CONCRETE

concretedecor.net

Unique Sand Finishes pg. 61

Installing Prefab Rock pg. 70

Mud Stamps pg. 84

Vol. 11 No. 3 April 2011

## Revival at Rockettown

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# publisher's LETTER

## Dear Readers,

In this edition of *Concrete Decor* are several stories about events at the recent Concrete Decor Show & Spring Training in Nashville. If you were unable to attend, this issue will give you a glimpse of what took place.

The event was a valuable opportunity for people to connect with their trade and return home with new ways to grow their business. The manufacturers that exhibited at this event should also be praised for the extraordinary way in which they came together as an industry for the sake of our attendees.

If asked whether the show was a success, I would say yes. It's extremely well-targeted, it's growing in attendance, the education keeps improving, and it's leaving a permanent impression on the cities we visit and their people.

You can read about the hands-on workshops at Rockettown in these pages, but I encourage you to visit [ConcreteDecorShow.com](http://ConcreteDecorShow.com) as well. There are also details all over Facebook and other online networking sites. As I mentioned during the opening keynote at the start of the Concrete Decor Show, your company can make similar impressions in your own community. You'll touch the lives of others in a positive way, and your business will grow as well.

When the Concrete Decor Show heads to San Antonio in February 2012 we will find similar opportunities to channel the strengths of our industry in ways that can impact the lives of others while at the same time providing some top-notch hands-on training. You don't want to miss it.

Having had the opportunity to work with so many talented artisans during the week of the event, I was reminded how important it is to keep the job site clean and safe at all times. It's not just the finished project that is effective at making a positive impression, it's how that job site looks from start to finish. When I was a kid, Scouting taught me to keep the space around me orderly. It wasn't always an easy job, especially if a piece of trash needed to be picked up that didn't belong to me. It was, without a doubt, a strength I quickly realized I had after entering the trades, because every customer appreciated it. Better yet, it was an expectation I had for my employees, and it was always effective at driving new business my way.

As part of an industry, it's important for us to understand that everything we do is scrutinized by others. You can look at this as a burden or as an opportunity to influence others in ways they may not have expected. Just like that finishing touch at the end of each project, ongoing attention paid to details will win out over your competition every time.

Sincerely,



Bent Mikkelsen  
Publisher



## concrete DECOR®

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*by Emily Dixon*

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Photo by John Strieder





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#### PRODUCT FOCUS:

Cracked Mud Seamless Skin, from Brickform

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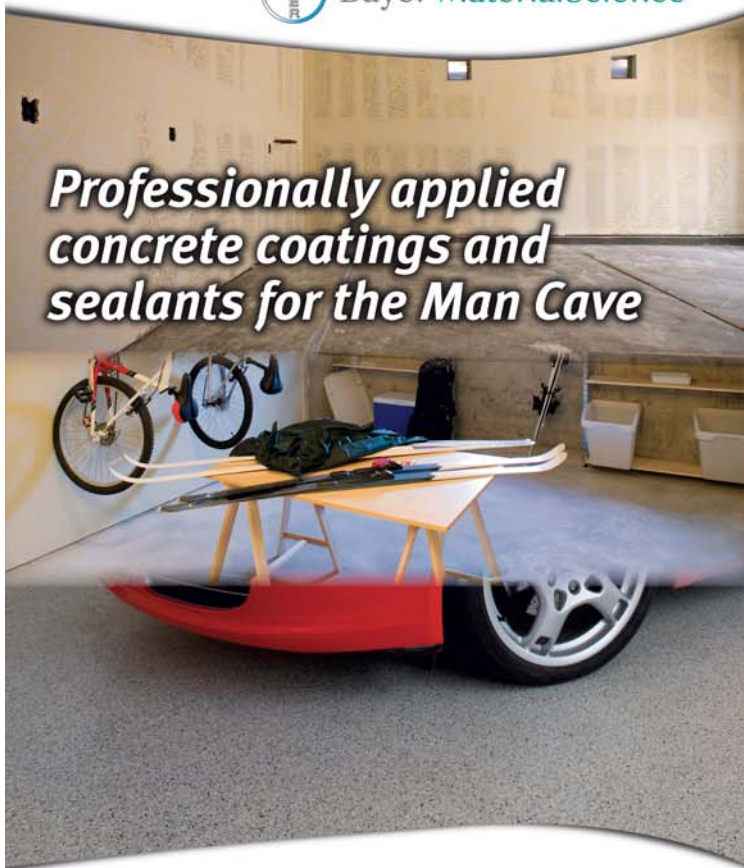


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**Doug Carlton** operates Carlton Concrete Inc. in Visalia, Calif. He can be reached at [carltondoug@comcast.net](mailto:carltondoug@comcast.net). See Doug's column, "Carlton's Corner," on page 43.



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**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](mailto:miller@theconcretist.com). See Michael's column, "the concretist," on page 40.



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**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 [dstephenson@acci-us.com](mailto:dstephenson@acci-us.com). See David's article on page 62.



**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@protrade.pub.com](mailto:trowelanderror@protrade.pub.com). See Chris' column, "Trowel & Error," on page 49.

Talk back! Weigh in online at [ConcreteDecor.net](http://ConcreteDecor.net)



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# business & INDUSTRY

## INDUSTRY NEWS

### RMC foundation releases pervious study

The Ready Mixed Concrete Research & Education Foundation has released the latest addition to its extensive library of offerings on pervious concrete: "Performance Evaluation of In-Service Pervious Concrete Pavements in Cold Weather."

The research includes a comprehensive evaluation of the use of pervious concrete in cold weather and examined impermeability causes, mix design, a rheological study and a pavement structural analysis. The researchers reviewed previous pervious concrete studies and made recommendations for future areas of research on the topic.

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

### Mapei Group expands to South Korea

The Mapei Group has recently completed the acquisition of all activities regarding adhesives and products for the building industry carried out by Henkel in South Korea under the Ceresit and Thomsit trademarks.

The acquisition has been made through a new company, Mapei Korea, that now has head offices in Seoul and a production facility in Chungcheongbuk-do.

Through this acquisition, Mapei intends to strongly increase its presence in South Korea and create a production base for the North Pacific zone.

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

### Lafarge and Columbia University release book on concrete

Lafarge, in partnership with Columbia University's Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation (GSAPP), has announced the launch of "Solid States: Concrete in Transition," a book that examines the use of concrete in today's architecture.

Compiled after a 2008 conference at Columbia University, the book calls upon a diverse group of experts to examine concrete's reemergence at the cutting edge of contemporary architecture, engineering and design.

 [www.lafarge-na.com](http://www.lafarge-na.com)

### Coal company invests in green cement

Alpha Natural Resources has made a strategic equity investment in Ceratech Inc (CTI). Ceratech manufactures a revolutionary "green cement" that utilizes 95 percent waste fly ash from electric utilities, dramatically reducing their landfill requirements while generating zero carbon dioxide emissions from the cement production process.

CTI's technology allows for beneficial repurposing of fly ash, a byproduct of coal combustion, dramatically reducing the volume of ash that is being landfilled. About three of every five tons of ash produced — approximately 42 million tons a year — end up in a landfill. A ton of CTI "green cement" diverts approximately 1,800 pounds of landfill waste. An additional benefit of CTI's unique technology is that its cement production process generates no carbon dioxide emissions, furthering its attractiveness.

CTI's cement is a one-to-one replacement for portland cement, with outstanding strength and durability characteristics. With no other cement on the market composed of more than 90 percent fly ash, CTI's green cement

## event calendar

### Post-Tensioning Institute 10th Annual Technical Conference and Exhibition


May 1-3, Kansas City, Mo.


 [www.post-tensioning.org](http://www.post-tensioning.org)

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

May 25, Dallas, Texas  
Aug. 24, Seattle, Wash.  
Nov. 2, Lawrence, Kan.


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

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

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

### Concrete Sawing and Drilling Association

CSDA Summer Meetings  
June 9-10, Tulsa, Okla.

 (727) 577-5004

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

### American Society of Concrete Contractors CEO Forum

June 16-19, Pinehurst, N.C.  
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[www.ceratechinc.com](http://www.ceratechinc.com)

### Spring seminars from ACI

The American Concrete Institute is offering five educational seminars in various locations around the country this spring.

This spring's seminars are "Concrete Repair Basics," "Concrete Slabs-on-Ground," "Reinforced Concrete Design," "Masonry Design to the IBC and MSJC Codes," and "Troubleshooting Concrete Construction."

[\(248\) 848-3815](tel:2488483815)

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

### Shotcrete association elects officers

The American Shotcrete Association membership has re-elected Michael Cotter, consultant, to a one-year term as secretary and Ted Sofis, Sofis Company Inc., to a one-year term as treasurer.

Also, three ASA directors were re-elected to three year terms: Tom Norman, Airplaco Equipment Co.; Ryan Poole, Domtec International LLC; and Dan Millette, The Euclid Chemical Co.

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

### World of Concrete Most Innovative Product winners announced

The winners of this year's World of Concrete Most Innovative Product awards have been announced. Held annually at World of Concrete, the MIP Award Program showcases many of the new products exhibited at the trade show.

The following are the winners in the Decorative Concrete Materials category.

Receiving the Expert's Choice award is Stonetec for the Deva Lex 100, a portable floor-engraving three-axis CNC (computer numerical control) machine. When mounted on its frame, the machine becomes a table CNC machine, but it can also be used on existing concrete or stone floors.

There were two winners in the Editor's Choice category. SPD Protector, by Lythic

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

### Don't forget colloidal silica densifiers

**Y**OUR recent "Trowel and Error" column about polished concrete (February/March 2011) offered a helpful overview of densifier chemistry, summarizing the three most familiar options. Unfortunately, you left out the fourth, newest technology: colloidal silica, which offers several advantages for applicators and the environment.

You suggested that it's important to understand the chemistry of densification and the function it serves. Densifiers are silica-based solutions that react with lime (calcium hydroxide) in concrete. Portland cement paste can contain up to 25 percent lime. The reaction forms calcium silicate hydrates (CSH), the same type of compounds formed by cement hydration. The additional CSH fills microscopic pores in the concrete, increasing hardness and decreasing the ability of liquids to penetrate and stain.

Increased hardness means abrasion resistance. It also makes concrete more polishable. Generally, the harder a material is, the better it will take a shine.

The difference in densifiers is how the silica gets delivered and bound to the concrete. Silicates (sodium, potassium, and lithium silicate) are compounds of mineral salts and silica. They are caustic, in the pH range of 10.5 to 12.5, similar to lime itself. Colloidal silica is virtually pure nanoscale silica suspended in water. It is more efficient at a basic chemical level.

When silicates react with lime, residues of the mineral salts are left behind. These residues can become the hard, discoloring surface deposit known as "whiting." It's the bane of polishers that can only be removed by regrinding the floor. Sodium and potassium silicates must be scrubbed off the concrete to avoid whiting. The residues often require costly hazardous waste disposal. Lithium silicate can also leave whiting if overapplied (which sometimes tempts applicators to underapply it, at the risk of not adequately densifying the concrete).

Colloidal silica, by comparison, contains less than 0.5 percent metallic salts, eliminating the inherent whiting problem of silicate densifiers. My company makes a colloidal silica densifier, Lythic Densifier, that is spray-applied for about 15 minutes — the same speed of application as lithium silicate. After drying for about an hour, the slab is ready for polishing. There is no removal step. A small amount of dry powder residue gets vacuumed up during polishing.

Colloidal silica has two other distinctive properties. First, it is less caustic than silicates — between 8 and 9.5 pH — making it safer to handle.

Second, colloidal silica bonds to other silica, including to itself. It can build up surface density with additional applications — applicators have reported rescuing soft and damaged slabs with it. It bonds to silica in cementitious overlays like Mapei Ultratop and Rapid Set TRU. These overlays are made from specialty cements that produce less lime than portland cement. Without lime, silicates cannot react and can fail to make the overlay polishable. Colloidal silica also makes possible colloidal silica-based stain protectors and cleaners that enhance the floor as they work.

Colloidal silica has a six-year track record of use in the field, and it is an option worth consideration. In a word, we deliver efficiency. More efficient chemistry leads to a more efficient densification process.

— David Loe, president, Lythic Solutions



Solutions Inc., is a hybrid product that increases concrete's resistance to stains, acid etching and liquid penetration. It features a formulation with two advanced technologies — a two-part water-based modified polymer is blended into colloidal silica. Also receiving an Editor's Choice award was Super Dye by Clemons Concrete Coatings. Super Dye can be reduced with either water or acetone. After a quick stir, the mixture is ready to be applied. There is no need to wait for the dye to sweat in.

Winning this year's Attendee's Choice award was Sink Crete, a line of sink molds from Something Better Co.

The MIP Program allows attendees and readers of Hanley Wood publications a chance to vote for the products they judge as innovative.

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

🌐 [www.stonetec.ca](http://www.stonetec.ca)

🌐 [www.lythic.net](http://www.lythic.net)

🌐 [www.ccc-usa.com](http://www.ccc-usa.com)

## Books from tilt-up association

The Tilt-Up Concrete Association has made available a superintendent's job logbook for members. The book allows superintendents to keep records for American Concrete Institute and TCA certification programs and track education and seminar attendance, work experience, personal awards, supplier information and emergency numbers. Conversion tables and safety checklists are included.

The association has also announced the release of the second edition of "The Architecture of Tilt-Up." A new large format (10 inches by 10 inches) marks many dramatic changes from the first edition offered in 2004. The second edition includes colorful imagery of some of the best tilt-up projects of the past five years along with significant updates to the construction section and the addition of a chapter on sustainability.

📞 (319) 895-6911

🌐 [www.tilt-up.org](http://www.tilt-up.org)

## MAX USA hire Northwest sales rep

Max USA Corp. has hired Miguel Zepeda as Northwest regional sales executive.

Zepeda's career includes more than

15 years of outside sales experience in the wholesaling of exterior building products in the Pacific Northwest market. His experience in sales includes siding, windows, roofing, decks and other exterior envelope products.

Zepeda will be based in Portland, Ore.

📞 (800) 223-4293

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

## Prosoco names Consolideck head

Prosoco has hired Kevin Sigourney to manage its newly created Consolideck Products Group, which consists of products for improving the appearance and performance of finished concrete floors.

As Consolideck Products Group manager, Sigourney coordinates the group's field representatives nationwide, along with sales, marketing and product-development activities. Sigourney previously served 10 years as Prosoco customer care manager.

📞 (785) 830-7343

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

## CPS names new president and business development manager

Concrete Polishing Solutions has formally announced David Padgett as CPS president and head business development manager.

Padgett has been part of the CPT family since its conception in 1998. One of the original owners of the CPT family of companies, Padgett has maintained his position of vice president of sales and marketing. Padgett has had a substantial role in designing the equipment sold by



Concrete Polishing Solutions.

Padgett will be focusing his industry experience, operations and business development knowledge to benefit CPS prep, grind and polish contractors. He will also be heavily involved in producing strategic alliances with leading manufacturers.

📞 (877) 472-8200

🌐 [www.go2cps.com](http://www.go2cps.com)

## ACI names director of sustainability

American Concrete Institute has announced Kevin P. Mlutkowski, LEED AP, as its director of sustainability.

In this newly created position, Mlutkowski will work with ACI volunteers, committee members, representatives from other organizations inside and outside the concrete industry, and fellow staff to increase sustainability content in the Institute's programs, events, documents, products and student activities. Additionally, Mlutkowski will coordinate ACI's sustainability activities at events and industry collaborations.

A Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Accredited Professional, Mlutkowski serves on the board of directors for the U.S. Green Building Council Detroit Regional Chapter and as a member of the Environmental Advisory Committee for Berkley, Mich.

🌐 [www.concrete.org](http://www.concrete.org)

## Mapei expands Concrete Restoration Systems with new hire

Mapei is expanding the Concrete Restoration Systems business unit of its Americas subsidiary with the recent hiring of William "Bud" Earley as a Concrete Restoration Specialist (CRS) in central Florida.

Before coming to Mapei, Earley was





managing principal of Professional Concrete Solutions, a Florida-based consulting firm.

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

### SkimStone hires Northwest rep

SkimStone, a division of Rudd Co. Inc., has hired Pablo Johnson as its new manufacturer's representative in the Pacific Northwest.

Johnson will be driving sales of the SkimStone and Milestone product lines. He was a featured artist at World of Concrete's 2010 Artistry in Decorative Concrete exhibition, where he used both SkimStone and Milestone in his project. Johnson will be working in the field, providing sales support and technical expertise to customers and end-users.

[\(800\) 444-7833](tel:8004447833)

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



### ASA names shotcrete committee chair

William T. Drakeley Jr., Drakeley Industries, has been named chair of the American Shotcrete Association's Pool & Recreational Shotcrete Committee.

As an award-winning pool builder and an ACI Approved Examiner for the Shotcrete Nozzleman Certification program, Drakeley brings a unique and important set of credentials to the position.

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



### Spancrete expands sales force

Spancrete recently hired Augustine "Auggy" Chung and promoted Clinton Krell to its sales team in Wisconsin and Illinois.

Chung joined Spancrete as a sales manager for the Chicago area. He is a LEED AP and, over the course of his career, has worked on more than 1,000 precast building projects, including the construction of two LEED Silver structures. In his new role, Chung will provide expertise and continue to grow precast sales in Illinois with a

strong focus on total precast structure solutions.

Krell, who began his career at Spancrete 11 years ago, was recently promoted to the position of sales representative covering southwest Wisconsin. Most recently he served as director of precast project development and education.

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

### New Concrete Coatings website

Concrete Coatings Inc. has launched its new website, designed with customers' ease of use in mind.

Product information is now easy to access and understand from any page on the site. Material Safety Data and Technical Data Information sheets may also be found on product pages or in one central location under the Technical Information tab. The site now offers downloadable Guide Specification Sheets as well as Frequently Asked Questions Sheets. In addition, the company is working on developing video demonstrations of the company's most

popular products.

As part of the launch of the new website, Concrete Coatings photo galleries were separated into separate albums in which the company can now specify products used and photo credits. The photo gallery utilizes technology that is easy to view on mobile devices such as smart phones and iPads.

[\(800\) 443-2871](tel:8004432871)

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

### W.R. Meadows revamps website

The W.R. Meadows website has been redesigned to give it a more contemporary feel, including more project photos, a product spotlight for new products, and new social media features.

All the content from years past is still available, including product data sheets, material safety data sheets, project profiles and more.

[\(800\) 342-5976](tel:8003425976)

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

Photo courtesy of Proline Concrete Tools



### Proline stamp wins Artisans Choice Award at 2011 Concrete Decor Show

A new sand stamp from Proline Concrete Tools won the Artisans Choice Award at the New Product Gallery of the 2011 Concrete Decor Show & Spring Training. The award was voted on by attendees at the show.

The sand stamp mimics the look and feel of natural sand. It's the first in a new series of Proline tools called the Element Collection.

Proline's stamp beat four other entrants in the New Product Gallery: the 270 EG edge grinder from HTC, Terra Fresco Micro-Topping from Kemiko Decorative & Industrial Coatings, the SS Specialties EZ Top Resurfacing System from The Stamp Store, and the Tru-Pac V decorative mortar conversion kit from Waltools.

[\(800\) 795-4750](tel:8007954750)

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





# Remaking ROCKETTOWN

*A Nashville youth center gets a decorative concrete makeover as part of the 2011 Concrete Decor Show & Spring Training*

by Emily Dixon

In each city it visits, the Concrete Decor Show & Spring Training leaves its mark in the community. Instead of just working on a slab that will be thrown away, the event develops more than a half dozen hands-on workshops with the intent of providing a decorative concrete makeover for an organization in need. This year, popular Nashville youth center Rockettown was the lucky recipient.

In just five days time, the facility was given multiple countertops, newly restored

floors, an impressive carved wall in a musicians' greenroom and much more.

Kicking off the week was a Craftsman Accreditation course led by Brad Burns and the Concrete Polishing Association of America. In order for students to receive accreditation, they had to complete hands-on concrete polishing work on the floors of Rockettown's coffee bar. The floor had endured years of abuse and neglect, but with the assistance of staff from various manufacturers and trainers from the CPAA,

the floors are in tip-top shape. Participating companies included SASE Co., HTC Inc., Substrate Technology Inc., American Decorative Concrete Supply Co., Husqvarna Construction Products, Prosoco Inc. and Racatac Products Inc.

Also in the coffee bar area, Jeff Kudrick and the students for his workshop, "Advanced Technology: Fiber-Reinforced Concrete for Decorative Precasting," created a concrete countertop using Cheng Concrete's NeoMix D-FRC and sealer. The word "Rockettown" was written into the countertop using letters and LED lights from Infinicrete, and the background was colored with pigment from Concrete Countertop Supply by Fishstone.

Next to the coffee bar is Rockettown's Flex Room. It can be expanded into additional space for the coffee bar, but it is also frequently used for meetings, classes and even break dancing. There, Bobby Watson and his students from "Polished Colored Concrete: Getting Color In and Keeping It There" restored the existing floor with American Decorative Concrete Supply Co.'s AmeriPolish SureLock Color System and Edge Tint.

A large component of Rockettown's offerings is musical entertainment. Before the makeover, artists would simply wait to go on stage in a small, ordinary greenroom. Thanks to Nathan Giffin and his "Learn Hand-Carved Vertical Decorative Concrete" course, the room is



Photo by Bent Mikkelsen





now outfitted with a one-of-a-kind carved concrete wall depicting Celtic knots and a guitar. To create the wall, Giffin used Specco Industries Inc.'s Speccrete Vertifaux, colors from Smith Paint Products, a Tru-Pac Mortar Convert Kit and tools from Contractor's Source.

Also in the greenroom is a "guitar sink" created by Nick Relampagos of California-based It's Concrete and Zac Coletti from Florida-based Coletti Concrete Studio. The pair fashioned the sink at the Artistry Demo area on the exhibit floor of the Show. Coletti created a sink mold with the shape of a guitar in the basin and gave it interest by shaping it so that water flows down the guitar's body and into the neck, toward the drain. The duo used Buddy Rhodes Concrete Products Bone White Spray Coat mix to spray the face coat, while Buddy Rhodes Concrete Counter Mix and Buddy Rhodes glass fiber and polymer were used for the backing. In addition, Ambient Glow



Photo by Anthony Elms



## Remaking ROCKETOWN



Technology supplied glow-in-the-dark aggregate that was placed in the neck of the guitar, and ancillary tools were provided from Kraft Tool Co.

A second Craftsman Accreditation course was held later in the week, where attendees helped polish the upper mezzanine in the building. The equipment was hoisted upstairs with a crane. Substrate Technology Inc.'s Prep/Master grinders worked seamlessly with HTC machines to provide a consistent finish and look. Tamryn Doolan of Surface Gel Tek provided the layout, design and application of a logo with her Flattoo system plus AmeriPolish SureLock Dye from American Decorative Concrete Supply Co.

Located on an upper level in another part of the building is Rocketown's music classroom. There, Melanie Royals and Katrina Johnson added visual impact to the floor using stencils and microtoppings. Students worked with products provided by SkimStone from Rudd Co. Inc. and Modello Designs to place a large guitar image and Rocketown's name in their "Masking Patterns and Microtoppings for Ultra Decorative Finishes" course. Padco applicators and SP Systems sprayers helped them finish the job.

Rocketown didn't just receive interior work. Several exterior projects also took place there during the week.

Near Rocketown's coffee bar entrance is a dry grotto courtesy of Bruce Riley at RicoRock Inc. and attendees in his "Building a Waterfall" course. The space

features several built-in seats and rock features. RicoRock donated the fiber-reinforced rock castings for the project. Tom Bench managed the installation, and Roger Brocker of Olympic Pool Plastering provided technical support to complete the project.

By an adjacent parking lot, Jim Mullins and participants in the "Stamping and Stenciling Concrete" course stamped two areas, each approximately 17 feet by 25 feet. Students got their hand at trying Butterfield Color's new Baltic Cobblestone pattern as well as the company's Brick Soldier Course. They also had the opportunity to color and seal the project with other Butterfield products.

As part of a pervious concrete demonstration, Jim Miller of C2 Products Inc. and Alan Sparkman of the Tennessee Concrete Association demonstrated two different mixes, both supplied by Metro Ready Mix. The first mix utilized a small aggregate and was designed to be stampable — colorants and stamps came from C2. The second was a commercial pervious mix that was placed with equipment from the TCA with the help of Multivibe tools and Lura Enterprises' Lightning Strike Roller Screed.



Photo by John Strieder

Underfoot near the entrance to the coffee bar is an engraved guitar neck designed by Carri Hofaker of Nashville Concrete Artists. Hofaker and artist Mike Sims used Engrave-A-Crete Inc.'s Shark, Barracuda and Wasp tools to engrave the design, and stains and sealers came from Clemons Concrete Coatings.

Leading up to that guitar neck are stairs for which Rocketown staff wanted some slip protection. They got it, and then some, from stylized concrete "skateboards" that from a artisan's perspective are the crown jewel of the makeover. Jason Geiser, owner of Deco-Crete Supply, Orrville, Ohio, created and installed the steps. (He describes his process and the tools and materials he used in his own story — turn the page to read it.)

Last but not least, an enormous colored and stenciled job from Todd Rose and students in his "Decorative Effects with Stenciled Concrete" workshop features the Rocketown logo. The 1,435-square-foot job started with 19 yards of concrete from

**SIXth** **avenue**  
SKATE PARK | NASHVILLE

Photo by Steven Ochs



Metro Ready Mix Concrete Inc., which was poured into flexible forms from Plastiform and stenciled with a cobblestone brick stencil supplied by Granicrete International Corp. In order to match the vibrant blue in Rocketown's logo, Bart Sacco at Kingdom Products developed a custom color hardener. Kingdom Products also supplied Antique Release Agent and Regal Gloss sealer. Sacco, Glen Roman and Butterfield Color's Dave Blasdel filled in the white arrow late Friday after the Show ended.

In all, thousands of dollars were donated and hundreds of work hours volunteered to complete this unique renovation. Although the Concrete Decor Show & Spring Training was only in town for less than a week, its efforts will remain in Nashville for years to come.

Bent Mikkelsen, publisher of *Concrete Decor* magazine, pointed out at the Show's opening keynote that contractors can achieve similar sweeping projects in their own communities by



Photo by Steven Ochs

developing relationships with high-profile organizations. These types of projects can help the public better understand the ways decorative concrete is used.


More details about these projects will be available soon at [ConcreteDecor.net](http://ConcreteDecor.net) in a showcase dedicated to the Rocketown



Photo by John Strieder

decorative concrete makeover.


Also, watch for information in *Concrete Decor* and [ConcreteDecorShow.com](http://ConcreteDecorShow.com) that will tell you how you can get involved in similar community projects at the 2012 Concrete Decor Show, Feb. 20-24 in San Antonio, Texas. 📱




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## An artisan tells how he made Rockettown's skateboard steps

by Jason Geiser

In September 2010, the staff at Deco-Crete Supply and I were asked to take part in a design meeting for the 2011 Concrete Decor Show & Spring Training. After an afternoon spent walking around the Rockettown campus, we saw a great opportunity to not only enhance the area but also showcase the unlimited possibilities of concrete.

After leaving Rockettown that night we mulled over ideas gathered throughout the day, taking into consideration a main concern that Rockettown staff members voiced — the coffee bar entrance steps were too slippery. Knowing that I wanted to incorporate skateboarding (Rockettown's most popular activity) into the project design, I got the idea to pour the steps out of concrete and have them replicate skateboards. Upon returning to Ohio, we made a few rough sketches and began working out the details with Rockettown. After receiving approval for the project, we began working on the skateboards.

In order to make a skateboard 12 feet in length, 16 inches in width and 2 inches thick out of solid concrete, we had to pull our resources together. We had a vision of

what we wanted the boards to look like — it was just a matter of making it a reality. We purchased a skateboard and removed the base plate and axle (together they are called a truck) and wheels to get a closer look at how everything fit together. Every part of the boards except their length would be double the size of an actual skateboard. (Our concrete boards would be proportionally more than twice as long as real boards.)

Our journey led us to a company called Online Solutions, which helped us make a CAD drawing that doubled the size of the actual skateboard wheels. After the drawing was put together, a plastic master of the wheels and trucks was made. We then contacted Rick Mast and his staff at Rock Décor, an Ohio-based producer of precast stone, to help make rubber molds that encased the plastic wheels and trucks. These molds would ultimately be what we poured the concrete into.

We had determined that we would need a total of six skateboards, and with two trucks and four wheels per board we knew making this could take a large amount of time. Using enCounter mix with enFlow water reducer, we were able to pour one truck and a set of wheels each day.

While the trucks and wheels were simple to pour once the molds were made, we knew



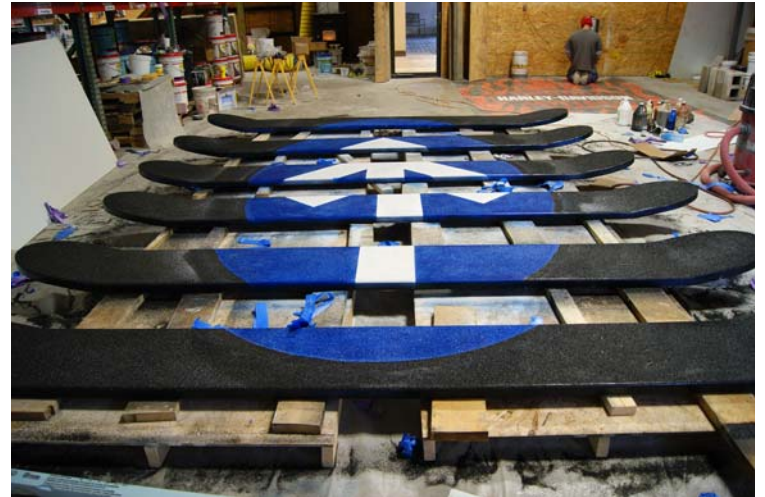
Photos courtesy of Jason Geiser

it was going to be difficult to make a total of six skateboard steps, each weighing over 400 pounds. We began by forming and pouring a master, face up, out of concrete. To make each step identical we had to have a clean master, which required a lot of detailing. Working with Hendricks Vacuum Forming Inc. (again, based in Ohio), a sheet of 1/4-inch polycarbonate was placed over the skateboard master and then heated and compressed to make the mold. In order to expedite the process, two molds were made. Like the wheels and trucks, the boards were poured using enCounter with enFlow water reducer. EnForce fiber and six-gauge wire were used as reinforcement. In order to speed up the cure process, we used hot water and nonchloride accelerator in the mix.

After removal from the mold the next day, the boards were placed on a table that was under a heated tent. By the time all of the kinks were worked out, we made our first pour on Wednesday, March 2, only eight days before we needed to leave







for Nashville.

After the boards had cured over the weekend, we dry-stacked them onto cement blocks in the position they would sit at Rockettown, and we taped out the facility's distinct logo. After the logo was down, the boards were laid on one level again, and we applied Surface Coatings' Exterior Kolour Dyes with a HVLP (high-volume low-pressure) spray gun in colors corresponding to the Rockettown logo.

Once the dyes had dried, we coated the tops of the boards with a polyaspartic and immediately broadcast blue, clear, and black tumbled glass that also matched Rockettown's logo. This achieved two things: One, it made a slip-resistant surface, and two, it gave the tops of the boards the same texture as an actual skateboard. To lock the glass in, three more coats of polyaspartic sealer were applied.

Now that the tops of the boards were finished, we had one last thing to do to add more detail to the boards. On the 2-inch faces of the boards, we used multiple layers of Kolour Dyes along with a pinstripping tape technique to give the look of compressed wood. The sides were then sealed using a polyaspartic that was applied with an HVLP gun. The finished boards, plus one spare, were loaded onto a trailer, and it was off to Nashville, making sure we avoided any potholes.

Even though the Concrete Decor Show did not start until March 15, we had to get to Nashville early to pour the base steps that the

boards would sit on. During our walk-through in the fall, we noted that Rockettown had an industrial theme. To incorporate this feel, Polytek liquid rubber was poured on a section of diamond plate donated by Metal Dynamics to make a liner for the sides and risers of the base steps. Accelerator was used in the mix to speed up cure time. After the forms were stripped, we applied a water-based epoxy primer to the diamond plate and coated it with a metallic paint. This was the only way we found to replicate the look and color of steel for a vertical application.

A five-minute epoxy was used to mount the wheels to the trucks, then the trucks to the boards. The boards were set on top of the base



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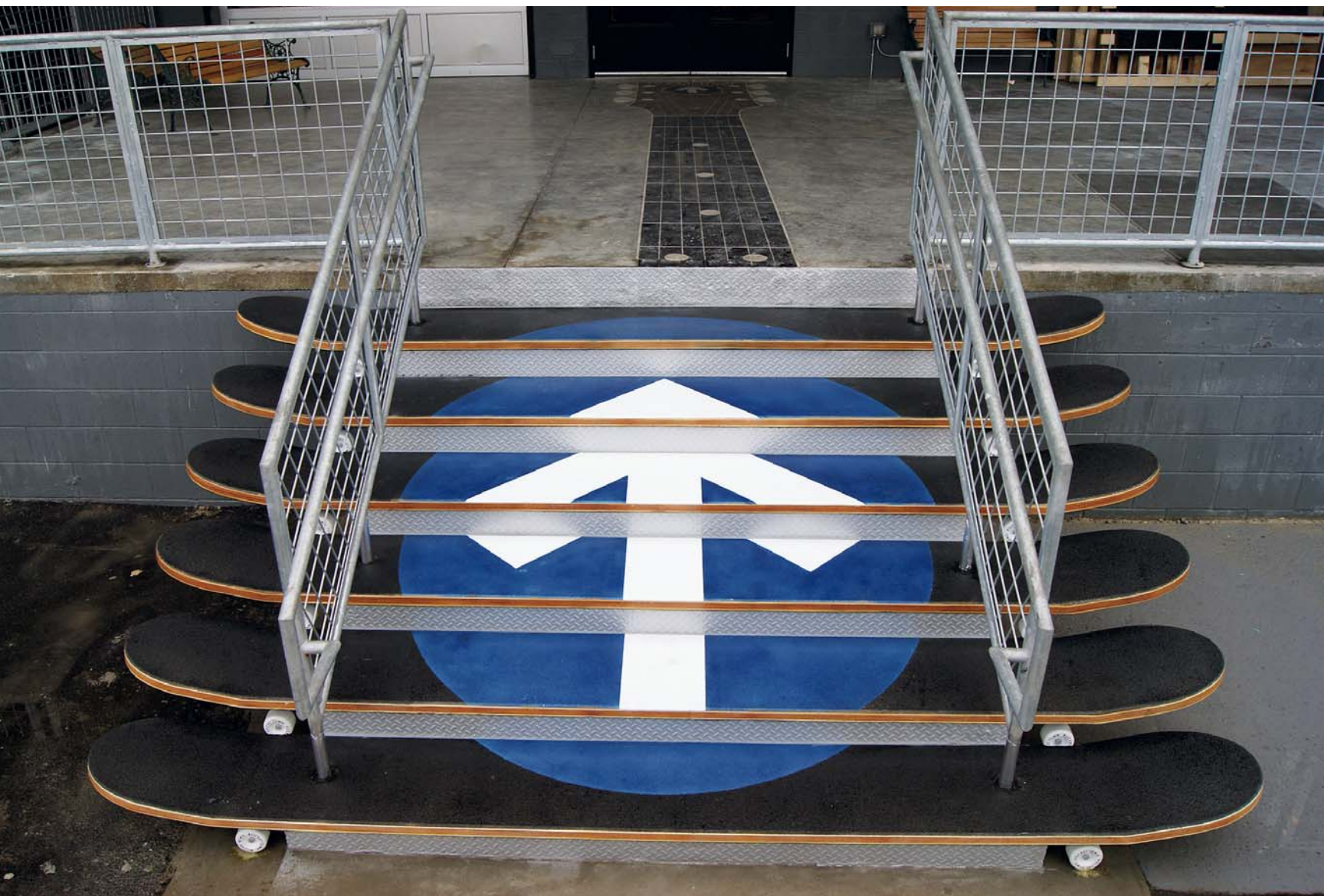
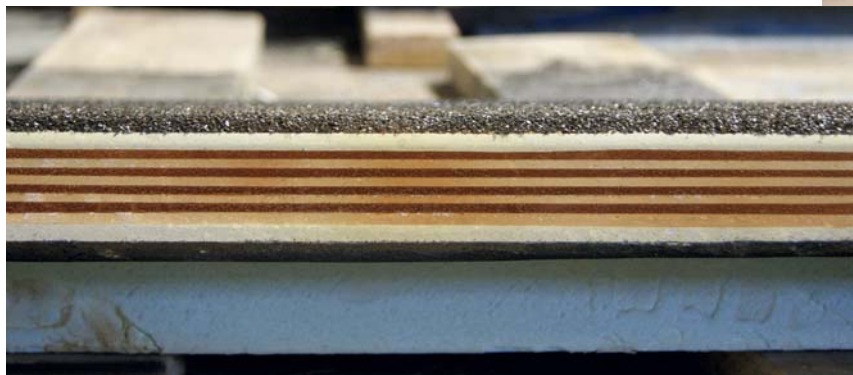
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steps using concrete glue to fasten them. The last step in the process, and the part we dreaded most, was core-drilling the boards to reinstall the steel handrail.

Overall, the entire project from inception to completion spanned six months. While it only took about a month to form and pour the boards, there were countless hours spent beforehand talking with different people to help bring this project to life.

The project would not have been possible without the help of Rod Weaver, of Blue Sky Concrete, Centerburg, Ohio. Weaver, along with Jordon Shrock, donated countless hours to help make this project a reality.

While there were some stressful moments along the way, the reward of seeing all the kids from Rockettown come and stare in awe made everything worthwhile for us. 🛠️

*Jason Geiser is a decorative concrete artisan and the owner of Deco-Crete Supply, which is based in Orrville, Ohio. He can be contacted at [jason@deco-cretesupply.com](mailto:jason@deco-cretesupply.com).*

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# DECORATIVE CONCRETE HALL OF FAME

## THE 2011 INDUCTEES

**T**HE Decorative Concrete Hall of Fame announced its first group of honorees at the 2010 Concrete Decor Show & Spring Training, in Phoenix, Ariz. It was only fitting that the Hall of Fame welcome its 2011 inductees at the 2011 Concrete Decor Show, held last March in Nashville, Tenn.

The new members were chosen by Hall of Fame members and owners and staff of *Concrete Decor* parent company Professional Trade Publications Inc., which manages the Hall of Fame.

The Decorative Concrete Hall of Fame was established to honor individuals and companies who have gone beyond the call of duty to help promote decorative concrete as a thriving business and a constantly evolving art form. These individuals' achievements and their commitment to excellence and innovation have helped the decorative concrete industry grow.

*Articles by Stacey Enesey Klemenc*

### John Anderson

Since he was 15, John Anderson has been involved with decorative concrete. He's worked in some capacity for a number of well-respected companies in the business, including L.M. Scofield Co., Lafarge, Bomanite and Brickform, and has consulted for contractors around the world.

Currently he heads up the international sales division for Ideal Work Srl, an Italian-based manufacturer and distributor of decorative concrete products that has dealings throughout Europe, Africa and the Middle East. Besides sales, Anderson is a source of support for the company's product development. Anderson



is also managing director at Ideal Work Elite Crete Ltd., based in the United Kingdom.

Although young in years, this Englishman is rich in experience. He has been instrumental in bringing decorative concrete to the U.K. and other parts of Europe. A talented decorative concrete artisan himself, Anderson has made a significant impact on the European marketplace by educating contractors on the many different decorative options they can offer their customers. Thanks to his efforts, more and more supply stores and contractors throughout Europe are getting involved with decorative concrete.

At Ideal Work's 3,000-square-foot training facility in Italy and 2,000-square-foot facility

in the United Kingdom, Anderson tirelessly works to demonstrate to the European market how everything from acrylic stains and exposed aggregates to various stamping techniques and chemical interactions can be used to produce beautiful yet practical applications. Whether customers want a modern look or are seeking to mimic an old-world treatment, Anderson is showing them the way with products and techniques that create low-maintenance surfaces.

Anderson joined forces with Bob Harris and Ideal Work's Luca Seminati and Maurizio Pontello to produce Paladiano, the "Wonders of the World" line of stamping tools cast from textures discovered in historical regions around the world. The tools are manufactured and distributed by Brickform.

### Tom Ralston

A third-generation concrete contractor out of Santa Cruz, Calif., Tom Ralston has the uncanny ability to understand concrete by recognizing its underlying beauty. He's taken his family-owned business to a whole new level by venturing outside long-established boundaries and discovering new uses for an age-old medium.

From building homes out of concrete and crafting concrete countertops to acid-staining a public skate park and creating a rock wall and staircase that won him a historical restoration award from the Santa Cruz Historical Society, this artisan time and time again pulls the uniqueness out of a concrete slab and exposes its characteristics



in a very beautiful way.

And the best part is he doesn't keep his findings to himself. When Ralston learns something new about concrete, he reaches out to his constituents to share his knowledge. For more than 15 years, he's conducted seminars and delivered hands-on training at events sponsored by such organizations as the American Society of Concrete Contractors Decorative Concrete

Council, the American Institute of Architects and the National Ready Mix Association.

For the past seven years, Ralston has addressed various topics at World of Concrete seminars. He was awarded a first-place ASCC Decorative Concrete Award in 2011 for Best Cast-in-Place Concrete. In 2009, he also received first-place Decorative Concrete Award honors for Best Structural

Decorative Concrete, Best Concrete Countertop and Best Artistry in Concrete.

In 2008, Schiffer Publishing published his book, "Cast-In-Place Concrete Countertops." A recognized expert in the field of decorative concrete who is certified by the American Concrete Institute, Ralston has had his work featured on the covers of seven magazines and has appeared in numerous architectural, trade and design publications.

Ralston currently serves on the Advisory Committee for Construction Education at Cabrillo College, in Santa Cruz, Calif., and has served on the ASCC Decorative Concrete Council board. A graduate of the University of Santa Cruz, Ralston has been at the helm of Santa Cruz-based Tom Ralston Concrete since 1989. He oversees 27 employees who tackle projects in structural, decorative, masonry and specialty concrete.



## Michael Miller

Michael Miller, "the concretist." The names are synonymous.

The son of a cement salesman, Miller was exposed to the industry before he could speak. He has spent his entire career exploring the possibilities of what can be done with concrete-based materials, which has led him to collaborate with other artists so he could develop his own art through his work. He credits his success in the industry to his ability to look at concrete closer, longer and harder than most in the business.

Before founding his own company — The Concretist Inc. — in Benicia, Calif., in



1990, he worked for several others in the business, including L.M. Scofield Co. and Symons Corp. In subsequent ventures, he founded Sensory Concrete in 2003 in Clayton, Calif., along with his co-principal, Kelley Burnham. In this capacity, he developed the philosophy and genre of decorative concrete work known by that name.

Miller and his team of artisans have influenced the design community about the exciting possibilities afforded by decorative concrete. Through numerous high-profile projects around the world, they have demonstrated their unique design approach and brought their creative impulses to fruition, often creating their own tools to

push the envelope on where people could go with new or existing concrete.

While he could be called a contractor or installer, the terms catalyst, provocateur and visionary would also sum him up. He has a way of aligning a company's philosophy with its uniqueness of products and underscoring those attributes with concrete. He excels as a colorist.

Over the years, Miller has become increasingly interested in sharing his knowledge with others. He knows unexplored territory awaits concrete artisans everywhere and that sharing will help them conquer the unknown.

## Rod, Gerry and Bart Sadleir

Since 1986, Concrete Solutions Inc., based in San Diego, Calif., has been a pioneer in the decorative concrete industry. As contractors, Rod Sadleir, the owner of Concrete Solutions, and his brother Gerry were among the first to resurface concrete with a very thin polymer cement overlay. Today, Concrete Solutions manufactures and distributes the products and systems they developed for the restoration, protection and beautification of concrete surfaces.

At World of Concrete in 1997, they unveiled their first claim to fame, their quarter-inch thick stamped concrete overlay. Its introduction stimulated much interest as others realized what could be done over existing concrete. Today, hundreds of companies around the world offer their own version of this revolutionary stamping system, which allows a decorative concrete



Bart Sadleir.

finish in a variety of patterns and colors.

The Sadleirs' innovations didn't stop there. In 2002, with credit to Gerry's development efforts, Concrete Solutions launched Spray-Top and its accompanying equipment. This product system allows a very thin cement coating over stamped concrete surfaces for restoration without losing the stamped texture, and it provides a surface that is uniform in color for acid staining or a color dye treatment.

Concrete Solutions has been outstanding in providing educational and hands-on monthly training classes for contractors at the company's main training facility in Las Vegas since 1997. They also teach classes in San Diego and across the United States, and even internationally for distributors. The classes are largely taught by Gerry, Ernie Archuleta and Rod's son, Bart, who joined the company in 1997 after graduating from BYU. Gerry and Ben Ashby provide instruction and training for the

Ashby Countertop System, to which Concrete Solutions has exclusive rights.

To add yet another dimension to the business, Bart is currently involved with "Project Overlay," for which he is filming and documenting projects and international visits that promote Ultra Surface Product Systems. He plans to provide contractors with step-by-step instructions for success. Videos will be posted on the company website and distributed on social networks.

Recognizing the outstanding contributions of Gerry and Bart, Rod gave them part ownership in Concrete Solutions, so you can truly say that it is a family-owned business. The three Sadleirs head up a company that is always looking for ways to improve the integrity and the look of concrete surfaces.

Concrete Solutions has been a steady voice in the industry, touting concrete and their ability to repair and resurface it in a natural finish or create a beautiful, durable finish in a variety of textures, patterns and colors that will last for many years. 🛠️



Singer Ruben Studdard and his band perform at a Concrete Decor Show dinner honoring the 2011 Hall of Fame inductees.



# The Cheng Concrete 2011 Circle of Distinction Design Challenge Winners

**F**U-TUNG Cheng announced the 2011 winners of Cheng Concrete's annual Circle of Distinction Design Challenge at the 2011 Concrete Decor Show & Spring Training, in Nashville, Tenn.

Judges of the 2011 contest were Cheng, Dan Gregory, editor in chief of Houseplans.com, and designer Robert Brunner, former director of industrial design for Apple Computer. They evaluated 97 entries from Cheng Concrete Exchange members and awarded a Best in Show, plus Best of's and Honorable Mentions in 11 categories. Two Presidents' Award winners were selected by Cheng Concrete co-presidents Mike Heidebrink and Annalyn Chargualaf-Peluso.

Throughout the presentation, Cheng emphasized that great photography and placement in attractive real-world surroundings can positively influence contest judges. "When you enter our competition, try to do the best photography you can, the best lighting and the best setting," he said. "It really makes a difference. Some of these entries, it looked like the dog took the photo with one of those little throwaway digital cameras, and we had to really look for the design. So make it easier on us — you will rise up in the ranks if you get good photography."

Here are the winners, with more commentary from Cheng.



## Best of Show

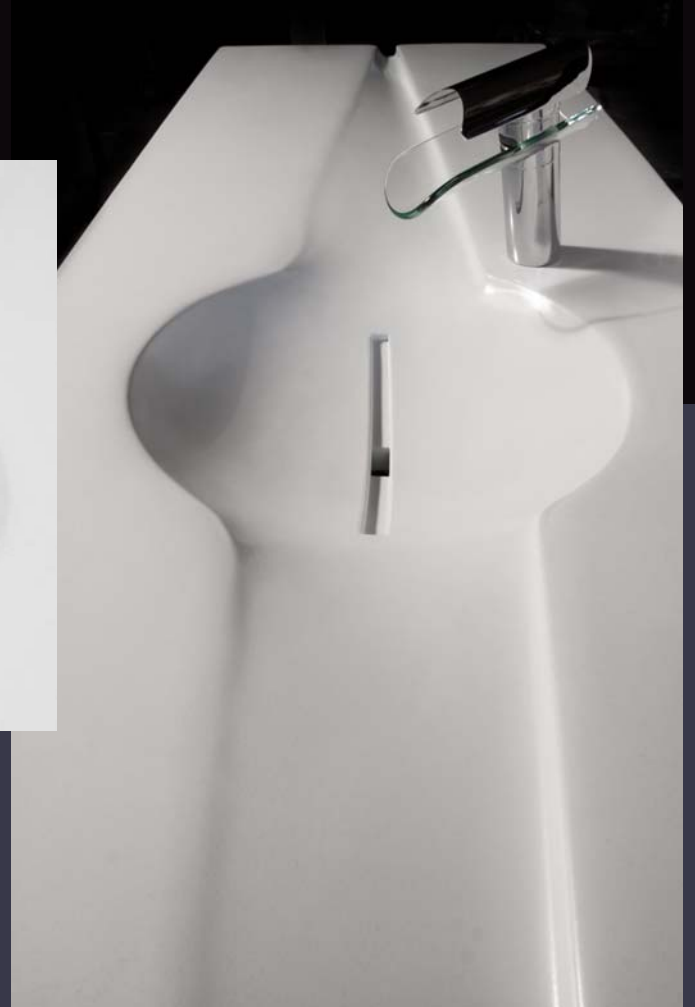
**Dania Andrade Pelayo,**  
**Ancuba, Rosarito, Mexico**  
Paella Esquer kitchen pieces

"You could really have fun eating paella and sitting around the bar. The (imprinted) hands are the hands of the owners' kids."

— Fu-Tung Cheng

Photos courtesy of Cheng Concrete





## Presidents' Award

Caio Paagman,  
Concrete Gallery Design,  
Invermere, B.C.  
Star integral sink



## Presidents' Award

Yves St. Hilaire,  
Sticks + Stones Furniture,  
Squamish, B.C.  
fire bowl





## New Member

**Best in Category:**

**Don Welsh, eleven39 design, Leucadia, Calif.**

Hygeia bench

**Honorable Mentions:**

Aaron Harold, Tennessee Concrete Countertops & Designs LLC, Knoxville, Tenn., kitchen with seven concrete tops; Jason Sawyers, Sawyer's Concrete, Salem, Ore., tub surround; Jake West, Topheavy Concrete, Truckee, Calif., Will's bath project



## Bath

**Best in Category:**

**Phillip Markham,  
Concrete Clarity,  
North Nowra, Australia**

Brewer bathroom

**Honorable Mentions:**

Eric Pottle, Surface Works, Peoria, Ariz., stone ProFormula Geocrete-finish vanity top and legs ("Kofron"); Ian Wyndlow, Liquid Stone Studios, Ladysmith, B.C., powder-room pedestal





## Commercial or Retail Application

### Best in Category:

**David Jefferson, Decking Around Inc., Napa, Calif.**  
Billiard picnic table

"This is complete trompe l'oeil, a sculptural trompe l'oeil, if you will. It's a replica of a billiard table in concrete. The corner pockets are actually cup holders. Most of my work is very modernist and Robert Brunner is an Apple designer. This isn't our cup of tea, so to speak. But we were so taken by how well he did this that we couldn't help but give it a Best in this category. It was a refreshing entry."

—Fu-Tung Cheng

### Honorable Mentions:

Darren Endo, The Ranch Design Group, Concord, Calif., The Little Chihuahua restaurant; Jeff Kudrick, J&M Lifestyles, Randolph, N.J., Hashi Restaurant (New York); Phillip Markham, Concrete Clarity, North Nowra, Australia, The Corner House bar



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## Decorative Finish

**Best in Category:**  
**Scott Grote, Grote**  
**Construction, Monton, Pa.**  
 "Crackle" texture

"It's alligator skin. We couldn't figure out how they made this."  
 — *Fu-Tung Cheng*

### Honorable Mentions:

John Jarvis, Carve Surfaceworks, Carolina Beach, N.C., Shell Island sedimentary wall; Brian Sieffert, Concrete Zen, Pittsburgh, Pa., kitchen countertop that matches painting

## Fireplace

**Best in Category:**  
**Yves St. Hilaire, Sticks + Stones Furniture,**  
**Squamish, B.C.**  
 Wrap-around fireplace

"The proportions are really beautiful on this. And it doesn't hurt that he has good lighting and pretty good photography — nice styling with the bucket and the wood. You know, judges are influenced by that kind of stuff."  
 — *Fu-Tung Cheng*

**Honorable Mentions:** Daryn Barnes and Chris Frazer, DC Custom Concrete, San Diego, Calif., precast board-finish fireplace; Gabriela Sanchez-Vegas, Concreative 4, Miami, Fla., contemporary fireplace art piece with stainless steel







## Furniture

### Best in Category:

**John Newbold, Newbold Stone, Austin, Texas**

Two-tone coffee table

"If he had put this in a better context instead of just his shop floor, he probably would have won another category too, on top of this one. We were considering this for Best of Show."

— *Fu-Tung Cheng*

### Honorable Mentions:

Caio Paagman, Concrete Gallery Design, Invermere, B.C., organic table with wood; Giuseppe Palombo, Duckspit Studios, Sausalito, Calif., concrete tabletop with steel base; Yves St. Hilaire, Sticks + Stones Furniture, Squamish, B.C., curved bench; Yves St. Hilaire, Sticks + Stones Furniture, Squamish, B.C., two-drawer coffee table





## Integral Sink

### Best in Category:

**Brian Sieffert, Concrete Zen, Pittsburgh, Pa.**  
Platinum powder-room sink

### Honorable Mentions:

Daryn Barnes and Chris Frazer, DC Custom Concrete, San Diego, Calif., Organic Erosion spa sink; Caio Paagman, Concrete Gallery Design, Invermere, B.C., Star integral sink; Eric Pottle, Surface Works, Peoria, Ariz., GFRC vanity with inlaid stones ("Butcher")

## Interior Kitchen

### Best in Category:

**Jeff Kudrick, J&M Lifestyles, Randolph, N.J.**  
Worth kitchen

"We looked at the concrete and we saw how challenging it was that he did all these in one pour, like one piece. They weren't made up of blocks and pieces."

— *Fu-Tung Cheng*

### Honorable Mentions:

Yves St. Hilaire, Sticks + Stones Furniture, Squamish, B.C., Eastmont Drive, West Vancouver, project; Yves St. Hilaire, Sticks + Stones Furniture, Squamish, B.C., Vancouver kitchen; Yves St. Hilaire, Sticks + Stones Furniture, Squamish, B.C., Whistler kitchen





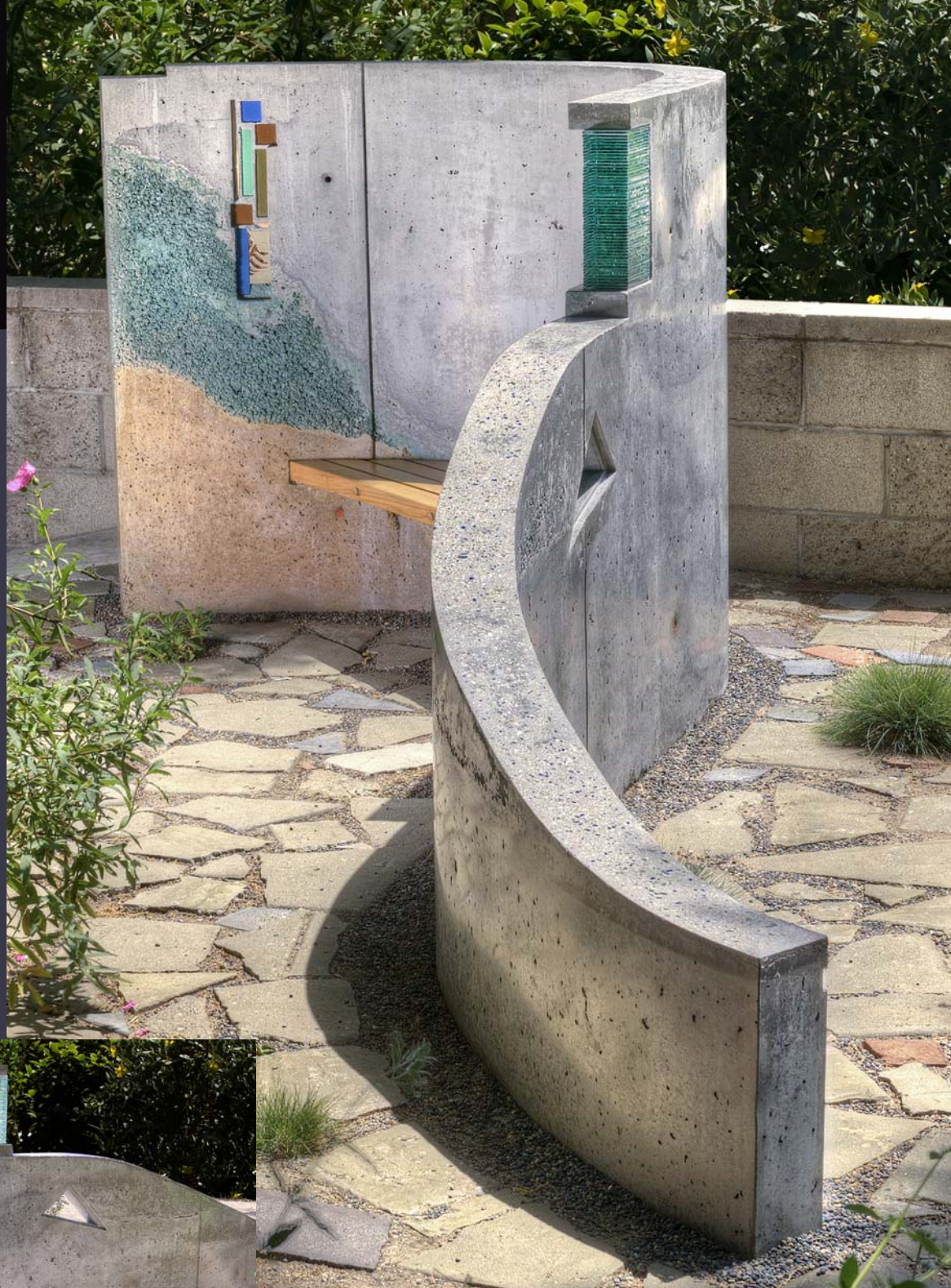
## Outdoor Living

**Best in Category:**  
**Gary Day, Concrete and Clay,**  
**Pasadena, Calif.**

Outdoor sculptural wall

"I thought it worked really well as  
a colorful piece in a garden"  
— *Fu-Tung Cheng*

**Honorable Mention:** Daniel  
Thiboutot, Rock 'n Concrete,  
Saint-Sauveur, Quebec, Roxanne's  
(Sainte-Rose, Quebec)







## Sculpture

**Best in Category:**  
**John Newbold, Newbold Stone,**  
**Austin, Texas**  
 Birdhouse

"Next year he won't win unless there's a bird actually (in the picture). I don't know if birds like modernism."

— *Fu-Tung Cheng*

### Honorable Mentions:

Giuseppe Palombo, Duckspit Studios, Sausalito, Calif., "Little Bird Told Me" concrete bust; Yves St. Hilaire, Sticks + Stones Furniture, Squamish, B.C., fire bowl

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## Water Feature

**Best in Category:**  
**Darren Endo/Leah Sheely,**  
**The Ranch Design Group,**  
**Concord, Calif.**

Outdoor poured-in-place fountain

"It was quite elaborate, with inlays of mosaic tile and different pools at different levels."  
 — *Fu-Tung Cheng*

### **Honorable Mention:**

Daryn Barnes and Chris Frazer, DC Custom Concrete, San Diego, Calif., cascading rock and concrete wall with planter 🏡







Photos courtesy of Surfacing Solutions Inc.





# Shawn Halverson

## Surfacing Solutions Inc.

Temecula, Calif.

by *Natasha Chilingirian*

**W**hen Shawn Halverson first tried his hand at concrete installation, he didn't intend to make it his livelihood. He got into structural concrete in high school after meeting a contractor who was working on a house for Halverson's parents, and at the time, he viewed the job as a temporary gig.

Temporary turned into full time, and Halverson spent the next 21 years or so in concrete. He worked as a foreman and later ran his own company, installing everything from high-rise buildings to stamped concrete.

In 1995, he left the field entirely to pursue new ventures. He launched a new career in the food delivery industry, but several years in, he realized how much he missed concrete (in particular, decorative). So Halverson slowly worked his way back in, gathering new clients and hiring several employees. In 1999, his current full-service

decorative concrete company, Temecula, Calif.-based Surfacing Solutions Inc., was born.

"I felt I was done with structural concrete, so I sold everything," Halverson says of his decision to leave the concrete industry. "Then I had an itch to do decorative concrete, so I started doing an

epoxy here and there, playing with countertops and enjoying the art aspect. Soon, I found myself back buying all the tools I had just sold."

Surfacing Solutions Inc. offers a wealth of decorative concrete services, including polishing, grinding, countertop and sink installation, patio and pool deck coatings, epoxy garage floors, stamping, overlays and coatings. The company serves clients in California,

Arizona and Nevada, and 75 percent of its work is commercial — universities, community centers, hospitals and wineries are just a few examples of its clients.







Working with a crew of about 10 laborers and his right-hand man, operations manager Keith Cantillon, Halverson has billed Surfacing Solutions as a “can-do” decorative concrete contractor.

While Halverson’s company executes a wide range of applications, concrete polishing is one that it’s known for. He first saw polished concrete seven years ago and says he was “blown away that concrete could look that cool.” Now, he serves on

the board of directors for the Concrete Polishing Association of America and hopes Surfacing Solutions Inc. can be “the go-to polishing company” for structural concrete contractors.

“The invention of colors and dyes made polishing look more artistic, and we love being able to do that,” Halverson says.

Halverson considers himself a practical, well-rounded decorative concrete contractor with excellent team leadership skills, and

art plays a large role in his work. “I have done some neat, artistic things that are phenomenal,” he says.

He says his designs are often inspired by a building’s architecture at the job site and that “art is predicted by the job itself.” He adds that the use of Modello concrete stencils has contributed to the artistic aspect of his company’s work, and he collaborates with many talented artists to boost the beauty of his projects.





Halverson's work can be seen at several popular entertainment destinations — one is Universal Studios Hollywood, where Surfacing Solutions Inc. completed a spray texture job on the concrete floor outside The Simpsons Ride in 2009. A previously installed epoxy coating had begun to crack and peel at the site, so Halverson's crew applied a high-traffic resurfacing product supplied by Floric Polytech and added pigment in purple, green, blue and orange,

completing the job in just four weeks. "It was fun to work in that environment," he said.

Another memorable job took place at the Wild Horse Pass Hotel & Casino, in Chandler, Ariz., where workers resurfaced the part-plywood, part-concrete floor of the casino's nightclub using Westcoat's ALX (a waterproof deck-coating system) and a self-leveling underlayment supplied by Mapei. To add sparkle, glass and stone pieces were

embedded into the underlayment material.

Surfacing Solutions Inc.'s 2011 projects include restoring the floors of two historical California courthouses — one in Santa Ana and one in Santa Barbara. Halverson says he'll first determine the types of materials originally put down on the courthouse floors, then choose a decorative concrete application process to closely recreate the look.

He's also building a reputation among





Temecula Valley wineries. This year, he has plans to install sinks and countertops and stain barrel-room floors at several wineries in the region, developing an old-world feel for winery employees and visitors.

Despite the recession, Halverson says his company has grown year after year. He attributes his success to the strong relationships Surfacing Solutions Inc. continues to forge within the industry and his commitment to customer service and

quality results. The company also fills a specific market niche, completing decorative concrete jobs in California, Nevada and Arizona that are 20,000 square feet or smaller. "The big East Coast companies don't want to travel out here for jobs of that size, so we fill out that void," he says.

Halverson prefers to work with smaller crews and evaluates each crew member for strengths and weaknesses, noting that some are artists and some can efficiently complete

a lot of work in a short period of time.

Fixing problems on existing decorative concrete applications is another strength of Halverson's. In fact, when he returned to the concrete field after his short-term career change, he started out by consulting and solving issues related to previous installations.

Ensuring his work is properly maintained is another key to Halverson's success — he educates each one of his clients





about how to keep their concrete looking great as time goes by.

"We're going to lose to the carpet and tile industry if the concrete doesn't look great down the road," he says. "I want to show off my work and say to someone, 'Go look at such-and-such restaurant,' and know that it will look great even if I put it in five years ago."

Yet another quality of Halverson's work is environmental sustainability. During wet

polishing work, he recycles water for use on-site the next day and refrains from flushing slurry down the drain. He uses high-quality vacuums to collect dust, ensures proper ventilation, buys from local vendors whenever possible and never produces more material than he intends to use.

Knowing how much trust and reputation matters in his industry, Halverson states that he leaves every Surfacing Solutions client satisfied.

"We go out of our way to make the customer happy," he says. "We know we solved their problem, made it decorative or artistic or however they wanted it to be, and produced quality, high-end work."

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



# THE concretist

## Let's Be Careful Out There

by Michael Miller

**F**RIDAY night, 9:45 p.m., at the start of a long Fourth of July weekend ... The Incident.

I don't remember a sound. Rather, I remember a sense of being swallowed. The fireball flashed and briefly expanded. Temperature: 1,800 degrees.

The blast had traveled from my left to my right — this was obvious from my skin (or the lack of it) on the left of my uncovered legs and arms. It was fast and it was violent, like a shotgun blast. Messy!

I was fortunate. I was still on my feet, pump-up sprayer with dye concentrate in acetone (an explosive flammable liquid) still in my hands. Even more fortunately, I had apparently held my breath, as my esophagus would've otherwise been seared. I would've died then and there.

I was strangely calm. I knew what had just happened. I surveyed my situation. The red rosin paper masking burned on the walls of the basement. The floor was on fire and my Tevas didn't offer much protection. In fact, they had partially melted, and melded, into my feet.

I'd best get out! Headed for the door. The sliding glass door. Chose poorly. Hit the glass. Missed the open door. Fell. Now I was on the floor and in what remained of the flames. Up. Through the correct side this time. Breathed. Coughed. Breathed again deeply and dove into the swimming pool.

My client, an architect and good friend, Chris Heinritz, was able to put out the fire with a garden hose. I got out of the pool and came upon his wife, Cindy. The look on her face told me that things weren't good. And she was looking at me, not the house. She'd look and then turn away. She steeled herself and led me upstairs to the shower.

Chris called 911. The fire department arrived. First-responders assessed the situation and suggested that they wrap me in wet towels. I didn't require an ambulance



Photo by Jeannine Miller

I now dress appropriately when spraying flammable solvents: long-sleeved shirt and pants, and head-scarf, in natural fibers; respirator and goggles; leather boots and gloves. There's a bucket and rag in case the hose bursts and an appropriate fire extinguisher and water hose with a trigger nozzle.

but they'd best get me to an emergency room. Quickly!

Their youngest son, Trevor, was along for the ride. "Cool, Dad! He looks just like the Mummy." And I did.

I had been dressed in typical Friday-night summertime garb: Tevas, shorts and a T-shirt. Where my skin had been covered, it was intact. My right side wasn't great but it wasn't so bad. My left side was disgusting! The skin was either missing entirely or was in tatters (hence Trevor's mentioning the Mummy). There were a few chunks of flesh missing and what skin remained looked like decomposed strips of raunchy gauze. Luckily these were my favorite sandals, as they were now a permanent part of my feet. I was now even more minimally clothed, in a damp beach towel, and shivering.

Made it to the Kaiser emergency room. They doped me up a bit, then began to remove skin that wasn't structurally intact. Tidied me up. Dressed my wounds. They

eventually transferred me by ambulance (I only kinda remember this, as by this time, I was not only doped up but pretty deep in shock) to the burn unit at U.C. Davis Medical Center, where I was to spend the next three weeks.

After one helluva lotta drugs, daily debridement, surgery involving skin grafts, and torturous physical therapy, Neen was finally able to bring me home. This was heaven! But hell and its minions weren't quite through with me yet. We were presented with a bill for just under a quarter of a million dollars, and various treatments and procedures were to continue for over a year. And yet, truly, I was blessed.

### Debriefing

What had just happened here?

It was Friday, mid-afternoon, July. Kelley and I had just finished sending off the crew and packing up our truck. This was the end of three warm days of patina staining. A



driveway. A really pleasant colorist project in the Napa Valley.

Halfway home, unwinding as we roll, my cell phone rings. It's The Ritz, Chris Heinritz. "Hey, Ritz!" "Miller, I need a really big favor." And so it began. He and Cindy had designed and built a really bitchin' home in Auburn, in the Sierra Nevada foothills. He had a nearly completed basement rec room, at pool-deck level, with an unfinished gray concrete floor. They were throwing a big Fourth of July party.

"Any chance you could get this floor stained, maybe tonight, before the party? Oh, and by the way, you and Jeannine are invited." "Ugh!" I agreed, with the stipulation that I needed to get home first, shower, eat, kiss Neen and catch my breath. He'd have to make sure that the space was cleaned and masked. I wouldn't stain it, but I would be able to dye and solvent-seal it. I'd be there around 9 p.m., and he and Cindy would have to accept whatever my first few shots at color produced. He agreed. It was on.

When you're the pilot of a plane, you always complete a preflight checklist. This safety precaution is a given. A matter of course. When you're the concretist, working with solvents, you do the same.

But not this evening. Bad circumstances. I was tired. I was rushed. It was warm and I was dressed inappropriately. (Long pants, long sleeves and shoes and socks would probably have kept me out of the hospital.) Chris had done a great job of cleaning and masking. He had masked with opaque paper — including over a closet containing a water heater. I neglected to ask about potential points of ignition. He didn't know enough to offer.

We assess the space, talk color, and off I go! First pass down. Chris and Cindy and their young daughter Annalise come down for a look and to offer an opinion. "Maybe a little more color, Mike. More saturated and more yellow." I'm a softy — they're best friends after all. I agree to take another shot at it. They leave. I make a quick color adjustment. Begin to spray. And, halfway

through the room — BOOM!

I thank God that I was in the room and not the Heinritzes. I thank God that this type of accident has never happened to any of my employees — although it has happened to an employee of a really close friend of mine, and it was bad.

Chris and Cindy's place didn't burn down. In fact, the damages were minimal — but in yet another incident, a second close friend of mine burned a beach house down to the ground!

There are clients who will say, "I'd just die for a floor like that!" But, of course, there's no decorative concrete worth dying for. So, do as I say, and not as I did. Please, be careful out there. 🚚

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

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## Mike's "When-You're-About-To-Work-With-Solvents" Safety Checklist

This is my list, just a few things to think about. NOTE: It's NOT intended to be comprehensive or complete.

**A Know your material/s.** Use the proper solvent for your situation. Read and understand your tech-data and MSDS sheets. Some solvents have higher solvency, are "hotter," than others. Some dry slowly. Others dry quickly. Some are VOC-exempt while others are not. Some burn. Some explode and burn. Some pose greater immediate physical risks. Others pose greater long-term health risks.

**B Eliminate all potential points of ignition.** This includes open flames, such as pilot lights (in water heaters, stoves and the like), propane heaters, welder's torches, lit cigarettes, etc. It also includes things that might spark, like electric tools (drills, saws and, yes, floor machines), exposed filaments in broken bulbs in strung lights, or halogen lights on tripods that might be accidentally knocked over and broken.

**C Properly ventilate the space.** Many solvents and solvent-based products are heavier than air. When working with them, basements are especially dangerous spaces. Confined areas are also especially

dangerous. Wide-open areas with high ceilings are not quite so bad. In fact, I've witnessed an acetone explosion over a 10,000-square-foot area, in a mall — dramatic, but with no serious results, because of a wide-open area with high ceilings. Whereas, my experience in the confined basement was devastating. If possible, open doors and windows and/or utilize exhaust systems (portable fans, HVAC and so on).

**D Wear a respirator, additional safety gear as required, and appropriate job-site clothing.** I wore a respirator on the fireball job, but my choice of work clothing was really poor. A long-sleeve shirt and long pants, in a natural fiber like cotton or wool, with socks and boots (or at least tennis shoes) would've made all the difference in the world! Gloves and eye protection also don't hurt.

**E Keep an eye on your hoses.** Solvents and solvent-based products soften hoses, which may unexpectedly burst under pressure. This is exacerbated in warm weather. Goggles or safety glasses come in really handy when this occurs. And, sooner or later, it will occur.

Plan what you'll do when this happens.



"Let's be careful out there!"

Consider having a bucket or trash can handy to temporarily pitch the sprayer into while you attempt to relieve pressure. Always have rags on hand. When you're not spraying, be sure to release pressure, drain materials from the wand and hose and store in a cool area, in the shade.

**F Have appropriate fire extinguishers handy.** This may include a hose of sufficient length with a trigger nozzle and sufficient water pressure.

**G Finally, always have a backup plan — and an escape route.**

Although things rarely go wrong, sometimes they do! And it only takes once! Be thoughtful in advance, hope for the best, but prepare for the worst.



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## CARLTON'S CORNER

### Joining Forces with Other Construction Companies

**A**s promised, this edition of my column will explore a strategy that can increase profits for your business.

You basically have two ways to make more money in decorative concrete

— you can increase sales or reduce the cost of doing business. Businesses in times like these have a tendency to become paralyzed when becoming proactive would be the best option. One good way to become proactive is to consider a team approach.

One of the many trends in the construction business today is that of combining forces with another company to tackle projects. Let's break down a few ways that teaming up can benefit your business, especially in today's limited market.

Unlike a partnership, the teaming I'm advocating is limited to one job at a time, with each participant maintaining its own business identity. There are ways to team up without the partnership thing, so I want to look at a few examples of what has worked for us. Remember, contractors that are creative and proactive will fare the best in today's economy. The level of teaming can vary — in fact, many companies that teamed up in the last recession went on to form legal business partnerships.

As you will see in the examples below, teaming will allow you to downsize yet still give you the option to profit from large projects.

#### Saving on labor

My office receives a call a day from laid-off employees looking for a job, so this means companies like yours have downsized. What happens when you land a decent-sized job that needs to be completed in a timely fashion? Combining forces or



by Doug Carlton

teaming with another company allows you to swell your labor force until the project is complete and then scale back until the next big project comes up.

My contracting company in California does this at least once per month and it works out great. It has allowed us to scale down in size, saving overhead costs, but still have the power to bid large projects.

For this to work, both companies need to maintain general liability insurance and workers' compensation insurance. Also, I strongly recommend establishing exactly who does what and for how much before the project starts. Keeping job tasks and billing specific will lead to a much happier ending.

#### Example one

Here's one example of a team venture: Last year I received a call from a young man who specializes in concrete counters. He had landed a good counter job but was concerned about how he could complete the installation since his labor force consisted of him. He was looking for a company familiar with decorative concrete that had a knowledgeable labor force willing to help with the installation.

I jumped at the chance for two reasons. One, it provided income to my business, and two, it gave my company exposure in the event that either the general contractor

or owner would want my decorative concrete services. (We specialize in exterior decorative concrete.) The young contractor profited, we profited, and the owner got his concrete counters. And yes, the exposure paid off when the general contractor had us bid other jobs he has in the design phase.

#### Example two

Here's another example: My office was contacted over the winter to bid a stamped interior for a new church. The project was just less than 20,000 square feet, so we jumped at the opportunity, but there was one problem. The underslab was complex — layers of crushed rock under a welded moisture barrier under a sand base. This type of slab preparation requires a lot of manpower just to get to the concrete placement phase. A large crew was required to set, place and then stamp the new floor.

We just didn't have the manpower for a fast-track job of this nature. What we did have was enough sense to approach the general contractor and combine forces, with his crew helping with the setup and lay-down of the concrete and our decorative crew taking it from there. Our decorative knowledge, combined with the general contractor's labor force, helped us achieve one of our most profitable months of 2010.

The floor came out great while staying



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on budget and schedule. The fact is that we would have lost this job if not for the teaming option.

### Example three

One more example: A relatively large streetscape project came into our office recently. Beside the usual decorative flatwork, this job was unique in that thousands of feet of parking-type curbing needed to be poured, but the owner wanted it decorative. We ran the bidding process through our estimator, but I knew the numbers were coming into too high, at least if we used traditional methods for installation and coloring.

That's when the idea came up to bring in a crew that specialized in the use of a curb machine and combine our forces with theirs. The end result was a very competitive bid that I'm sure will lead to a great job. To simply view this project as we did projects in the past wouldn't have worked and probably would have scared the developer

into another option that didn't include me.

I have no way of knowing what type of decorative concrete you specialize in, but it is worth your time to look into ways to team up in order to turn more profit. The days of passing on projects because we don't have manpower or knowledge are over. Every job must be looked at to see every possible way to create quality and profit. Teaming just may be what keeps your company in the profit zone.

Be sure to take the time to work out all the specifics and responsibilities of each teaming contractor prior to starting the project. 🛠️

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



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## PRODUCT NEWS

### Dust extraction tools from Makita

Makita has released two new dust extraction solutions for concrete contractors. The Grinder Dust Shroud and Dustless Hammer Attachment are engineered for cleaner, more efficient concrete surfacing and drilling.

The new dustless hammer attachment works with Makita SDS-PLUS corded and cordless rotary hammers. It features a 17-inch hose, telescoping spring-loaded barrel, depth stop, bit size adjustment knobs and a built-in ruler.

Use of this attachment with most job-site vacuums results in better suction and more efficient dust extraction. Because there is no vacuum motor or component attached to the tool, the Makita solution is more compact and weighs less than built-on systems.

Makita's new grinder dust shroud is designed to fit Makita 4 1/2-inch to 5-inch grinders. It features a spring-loaded suspension system that keeps the shroud flush to the surface during movement and compensates for blade wear. The shroud has a removable edge piece for surface work flush to edges or other objects. It also has soft brushes that help contain the dust and allow for smooth movement over the work surface. The outside diameter of the extraction port will work with most standard vacuum hose systems.

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### Dewalt introduces new miter saw stands and accessories

Dewalt has announced the launch of four new job-site work stands: the Heavy Duty Miter Saw Stand (DWX723), the Compact Miter Saw Stand (DWX724), the Heavy Duty Work Stand (DWX725) and the Heavy Duty Work Stand with Miter Saw Mounting Brackets (DWX725B). Additionally, Dewalt is unveiling accessories that are compatible with the new stands and have been designed to offer professional contractors a complete and customizable job-site solution.

All four of the new miter saw stands feature screw-attached, nonmarring

polymer feet that are secure and won't mark flooring surfaces, in addition to leg lock levers for easy setup and breakdown. The stands differ in length, weight and material capacity.

In addition to the four new stands, Dewalt is also launching a new line of work-stand accessories.

The Miter Saw Mounting Brackets (DW7231) allow contractors to secure multiple saws to the rail. The Material Supports (DW7232) that come with the Heavy Duty and Compact Miter Saw Stands are fully adjustable and feature flip-up cut stops. The Extension Arm Support (DW7028) offers solid support even at the extreme end of the extension and under heavy loads, and the Carry Strap (DW7026) aids portability. While the Roller Work Support (DW7027) has a wide support that allows materials to move back and forth, the Wide Work Support with flip-up cut stop (DW7029) is nearly twice as wide as standard work stands for greater support capacity.

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### Lightweight drill from Hilti

Rugged, compact and convenient, the new Hilti TE 7 Rotary Hammer Drill is engineered with a powerful and efficient motor and an innovative hammering mechanism for superior drilling performance and longer tool life.

Weighing in at less than 7 pounds, the TE 7 has impressive power-to-weight ratio that is ideal for drilling in all directions. With the lowest vibration in its class, it allows professionals to drill nonstop with minimal effort. An optional, self contained dust removal system (Hilti TE DRS-M) is available for virtually dust-free drilling.

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### Compact laser from Bosch

The Bosch GLL2-40 cross-line laser is easy-to-use, accurate and durable, making it ideal on professional interior job sites for up to 30 feet.

It projects lines independently or

together for a wide array of building construction leveling and alignment applications. Single-button operation means easily selecting horizontal, vertical, cross-line or manual mode operation.

Projecting crisp, clear lines up to 30 feet and with 1/8-inch accuracy, the GLL2-40 offers full-size advantages in a compact package. At a convenient weight of 8 ounces, the GLL2-40 is less than 2 inches wide and less than 4 inches in length and in height. 🛠️

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## PROJECT PROFILE

### Wheldon Garage Floor St. Petersburg, Fla.

by *Natasha Chilingirian*

**I**N 2005, race-car driver Dan Wheldon received the first-place title at the Indianapolis 500-Mile Race (also known as the Indy 500) and, along with it, the 2005 Indy 500 Pace Car, a new Corvette convertible.

Wheldon stored the Pace Car at a location outside his St. Petersburg, Fla., home, but several years later, he decided to place the Corvette on display as if it were a work of art in his three-car garage. To set the stage, he made plans to turn the garage floor into a masterpiece too.

In January 2009, decorative concrete artisan Rod Burton of A Gorgeous Floor installed a high-sheen, acid-stained concrete floor in shades of brown and black in the garage, creating a stunning yet not overpowering backdrop for the prized automobile. Using mostly products manufactured in-house by A Gorgeous Floor, Burton followed his company's patented installation process of overlay material application, acid staining and sealing to transform the floor in five days.

Burton said the project began when Wheldon's wife, Susie, made a cold call to his company. After visiting the Wheldons'

home and solidifying a look for the floor, Burton got to work.

"Dan wanted a showroom floor to show off a one-of-a-kind car," Burton says. "He wanted something really flashy."

First, Burton lightly ground the existing concrete and applied A Gorgeous Floor Moisture Barrier, his company's two-part epoxy moisture barrier. Due to Wheldon's close proximity to the Florida shoreline, a high level of moisture was present in the ground beneath his home, which made a moisture barrier necessary to prevent bubbles from forming underneath the overlay material.

"When you apply overlays in areas with high water tables, the moisture can cause the overlay to re-emulsify, creating bubbles that cause the floor to fail," he says. "Using the moisture barrier is a good policy for us in any area that might have high moisture."

Once the moisture barrier was completely dry the following day, Burton troweled down his company's acrylic overlay material, A Gorgeous Floor Overlay. On day three, he applied a Kemiko acid stain in Black Stain, a black tortoiseshell color that produces brown marbling effects.

Burton then completed his three-step sealing process. First, he applied A Gorgeous Floor Primer, a two-part, low-viscosity epoxy that penetrates and bonds to the overlay surface. After seven hours of drying time, he applied the second coat, A Gorgeous Floor Hi Build, a two-part, high-viscosity epoxy that helps level the surface and requires 14 hours of drying time. He finished with a coat of A Gorgeous Floor Top Seal, a two-part, abrasion-resistant aliphatic urethane designed for high-traffic surfaces.

Extra care regarding the driveway that extends out from the garage was taken throughout the project, Burton says. To

avoid drops and spills, he masked the driveway near the door openings with two layers of plastic.

"Dan pays a lot of attention to detail," Burton says. "He didn't want a single drop of stain or sealer on his driveway."

Burton says he began developing his sealers about six years ago when he found that other sealers on the market would often yellow, bubble or fail to adhere. He then spent a solid three years perfecting the formula. After exclusive use in-house, A Gorgeous Floor's sealers are now available for sale directly from the company to members of the trade. The sealers do not require maintenance, and Burton says out of every floor he's sealed with his products, he's only had to reseal one in a high-traffic salon due to normal wear and tear.

"Our number-one priority is hardness," Burton says. "Epoxies are pretty good, but they're not really scratch-resistant. That's why we go over it with the aliphatic urethane. It's the toughest nonbaked surface

#### Project at a Glance

**Client:** IZOD IndyCar Series race-car driver Dan Wheldon

**Decorative Concrete Artisan/Designer:** Rod Burton, A Gorgeous Floor, Palm Harbor, Fla., and Union, Maine (Burton works out of the Maine location)

**Timeline:** Five days

**Project Specs:** An acid-stained floor in Wheldon's oversized, three-car garage

**Material Suppliers:** A Gorgeous Floor, Kemiko

**Materials Used:** A Gorgeous Floor Moisture Barrier, A Gorgeous Floor Overlay, Kemiko Acid Stain: Black Stain, A Gorgeous Floor Primer, A Gorgeous Floor Hi Build, A Gorgeous Floor Top Seal


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The Wheldons were very happy with the results of their new garage floor. “Susie said, ‘I wish we didn’t have hardwood floors in the house so you could do another floor!’” Burton says.

As a thank-you gift, Dan Wheldon presented Burton with an autographed copy of his book, “Lionheart,” and inscribed a note on the inside cover stating that Burton was great to work with and that the floor “looks amazing.”

Part of Burton’s success on the Wheldon garage floor project may



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Race-car driver Dan Wheldon autographed a copy of his book, “Lionheart,” with this inscription for artisan Rod Burton as a “thank you” for the new garage floor.

be due to the fact that he lets his customers lead the way in color, texture and sheen level choice. In this case, he spent time reviewing color samples with Dan and Susie and discussed what they liked and didn’t like before getting to work.

“I let the customer decide how intense they want the color to be,” he says. “I let them pull the plug.”

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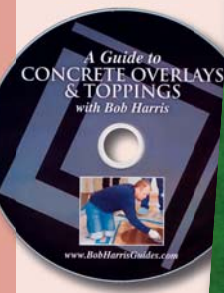
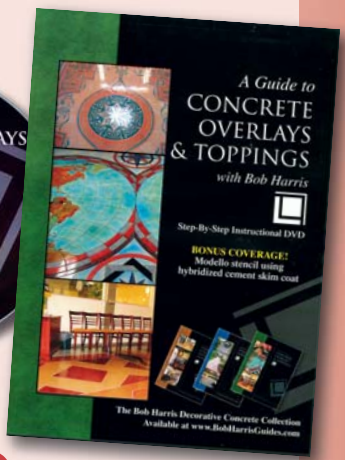
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# coating & topping CONCRETE

## TROWEL & ERROR

### Prepping Your Finished Surface for a Sealer

**S**URFACE preparation is a commonly used term in the decorative concrete industry. An argument can be made that it might even just be the *most* used term in the industry. We hear or read about it most often when dealing with overlays and stains. Grind, scarify, acid etch, etc. These processes “open” and clean the substrate to allow the new topping or coloring to properly penetrate and adhere. The process of surface preparation is hands down the most important part of any topping or stain application.



by Chris Sullivan

Nothing really new there, so why am I rehashing old info that most everyone has heard hundreds of times? The answer is simple. While surface preparation is arguably the most common process, it is also the most misunderstood and improperly performed.

To be more specific, let's look at one area of decorative concrete in which surface preparation is ultracritical but often overlooked or just brushed over — sealing.

Very few decorative projects do not use sealers or clear coatings of some type. In many cases the sealer is what really finishes the project, bringing out the true color, enhancing variations and providing that often-desired “wet look.” Not to mention the sealer's true function — providing a layer of protection that greatly extends the life span of the project.

If sealers are so important and the industry promotes proper application, why do we see so many failures? I believe the answer lies in surface preparation or the lack thereof. Remember, sealers require a porous surface so they can penetrate, which in the end leads to proper adhesion. Without penetration, you don't get

adhesion, and that leads to sealer failure.

Let's take a detailed look at some common sealer uses within the decorative industry to see where lack of sealer surface preparation breaks down and leads to problems.

#### Stamped surface prep problems

When it comes to stamped or imprinted concrete or overlays, typical surface preparation is to power-wash the surface, nothing more. While power washing does clean the concrete, it is often not enough. The analogy I often use is washing your hands. If your hands are dirty, washing with water gets some of the dirt off, but washing with soap and water gets all the dirt off.

The same goes for preparing concrete and overlay surfaces that have been stamped. Whether powder release or liquid release is used, a good, quality soap-and-water scrub makes a huge difference. This is especially true when powder release is used, as powder release does not break down in water alone and needs the surfactants in soap to loosen up the residue and get it off the substrate. Don't forget the scrubbing part, as soap alone is good, but the scrubbing action loosens excess chemical residue and is better.

All those concrete pores need to be clean to give the sealer a place to adhere to. If they are filled with powder, dirt, chemicals, water or whatever, the sealer sits up on the

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surface and is weak.

The second place we see surface preparation issues when sealing stamped work is when a secondary colorant or highlighting tint is used. It's human nature to think that if a little is good, a lot is better. That mentality leads to problems when applying these secondary colors, as the color ends up in the pores of the concrete, and as stated above, if the sealer can't get into those pores, you end up with sealer failure. Too often I see a stamped concrete slab that has been properly prepared for sealing, but because the highlighting color was applied too heavy, the project suffers from sealer failure six to 12 months after installation. Sealers can't tell the difference between highlighting colors and contamination.

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## Stained surface prep issues

The other major decorative concrete sealer job that suffers from inadequate or improper surface preparation is sealing stained surfaces. The basic act of staining goes against everything sealer preparation is all about — a clean and contamination-free surface. When stains or dyes are applied, we are reducing the ability of a sealer to penetrate and adhere to the concrete.

The good news is that when applied properly and in the right (small) amounts, there is enough room for both stain and sealer to coexist and perform.

There are three key surface preparation factors to consider before sealing any stained or dyed surface:

**1 Surface tension or tightness.** With the growth in popularity of polished concrete, I am seeing more diamond grinding and polishing machines used to prepare surfaces for staining and sealing. The problem is less with the equipment and more with the diamonds pads being used. Even the low-grit (20-grit to 100-grit) metal-based diamond pads are designed to start honing concrete, not open or rough the surface. Applicators think they are preparing the surface, while in actuality they are tightening or honing the surface, leading to sealers' inability to penetrate and adhere.

**2 Overapplication of the stain.** This is more of an issue with new-generation water-based stains, as they don't have the penetrating depth of solvent-based or reactive stains. Space within the concrete substrate is at a premium. The stain and

sealer need to share that space. If the stain is overapplied, it leaves no room for the sealer, which in turn leads to sealer failure. Applying these types of stains lightly is very important. Cleaning any and all excess stain residue from the surface is critical. Don't be afraid to use soap and to get a little aggressive with scrubbers when preparing stained surfaces for sealers.

**3 The pH level.** The pH scale measures acidity and alkalinity on a scale of 1 to 14. Water is neutral (7.2), and concrete is alkaline (12). When any pH-altering chemical (such as acid stain, sealer stripper or acid-etch material) is used on concrete, the surface must be neutralized. This involves cleaning the surface with alkaline soap and a good clean water rinse. If the surface is not neutralized, the chemistry of the sealer is compromised, resulting in sealer failure.

No matter the sealer type or decorative concrete finish, properly preparing the concrete prior to sealing is critical to long-term success. Don't fall victim to rushing the last step — sealing — of your decorative concrete project. Take the time to understand what a properly prepared surface looks like and how to get there, and success will follow. 🛠️

*Chris Sullivan is vice president of sales and marketing with ChemSystems Inc. He has presented seminars and product demonstrations throughout North America, including at the World of Concrete convention. Contact him with technical questions at [trowelanderror@protradehub.com](mailto:trowelanderror@protradehub.com).*

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# coating & topping CONCRETE

## PRODUCT NEWS

### Gorgeous sealers for public sale

A Gorgeous Floor has announced that they are now offering their sealers to members of the trade.

AGF's no-maintenance sealers were the earliest developed in the acid-stained overlay industry, and according to the company they have long set the standard in durability and appearance.

Recoat times have been engineered to be convenient and to simplify the sealing process, and the system has been proven in countless residential, commercial and industrial applications.

Additionally, AGF's liquid moisture barrier is also available for use under overlays.

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### Installation kit one of many new releases from Bon Tool

Bon Tool Co.'s expanded product line includes more than 30 new products for the building trades. The products introduced for spring 2011 are featured in Bon's supplemental catalog Vol. 311.

One featured new item is Bon's Self Leveling Floor Kit, which contains the seven basic tools recommended for self-leveling epoxy installation, a popular choice for garage floors, basements and industrial and commercial applications. A few of the items in the kit are themselves new to Bon, such as the Mixing Barrel, 5 Liter Measuring Pitcher and 3-Piece Aluminum Handle. The epoxy tools can also be purchased separately, and they complement Bon's complete line of epoxy equipment.

Other new products of interest are the Gloss Restorer Sealer, a Multi-Blade Paver Bar, and three new Wheelchair Ramp Walking Tools.

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### New floor system from Stonhard

Stonhard recently added a new, environmentally friendly product, Stonclad G2, to its line of Stonclad floor systems.

Stonclad G2 is a four-component, polyurethane mortar system that incorporates post-industrial recycled glass and rapidly renewable materials into its composition, making it a good fit for sustainability-minded projects that won't use traditional epoxy floors.

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## Flexmar Coatings introduces polyaspartic stain-and-sealer

Flexmar Coatings has announced the introduction of Variegate polyaspartic stain sealer.

Variegate combines a polyaspartic semitransparent stain and wear-surface

sealer in one product and eliminates the need for acid staining. Instead, the applicator can achieve a variegated look that simulates a natural, marble-like or stone-like appearance with one or more color combinations naturally as the semitransparent stain penetrates into concrete pores during the application process.

Flexmar Variegate stain sealer cures rapidly, reducing project time from days to just hours. Variegate semitransparent stain sealer can be applied year-round, even in cold weather. It provides excellent outdoor resistance to UV rays, offers superior wear resistance and offers unmatched color and gloss retention with acid stains when compared to clear epoxies or acrylic sealers. It also provides superior resistance to abrasion, impact, household chemicals and hot-tire pickup, allowing for a life cycle 10 times longer than some stains with acrylic sealers.

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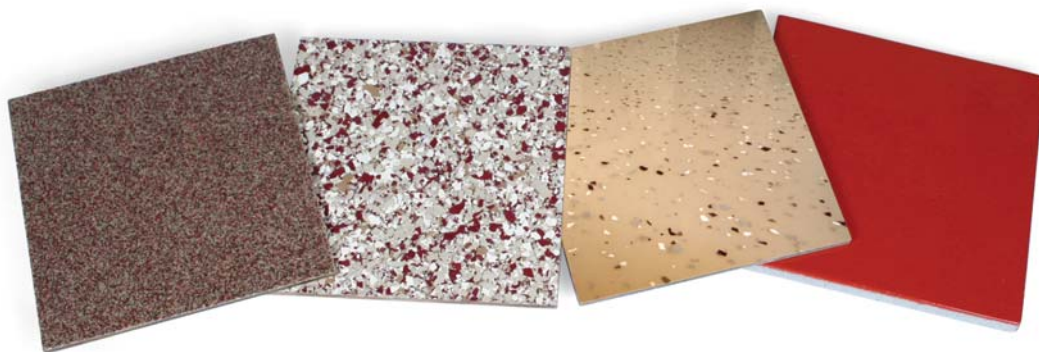


## New systems from Seal-Krete


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For interior applications only, Epoxy-Shell is an epoxy-based floor coating system that blends durability with outstanding adhesion to a variety of substrates, including concrete, quarry tile and plywood floors. Chemical-resistant Epoxy-Shell systems are easy to apply at temperatures from 50 F to 95 F with slower dry times. Common applications include school hallways, cafeterias, shower and locker rooms, detention, research, animal care and pharmaceutical facilities, labs and retail stores.



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## Fixing Bug Holes in One Step

by Mark Celebuski

**T**HERE are few things more frustrating about making concrete countertops than dealing with bug holes. They seem to always show up and are seemingly just about impossible to fill completely. You think you've got them all filled, only to have bug holes show up after final polishing.

They eat into your profits, cause fits by day and sleeplessness at night. It doesn't matter if you're wet-casting or casting GFRC. Chances are you're going to have to deal with bug holes. The good news is that you can fill them completely in one step if you follow the procedures I've developed.

When you see a very small pinhole at the surface, you're seeing the tip of the iceberg. When you set out to fill it, you're trying to fill a large void through a very small opening.



Even bug holes the size of this one can be filled using a grout-and-topcoat method.



Your eyes will tell you when all of the bug holes are powered shut.

It's also going to be very tough to fill them completely in one pass by hand. You rub and rub, thinking they're full, when in reality you're only bridging the opening, which opens back up during final polishing.

Here's how to power them shut.

The idea of powering bug holes shut came from one of my students. Ben Smith, of Hanover, Pa., was explaining how he fills holes while polishing floors. You mix the cutting dust with a liquid hardener and voila — the holes are filled while polishing. We figured that using a cementitious paste in lieu of the cuttings would work and it did.

You cannot fill a bug hole when it's full of water. You're trying to get material in the bug holes, the water's trying to get out, and it just doesn't work. Imagine trying to fill a wine bottle completely with grout when it's





A variable-speed polisher with a 200-grit polishing pad spreads the grout.

Once you master bug holes, it's possible to achieve a close-to-perfect surface.

already full of water. Allow your slab to dry before filling the bug holes, or use air to drive the water out of the holes.

CSA cement seems to have been invented to fill bug holes. It shrinks a lot less than portland cement and it sets a lot faster. I use a mixture of CSA cement, pigment as needed, and a 1 to 1 ratio of Acryl 60 and water.

You want to start with a very thin coat of grout, or else the grout will bridge the bug holes rather than filling them. I like to describe



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this idea as not losing touch with the slab. You should be able to see and feel the slab through the grout.

I use a variable-speed polisher with a 7-inch, 200-grit polishing pad. It's important to use a polisher with enough power to turn the pad at a low speed without burning out the polisher. If you're spraying grout onto your apron you're going too fast. If the grout begins to dry out, spray a bit of water to keep it wet.

Your vision is the best judgment of when the holes are full. You can actually see the bug holes getting filled as you work the



When filling bug holes, you should be able to see the slab through your first layer of powered-on grout.

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polisher over the tops. Fill the larger holes with your hand to speed things along. The polisher will force grout into the smaller holes. Allow the machine-applied thin coat of grout to set up slightly and trowel on a very thin topcoat if you have very large craters to fill. I've filled up to quarter-sized holes using this method.

I can fill the bug holes in 40 square feet of kitchen countertops in about 30 minutes using these techniques. That's a far cry from

the multiple passes I used to make by hand, and it's a lot more thorough as well. 🛠️

*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](mailto:mark@pinnaclecastconcrete.com).*

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## PRODUCT NEWS

### Federal Brace releases Brickyard elevated counter support

Federal Brace has released one of their strongest elevated bar supports, the Brickyard. Living up to its name, this solid bracket can hold heavy stone, granite or concrete countertops firmly in place.

Its three-hole design gives it a modern, spacious feel.

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

### New Metabo large angle grinder is safer, more efficient

Metabo Corp. has added a new large angle grinder to its Metabo Metal Masters series. The W24-230 is ideal for cutting and grinding metal safely and efficiently.

The W24-230 comes equipped with a 9-inch wheel guard and delivers 150 inch-pounds of torque. This large angle grinder has a rated speed of 6,600 rpm and loaded

speed of 4,600 rpm. The tool features 2,400 watts of power and is rated at 15 amps.

The new angle grinder features Metabo's VibraTech three-position side handle that significantly reduces vibration levels up to 60 percent. The grinder's ergonomic rear handle includes a vibration-dampening system and pivots 90 degrees left or right for comfort during cutting or vertical grinding while reducing user fatigue.

The W24-230 includes a simplified on/off switch with a safety lock-out switch that protects against unintentional start, a burst-proof guard with seven positions, and a spindle lock. A newly designed diagonal fan pulls air across the grinder's motor for

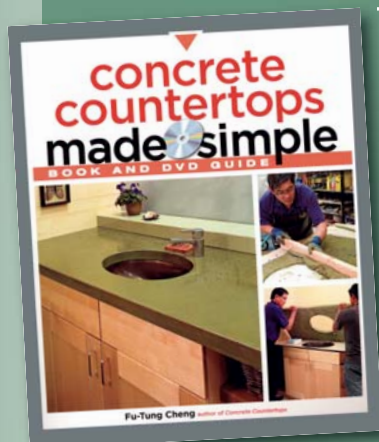


cooler operation, higher efficiency and increased reliability through optimum heat dissipation. The tool weighs just 12.8 pounds.

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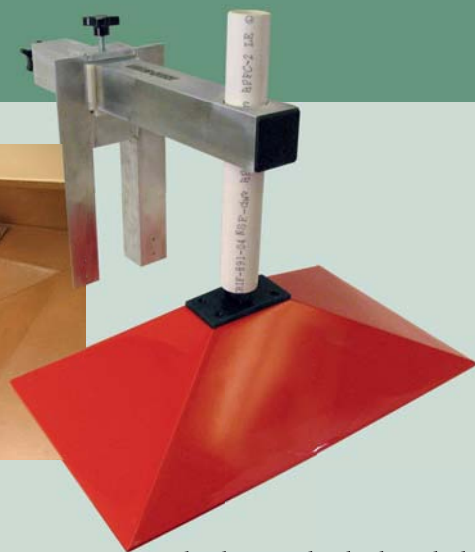
## Sink Molds, Edge Detail Molds, Tools and Fiber Optics from Infinicrete

FOR the past three years, decorative concrete artisan Jeff Kudrick has been developing his own sink and countertop molds and decorative concrete tools under the brand name Infinicrete, using them regularly in high-profile

Photos courtesy of Infinicrete



A J&M Lifestyles sink created with Infinicrete's Tribeca Sink Mold.



projects and distributing them through manufacturing companies Cheng Concrete and SureCrete Design Products.

Customers have been able to pick up Kudrick's one-of-a-kind products in person at Infinicrete's shop in Randolph, N.J. And now, Infinicrete materials are also available for direct purchase via a new online store at [Infinicrete.com](http://Infinicrete.com).

Infinicrete offers sink molds, edge detail molds for sinks and countertops, tools such as the versatile Drain Boom Jig, and fiber optics materials used to create lighting effects. All of these are designed in-house by Kudrick.

The company also sells precast concrete mixes by Cheng Concrete and SureCrete, as well as dyes, stains, release agents and sealers from a variety of other manufacturers. By launching the company's online store, Kudrick has brought Infinicrete into the public eye, inviting new customers and setting the stage for company growth.

Kudrick, product manager at Randolph, N.J.-based decorative concrete studio J&M Lifestyles, has more than 20 years of construction experience and is best known for his artistic decorative concrete works, such as fireplace surrounds, kitchen and bath fixtures and molded furniture. His manufacturing

background, which includes building machinery and molds in industrial applications, led him to experiment with product development that would eventually become his Infinicrete line.

Infinicrete's mold products include edge detail molds and accessory molds such as knockouts and flanges, which can be used to change the shape of sink basin drains. Edge detail and accessory molds are sold individually and can be combined with Infinicrete sink molds, giving artisans many design options.

"We like to give people the ability to adapt their molds and get different looks with the edge details," Kudrick says.

Sink molds are made from fiberglass, and the large, flat areas of the molds are core-reinforced. They're manufactured with high-quality tooling resins and gel coats, and they come in designs classic and modern, such as the Tribeca Sink (a design that won a project Best of Show in Cheng Concrete's 2010 Circle of Distinction Design Challenge), a square-shaped basin with four sharp creases that connect each sink corner to a small, square-shaped drain.

The edge detail molds and accessory molds are made from urethane rubber, and edge detail designs range from

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simple to intricate. For example, the Cove Edge Detail design allows artisans to form a single inverted scallop along a countertop edge, and the Deer Scene design lets customers adorn a 4-inch-high countertop edge with images of deer, trees and mountains. Many edge detail molds, including the Deer Scene, can be stacked with other molds to further design options. The edge detail molds are sold in 10-foot lengths, saving application time and resulting in fewer countertop edge seams.

Scott Reed, a Baton Rouge, La.-based decorative concrete artisan and owner of Cajun Concrete Concepts, recently began using Infinicrete molds for three projects: A horseshoe-shaped bar top at Extra Innings Sports Bar & Grill in Central, La., a Louisiana State University theme bar top at Baton Rouge restaurant Doe's Eat Place, and an eight-sink bathroom vanity job.

Reed says that so far, he's very impressed by the durability and design of Infinicrete molds. "I've had some experience with other sink molds, and the quality of these fiberglass molds is by far superior to anything I've seen," he says. "The designs are good too, and reflect current market trends."

Kudrick says the most unique tool offered by Infinicrete is the Drain Boom Jig, an adjustable aluminum support tool that holds drain pipes and fiber optic accessories in place during concrete sink and countertop fabrication, helping artisans achieve perfect alignment and leak-free pipe connections in their finished products.

Another Infinicrete highlight is its selection of fiber optics products, which J&M Lifestyles has incorporated into its projects for years, Kudrick says. The inventory includes illuminating cables, light sources, countertop lighting kits and other tools and accessories. The products can result in dramatic effects, such as with

the 96-inch color countertop lighting kit that makes surfaces look like a colorful, twinkling, starry sky.

Infinicrete's offerings of SureCrete and Cheng Concrete products are vast and include Cheng D-FRC and SureCrete Xtreme precast mixes, as well as SureCrete Chemical Stains and Eco-Stains.

Kudrick plans to make the Infinicrete website not just a store, but an educational resource and online destination for decorative concrete artisans. The site includes "How To" and "Design Ideas" sections, where Kudrick will post photo galleries, instructional videos and useful links.

One of the key selling points for the Infinicrete line is the valuable product-use information and support customers receive when they make a purchase, he says. "We're not just making a product and then telling you to figure out how to use it. We've used these products extensively over the years and have a specific application method for them. The people supporting these products use them themselves, and that means customers will get more out of them."

Product expansion is now on Kudrick's mind, and he plans to grow Infinicrete's inventory by adding new sink molds, more Cheng Concrete products, and concrete stamps, to name just three examples. 🚚

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Photo by Steven Ochs

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## PRODUCT NEWS

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The technology still utilizes the instant Tramex nondestructive moisture content test, but upgraded hardware, circuitry and a time-adjustable backlit display make this a better tool for assessment of concrete and other floor slabs.

This instrument is designed to perform relative humidity tests on concrete, using the supplied RH probe to test above grade. The instrument is available as a kit, which includes a high-impact carrying case, an infrared thermometer for instant surface temperature readings and a heavy-duty wood probe for testing the moisture content of wood flooring.

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## SurfEtch from Butterfield Color

**S**URFETCH from Butterfield Color is a water-based mild surface retarder that, when used with fresh concrete, exposes the sands in the concrete for a unique decorative finish. In addition to its aesthetic appeal, it can add slip resistance and is solvent-free. Best of all, it's easy to apply for even the beginning contractor.

"You spray it on after final finishing, and come back the next day (depending on climate) and wash it off," says Keith Boudart, Butterfield Color sales and marketing manager.

SurfEtch works by chemically delaying the set of the surface mortar while allowing the underlying concrete



to harden normally. This gives the contractor time to wash the surface and remove the surface mortar, exposing sands from 1/16 inch to 1/8 inch deep.


SurfEtch can be used on most horizontal installations, including curbs, sidewalks, driveways, patios and pool decks.

It is ideal for decorative uses, particularly in conjunction with stencil jobs. "The SurfEtch does not wick its way under where the stencils touch the surface," says Boudart.

For example, if a contractor lays down a stencil of a brick pattern and then applies SurfEtch, the bricks will end up with exposed sands, while the grout lines will not. "It gives an old, worn brick pattern," he says.

Adding to its decorative appeal, SurfEtch can be used along with integral color.

"When SurfEtch is applied it still gives the look of integral color, but it exposes

the sands enough to change the color," says Boudart, adding that many people use it in borders or accent ribbons. 

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# grinding & polishing :

## Fixing Finishes on the Front End

**H**AVE you ever been to a museum and looked at a beautiful painting? The depth of color, the intricate variations of texture and the captivating lines all combine with the way that the light is reflected and seems to be drawn into the painting.

Imagine what that same painting would look like if it were painted on tree bark or fence boards instead of a high-quality canvas.



by David Stephenson

The medium (or substrate) that is used in a work of art has a lot of control over the finished product. Polished concrete is no different. You have all seen beautiful pictures of floors that show fantastic color, reflectivity and clarity. A breathtaking array of patterns and designs are shown in *Concrete Decor* and other magazines all the time. What you don't see are the close-up shots of poorly finished column block-outs, hand-finished edges at cold pour joints, or the spalled control joints that were cut using a dull saw blade in such a way that the aggregate is ripped out of the slab rather than cut through. Not many people in our industry want to admit that these issues are out there. But your customers will find these

issues and expect the flooring contractor to try to fix them.

Unfortunately, on most remodel projects there is not a lot that can be done to control these types of issues, and the repair methods are a topic for a whole different article. (Discussing these potential concerns with your customer ahead of time will greatly help your situation.)

However, on new construction, with good planning and forethought you can take the concrete finish from really bad to pretty good, and this will take your customer's experience and satisfaction to a whole new level.

Not every project has the controls in place that some of the better national



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An example of poor finish work and a poor-quality concrete block-out.

Photos courtesy of American Concrete Concepts Inc.

retailers are able to command. On your everyday project, more often than not, the lowest-priced concrete finisher is who ends up with the project. Still, managing the quality of the concrete pour and finish is an integral part of turning out consistently high-quality concrete floors.

In my experience I have found that preventing problems on the front end is much easier than trying to fix them.

The prevention process starts by making sure that the polished concrete contractor is involved as early in the project as possible. I recommend having a preconstruction meeting with the customer, architect, general contractor, concrete finisher,

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# grinding & polishing :

mason and polished concrete contractor. This is not hard to do, as any project of size has meetings with all of these parties in attendance before construction begins. Since the polished concrete subcontractor is ultimately responsible for the finished project, he or she should run this portion of the meeting. All aspects of the concrete placement should be discussed: mix design, curing methods, weather issues and how they can potentially affect the finished product, the specific equipment that will be used to finish the slab, edging techniques, column block-out treatments, flatness and levelness, cure time before any grinding

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An example of poor-quality finishing work  
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occurs, floor protection during construction (a big one) and anything else that will have a bearing on the final outcome. This is also a good time to discuss maintenance, since all involved parties are in the room together.

One important thing to remember is that if a slab is poorly finished at the beginning, you have the option of choosing to take it out and replace it. If the building is built and at the end of the project you do not like the result, it is impossible to replace the slab properly at that point.

I recommend having specific floor flatness levels and testing built into the specifications. This will help ensure that the polished concrete floor will have consistent aggregate exposure throughout the project. If there are sharp deviations in flatness, this is usually reflected in spot areas of large aggregate exposure.

Edges are also significant because hand-finished concrete is more porous than mechanically troweled concrete is. The most common result of hand-troweled edges is a general white appearance, because the open pores of the concrete do not get polished while the surface does. This problem is especially common along block walls





## PRODUCT NEWS

### Allen introduces the MP 215 rider

The Allen MP 215 is a complete redesign of the MP 205 Mechanical Drive Riding Trowel.

The MP 215 is an entry-level riding trowel with features that are typically found in larger riders. The engine and heavy-duty drive train is packaged in an easy-to-service frame. The Allen Standard-Duty Gearboxes and four-bladed 36-inch diameter rotors are proven performers in the field. Also, the MP 215 is now equipped with a Torque Converter Clutch that gives the operator full variable-speed control of the rotors up to 145 RPM.

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where the concrete is poured to the wall, as opposed to the slab being poured and mechanically finished before the block wall is placed on top of the slab. A block-on-slab wall will have a much more consistent edge.

There are many ways that slabs can be poorly finished, and not all of these have anything to do with the concrete finisher. Nature can play a major role in how a slab finishes out as well. Rain, wind, sunshine and ice can cause issues. It is important to discuss this with the general contractor beforehand. While schedule is always a driving factor, pouring on a risky day can really come back to hurt the finished floor. Sometimes waiting that extra day or pouring a day early can mean all the difference to the finished product.

Remember, prevention is the most important part of helping a concrete finish turn into a great canvas. 🛠️

*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 [dstephenson@acci-us.com](mailto:dstephenson@acci-us.com).*

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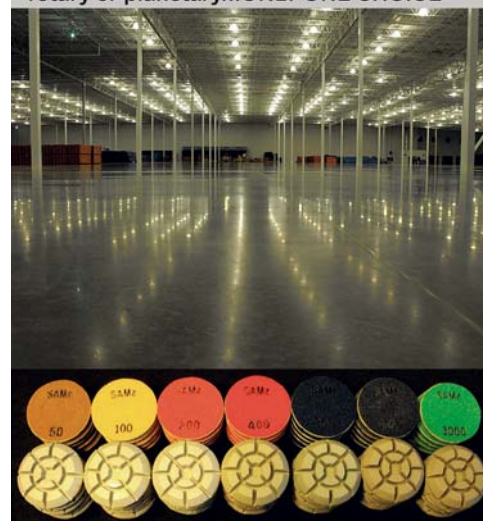
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## It's OK to Blame Sealers When They're the Problem

Is the solution to polished concrete maintenance educating the customer on proper procedures, or is it developing better sealers to provide the customer?

I noticed a common theme this year at the World of Concrete show in conversations with leading professionals in the industry and old contractor friends alike: maintenance procedures for polished concrete. It was a popular conversation, including at the show's polished concrete



by David Padgett

luncheon, at which it was discussed by each speaker in detail.

Each time I heard this topic being batted around, I interpreted the problem a little differently. In my opinion, what is really being discussed is how we deal with the poor results we are getting from our sealers in the polished concrete industry today. It has been my experience that the issues of stains on polished concrete (that cannot be removed through normal daily cleaning), dyes fading in some environments, and traffic patterns becoming visible on some of the semitopical sealers have as much to do with the delicate nature of the sealers available on the market today for polished concrete as they do with improper

maintenance after the project has been completed.

In one such conversation with Mike DeCandia, of L.M. Scofield Co., we discussed how the current polished concrete industry is like a teenager on the way to maturity. We have not yet matured in some areas, and sealers are one of these areas.

Not too many years ago polished concrete was being marketed as a no-maintenance floor solution that needed nothing more than a hardener and maybe a fully penetrating silicone or siloxane sealer to block spills and stains. We now realize that we need a sealer with more body that will form a film on the surface to protect in grocery and food spill environments — thus



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the creation of the semitopical guard-type products. These improved the ability to protect from stains and lock colors into the surface but brought their own challenges to the table.

Scott Thome, also of L.M. Scofield Co. has explained it like this: Traditionally, ground and polished concrete processed with a silicate densifier and a silicate nonfilm-forming guard will have great abrasion resistance. However, to date the only way to create resistance from organic acids is to install a physical membrane above the surface. Both systems will need to be maintained with a product that is reapplied regularly.

The contractor gets caught in the crush when the customer has been promised the best of both worlds, a situation complicated by 20-year hardener warranties that lead the customer to believe that his floor is going to be bulletproof with no maintenance for 20 years.

The obvious solution would be for our chemical providers to develop a sealer system that would:

- Protect from spills and stains
- Provide chemical resistance that is capable of resisting common cleaning chemicals such as ammonia without breaking down and stripping off the surface
- Provide abrasion resistance that is sufficient to protect the surface for an expectable length of time
- Provide a simple and compatible rejuvenation chemical to reestablish the layer of protective membrane worn away by abrasion without any need to remove residue from the initial installation before the rejuvenation process.

Mr. Thome has said he believes the future will bring protection materials that do not leave a film and also stop organic acids from etching the concrete surface. The technology exists, he says — we just need to tap into it.

The polished concrete industry at large has not found this coveted product.

## PRODUCT NEWS

### SAMz abrasives get wider exposure

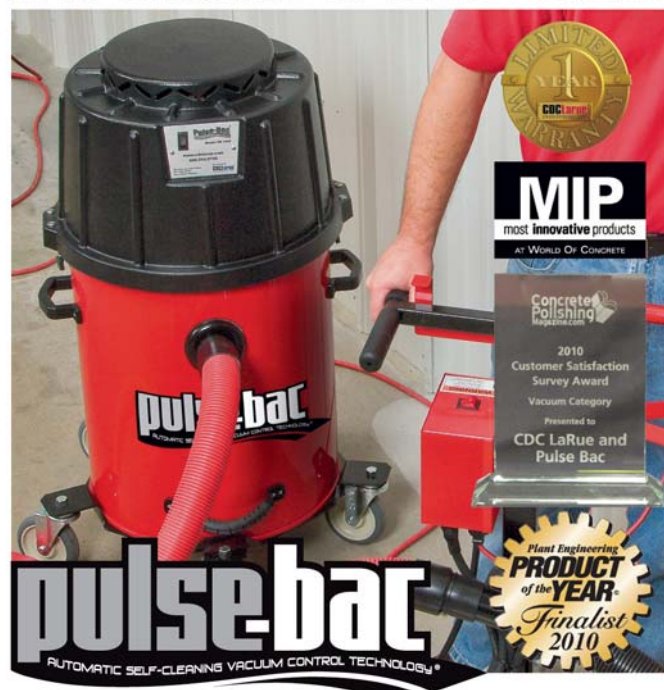
Floors By Design is releasing to the public SAMz series abrasives, which until now were only available to a few large polishing companies that concentrate on larger projects.

After more than two years in development and testing to become a product that would outlast and outperform other abrasives on any type of concrete or condition, SAMz consistently will grind or hone a surface in less time. They allow an installer to start a grit higher to finish faster and with better results. With a documented case of 500,000 square feet polished wet by only one set, they may be the longest lasting abrasive available today.

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To be on the safe side I recommend you be sure to offer customers a detailed maintenance plan that includes rejuvenation cycles of no longer than one year at a time for high-traffic color projects or high-profile projects such as food stores and restaurants that require the guard-type sealers for stain protection.

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# grinding & polishing

When dealing with an architect or an owner that has had some poor experiences with a semitopical or a dyed polished floor, be sure to explain to them that there are many different types of dye and sealer combinations and that the technology for these products and the methods of applying and maintaining those products is improving daily. Examine the maintenance methods that have been used on their problematic floors first to determine what may have caused the problem. Learn which chemicals will strip the semitopical product used and make sure they are not used going forward. Assure the customer that the floor can be restored for less cost than the original installation and that, if a proper maintenance program is implemented, it will last for years to come.

Also, pressure your chemical providers to improve the products they are providing instead of just telling you it works great for them. If that is the line they give you, remind them that you are the one the customer is calling when the weaknesses in the products are realized on the job.

Share with your chemical provider the difficulties you are experiencing in the field with your sealers or dyes. Let them know how difficult it is to explain to a customer that the simple cleaning chemicals they have been using for years on other floors have stripped the semitopical sealer off the surface and are allowing the dye to be washed out with water. Explain the need for a semitopical

sealer that can either completely repel stains or be easily touched up to repair stains on the beautiful decorative floors you are installing. If the chemical company you are working with does not respond to you, go to another reputable provider and start there.

The polished concrete market must mature in this area of sealers and maintenance. We need our chemical provider partners to lead the way in that front.

The future is bright for polished concrete and growing pains are natural for a new industry. Our contractors must be proactive and make sure they are on the front edge of the learning curve, our chemical providers must lead us to the next level in sealers, and our janitorial contractors need good training programs for polished floors. These steps will insure the growth of polished concrete. 🛠️

*David Padgett is president of Concrete Polishing Solutions. He can be reached at david.padgett@go2cps.com.*

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by Kelly O'Brien

### River Rock and Roll

Colorado Hardscapes Inc., Denver, Colo.  
www.coloradohardscapes.com

This complex interior treatment pairs a multihued pattern of polished concrete with natural river-stone borders and detailing.

#### Ingredients:

TenCate Geosynthetics  
Mirafi 140N nonwoven  
geotextile bond-breaker  
Aluminum divider strips,  
1/8 inch wide by 3  
inches deep  
Masonite strips, 1/4 inch  
thick

Lithocrete Conditioner  
Colorado Hardscapes  
custom integral color:  
Dusty Trail

Locally quarried 1/4-  
inch stone aggregate,  
chosen to complement  
the integral color

Fine-grade black sand  
Bomanite Concrete Dyes  
(Colorado Hardscapes  
used Blue Poppy and  
two custom blues)

Bomanite Stabilizer  
Pro lithium silicate  
densifier with silane

Bomanite VitraFinish stain guard

River stones

Neutral-colored tile grout

Special equipment required: polishing machine, abrasives from 30 grit to 800 grit, burnishing pads



Photo courtesy of Colorado Hardscapes Inc.

#### Directions:

► This installation is designed to go down over an existing concrete floor, so your first step is going to be to put down a bond-breaker, in this case the Mirafi 140N, which should cover the entire surface of the floor.

► Once the bond-breaker is down, mark out the desired pattern on the surface. For this installation, artisans chose a geometric pattern that uses a range of colors for a nice variety. It will be important to keep track of which section is going to be which color, so make sure you have a detailed layout that shows which sections get which treatment. In the case of this recipe, you have three to keep track of: grey concrete that will get dyed later on, integrally colored concrete that won't, and the river-stone inlay borders and details.

► Mark out your pattern on the floor and install 3-inch deep, 1/8-inch wide aluminum divider strips to serve as borders between sections. Reinforce these with Masonite strips, which will be taken out later.

► Add the Lithocrete conditioner and aggregate to all of your concrete and mix thoroughly. In one batch, add the black sand to your concrete at a ratio of 1 to 4, and add the integral color as well.

Mix thoroughly.

► Time to place your concrete, all of which is going to be 3 inches deep. In all of the sections that are going to be dyed, place the grey concrete. In all of the sections that you want the earth-toned concrete, place the integrally colored batch.

► Once everything is placed, remove the Masonite strips (except in the sections destined for the river stones), and let the concrete set for 24 hours. Then come back and cut your control joints.

► Let the concrete cure for 28 days.

► Once it's cured, use decorative saw cuts to mark out different sections of the grey concrete that will receive different colors of dye.

► Apply the Stabilizer Pro to the entire surface, let dry, and begin the polishing process. Start with 30-grit abrasives, and step up gradually, keeping an eye on the slab's surface porosity, which will be the deciding factor in when to stop and dye the surface.

► The optimal time to apply your dye will vary from job to job, but it typically comes around midway through the polishing process. At the right time, apply your dyes. For this installation, Colorado Hardscapes alternated standard colors like Blue Poppy with custom color blends to get a wide variety of shades, ranging from royal blue to midnight.

► After applying the dyes, continue polishing the floor, stepping up your abrasives until you reach 800 grit.

► Clean the surface thoroughly, being careful to remove any residual dust.

► Apply a coat of VitraFinish, and once dry, burnish the entire surface.

► Caulk your control joints and decorative cuts.

► Finally, fill in the remaining sections of the floor by placing an even coat of grout and setting river stones into it. 🛠️



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## Fabulous Formations: Eight Tips for Installing Rock-and-Water Features with Precast Pieces

by Bruce Riley, with Amy Johnson

**C**USTOM rock features and hardscapes built from glass-fiber reinforced concrete (GFRC) are high-end features added to landscapes at luxury homes or commercial developments. There is a movement to make these decorative elements accessible to more customers by supplying contractors with prefabricated, modular components they can install.

Several companies nationwide, including RicoRock Inc., of Orlando, Fla., take molds of natural rock formations and use them to cast natural-looking panels and boulders from GFRC. Contractors with concrete and masonry experience can use these products to create fabulous rock features even if they don't have advanced skills to cast and carve the rocks themselves.

One of the most popular landscape uses for GFRC rock installations is pool surrounds and waterfalls. Here are some tips for using structural components to make these features look and perform their best.

Bruce Riley is managing director of RicoRock Inc. He can be reached at [bruce@ricorock.com](mailto:bruce@ricorock.com).



Photos courtesy of RicoRock Inc.



**THE FORMING STAGES:** Forming the foundation for a free-standing waterfall from concrete blocks or compacted dirt is very time-consuming and expensive. A good alternative is building on extruded polystyrene foam blocks. The foam blocks can be cut into a rough shape and covered with a rebar armature. GFRC castings are then wired to the rebar and backfilled with concrete.

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**THE FORMING STAGES:** Cast panels are not close-fitting jigsaw pieces. There are usually gaps of 3 inches to 6 inches between them. Metal lath with a plaster finish is the best way to fill these gaps and visually blend castings. Using plastic zip ties instead of tie wire avoids problems with rust, a common cause of callbacks in later years.



**THE FORMING STAGES:** Waterfalls often have caves or grottos — open areas behind the water. Using a “grotto lid” that comes with rebar already inserted in the casting saves time when installing these cantilevered panels.



**WATERPROOFING:** Whether installing cast or hand-sculptured rock, it is critical to waterproof the pool shell BEFORE attaching any rock, because water will penetrate any cold joint and pass through raw gunite. Plastering the outside of artificial rock does not fix leaks caused by improperly installed rockwork. It is a beginner's mistake to build the rockwork and then try to apply waterproofing.



**WATERPROOFING:** Water course areas should be hand-troweled into a rough shape, waterproofed, and then hand-stamped and textured. Failure to waterproof the area before finishing will result in calcium deposits, leaks and, ultimately, callbacks.



**WATERPROOFING:** Waterproofing with a hydraulic-cement type of material is critical to prevent leaks and calcium deposits. It is typically not a finish but an underlayment for a finish texture coat.



**FINISHING:** The gaps between panels should be filled with a mortar mix that dries to the same color as the GFRG. Additional color can be added to both panels and mortar, but if they don't match to begin with, they won't match after they are colored.



**FINISHING:** Textures on the gaps between castings can be achieved with texture mats and a release agent. But to really match the character of the castings, a dry-lining technique that involves carving partially hardened mortar is needed as well. Allow the mortar to dry, for several hours if needed, to a very stiff stage, and then carve crevices and lines to give the mortar a rock character. 🛠️

## PRODUCT NEWS

### How-to barbecue book from Scott Cohen

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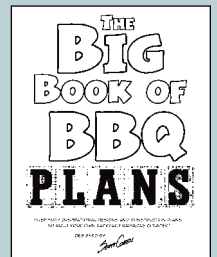
Acclaimed designer and decorative concrete expert Scott Cohen has released “The Big Book of Barbecue Plans,” a collection of his favorite outdoor kitchen and barbecue plans. Homeowners and contractors alike will find in the book all the information they need to build high-performance outdoor kitchens in sizes

and configurations that work for different spaces, budgets and cooking styles.

The book features 70 detailed plans taken from Cohen's own portfolio. Every page features a new project with clearly illustrated layouts, accurate measurements and specific guidance on the materials needed to complete the job.

The book also features a detailed how-to guide that demonstrates Cohen's innovative techniques for concrete counters.

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# staining & coloring CONCRETE

## PROJECT PROFILE

### Fuddruckers Restaurant Floor Modesto, Calif.

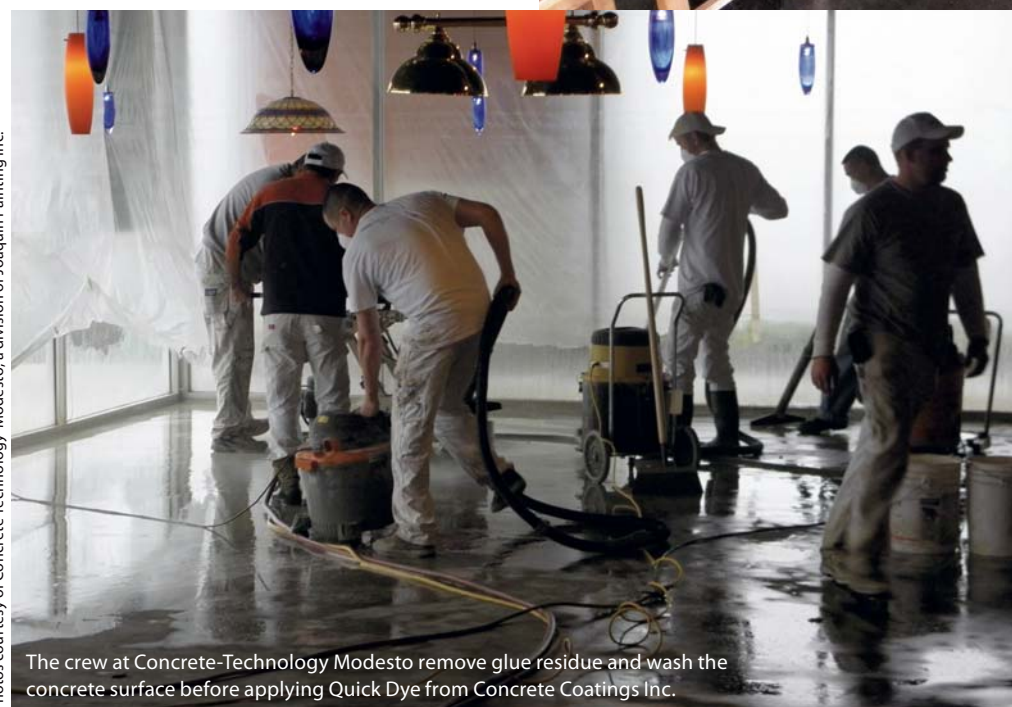
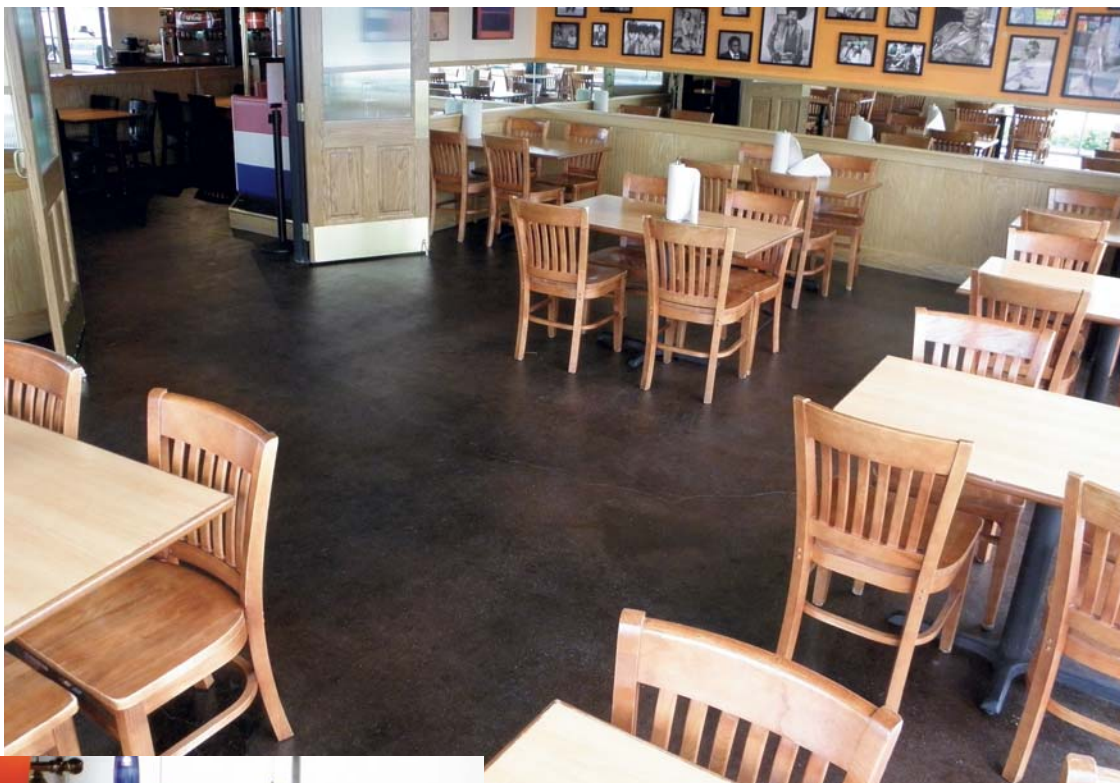
by Stacey Enesey Klemenc

**A**FTER three years of spilled milkshakes, splattered ketchup and oversquirted mustard, the carpet in the dining area of the Fuddruckers in Modesto, Calif., had to go. Franchise owner Kevin Bidlack considered replacing it but knew the fix would be temporary. Three years later, he'd have to do it again.

The gourmet burger restaurant's carpeting also had upkeep issues. "I would have the carpet deep-cleaned every two to three months but it would only smell clean for a day or two," Bidlack says.

However, refinishing the existing 3,000-square-foot concrete slab underneath would be an investment in time, a precious commodity for a business that depends on cash flow. "If I just swapped out the carpet, I could have closed early one evening and opened up the next day," Bidlack says.

Instead, he closed for 2 1/2 days, trusting a contractor's commitment that a long-



The crew at Concrete-Technology Modesto remove glue residue and wash the concrete surface before applying Quick Dye from Concrete Coatings Inc.

lasting quality concrete product could be delivered on time.

#### A sticky glue issue

Tearing up the carpet and removing it was a snap, says Mark Butler, vice president of Concrete Technology-Modesto, the

#### Project at a Glance

**Contractor:** Concrete Technology-Modesto, a division of Modesto-based Joaquin Painting Inc.

**Client:** Fuddruckers restaurant in Modesto, Calif.

**Project description:** Remove badly stained carpet and dye existing concrete slab to emulate a rustic, old-world look.

**Challenge:** To get the entire job done from removal to completion in less than three days.

**Products used:** Concrete Coatings' QuickDye, Hillyard Citrus Scrub 90 adhesive remover and Concrete Technology Inc.'s Aquathane 6000 sealer.



company that got the job. But removing the adhesive was another story. Commercial carpeting, he explains, doesn't have a pad — it's glued straight to the slab floor. And a small miscalculation put the time-crunched schedule in jeopardy.

The initial area Concrete Technology-Modesto head foreman Colin Sparkman tested only had one layer of glue, which easily came up. Unfortunately, he laments, the rest had three to four layers. "I had to bring in a couple of extra guys to keep the job on schedule."

With three crews of 10 working around the clock, they removed the adhesive with sling-arm buffers and Citrus-Scrub 90, a commercial adhesive remover from Hillyard Inc. "We had to stay with a low-odor material because we were dealing with a restaurant," Sparkman says. "We couldn't use anything really aggressive."

When the adhesive was removed, they lightly sanded the floor to open up the concrete's pores so it could better accept a colorant.

Bidlack wanted a rustic, distressed look for his restaurant. Sparkman initially

suggested using an acid stain but nixed the idea because the process takes too long. Dyes, which like acid stains can produce deep brilliant colors, were a logical option.

"Typically it takes anywhere from 24 to 48 hours for an acid stain to penetrate and chemically react with the concrete," Sparkman says. The copious cleanup process usually takes another day, and then you still have to seal. Overall, an acid-staining project this size usually takes five to seven days. This one took less than three.



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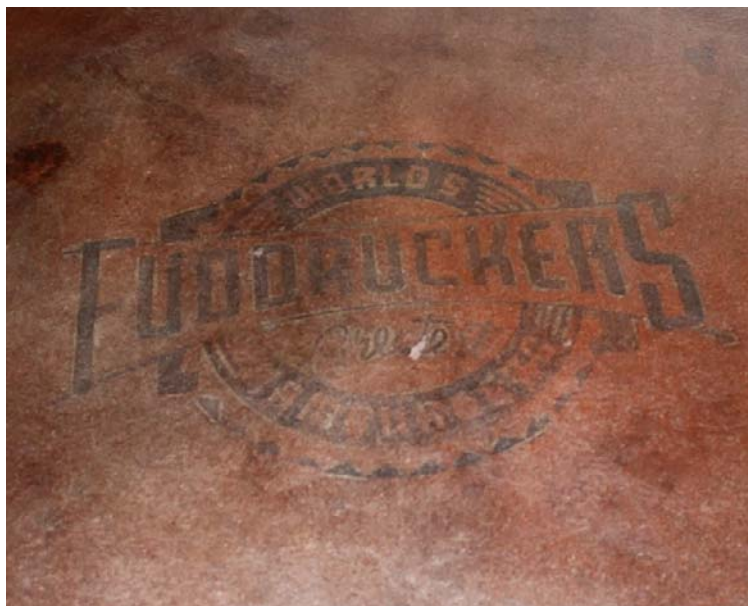
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## A look to dye for

To color the floor, Sparkman chose QuickDye, an acetone-based material for interiors from Concrete Coatings Inc. that's easy to apply and can be sealed quickly. His crew, he says, had never used QuickDye but had no trouble applying it. "They were flabbergasted at how little time it took to get such great results."

The client also got the rustic effect he wanted. In a couple of hours, the crew sprayed a combination of Mahogany, Walnut and Ebony dyes to achieve the desired mottled look without having to wait for a chemical reaction. They removed dye residue by washing the concrete with an autoscrubber for less than four hours. The final step involved applying two coats of Aquathane 6000, a food-safe sealer from CTi.

Sparkman says he didn't even consider water-based or acrylic stains for this job because in his experience a lot of them tend to fail in high-traffic areas. "I wanted a dye that actually penetrates the concrete, so when chairs scrape across the floor, color will still be there. With universal stains, the color just sits on top of the surface.

PHOTO CREDIT: JOSH HOSTETTER

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If the floor gets mangled from something like a refrigerator being dropped or dragged on it, water-based and acrylic finishes are hard to fix, he says. “I’ve run into that situation with other commercial jobs and matching up the color was a nightmare. I’ve had to reglaze the entire floor to fix the problem.”

With QuickDye, he says, you can easily touch up marred areas. “As far as blending goes, you can get the same mottled effect time and time again.”

But precautions need to be taken when applying acetone-based dyes such as QuickDye, Sparkman says. They’re highly flammable, and respirators must be worn because of the fumes. “We had fans running

the whole time and had to shut off all the pilot lights, including the one for the hot water,” he says. “We had to bring in our own hot water.”

According to Brandon Gutierrez, director of marketing for Concrete Coatings Inc., dyes are prized for their consistency and ease of use. “People really love dyes because they can be used by themselves or as a touch-up to acid stains that don’t react with certain areas of concrete.”

With dyes, you know you’re going to get the color you choose, he adds. “Acid stains react differently each time depending on the concrete’s makeup. You really don’t know what you’re going to get.”

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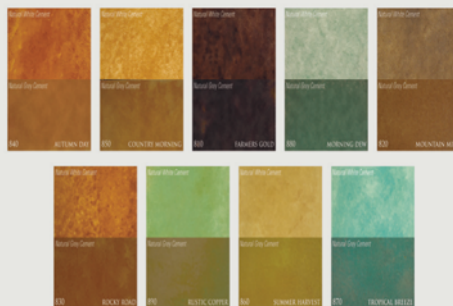
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## Staining Recipe

by Kelly O'Brien

### Concrete Chic

Bay Area Concretes Inc., Livermore, Calif.  
www.bayareaconcretes.com

This luxe look is achieved by overlaying several super-thin coats of microtopping and dye, resulting in a finish with subtle depth and a sexy sheen.

#### Ingredients:

Innotech Decorative Concrete Products Microtopping EXT Liquid, plus custom colored tint packs: Flint and Charcoal

Colormaker Floors Aquacolor: Wales Charcoal, Onyx Black, French Grey, White

Colormaker Floors Deso Dye Concentrate: Black, Burleywood

Acrylic thinner

Surtec Systems Aquapro sealer

Surtec Systems Endure floor finish

Special equipment required: Shotblaster loaded with light abrasive, floor grinder with 100-grit pads, hand-held sander

#### Directions:

Because this is an overlay application, your first step is going to be to prep your substrate. Shotblast the surface with a light abrasive, and use a shop vac to clean.

Using your floor grinder and the 100-grit abrasive pads, grind the floor lightly until you have a smooth, even surface.

Clean the floor thoroughly.

Mix up your first batch of Innotech microtopping with no pigment. Apply an even coat across the entire surface with a trowel.

Let that dry completely, and then sand lightly. Clear off any dust.

With that base coat down, the fun can begin. What gives this floor depth is that, on top of this base coat, five more layers of colored microtopping are applied, and between each of them, a coat of dye. Basically, once the base coat is down, you get to mix and match different shades of microtopping with different shades and different dilutions of dye before finishing with a nearly transparent topcoat.

The process goes as follows: For each layer, you'll want to mix a new batch of



Photo courtesy of Bay Area Concretes Inc.

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lightly pigmented microtopping in varying shades of gray. Bay Area Concretes used these ratios for the pigments in each layer:

- Layer 1 – 3:1 Flint to Charcoal
- Layer 2 – 1:1 Flint to Charcoal
- Layer 3 – all Flint
- Layer 4 – 4:1 Flint to Charcoal

■ Once you've mixed up your batch of microtopping for your first layer, apply in a thin coat, let dry, sand lightly and clean.

■ Mix up the dye you want to use for the layer. Bay Area Concretes used the colors listed to mix a whole palette of grays and blacks at a variety of dilution ratios. The Deso Dyes were all diluted 50:1 with acetone, but the Aquacolors were diluted with water anywhere from 5:1 to 50:1. You can experiment with lots of different shades, but you'll want to use heavier dilutions in the lower layers and lighter dyes the closer you get to the surface.


■ Apply a coat of dye and let it cure completely.

■ Repeat the process — microtopping, sanding, dyeing — for the next three layers.

■ Once you've finished those four layers of dye and microtopping, you'll want to mix one last batch of microtopping, colored with just a little bit of Charcoal pigment and diluted heavily with acrylic until translucent.

■ Apply this final coat, let dry, but don't sand! This will leave your trowel marks intact for some additional texture, so trowel nicely.

■ Apply a final coat of light-colored dye for a last bit of mottling, and let dry.

■ Seal with two coats of Aquapro, followed by three coats of Endure, letting each coat dry before applying the next one. 



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# concrete DECOR® product focus

## Pro-Dye from Brickform

**A**FTER listening to suggestions from contractors and distributors, Brickform, a division of Solomon Colors Inc., has redeveloped its popular Pro-Dye as a liquid formula.

With the older-generation, powdered Pro-Dye, contractors have to wait for as long as three hours for it to dissolve after it is mixed with acetone. Now the wait is over.

"We've come up with a concentrated liquid that's ready to use," says Art Pinto, product manager for Brickform. "When you add acetone, you just shake it up a bit and it's ready to go. It's a lot more convenient."

Pinto notes that the formula is nonflammable and can easily be shipped by ground or air. It may contribute to

LEED points, as it emits zero VOCs.

In addition to eliminating the long wait, the liquid formula allows contractors to make small batches. Because so little powder is used when the old formula is mixed with the recommended one gallon of acetone, making a smaller batch requires a very accurate portable scale to keep the ratio correct. With the liquid formula, smaller amounts for smaller batches can be measured much more easily.

The difference between the new and old versions of Pro-Dye ends there, however. The same vivid 24 colors are offered, and it is still ideal for use with vertical applications, stencils and logos. "It's virtually the same product," Pinto says.

The original powder formula is still available for those who prefer it, Pinto



Photo courtesy of Brickform

says. "Habits are sometimes hard to break right away. From past experience, we know that some contractors will resist change and will prefer to stay with the original product until they are thoroughly convinced that the new form is indeed a better option."

Pro-Dye can be used in conjunction with Brickform's new Pro Lithium Densifier and Pro Concrete Guard polishing system. "We feel it's a great compliment to our line of polishing concrete materials," Pinto says. 🚚

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by Kelly O'Brien

### The Third Dimension

Artistic Concrete Coatings, Wapakoneta, Ohio  
www.artisticconcretecoatings.com

With a subtle two-level texture coat and a wild 3-D geometric pattern, this staining technique delivers a unique, captivating floor finish.

#### Ingredients:

(Note: These amounts are enough for a 700-square foot surface.)

- 8 gallons The Concrete Protector HD Resin Concentrate
  - 8 gallons water
  - 8 50-pound bags The Concrete Protector Spray Texture
  - 1 bottle The Concrete Protector Colorant: Buff
  - 10 rolls The Concrete Protector Stencil Tape, 1/2-inch
  - 1 quart each Smith's Color Floor: Black, Amber, Nutmeg, Bark Brown
  - 5 gallons The Concrete Protector T-3000 High Wear Epoxy
  - 2 gallons The Concrete Protector Protector-thane 1000
- Special equipment required: Graco RTX 650 or another texture sprayer

#### Directions:

- Start by preparing your concrete substrate to receive the spray texture by shotblasting or grinding the entire floor to remove all contaminants.

- Dilute the resin concentrate 1:1 with water.
- For each 50-pound bag of spray texture, add 1.75 gallons of the resin concentrate solution as well as one ounce of Buff colorant, and mix thoroughly. Using your texture sprayer, spray an even coat across the entire floor — this should take about four bags of spray texture.

- Let the surface dry for at least 4 hours (if your ambient temperature's around 70 degrees). Once dry, scrape off any extraneous texture so you have a relatively even, textured surface.

- Working from the center point of the room, use the stencil tape to mark out a grid of squares. Then tape a diagonal line through each of the squares in both directions (so you end up with a grid where each square has an X through the middle). From there, you can eliminate the tape lines you don't need until you have the tessellation pattern. (This is tricky, but with a little practice, working from the picture, you can figure out which lines need to be there and which ones don't.)

- Once you have the pattern taped out to your satisfaction, start mixing the spray texture for the topcoat. Use the same ratios as you used for the base coat — 1.75 gallons of resin concentrate solution for each 50-pound bag — but omit the colorant.

- Spray the entire floor with the white spray texture. (This should use up the remaining four bags.) Let the texture dry thoroughly.

- Pull up the tape to expose your grout lines.
- Mix your batches of stains at 3 parts distilled water to 1 part stain. (You'll end up with a gallon of each color.)
- Using sponge brushes, go through and hand-stain all of the Black accent tiles (see pattern in photo), being careful not to let the

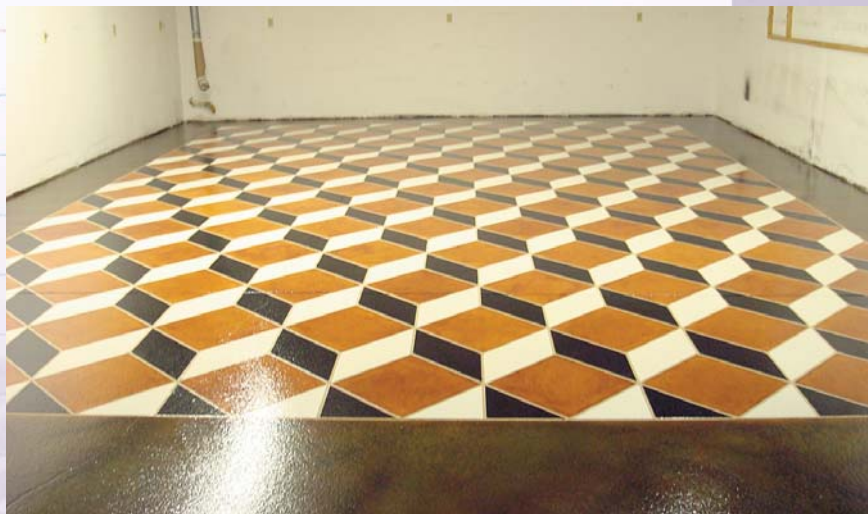


Photo courtesy of Artistic Concrete Coatings

stain run into the grout lines.

- Hand-stain all of the square Amber tiles in the same manner, still watching out for grout lines.
- Once the tiles have dried, tape plastic sheeting over them and spray the border of the floor with an even coat of Nutmeg stain.
- Once the Nutmeg has dried, highlight the border with some Amber and Bark Brown.
- Let the entire floor dry overnight.
- Apply a coat of the T-3000 high-wear epoxy to seal and let dry thoroughly.
- Finally, finish the floor with a topcoat of Protector-thane for resistance to abrasions and chemicals. 🛠️



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# stamping & texturing CONCRETE

## PROJECT PROFILE

### Spirit AeroSystems Courtyard Wichita, Kan.

by Chris Mayo

**P**LENTY of people have hobbies — the businessman who dabbles in winemaking, the social worker who paints with oils, the cop who gardens. But decorative concrete as a hobby?

Meet Kim Doehring, president of the Wichita, Kan., company Rockworx Concrete Design. He's an aeronautical engineer by day, an award-winning decorative concrete artisan on the side.

Doehring's work on the 10,000-square-foot Spirit AeroSystems courtyard in Wichita is, in a word, stunning. Doehring and his six-man crew transformed an area between the airliner-component company's cafeteria and administration buildings from unattractive sidewalks and grass into a place where employees take breaks, gather for meetings and eat. The courtyard won 1st place in the Cast-in-Place Stamping — Over 1,500 Square Feet category in the 2011 Decorative Concrete Council Awards, given out by the American Society of Concrete Contractors Decorative Concrete Council.

"The original courtyard was a plain concrete slab (sidewalks around a grassy area)," explains Doehring. "When Spirit split from Boeing and took over the buildings, they decided to do several facility upgrades. The intent of the courtyard renovation was to change the area from a transit zone between buildings to a usable employee area."

Wichita-based Eby Construction Co. (Spirit's construction contractor) was aware of Doehring's moonlighting passion and asked him if he would be interested in the job.

Doehring recalls that Spirit had an initial design concept, but they didn't have a full understanding of the scope of possibilities with decorative concrete.

"I worked with them to encourage a more unlimited design pallet and also



Photos courtesy of American Society of Concrete Contractors

helped them with color choices," he says. "After learning about the processes involved and understanding the wider range of possibilities, they came back with a design in which they had incorporated many of my ideas with some of their own twists and concepts."

The end result was a pattern integrating earth-tone colors stamped to mimic a slate pattern, all tied together with sweeping curved borders and circles.

"The idea was to provide an oasis within the aircraft facility, a place where employees can get away from aircraft for a while," Doehring says. "Spirit added beautiful landscaping and a fountain, which adds to the effect. Speaking for myself, the area is regenerative, even when I'm just passing between buildings."

#### Project at a Glance

**Contractor:** Rockworx Concrete Designs, Wichita, Kan.

**Client:** Spirit AeroSystems Inc.

**Designers:** Spirit AeroSystems, in collaboration with Rockworx Concrete Designs.

**Products Used:** The Plastiform Co. plastic concrete forms. Increte Systems products: Olde English Slate Pattern and Notched Ashlar Slate pattern stamps, Desert Tan and Peach Tone Color Hardeners, Dark Gray and Sand Buff release agents, Clear Seal acrylic resin sealer, Shur-Grip nonslip additive.

**Project Description:** Transform a boring 10,000-square-foot concrete area between two buildings into an attractive courtyard for employee use.

**Challenges:** Complete the project on a deadline without disrupting the day-to-day operations of Spirit AeroSystems.



## Achieving liftoff

The first challenge for Doehring was to figure out how to get the concrete to the site. He was going to be doing the bulk of his concrete pours either after hours or on weekends — he was doing aircraft engineering during the day, after all — but he didn't want to absorb the added expense associated with off-hours concrete pumping. He took some measurements and realized that a concrete truck would fit (barely) between the two buildings. With that realization, he simply had to set forms in sections, pouring incrementally from the rear of the courtyard forward.

Next, he had to build a crew that was willing to work evenings and weekends. The answer? His college-aged son and some of his son's friends. "I had two guys with concrete experience, but the high school and college kids were great to have on the crew," he recalls.



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### Placing, stamping and coloring

With his crew in place, Doebling set about forming and pouring concrete. "We used Plastiform forms to achieve the curves and circles in the layout, pouring the curved borders for each section first," explains Doebling.

The borders, colored with Increte Desert Tan Color Hardener and Dark Gray release agent, were stamped with Increte Notched Ashlar Slate pattern stamps.

Once the forms were stripped and the concrete cured, the borders served as forms for the field concrete, in which he maintained continuity by stamping with Olde English Slate Pattern stamps. The field concrete was colored with Increte Peach Tone Color Hardener and Sand Buff release agent, creating a contrast to the colors in the borders.

Doebling finished off the job with Increte Clear Seal and Increte Shur-Grip nonslip additive. The Clear Seal will provide for easier snow removal during Kansas'

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harsh winters and act as a physical barrier to protect the concrete from frequent salting, while Shur-Grip provides a safer slip-resistant surface year round.

### About the award

Bernie McGuire, marketing manager for Increte Systems Inc., submitted the Spirit AeroSystems job for the award it ultimately won.

"We like to follow up on each job that we supply materials for," says McGuire. "When we see one that really stands out, we don't hesitate to nominate it for an award. It's a win all the way around ... the contractors get well-deserved credit for outstanding work, and we feel good that we contributed to something special."

McGuire says it was an easy decision to nominate Doebling's work. "The look of the Spirit AeroSystems job was unique and really well done. The way the borders and patterns accented the entirety of the job was very interesting. It was definitely deserving of recognition."


### A true calling?

Doebling began working with decorative concrete shortly after the 9/11 tragedy. The aircraft industry had slowed to the point that he was laid off from his Boeing contract engineering job, and he turned to concrete to make ends meet. When the aircraft work recovered, he returned to engineering, but in the interim he had discovered that he truly enjoyed the craft of decorative concrete.

"As an engineer, I was fascinated with how anyone could make rocks out of concrete," he says. "When I was temporarily laid off due to the aviation downturn, I spent that time learning how to fabricate, texture and color concrete. After completing a couple of concrete rock projects (for spas) I realized that there wasn't enough demand for a newbie concrete rock builder, so I added stamping and coloring to my repertoire."

"After that, it was simply a matter of embracing the challenge of making every stamping project look as realistic as possible. It has never been about mass production. It's more about the artistry and creativity of using concrete to simulate nature."

So does Doebling plan on continuing with both concrete and aeronautical engineering?

"I just play it by ear," he says. "I think I'll always continue creating with concrete. I plan to start working on incorporating decorative concrete integrally into new homes, both inside and out. I have faith that concrete holds the most creative possibilities in our future homes." 

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## Seamless Cracked Mud Seamless Skin from Proline Concrete Tools

**P**ROLINE Concrete Tools receives a lot of requests for custom stamps, but rarely do the patterns end up turning into a nationwide trend.

Back in early 1990s, the San Diego Zoo's San Diego Wild Animal Park (now called the San Diego Zoo Safari Park) wanted to emulate cracked mud found in

the Serengeti Desert.

"They were looking for a cracked mud, like what you would see in a dry watering hole," says Tyler Irwin, sales manager for Proline. "They knew exactly what they were looking for."

Both parties were pleased with the final outcome, and Proline added the Seamless Cracked Mud design to its line of seamless skins.

"We actually didn't think it would be very popular," Irwin says. "The uniqueness of it caught people's attention. It's one of our more popular skins now."

The pattern has become a hit for both commercial and residential applications, which Irwin credits to the original design.

"It doesn't look like anything else, even in our line," he says.

The seamless skins are available in 3-foot by 3-foot, 4-foot by 4-foot, and 5-foot by 5-foot sizes. In addition to the standard mat, a more flexible version is available for texturing up against walls. Irwin also noted that this particular texture is



Photo courtesy of Proline Decorative Concrete Systems

an easy one to stamp, so it's great for all skill levels.

For clients looking for the complete "cracked mud" treatment, Irwin suggests supplementing the texture with Proline's EZ-Tique antiquing washes. "Generally people use a base coat of Espresso, and then hit it with Rock Gray and Walnut," he says. "It makes for a very simple and inexpensive process."

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## PRODUCT NEWS

### Butterfield releases new stamps, texturing system

Butterfield Color has introduced a new addition to its collection of textures. Quartzite Strata is a base texture stamp for a working fire-pit feature.

Quartzite Strata was created by molding actual slabs of quartzite rock collected from the Ozark Mountains. The multidirectional facets in the surface make for a naturally stunning and aggressive texture that aids in slip resistance, making it an excellent choice in any application where traction is important. The texture of this stamp hides stamp placement and

also minimizes the need to rotate stamps, making it easy to work with.

Simplicity and versatility is the key to another new Butterfield release, the 18-inch by 36-inch Bluestone stamp. Each individual stamp is comprised of a single 18-inch by 36-inch stone. It is available in three distinctive textures to minimize repetition.

This stamp can be used to create a variety of stunning patterns, including





## Cracked Mud Seamless Skin from Brickform

**W**HEN Disney's Animal Kingdom in Florida wanted to create a new ride inspired by the popular Disney-Pixar movie "A Bug's Life," the theme park called on Brickform, a division of Solomon Colors Inc., to create a seamless texture skin representative of a dry lakebed. That was nearly one decade ago.

More recently, the cracked mud look has taken off in the marketplace. As a company policy, custom stamps aren't released to the public, so Brickform has redeveloped the texture skin to sell it.

"We were getting requests for a similar style, so we went back and reinvented the concept," said Jeff Bowers, who works in operations at Brickform. "We were able to recreate it into what it is today."

Rather than try to imitate the look of a dry lakebed in their shop, employees went out into nature to create a mold.

"It has a very natural feeling and look," Bowers says. "It's pulled straight from the earth."

Bowers noted that the most popular applications for the texture skin have been in themed locations such as amusement parks and zoos, as well as gardens and walkways where people want a natural look.

"One thing that makes this a perfect tool for these applications is that it takes the coldness of concrete out in a natural setting," he says.

Bowers noted that while the cracked-mud design works just like a normal texture skin, contractors may want to pay extra attention when placing it.

"You need to make sure you get all the texture in before removing the skin," he says, adding that if you completely remove the skin the cracks are almost impossible to line back up. "As long as you peel back the skin and check for any dead spots before lifting it up completely you can prevent a potential problem."

A variety of tool sizes are available, from a 12-inch square to a 48-inch square,



Photo courtesy of Brickform

making the skin ideal for projects of any size. The skin comes with either a Standard Flex or Ultra Flex rating.

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## PROJECT PROFILE

### Hi'ilani EcoHouse Kukuihaele, Hawaii

by Kelly O'Brien

**P**ERCHED on a hilltop amidst the tropical rain forests of the "Big Island" of Hawaii, the Hi'ilani EcoHouse commands a view out across the Pacific Ocean that you have to see to believe. With pristine beaches practically at your doorstep and balmy trade winds rustling through the treetops, it's your typical island paradise home. But when it comes to cutting-edge carbon neutral design and ecofriendly concrete construction, the Hi'ilani EcoHouse is anything but typical.

"This is a project that is a breakthrough project," says Robert Mechielsen, who designed the home. Mechielsen has years of experience in green building, both as

director of technology for Holland-based firm Carbon Neutral Technologies BV and as the principal of California-based Studio RMA. As you might expect from someone with such an illustrious background, he created a design for the project that incorporated a wide array of sustainable principles and products.

The homeowners are two families who decided to build a multifamily home together — both to get more bang for their buck and to reduce their collective carbon footprint. The luxurious home sits on 12 acres, includes a recording facility and a spa, and is completely carbon neutral. Mechielsen says one of the goals of the

project was to disprove "this idea that to be carbon-neutral you have to suffer."

In order to achieve carbon neutrality, Mechielsen developed a holistic design that accounts for every watt of electricity, drop of water, and ounce of carbon dioxide consumed or produced by the home over the course of its lifetime. Through partnerships with green manufacturers, he was able to employ numerous cutting-edge sustainable products in the home that ran the gamut from a self-regulating "eco-air-conditioning" system to an in-development concrete additive that boosts strength and reduces the amount of cement required in the concrete mix used for building.



Photos courtesy of Hadrian Tridi Systems





But of all the sustainable technologies the project employs, the heart of the Hi'ilani EcoHouse's success was Mechielsen's choice of construction method — Structural Concrete Insulated Panels (SCIP).

### What's the SCIP?

SCIP technology has been around for about 25 years, and Rod Hadrian, owner

of Hadrian Tridi Systems and Mechielsen's partner on the Hi'ilani project, has been marketing, selling and distributing it for almost as long. If you're new to SCIP construction, here's a primer: The panels are made from 5-inch-thick foam (which typically contains around 60 percent recycled material, says Hadrian). Running through the foam are high-gauge wire trusses — made with 100 percent recycled metal — that protrude on both sides of the panel. Welded to those trusses is a framework of (also recycled) wire mesh, onto which the contractors apply an inch and a half of concrete. The mix is either shot or poured onto the metal lath depending on whether the panel is vertical or horizontal.

The panels are 4 feet wide, run up to 40 feet long, and can be fastened together in virtually any configuration. For each SCIP project, panels are custom-ordered, so there's little waste, but that's almost inconsequential when compared to SCIP's other benefits.

For one thing, the foam core provides exceptionally high thermal resistance, which is a key factor when you're going for high-efficiency design. For another, SCIP structures are highly (and in some cases completely) resistant to many of the

vulnerabilities that plague wood-framed buildings: insects, vermin, rot, fire, high winds and even earthquakes. But chief among SCIP's many admirable assets is its incredible strength.

The Hi'ilani EcoHouse exemplifies that last in particular. In the entire 4,000-square-foot house, there is no structural wood or metal, unless you count rebar, and even then the highest gauge they used was 5/8-inch. That includes, by the way, the dramatically cantilevered rooftop, which Hadrian says would otherwise have required massive steel beams to pull off. "The strength that we create (with SCIP) is just unbelievable," he says.

### Miracles of modern roofing

SCIP panels and the green-friendly concrete mix were used to build the entire house. However, the inverted roof in particular is not just a testament to SCIP technology. It's also the cornerstone of Mechielsen's carbon-neutral design. The roof, Mechielsen says, "is almost like a motor. It drives the energy of the house, drives the airflow, and collects water for the house."

The energy part refers to the solar arrays on the rooftop, which contribute, along with

### Project at a Glance

**Head of the Design Team:** Robert Mechielsen, Studio RMA

**Head of the Building Team:** Rod Hadrian, Hadrian Tridi Systems

**Homeowners:** Sherry and Dave Pettus, Jim and Teri Sugg

**Location:** Kukuiahaele, Hawaii

**Length of Time Required:** 18 months start to finish. (They're expecting to finish the home this summer.)

**Project Specs:** 4,000-square-foot, carbon neutral, two-family home on 12 acres. The home is arranged with two private bedroom wings, one for each family, on either side of large common spaces. The house also boasts a sound-recording facility and a spa.

**Some of the Products Used:** Tridipanel SCIP construction system, Hydrostop PremiumCoat roofing system, Cure X Plus VOC-eliminating paint additive



wind power, to the home's independence from the island's power grid. As for airflow, that's a reference to the roof's role in the home's "eco air-conditioning" system. The shape of the roof panels, inspired by an airplane wing, creates areas of negative pressure that draw fresh air into the house, where it is circulated by solar-powered fans.

Finally, one of the greenest aspects of this super-green home — slated for a LEED Platinum rating upon its completion sometime this summer — is its water catchment system. Rainwater collected by the inverted roof is fed to a 25,000-gallon storage tank (also built of SCIP panels) which provides 100 percent of the water needed for household and irrigation use.

The other purpose served by the distinct, inverted roof design is as a visual metaphor for the project's name. Hi'ilani, says Mechielsen, is a Hawaiian word meaning something like "allowing oneself to receive the gifts of heaven." This sentiment can also be conveyed in the gesture of cupping your hands together, a gesture aptly echoed in the shape of the roofline.



Rod Hadrian of SCIP system provider Hadrian Tridi Systems stands on the roof of the Hi'ilani EcoHouse.

### A holistic approach

"I'm very good at science, and engineering — the physics part of things," says Mechielsen. "But I have a very artistic mind also." That balance between the right brain and the left, form and function, is

central to the Hi'ilani EcoHouse project.

Mechielsen says the first step to creating a truly green building is to take into consideration the resources available. "I have trade winds. I have sun. I have views. I have gravity. Those are all freebies," he says. "Then you start looking at the best technology to put it together." That balance between design and technology is also at the heart of Mechielsen and Hadrian's partnership.

"Robert is a genius with the design," says Hadrian, and "Rod is outrageously good at handling logistics," says Mechielsen. That combination of architectural and practical expertise is what makes the two of them, according to Mechielsen, "a lethal combination."

While the Hi'ilani EcoHouse is definitely a luxury project, Mechielsen and Hadrian see it as only the first step. "With the high-end EcoHomes, we want to show the public what we can do," Mechielsen says. The second prong of their approach is to take SCIP technology into low-income and medium-income housing. The intention with such a high-profile project was "to underwrite the development of a new building system," he says. So keep an eye out — carbon-neutral SCIP construction may be coming soon to a job site near you. 📱

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

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

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