

# Concrete

The Journal of Decorative Concrete

VOL. 2 No. 4 • DECEMBER/JANUARY 2003 • \$6.95

# Decor



## Getting High on Concrete

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**WEEKLY TIME SHEET**

WORKER: Bill W. WEEK: Last Wk

DATE	DAY	START TIME	LUNCH	END TIME	WORK DONE	JOB	TOTAL HOURS
	Monday	7:00	1/2	3:30	Driveway	Westgate	8
	Tuesday	7:00	1/2	3:30	Driveway	Westgate	8
	Wednesday	7:00	1/2	3:30	Driveway	Westgate	8
	Thursday	7:00	1/2	3:30	Driveway	Westgate	8
	Friday	7:00	1/2	3:30	Driveway	Westgate	8
	Saturday						
	Sunday						
TOTAL HOURS:							40

**REALITY?**

Created 2/7/2003 4:52 PM

## Employee Report

**Bill Winston**

Jobclock Name: Westgate Apartments

Date Range: 2/3/2003 through 2/7/2003

Start	End	Activity	
2/3/2003 7:13 AM	2/3/2003 12:02 PM	Surface Prep	4:49 hours
2/3/2003 12:50 PM	2/3/2003 3:17 PM	Surface Prep	2:27 hours 7:16 hours
2/4/2003 7:20 AM	2/4/2003 12:06 PM	Surface Prep	4:46 hours
2/4/2003 12:57 PM	2/4/2003 3:31 PM	Surface Prep	2:34 hours 7:20 hours
2/5/2003 7:08 AM	2/5/2003 12:01 PM	Pour/Stamp	4:53 hours
2/5/2003 12:41 PM	2/5/2003 3:07 PM	Pour/Stamp	2:26 hours 7:19 hours
2/6/2003 7:16 AM	2/6/2003 12:15 PM	Pour/Stamp	4:59 hours
2/6/2003 1:05 PM	2/6/2003 3:16 PM	Pour/Stamp	2:11 hours 7:10 hours
2/7/2003 7:21 AM	2/7/2003 11:50 AM	Seal/Coat	4:29 hours
2/7/2003 12:40 PM	2/7/2003 3:19 PM	Seal/Coat	2:39 hours 7:08 hours

Signature Bill Winston  
Bill Winston

Employee subtotal

**36:13 hours**

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## Professionals Wanted

It's show time once again. And I must say *Concrete Decor* is looking forward to your visit at this year's World of Concrete show in Las Vegas, February 4-7. If you have not attended the World of Concrete before, or it's been a few years since your last visit, keep in mind that Las Vegas is not only a convenient location but also commands the largest turnout of product manufacturers and visitors alike.

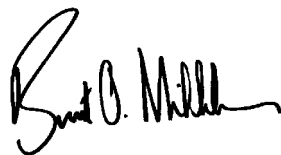
This year's event will host numerous seminars and live demonstrations by many of the industry's most talented craftsmen. This is your opportunity to take advantage of these educational programs, exchange ideas with other tradesmen from across the country and visit with manufacturers exhibiting their latest advances in product technology. As a contractor and one who loves the trades, it's been my experience that trade shows like this provide valuable information on making yourself more skilled and your business more profitable. While at the show be sure to visit *Concrete Decor* at booth #9522 — Concrete Repair Pavilion. Along with handing out the latest issue of *Concrete Decor*, we have something new and exciting for our *Concrete Decor* readers. Our new Web site, [www.findthePRO.com](http://www.findthePRO.com), is the latest addition in our service to contractors. At the show, we can meet with you in person and demonstrate how the Web site works and how your business can become recognized nationally, via our consumer-oriented e-magazine *Better Design*, for outstanding projects you've done.

[www.findthePRO.com](http://www.findthePRO.com) works like this: Every contractor subscribing to *Concrete Decor* receives a free basic company listing at [www.findthePRO.com](http://www.findthePRO.com). By subscribing to *Concrete Decor* at the show or anytime in the month of February, you'll get double the value. That means, subscribe to *Concrete Decor* for one year and you automatically get a second year FREE. Link your company Web site to [findthePRO.com](http://findthePRO.com) for one year (subscription included) and you'll automatically get a second year FREE. To take advantage of this special offer, subscriptions must be postmarked by February 28, 2003.

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We hope you enjoy this issue of *Concrete Decor*. Your valuable support assures continued growth in our service to you and the industry.

Happy New Year,



Bent Mikkelsen  
Publisher



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**Publisher:** Bent O. Mikkelsen

**Co-publisher:** Ernst H. Mikkelsen

**Editor:** Rosemary Camozzi

**Assistant Editor:** Harlan Baldrige

**Circulation:** Sheri Mikkelsen

**Design and Production:** Stephen Stanley

**Graphic Designer:** Michelle Hilden

**Advertising Sales:** Kathleen Goodman  
(314) 367-1121

### Writers:

Christina Camara  
Stacey Klemenc  
Mary Ann Petersen  
Joan Stanus  
John Strieder  
Denise Wendt

### Contributing Writers:

Michael Chusid  
Ken Lundin  
Jim Peterson

### Photographer:

Kent Peterson

### Editorial:

Professional Trade Publications, Inc.  
1925 Bailey Hill Road, Suite I  
Eugene, OR 97405  
Tel: 541-341-3390  
Fax: 541-341-6443

Email: [bmikkelsen@protradepub.com](mailto:bmikkelsen@protradepub.com)

### Circulation and Administration:

Professional Trade Publications, Inc.  
P.O. Box 25210  
Eugene, OR 97402  
Tel: 541-341-3390  
Fax: 541-341-6443  
Email: [emikkelsen@protradepub.com](mailto:emikkelsen@protradepub.com)

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**ON THE COVER:** Contractor Geth Noble of Airspeed Skateparks takes the trade and his hobby to a whole new level. See story on page 8.  
Photographer: Kent Peterson



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## **NRMCA strengthens industry relationships**

Nicole Maher is the new director of industry relations and special programs for the National Ready Mixed Concrete Association. Maher has served NRMCA since 1989 in a number of capacities, most recently as director of associate membership and special programs. She will continue to act as administrator to the Concrete Plant Manufacturers Bureau, the Truck Mixer Manufacturers Bureau and the Volumetric Mixer Manufacturers Bureau.

## **Clark joins OKON**

Linda Clark is the new director of national retail sales for OKON Inc. Clark brings extensive experience in corporate account development and will be responsible for spearheading the advancement of OKON's retail market business.



## **New offices for USF**

USF Surface Preparation Group has expanded its Rocky Mountain presence with new offices in Salt Lake City and Denver. With a combined square footage of more than 14,000 square feet, the new locations act as a customer hub for the states of Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Utah and Wyoming. Both offices were relocated from smaller facilities in response to a growing number of customers in the region. The offices support the sales, service and supply of airblast, portable and select wheelblast equipment and media. USF Surface Preparation Group is a division of USFilter. For more information, visit [www.surfacepreparation.com](http://www.surfacepreparation.com).

## **Supplier opens second location**

The Decorative Concrete Store, headquartered in Cincinnati, Ohio, is expanding into the Springboro/Dayton South area. The stores are a great source for architectural and decorative concrete

construction tools and materials. The new store is at 880 Pleasant Valley Drive in Springboro, Ohio.

## **New name reflects expanded focus**

Versatile Deck Coatings has changed its name to Versatile Building Products. Due to increased growth in the areas of industrial and garage coatings, repair mortars and self-leveling underlayments, Versatile's business and market reach has extended far beyond the waterproofing market that was its base for so many years. The name change reflects its ongoing and increased commitment to the decorative concrete, concrete repair, waterproof decking, and coatings markets.

Versatile Building Products Inc. (800) 535-3352 or [www.deckcoatings.com](http://www.deckcoatings.com).

## **New VPs at NRMCA**

Glenn Ochsenreiter is the new vice president of marketing for the National Ready Mixed Concrete Association. He will oversee NRMCA's concrete promotion, membership and product marketing. Ochsenreiter comes to the association with more than 20 years senior-level experience in business-to-business, consumer and trade association marketing.

Michael Forster is the NRMCA's new vice president of finance and administration. Forster, who has worked for Maximus Inc., The Washington Post Co., Arthur Anderson and others, has extensive experience in strategic planning, audit and quality assurance, financial planning and information systems analysis.

## **E-learning site offers math prep for seminars**

A new e-learning site offers a multiple choice math pre-assessment test for those registered in the National Ready Mixed Concrete Association's Certified Concrete Sales Professional (CCSP) program or the Concrete Technology Training and Certification Course Short Course. Sponsored by the NRMCA in partnership with Grace Construction Products and Middle Tennessee State University, the site recommends math references that the participant can use if he has difficulty answering certain problems. The test was developed to help registrants prepare for the seminars. For more information, see [www.nrcma.org](http://www.nrcma.org).

## **ASCC conference a success**

The first annual conference of the American Society of Concrete Contractors was attended by 180 concrete



contractors and their employees. Activities included seminars, roundtable discussions, architectural flatwork demonstrations and award presentations.

Eugene H. Boeke Jr., former vice president of Atlanta-based Beers Skanska Inc., received a Lifetime Achievement Award at the conference, held Sept. 12-14 in Nashville, Tenn. Boeke is nationally known for his expertise in poured-in-place architectural concrete and concrete formwork. He is past president of the ASCC and a past director and past national board member of the American Concrete Institute. He received the ACI's Roger H. Corbetta Construction Award in 1988 for significant contributions to progress in methods of concrete construction.

Innovation Awards were presented to David W. Somero, developer of the self-propelled laser screed for striking off freshly poured concrete, and posthumously to Brad Bowman, who developed technology for imprinting concrete with a pattern and texture.

Joe Schneider, founder and president of Spirit Seminars Consulting, was the conference's keynote speaker. A former concrete finisher, Schneider shared his insights on different personality types and how they can work together.

Participants were also treated to decorative concrete installation techniques, including staining, etching, overlays, stamping and stenciling. According to the ASCC, decorative concrete is the fastest growing segment of the concrete industry.

### Concrete technology training offered

A five-day course offering concrete technology training and certification will be held in Denver, Colo., March 3-7. The short course, offered by the NRMCA, is a comprehensive curriculum on concrete and aggregate technology designed to provide the

fundamental knowledge needed to perform job functions successfully and efficiently. The course covers the specifications, testing, properties and uses of concrete as well as its ingredients, materials, mixture proportioning, quality control procedures and more. Laboratory sessions on proper

testing of fresh concrete and aggregates will be held. The course culminates with examinations offering three levels of industry-wide recognized certification. For registration forms or more information, visit [www.nrmca.org](http://www.nrmca.org) or call (888)-84NRMCA.



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2. Each NCA package is double bagged. Remove the protective outer bag and add the entire water-soluble Fritz-Pak inner bag and contents to the wet concrete mix. The inner bag will easily dissolve.
3. Important: Mix thoroughly for at least 5 minutes at high speed to ensure proper dispersion throughout the mix.
4. When working at low temperatures, users should follow the ACI Guidelines and Specifications for Cold Weather Concreting (ACI 306R-88 and ACI 306.1-90).

**RECOMMENDED DOSAGE RATE:**  
Dosage rate varies depending on temperature and the amount of acceleration desired. Increased dosages provide higher acceleration rates. Recommended dosage is 1-3 bags per cu yard of concrete (1-3 lbs/cwt - 1-3% by weight of cement). Higher dosages may be used for faster acceleration. Some typical effects of Fritz-Pak NCA at different temperatures are presented in Table 1 (see back of the bag). Dosage percentages are percent of Fritz-Pak NCA by weight of cement.

Refer to Fritz-Pak NCA Product Bulletin #210 and Material Safety Data Sheet for more information.

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# Decorative Concrete Tips

**Decorative Concrete Tips** is a forum for readers to exchange information about methods, tools, and tricks they've devised. We'll pay for any we publish. Send details to CD Tips, Concrete Decor, P.O. Box 25210, Eugene, OR 97402. We look forward to hearing from you!

## Evaporation Reducers

**W**e all know that the weather plays a huge factor in our trade. Trying to figure out the ever-changing weather conditions and how they affect our work is the lifelong journey of every dedicated concrete installer. As we all know, weather can change in a very short period of time despite what the weatherman calls for on TV. A few years ago, I found a material that works like a secret weapon in certain weather conditions. It is called an evaporation reducer and it does exactly what its name suggests.

Did you ever do a pour in spring or late fall when the ground is cool, and the sun real strong? The cool ground kinda makes the concrete mushy on the bottom, yet the surface is setting up fast from the sun. Now throw in a little wind, and you have yourself a royal headache brewing, trying to figure out what the heck is going on with the concrete. So you ask yourself, how do I finish this...? Surface evaporation can be a major pain in the butt with everyday standard concrete, then when you add some color hardener that will rob away a bit more moisture, it adds fuel to the fire

— now your concrete is doing everything you *don't* want! Days like this you're thinking about having to rip it out, even before it is fully set or anywhere close to being finished, mainly because when the effects of nature have dried out the surface, finishing the slab could be a real challenge. Evaporation reducers are great in this kind of situation, although they are good for many other climatic conditions as well. The trick is to know when to use an evaporation reducer and to use it early in the game.

An evaporation reducer is not a finishing aid and should not be used in the final finishing operations after all other efforts have failed. This type of product should be used immediately after screeding, and/or between floating operations in the early stages of the pour. This material is made by several different manufacturers; they all produce the material with a fugitive dye in it so you can see where it is applied and where it is not applied. I have seen it in yellow, blue and pink. It comes as a concentrate that is diluted nine parts water to 1 part evaporation reducer, which yields 10 gallon of material. Coverage will be between 2,000 and 4,000 square feet. This is dependent on the volume rate at which the material is applied. It is usually applied with a hand-held pump sprayer.

Evaporation reducer works by forming a mono-molecular film on the surface of the fresh concrete. This film holds the moisture content in the fresh concrete while it is in its fresh or plastic state. Additionally, it reduces surface moisture evaporation by about 80 percent in the wind and about 40 percent in direct sunlight; it eliminates or greatly reduces plastic-shrinkage cracking and crusting from the wind; and it helps greatly with excessive evaporation caused by portable heating in winter months.

It is also wonderful with sun spots coming through large windows and when half the pour is in the sun and half the pour has shade. The fluorescent color tints disappear completely upon the drying of the concrete and any remaining residue does not alter the final color or impair bonding of sealers.

This is one item that will help improve the quality of your final work, even if weather is against you. Good luck on all your projects!

— Bart Sacco.  
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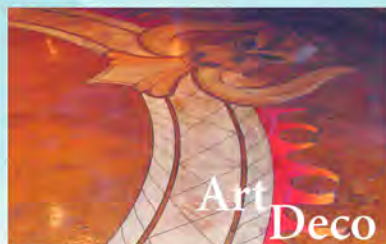
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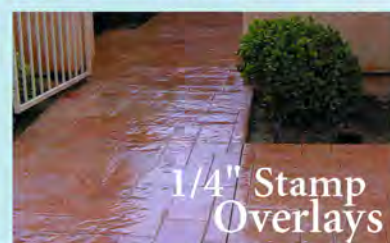
Art Deco



Interior  
Overlays



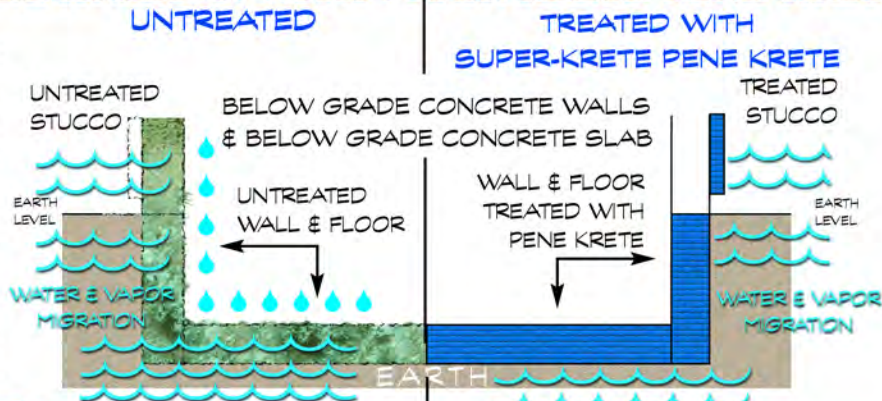
Pool Decks



1/4" Stamp  
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# Airspeed Skateparks

*Inspiration finds form ... in concrete*

**A**s you approach Airspeed Skateparks' latest project, in Eugene, Ore., you hear the sound of speeding skateboards as they glide over the slick surface of the concrete. The whirl is occasionally punctuated by the chop of wheels biting into the surface after soaring high into the air. The 8,100-square-foot park invites wheels of all sizes: small "trick" bikes, rollerblades, and, of course, skateboards. No matter what the medium, the riders glide side-to-side, up and down, and pop up, floating momentarily.

The park's builders, Geth Noble and Stephanie Mohler, have about 30 years of skateboard experience between them. At separate times, the two were irresistibly drawn to the building site of a community-sponsored skateboard park. Neither had previous experience pouring, shaping, or mixing concrete, but both put in many volunteer hours alongside different crews while learning the art of pouring and troweling dips, bowls, and drop-offs.



After working hundreds of hours without pay, Noble and Mohler were hired on as part of a permanent crew.

Alongside the concrete crews (all of whom skated), they jumped into each project, helping develop thrilling new challenges. Noble, 37, and Mohler, 30, have collectively worked on about a dozen skateparks. A couple of years ago, they decided to form Airspeed. "What we do is a passion; we love it because we love skating," says Mohler. "To me it's the ultimate because it brings together physical labor, art, skateboarding, and community." Depending on the project, Airspeed's crew ranges from six to eight workers, all of whom are avid skaters.

Parks usually range from 8,000 to 20,000 square feet. At nearly 30,000 square feet, the Chehalem Skate Park, in Newberg, Ore., is one of the most revered and visited parks in the Pacific Northwest. *Thrasher Magazine* rated the park — which Noble and Mohler helped build — an 11 out of a possible 10. According to the magazine, "Ten is just not loud enough."

## It's all about motion

Plenty of people can work with concrete and make functional and aesthetically pleasing interior and exterior structures. A skatepark, however, is a different animal. In addition to having a sound structural plan and fresh features, a great park needs a crew that understands motion. Stephanie and Noble are adamant that to build a great park, the designer must be a skater and therefore, a potential user of the park. "You just have an intimate knowledge of how things should be, or could be. You have inspiration that an architect or someone outside of skateboarding could never have," says Mohler.

"I wouldn't be able to design if I didn't skate. It's all about speed and air," says Noble, who last year received a design award sponsored by two skateboard organizations, the Concrete Disciples and the Skatepark Association of the United States of America. How do you incorporate speed in a design? "There are all sorts of ways to generate speed," Noble says.

"Shapes, both concave and convex, can pump the rider through or over. Steep and tall things will drop them down." All the "speed lines" need to be lined up, he says. Some designers shoot these lines out of the park or into a straight wall, which breaks the momentum of the rider. Noble's goal is to design lines that propel the skater gracefully through the park, giving them a ride that doesn't require a push to stay in motion. This can be done, says Noble, if all lines "connect in a logical fashion."

## Motion manipulation

Because they have skated for so many years and continue to skate "most every day," both Noble and Mohler find inspiration for new designs on a regular basis. To bring their inspiration to concrete reality, they use a 3-D modeling software program called Rhino. The program creates, edits, and analyzes a broad array of complex objects through its mathematical representation of 3-D geometry. This flexibility, when combined with







Rhino's high degree of accuracy, makes it possible to design, make prototypes, engineer, analyze, and manufacture an endless variety of shapes. Users can manipulate and experiment with a concept, working through problems and creating new ideas. Rhino is an especially good tool for free-form and organic shapes. Noble and Mohler says the program has pushed them to a new level in their design capabilities.

Airspeed Skateparks builds only its own designs and designs only for parks that it will build. Combining construction and design keeps Geth and Stephanie busy as they juggle building one park while planning the next one. Because there are various niches in skating — street skating, pool riding, skatepark riding, vert riding — Airspeed incorporates all aspects with each design.

### **A committee approach**

The initial design serves as a template, representing the basic size and placement of the park. "The park





evolves into what it is really going to be during the building process, says Stephanie." It never stays like it is on paper — it always gets way better!"

Typically, a public meeting is held with all interested users (for more info about skatepark building resources and community collaboration, visit [www.skatepark.org](http://www.skatepark.org)). Requests for designs are heard and opinions are sought as to what people want the park to offer. "We listen to their ideas and desires and try to incorporate them into the design," Mohler says. As lead designer, Noble likes to educate the park's potential users on the very latest designs, rather than simply providing the same, common shapes that users know and may eventually find boring. Riders like "fly-outs," places where they can launch out into the air. They also like rails. A "kink-to-vert," an eight-foot radius pocket with a kink that shoots the rider up a four-foot vertical wall, is also popular. Airspeed likes to build new features every time.

## The mix

The better the mix (the higher percentage of portland cement), the more durable the concrete. Cracks can't be completely eliminated, but the good news is that deterioration can be repaired. As a preventative measure, Noble places flush joints about every 20 to 30 feet. If an area appears especially vulnerable to cracks, saw cuts can be used for control. The crews use a lot of retardant, about a two-hour set delay to give them time to manipulate the concrete. To make the park's unique rounded and aerodynamic shapes, Noble fabricates tools out of fiberglass. He also uses tools designed for building swimming pools. After shaping and hard troweling, acrylic Cure & Seal is applied to give it a slow cure.

## The ultimate park: Florence

Noble and Mohler have long dreamed of building a skate park in Florence, Ore., their hometown. Their dream

will finally be realized this spring, when they are scheduled to start the project. This will be one to watch for. "We have all kinds of plans for it, top-secret structures that have never been built before," says Noble. Sandblast etching, tile work, and after-finish staining will highlight Airspeed's artistic talents. Fortunately, Florence has excellent resources for Airspeed's vision, bringing a budget to the project that will aid in the creation of a world-class skatepark. This project will not only be an impressive example of concrete work, but if it reflects half the amount of enthusiasm that Noble and Mohler bring to it, it will be a whole lot of fun.



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CIRCLE #45 ON READER SERVICE CARD



# Spotlight

## Marketing a Contracting Firm — What Does it Take?

by Juliet Farmer and Jim Peterson

**M**arketing skills aren't something people are born with. To market effectively, meaning you get results and aren't wasting money or time, you have to work — hard.

You're used to working hard. Hard work is what you've built your company on. Every day you're working hard to close more sales and finish jobs. But unless you work as hard at marketing your company, you may soon find yourself out of work entirely.

Thor Moody, President of the American Society of Concrete Contractors, says that most contractors, large and small, don't focus on image, instead focusing on selling only. And because they work that way, they get very little negotiated work.

Was he talking about you?

So what does it take to market your company effectively? First, you need the money to market, then you need some proven ways to market, and lastly, you need to learn the keys to success.

So now you have the money set aside for marketing. You're ready for the phones to start ringing. What now? Here are 13 ways to effectively market your business:

1. Study! Like everything else in life, you can never learn too much about marketing and business strategy. Because there are thousands of books out there on the subject, it's a bit overwhelming to try to weed through them all to find books that offer proven advice. Tom Ralston, of Tom Ralston Concrete, suggests reading *Lessons from the Top: The 50 Most Successful Business Leaders in America — And What You Can Learn from Them*, by Thomas J. Neff, James M. Citrin, and Paul B. Brown. "Be like a scientist and analyst in your area, like a baseball statistician. Information is power; it's fun to keep learning. Never be complacent, never rest on your laurels," Ralston says.

2. Tap into a free resource. Press releases are a great way to take advantage of an effective message vehicle — the media. You're doing lots of newsworthy things, but do you get the attention of the media? If you're not getting coverage from local media outlets, you're not reaching potential customers. Newsworthy press releases are a great way to communicate with the media, and they can also be used on your Web site and in your collateral material.

3. Retain current customers. Part of retaining your customers involves keeping in constant communication with them.

Marketing tools such as newsletters build and maintain rapport with your customers. Rocky Geans, owner of L.L. Geans Construction Company in Mishawaka, Indiana, started his advertising with bus benches and small ads in the yellow pages. He says he also uses a quarterly newsletter to communicate to customers and prospects. "I had a prospect I had been mailing newsletters to for three years and I finally got work from him and now we work with him all the time," he says. "You just have to be tenacious, you can't give up."

4. Position yourself as a professional. Include a full-color brochure customized with your company information in bids, and use the catalogs on your Web site and in other collateral material.

5. Profile your company. Include a full-color profile of your company in your bids, and use the profile on your Web site and in other collateral material.

6. Give stuff away. Nail down the keys to advertising success — recency and frequency — in one step. Give clients and prospects custom advertising specialties like mugs, scales and mouse pads with your company name and logo on them.

7. Stay in front of your customers. Direct mail is a great way to keep your name in front of customers and prospects. Target your mailing list to include architects, custom homebuilders, general contractors, designers, homebuilders, landscape designers and remodelers, and send them full-color postcards or letters. Geans is getting ready to launch a direct mail campaign, and he's supplementing his letters with reply cards, follow-up letters and brochures.

8. Make the most of your Web site. You've already spent money getting your Web site up and running, so don't forget to make the most of it by creating galleries of your work and keeping the content current and fresh. And while it's vital to be on the Internet with a good Web site, Rod Sadleir, owner of Concrete Solutions in San Diego, California, takes it one step further. He says he uses virtual imaging as a great selling point.

9. Advertise on television. Want to wow the customers you already have while you reach a larger audience? Have a professional commercial produced and run on local and cable television. Sadleir also recommends radio and cable



television ads. Although it may sound unheard of, he has some local cable television spots he says he bought for \$10 each. He says he also advertises in targeted publications.

10. No matter how great your marketing, the integrity of your work needs to back it up. "Nothing is better than a contractor doing good work," says Doug Bannister, owner of The Stamp Store, in Oklahoma City, Okla. "I knew of a company marketing extremely well, but they couldn't handle the field work and now they're out of business." Ralston agrees. "If you don't back up marketing with good product and put in 110 percent, it doesn't matter," he says. "You need to work hard to develop a good reputation. I try to make my customers go away with a smile. I want to make raving fans out of my clients, because word-of-mouth is 75 percent of my work."

11. Brand your business. Ralston says his branding all started with his mint-green logo. "I spent a year getting the perfect logo ... I even have my logo in a stamp to sign every job," Ralston says. He also uses the logo on company uniforms and vehicles. But he takes it one step further by painting his trucks the same color as his logo. "I use mint green for money and success," he says.

12. Samples are another strong selling point. Bannister says that he started out making small samples of stamped concrete as leave-behinds on sales calls, and now his showroom does the work for him. "Our showroom is a clearinghouse to getting products sold," he says.

13. Get involved in your community. Geans likes the community approach in addition to other marketing tools. He supports local little league teams, because he says, "It shows I'm part of the community, and the added benefit is parents see my company name."

Clearly, most companies cannot initiate all these marketing tools at one time. But pick out what you can do — then keep adding on marketing initiatives over time. And the best reason to not be shy about marketing? "There's a limit to how much work you can get from knocking on doors. You need to find a way to get people knocking on your door," Moody says.

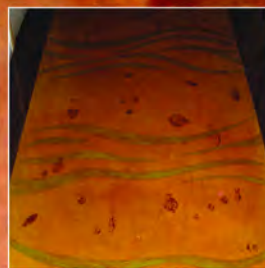


*Jim Peterson is founder and president of The Concrete Network. Founded in 1999, The Concrete Network (www.concretenetwork.com) serves architects, builders, designers, consumers, and remodelers with more than 1,500 pages of concrete information and local service providers for concrete countertops, stamped concrete, acid-etch staining, concrete resurfacing and 43 other types of concrete work.*

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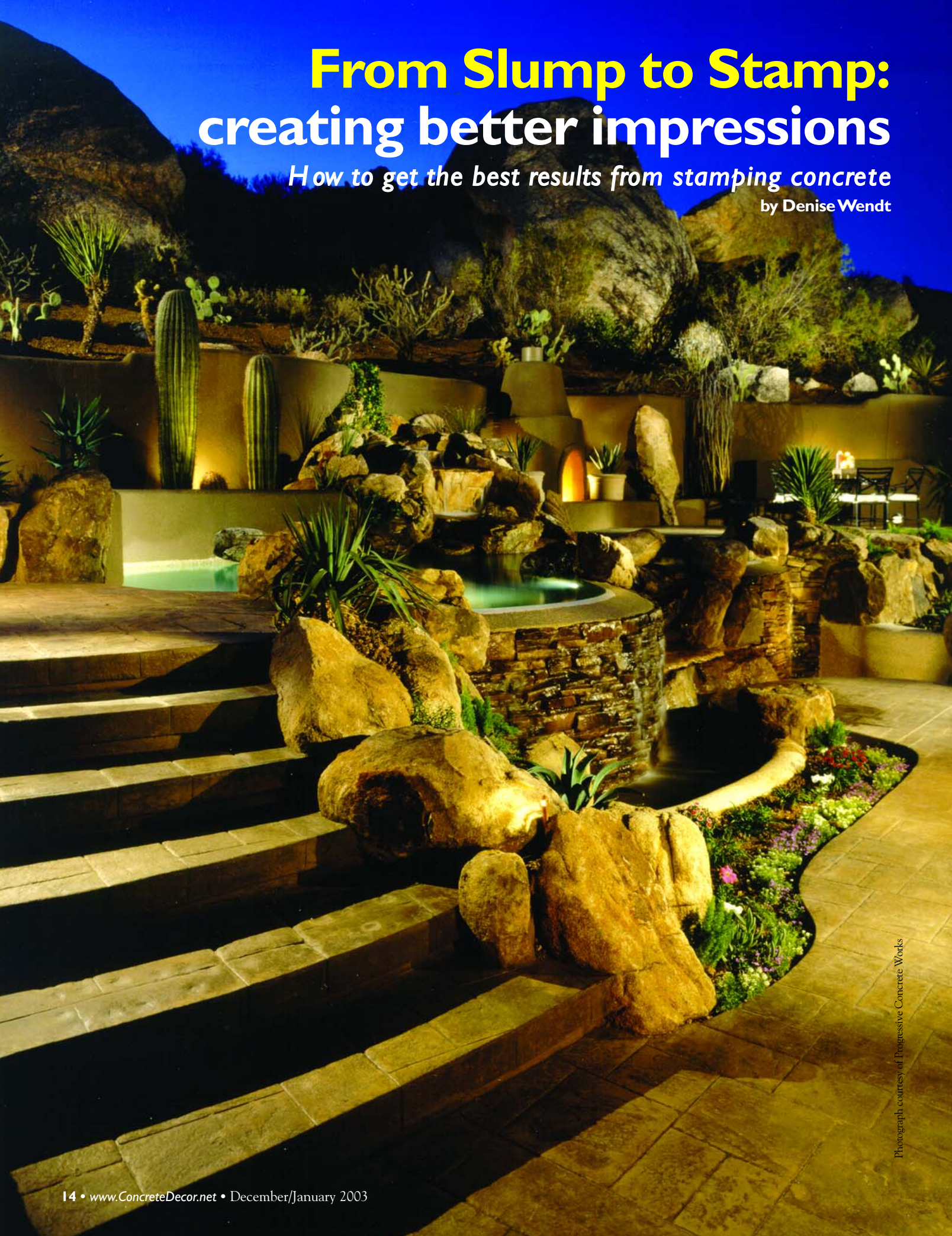
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# From Slump to Stamp: creating better impressions

*How to get the best results from stamping concrete*

by Denise Wendt



Photograph courtesy of Progressive Concrete Works



**S**tamped concrete offers an inexpensive alternative to slate, brick and stone materials while creating the same visual effect. But there are a few tips every installer should remember. *Concrete Decor* asked veteran concrete professionals to share their techniques for success.

### Mud that's just right

"Concrete is the hardest work on this planet, bar none, if it gets away from you," says Richard Smith, who owns Richard Smith Custom Concrete in West Hills, Calif. "But with proper planning and a lot of common sense, that doesn't have to happen."

"When you finish or stamp concrete it is kind of like Goldilocks' porridge," says Tom Ralston, owner of Tom Ralston Concrete in Santa Cruz, Calif. "You can't have it be too soft or too hard. It has to be at just the right consistency." Too wet and the concrete pulls the stamps, leaving suction marks. Too dry and it will not leave any substantial embossment or impression.

Concrete tool distributor and trainer Bart Sacco owns and operates Concrete Texturing Tool & Supply in Throop, Penn. "You want concrete that's workable but not excessively wet," says Sacco. He uses a 4- to 4.5-inch slump. "As the season progresses I'll pour tighter to compensate for evaporation," he says.

Michael Riggs owns Progressive Concrete Works Inc., in Phoenix. "We place all concrete at a maximum slump of 5 inches," says Riggs. "Consistency is very important and every load should be placed at the same slump so that the texture and color will be consistent." A lower slump can also prevent oozing between stamps, says Riggs.

To ensure a consistent impression, Riggs places 4 inches of aggregate base course and then compacts the subgrade before placing any concrete. "We have found that this helps us achieve a more consistent finish and also helps to prevent efflorescence," he says.

As with all concrete, weather and sunlight affect surface hardness. Surface hardness has a significant impact on the



Photographs courtesy of Progressive Concrete Works



texture as well as the color. When setting up a job with areas in direct sunlight and areas in shade, Riggs says to consider how the inconstancy will affect the finishing. If possible, consider placing the areas separately.

### Smoothing suction marks

Ralston recommends using a texture roller or a lambswool paint roller to smooth out suction marks that can result from stamping wet concrete. Wedged jointing rollers can be used to knock down suction marks, smooth ridges and clean up the joints between the stamp patterns.

"Many times the oozing is a characteristic a bad set of tools," says Riggs. If you have a set of tools that you have had oozing problems with in the past, replace the tools, he says.

### Timing is everything

"Timing is essential in patterned concrete work," says Sacco. He urges contractors to know the properties of the concrete they're working with, to

know the weather conditions they'll be working in and to adjust their timing appropriately. "Depending on the time of the year, you'll either have to speed up or slow down to achieve a nicer stamped impression," says Sacco.

"When planning and scheduling a project, don't place more concrete than you can handle," says Riggs. "Remember the owner is paying you a premium for the stamped concrete and is going to be critical of every small detail."

Charles Leland, owner of SureCrete Design Products in Dade City, FL, agrees. "Don't get greedy," says Leland. "Start with smaller, controllable amounts to stamp in a work day. And don't be afraid to hire a consultant for a job to ensure success."

Know your stamps before you get to the job site, says Ralston. He recommends putting down about an inch of sand in a 15x15-square foot area. Wet that down and lay out your stamps. "Do a dry run so you know how these stamps are going to interlock," he says.



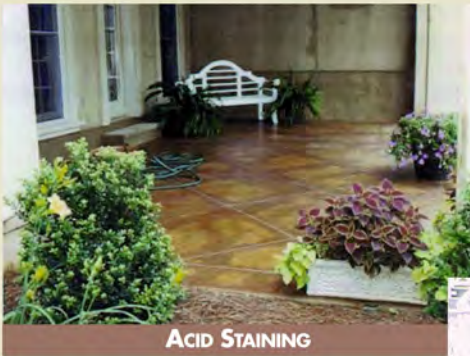
**Above: Ashlar slate with a visible repeat.**

**Below: Running the pattern at a 45-degree angle eliminates unwanted lines.**



Photographs courtesy of Richard Smith Custom Concrete

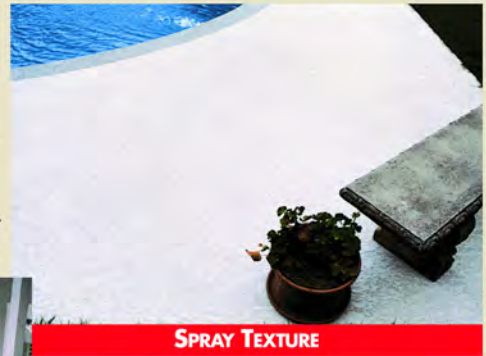
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Be aware that the tools will also draw moisture if left on the slab too long, affecting the texture as well as the color, says Riggs.

### Tool selection, use can help reduce repeats

Some stamps, such as a European fan pattern, are designed to be used throughout an entire pour, repeating over and over again. But a visible repeat, in an ashlar slate for example, is undesirable. For such a project, use a 3-pattern stamp, with patterns labeled A, B and C or blue, gold and red. "The different colors dictate a different rock pattern to help you reduce the look of using a mold," says Sacco. Interchange these three different patterns frequently throughout the slab.

Smith avoids unwanted lines by turning some patterns 45 degrees. "A pattern, such as ashlar slate, that isn't intended to be a straight-line pattern becomes a straight-line pattern when you start stacking it," says Smith. "The way to get around that is to turn it on a

45 degree angle and all of a sudden all those lines disappear."

Bands and borders can also break up noticeable lines that develop on large areas. "Hide" control joints by incorporating them into the design with complementary bands and borders, suggests Leland. "Banding with a contrasting color or texture will help break up a large field," says Riggs.

Borders can also help downplay slight color variations that can result from different pours.

Sacco uses Creative Images tools to cover larger pieces of ground with fewer placements of the mat. The larger Creative Images stamps can break up noticeable lines that develop on large areas. Note that two men must lift these larger stamps simultaneously to avoid scrubbing the surface of the concrete.

### Admixtures can also help

Admixtures do many different things and some can help minimize the problems that can occur when stamping concrete.

Calcium chloride and Polar Set accelerate set time and allow the bottom of the pour to dry at the same rate as the top, promoting a good stamp. Polar Set doesn't have any adverse effects with rebar while some colors are adversely affected by the calcium chloride. So consider your job when choosing an admixture.

"Fritz-Pak makes good admixtures that you can add on the job site," says Ralston. This is especially useful when the site is hotter or windier than where you started that morning. "Fritz-Pak step retardant can give you the extra time you need in those conditions," he says.

Riggs uses admixtures to control set times and water cement ratios. But watch out for crusting and surface cracking with some high-range water reducers.

Riggs likes to use dry shake color hardeners, which offer a broad range of coloring options. "Installers need to apply the hardeners evenly to avoid clumps and wet and dry spots," says Riggs.

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"Some detailed stamps require a creamier cement," says Smith, who adjusts for this by adding a little color over the top of the cement. "The extra color gives the concrete a slightly fatter surface or a creamy base," says Smith.

## Tamping tips

Tamping well requires practice and experience. Our pros had these tips on which tools to use and how to use them.

"We like to use the tamper because it allows us to use different amounts of force to address the areas of the slab that have not set up consistently," says Riggs.

Leland uses a tamper to remove footprints.

Smith usually uses a square tamper, but some jobs require a different approach. "If we're doing a driveway or pool deck that has a drain basin, even the standard 10x10-inch square tamper will leave an outside impression." Then he turns to a thin, 8-inch round piece of plywood to tamp down the stamp.

"When you get into different elevations or when the slab tends to roll up and



down, you want to try a different method."

Sacco uses 2x10 or 2x12-inch pieces of lumber to seat his mats. "When the concrete is very fresh, we'll lay the mats out, keeping them as tight as possible. Then instead of stepping on the mats, we'll lay a strip of lumber down and walk on that, distributing our weight more evenly." He uses two pieces of lumber, putting one in front of the other, and leapfrogs from one to the next.

## Training

All our professionals agree that training is crucial, whether you're a veteran of the trade or just starting out.

"If you are not constantly learning in this business you are in big trouble," says Riggs. "Since 1970 we have placed literally millions of square feet of stamped concrete and every day is a learning experience."

"Training is extremely important," agrees Ralston, who also teaches pattern stamping and acid-staining techniques around the country. "Any seminar you can send a person to is beneficial. You will always learn something and they can make good networking connections when attending seminars."

Twenty-five-year concrete veteran Smith says you're never too experienced to learn something new. "Wherever I can get my hands on a good training course, I still go. There are constantly new techniques, new chemicals coming out and new ways to apply color."



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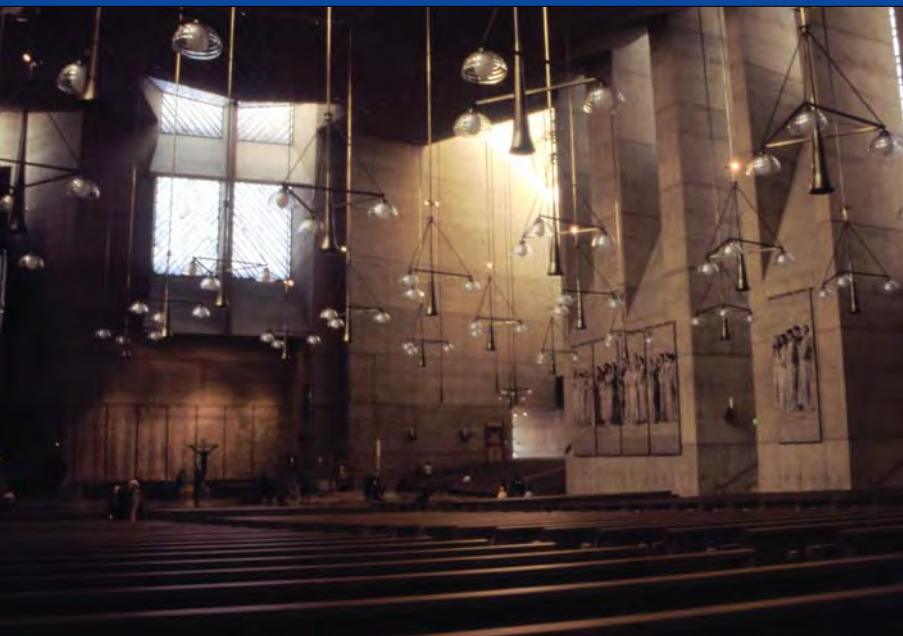
CIRCLE #23 ON READER SERVICE CARD



# Earthy hues, heavenly structure

*Colored concrete at the Los Angeles Cathedral*

by Michael Chusid



Photographs courtesy of Davis Colors





In the recently completed Our Lady of the Angels Cathedral, common concrete has been uplifted into a structure that expresses the spiritual passions of its community. One of the most striking ingredients in this transformation has been the use of integral color in the concrete. Colored concrete was used to construct the cathedral and the adjacent bell tower and plaza, and is exposed as the finish for interior and exterior walls. Unlike the gray of typical concrete structures, the cathedral has an earthy golden cast that complements the Southern California sky and recalls the hue of the adobe used to build the first mission churches in the region.

While the “mission adobe” palette harkens back to the past, the cathedral was also built with an eye towards the future. Dubbed the “Half-Millennium Cathedral,” the structure was designed to provide five hundred years of service to the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. This ambitious performance criterion figured in the decision to use integral colors since the iron oxide pigments that tint the concrete are permanent and fade-proof.

The colorants for the cathedral were supplied by Davis Colors, a brand of Rockwood Pigments and a world-wide leader in concrete color additives. According to Nick Paris, vice president of Davis Colors, “Iron oxides are the same pigments that give real adobe its buff tone and provide the color in such natural wonders as the Grand Canyon. The earth tones of the cathedral will last as long as the concrete itself.” The use of integrally colored concrete assures that the cathedral will be able to avoid the ongoing maintenance associated with paints and surface-applied coatings, he adds.

### Design approach

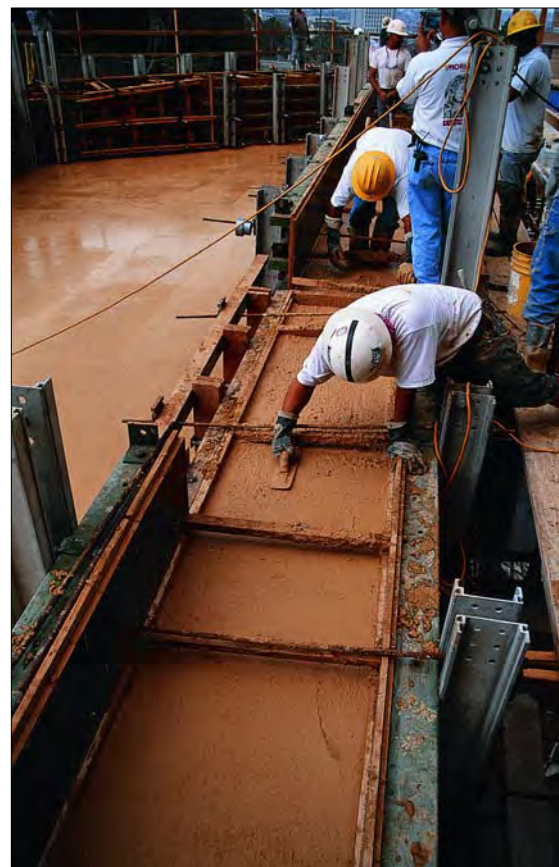
This is not to say that painted or prefinished surfaces were seriously considered on the project. The cathedral’s designer, Spanish architect Jose Rafael Moneo, envisioned the use of cast-in-place concrete from early in the

project. His choice reflects his experience with architectural concrete in Europe and his concern for using materials honestly to express the character of the material from which a building is made. When another design option was proposed — to clad a steel frame with prefabricated panels — Moneo rejected the approach, stating that he wanted to “see the hand of the craftsman” in the construction materials. In keeping with the architect’s vision, the concrete shows subtle nuances in appearance due to the complex behavior of cementitious materials. “Concrete, whether colored or not, is a natural material prone to variation in appearance,” Paris says. Instead of being seen as defects, these variations are part of the aesthetic appeal of concrete, expressing its character and vitality.” Indeed, many visitors to the cathedral assume that it is made of quarried stone because the colored concrete has such a natural look.

The project team was faced with the challenges of designing a concrete mixture and establishing construction procedures to meet both the technical and aesthetic requirements of the building. The first large scale mock-ups built to investigate proposed concrete mixtures cracked due to heat produced by curing cement. The thick walls of the building, up to 60 inches in some locations, had created a heat sink that made it difficult for the cement’s heat of hydration to dissipate. Thermal cracking is not a problem in typical



Photographs courtesy of Davis Colors





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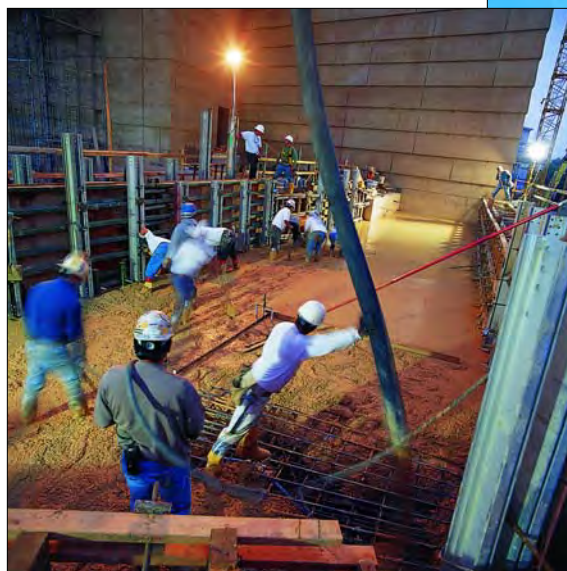
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buildings. But in a monument designed to last five centuries, thermal cracks could allow corrosive chemicals to penetrate into the structure and lead to premature deterioration.

The conventional approach to this type of problem is to use cement and admixtures that release less heat. Such materials, however, were either not available from local suppliers or were too dark in color to produce the desired concrete shade. Another approach is to cool a structure by spraying it with water as it cures. However, this was unacceptable on the cathedral since concrete can pale if it is exposed to water before it has set sufficiently. To resolve these contradictory demands, a large number of additional mock-ups were constructed to test various concrete mixtures and techniques.

### Concrete materials

Eventually, the project team developed an approach that satisfied all their requirements, and did so beautifully. A white portland cement with low heat of hydration was imported from Denmark. Fly ash, used to increase the concrete's strength and corrosion resistance, was specially processed to assure a consistent, light color pozzolanic material.

Similarly, fine and coarse aggregates were selected for compatibility with the desired shade.

Color additives were custom blended by Davis Colors to meet design requirements. Davis packaged the pigments in premeasured sacks to simplify batching at the ready-mix plant. A dosage rate of eight pounds of pigment per cubic yard of concrete was used throughout the project. In total, the cathedral required more than one hundred tons of Davis Colors.

Pouring the cathedral walls took over a year. A key to maintaining color consistency throughout the pour schedule was to procure all concrete mix materials at the same time. This avoided inconsistencies that could have resulted if material sources changed during the course of the project. Catalina Pacific, the concrete supplier, ordered most materials in bulk quantities and stored them in silos dedicated to the project. Because a Davis Colors factory was located just a few miles from the ready-mix plant, color additives were warehoused at the Davis facility for just-in-time delivery.

### Construction techniques

Color consistency also depended upon a high level of workmanship by the



contractor, Morley Construction Company. There are almost no right angles in the multi-faceted project. This meant that formwork had to be constructed with a level of care more typical of furniture making. A double layer of overlaid plywood form panels was used to keep walls flat and resist the pressure of twelve-foot-high concrete lifts. The double layer also allowed the face panel to be screw-mounted from the back; this kept the face of the forms smooth and free from fasteners that would have left impressions in the concrete. Joints between form panels were sealed to assure that cement paste would not leak out and leave blemishes in exposed surfaces. Just before concrete was placed, forms were carefully cleaned and treated with a thin, uniform application of form release. Then, forms were left in place several days after concrete placement until thermocouples, installed inside critical pours, indicated that the walls had cooled enough to avoid thermal shock.

Special attention was given during concrete placement to guard against conditions that could have produced surface defects. For example, congested seismic reinforcing steel could have blocked the passage of coarse aggregates and created a condition known as segregation. At sloped areas, such as the giant colored concrete cross above the altar, another concern was to place the concrete as close to its final position as possible to avoid the formation of flow lines in the concrete.

Morley organized its crew into several teams that competed on the basis of quality control as well as productivity. Working on a significant building like the cathedral can be the crowning project of a career in the building trades, and everybody involved in the work gave their highest level of craftsmanship to the project. The proof is evident; almost no construction defects mar the exposed concrete.

The cured concrete was given a very light sandblasting. On the exterior, the sandblasting was just enough to dull the sheen left by the formwork. On the interior, the sandblasting was slightly

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Executive Architect/Engineer:	<i>Leo A. Daly</i>

heavier, imparting a lightly etched grain to the surface. Sandblasting helps create a more uniform appearance, Paris says. Besides removing some superficial stains, it produces a roughened surface that scatters reflected light to soften the impact of mottling.

Finally, the concrete was treated with siloxane water repellent, a clear, penetrating chemical that does not alter the visual character of concrete. Siloxane will be reapplied at intervals over the life of the building to help

keep the structure clean and assure continued protection against water intrusion.

Despite the attention given to quality assurance on the project, colored concrete proved an economical solution since it provided both the structure and the finish for the building. Once past an initial learning curve, construction moved swiftly and allowed the church to meet its move-in schedule and consecrate the cathedral in September 2002.

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With more than 26,000 cubic yards of colored concrete required for the cathedral and adjoining structures, the facility is believed to be the largest building project ever constructed of colored concrete. "It raises the bar for all colored concrete buildings, proving that colored concrete can be used reliably for any structure, no matter what level of architectural quality is required," Paris says.

For the worshippers who attend mass in the cathedral and for the commuters who see the structure as they drive past its sentinel position alongside downtown L.A.'s 101 Freeway, it may not matter that a new standard has been set for colored concrete. What does matter, however, is that the "Concrete Cathedral," imbued with color, will help raise the spirits of Los Angelinos for centuries to come.



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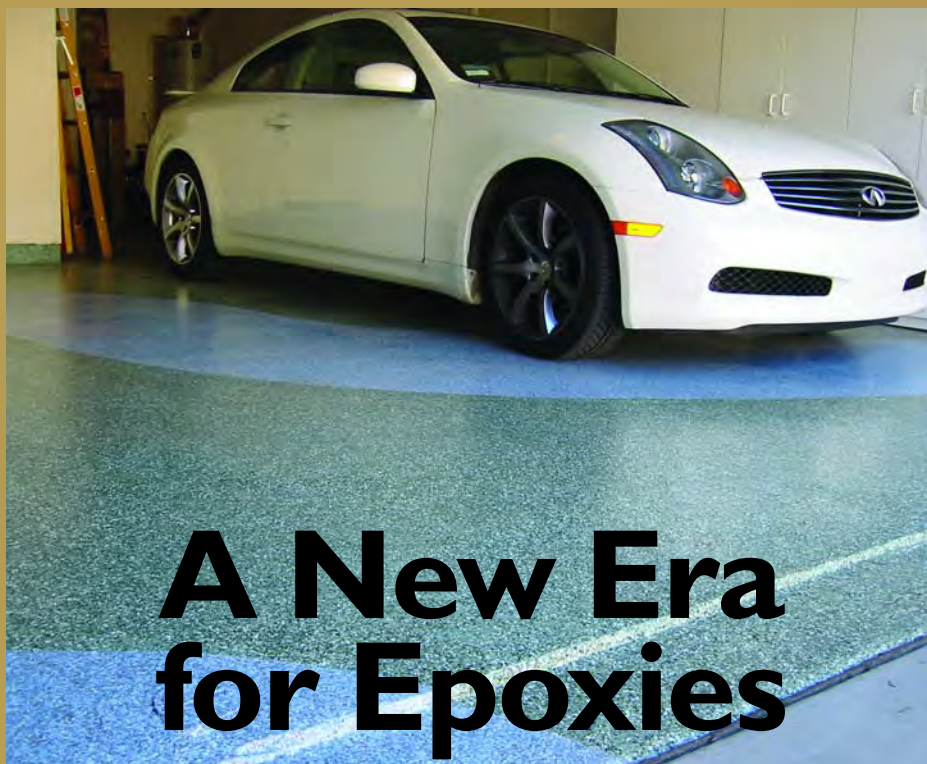
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# A New Era for Epoxies

*The durable coatings are now decorative as well*

by John Strieder



Photograph courtesy of Concrete Graphix

**W**hen Jimmy Tubbs, owner of Concrete Graphix in Camareo, Calif., gets tired of coaxing the same boring colors out of concrete, the decorative concrete contractor turns to tinted epoxy to jazz up his work. "I've opened up the book to anything now," he says. "The sky's the limit."

To put the finishing touch on a concrete portrait of a hummingbird, he spread glittered epoxy on the stone bird's belly, giving it a shiny, natural look.

This is a new twist for a coating that is rarely celebrated for its artistic qualities. Epoxies have been used for years on concrete floors in factories, hotel lobbies and other commercial settings because of their adhesion, hardness and resistance.

But innovations that improve epoxies' performance have combined with a growing interest in their decorative capabilities to create a kind of renaissance for this industrial stalwart.

Tubbs is using it a lot these days in his less arty jobs as well. He's laid down epoxy at the Irvine Spectrum shopping center, on floors at a Fatburger restaurant and a Trader Joe's specialty grocery store, and to seal stamped stone on the shower walls of a house.

"It's such a strong cover," he says. "It gives so much shine."

## How they compare

Epoxies are two-component systems — they cure as the result of a reaction between two substances after they are mixed. There are "single-component

epoxies" on the market, but as Darryl Manuel, president of Vexcon Chemicals Inc., says, they aren't really epoxies. "They're alkyd paints," he declares. "They don't have the resistance of epoxies."

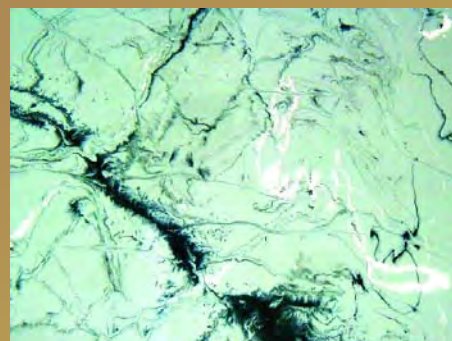
Epoxies stand up well when compared to their competitors in the concrete covering field. They have several times the wear resistance of standard acrylics. They are more resistant to oil, gasoline and other abrasive spills than garage-floor paint. And they adhere to concrete better than urethanes.

Recent innovations have introduced epoxies with faster cure times, more light stability and more flexibility, says Jim Essig, western technical director for Crossfield Products Corp. "Epoxies are getting





Photograph courtesy of Concrete Graphics



Photographs courtesy of Floor FX

much more technically advanced to meet requirements from the marketplace.”

The past five years have also witnessed a shift in home and garage decor from the monolithic gray concrete floor to decorative epoxy, he says. “Everybody is more interested in aesthetics now than they used to be.”

The residential market is showing fast growth, agrees Manuel of Vexcon, which introduced its PowerCoat Epoxy System in 1995. But the commercial side still has room to grow, he says, noting that epoxies cost three or four times as much per square foot as acrylics. “The market has been commercial because that’s where the value of the epoxy is versus other types of things,” he says. “The commercial people are going to pay for it. They

don’t want to be shutting down the store to fix their floors.”

Mike Duarte, technical director for Versatile Building Products Inc., says the growing demand for epoxies in homes has been driven by contractors and clients, not manufacturers trying to expand their markets.

Using an expensive industrial-strength coating on a garage floor is often overkill, he acknowledges. But because labor and travel time account for so much of the bill on a job, buying a better sealer doesn’t raise the price much. And it can save the contractor (and the homeowner) a second trip. “You don’t want to be out resealing somebody’s house in two years,” he says. “You don’t want a callback either. You don’t want the sealer wearing off within the warranty.”

Besides, Duarte says, customers in the residential market want glossy surfaces — and, in his opinion, nothing delivers better than epoxies. A contractor can simply flood the floor, he says, and get a full film build, high sheen and a level surface in one coat. “You can’t really hide pockmarks with acrylics or urethane,” he says.

### Special effects

Contractors aren’t just drawn to epoxies because of their protective properties.

A plethora of pigments, flakes, powders and additives are available to give concrete floors different looks ranging from the stateliness of marble to the shimmer of a “candy-coated” hot rod.

The pigments on the market radically expand the color palettes of decorative concrete contractors,

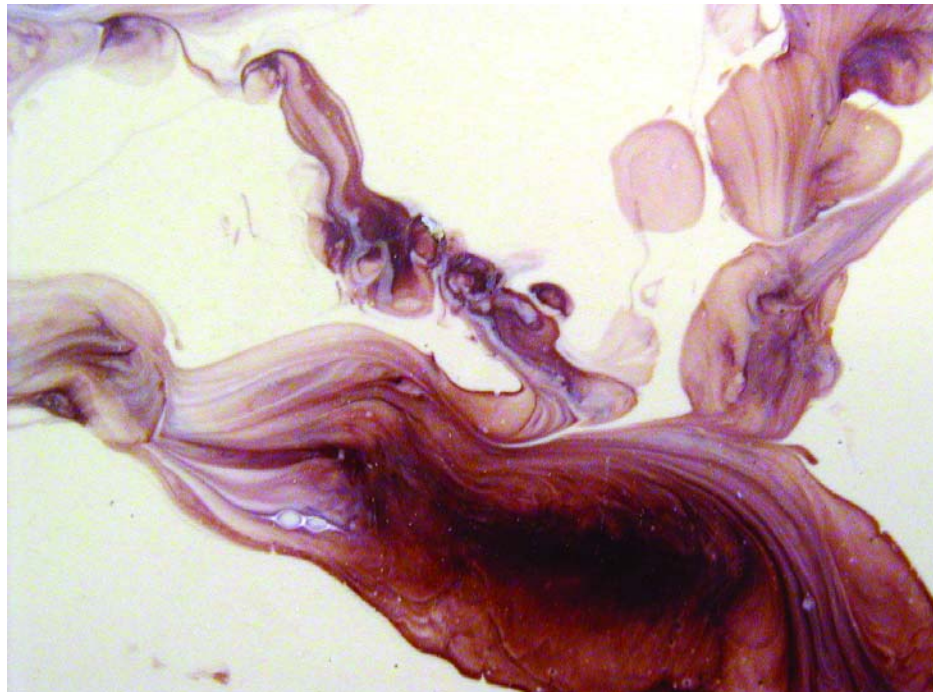


according to Lee Tizard, vice president of sales for flooring supply company Floric Polytech Inc. "You can change the integral color of the floor to almost any other color you want," he says.

There are metallics, pearlescents that change color with the light, phosphorescents that glow in the dark, and fluorescents that strike the eye with vivid, glowing colors. Decorative epoxies are sold in flats, mattes and high glosses.

Granitelike flake floors — epoxies saturated with vinyl chips that give a garage floor a rich rocky appearance — have become extremely popular in garages, Tizard says. "Epoxy granite floors are sometimes referred to as poor man's terrazzo."

Chameleon glitter, like the kind used in custom-painting cars, can give the floor of a trendy nightclub or restaurant the head-turning ability to change colors as customers walk across it. From one direction it looks green, and from another, red.



Photograph courtesy of Floor FX

Many contractors like to take it up a notch by adding metallic effects to their arsenal, says James Johnson, president of Las Vegas-based Floor FX. "Metallics are a unique option." Floor

FX offers metallic coatings that can be applied in one day. "We have an epoxy coating that looks three feet deep, but it's only 16-20 mils," Johnson says. "It looks so deep you could fall into it."

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For extra protection, a second, clear polyurethane coating can be added for additional chemical and abrasion resistance, he says.

Contractors who sell these special-effects floors are making a killing, Tizard says.

"The materials cost might be double, but that still doesn't warrant the extra \$3 per square foot you're getting paid. Obviously in time prices will come down. But it's definitely something that's very profitable, and it looks good."

Even so, Manuel says that commercial architects often feel more comfortable than homebuilders experimenting with epoxies. "Their minds' eye is a little bit better to see what they can expect with an epoxy," he says. "It's not the sort of thing you try and see if you like. They are very difficult to remove."

They're also harder to apply, especially for concrete contractors who are used to pouring acrylic into a sprayer to seal a back porch.

Johnson's company, Floor FX, offers contractors assistance in building businesses that specialize in the vinyl flake market. Some contractors gross \$1 million a year just on coating garage floors, he says.

### Harder than it looks?

Epoxy, a coating that cures, is more temperamental than acrylic paint, a liquid that dries.

"Typically with these things you just need a good clean surface," says Darryl Manuel of Vexcon. But by clean, he means pristine. No powders, oils, acids or compounds that could disrupt the curing and bonding process. Often, the surface needs to be roughed. This can best be accomplished by shotblasting or grinding.

"Epoxy's tough to bond," says Tubbs. "The surface has to be clean. There's a lot more prep work getting that stuff to stick."

And epoxies have their limitations. Traditionally, their biggest liability has been their lack of breathability — the

ability to let moisture vapor seep through them into the open air. When those vapors are smothered, something has to give, and it's often the coating.

Moisture in concrete is one of the main reasons epoxies fail, says Manuel, noting that most epoxies cannot be applied on green concrete surfaces. Another is improper pH levels in the concrete.

Epoxies are also notorious for chalking and yellowing outdoors, but these days, there are exceptions. Aliphatic epoxies, unlike aromatic epoxies, stand up to the outdoor elements and, as a bonus, allow better gloss retention. Vexcon's PowerCoat Epoxy System does not yellow or chalk even in aromatic form, has better breathability than a standard epoxy,



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and can be applied as soon as the concrete is troweled, Manuel claims.

But nonyellowing epoxies introduced in the 1990s cost three to four times as much as typical epoxies, notes Essig. And epoxies have a tendency to show wear patterns, he adds. "The best epoxy is not going to match the abrasion resistance of the two-component urethane."

Tubbs, owner of Concrete Graphix, once had to eat a \$20,000 job because epoxy he laid on an acid-stained floor came up a year later.

Now, he takes no chances. He sticks to one brand he trusts. If an epoxy manufacturer doesn't make acid stain, he says, it may not have tested its epoxy on acid stain. "There's a lot of stuff out there that's not that good."

Duarte of Versatile urges contractors to find out if the companies that supply their epoxy employ a chemist and manufacture in-house. "These guys often have no manufacturing

capability, no technical service," he says. "Sometimes the company is just an ex-contractor. That's the biggest thing we have to fight out there."

Epoxies should also be tested with a mock-up before they are used on the job, he says. "You need to know what you're putting down and understand why you're doing it."

Tizard of Floric Polytech says one of the biggest problems for contractors lurks in the lips of their epoxy cans.

When a contractor mixes chemical "B" into can "A" and starts to mix the epoxy, some of the "A" material can surge up into the lip of the can and not get blended with the rest.

Then when the can is poured onto the concrete floor, the unblended material in the lip shows up as soft spots in the coating. "They don't mix resin enough to get the uncured spots," Tizard says. "That's universal within the industry, that people make that mistake."



His solution is simple — mix the epoxy in the source can, pour it into a second and mix again for about 30 seconds, then pour it into a third to carry it to the concrete surface.

Johnson has his own words of warning. "If the surface is deteriorated,

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Photographs courtesy of Concrete Graphics



thin mil coatings won't camouflage that," he says. "If the concrete is so bad it's going to result in a failure two years down the road, walk away or replace the concrete."

### Tips for success

Tizard has a number of tips for coaxing flashy effects from an epoxy.

For example: When an epoxy with metallic additives is laid on a floor, the pigments can form lines like a mowed lawn.

To get a uniform-looking finish, Tizard recommends letting the epoxy cure for about an hour, then spritzing the surface with a dispersal agent such as alcohol or a flow and leveling agent. The tiny drops of fluid have a dramatic effect. "Each one is like dropping an atom bomb in a forest," he says. The resin flows back into the small craters, but the pigments remain displaced.

Another tip: Lay a pigmented base coat down, then throw a coat of a water-based metallic on top. Spray the second coat with a liquid release, like one used for stamp overlays. "It gives a hammered bronze effect, like a hammered bronze sink," he says.



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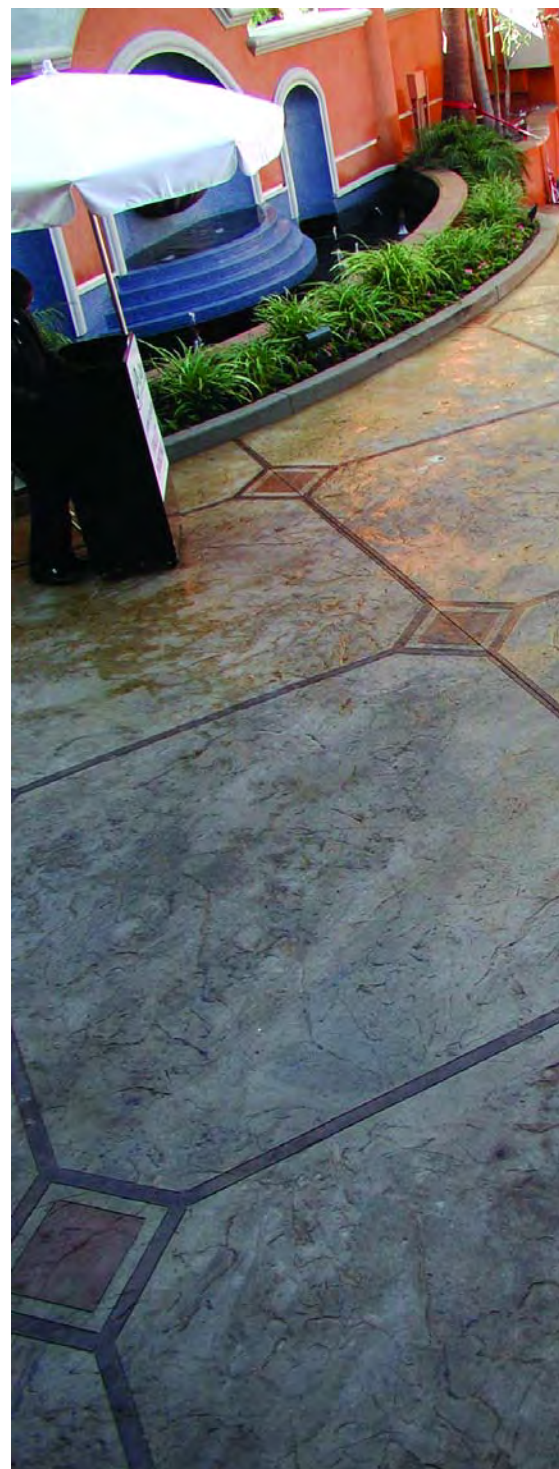
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Photograph courtesy of Richards Smith Custom Concrete



By Joan Stanus

# Decorative Control Joints

*When necessity becomes art*





Photograph courtesy of Richard Smith Custom Concrete



Photograph courtesy of Richard Smith Custom Concrete

**L**et's face it. Concrete is going to crack. But controlling those cracks with properly designed control joints to aesthetically enhance the slab "is what separates the men from the boys," according to many of today's artisans who are carving a name for themselves in the decorative concrete field.

"Cracks are not appealing," notes Lee Levig, president of Concrete Works in Fairfield, Calif. "If you're doing decorative work, that's something

you don't want to introduce ... so joints are the key. We never try to prevent cracks. The object is to control and then disguise them in the most decorative way possible."

Since joints are simply pre-planned cracks, the whole trick, he notes, is to "fool the eye" into seeing beauty, not imperfection.

"I like to use the joints as part of the decoration," Levig adds. "If you take the time and think out what's going on, it's not that difficult.



It's all in the prep work and the tools. The more you carve it up, the fewer the random cracks."

"You have to plan the cracks," echoes Bud Stegmeier, manager and partner in Stegmeier Corp. of Arlington, Texas. "The primary function of joints is to break up the slab in geometric patterns to cause it to crack in a uniform way. Whether you're doing regular or decorative concrete, the joints should look nice."

Turning those joint "patterns" into distinctive decoration has become a finely honed skill for many concrete craftsmen around the country.

Instead of using a canvas and paintbrushes, today's concrete artisans are taking advantage of newly developed manufactured products and coming up with creative techniques to turn concrete pours into works of art.

But fashion should never take a back seat to function, many caution. Joints perform a vital function in concrete work. What makes for stellar concrete is when the architect/contractor can combine both function and decoration together to create a beautifully crafted slab of concrete.

Richard Smith of West Hills, Calif.-based Richard Smith Custom Concrete, puts it this way: "We don't tell concrete what to do — it tells us what to do. But there's nothing that can't be done."

Depending on the type of joint, environment and the circumstances of the pour, practitioners use various techniques, products and methods to get the effect they're after. They may score or saw

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cut, they may add a colored seal, or they may use grooving techniques to distress harsh lines.

Some contractors are even turning to new joint materials to create a stylized decorative look. Artflor by Tri-Co, based in San Deigo, has recently begun using such metals as brass, copper and stainless steel as joint components.

"It's strictly for aesthetics, but it's still functional," notes Penny Steward, director of sales and marketing. "It really enhances the design ... and gives the concrete a great look."

Steward noted that as nightclubs become "major players" in using decorative concrete as part of their décor, all sorts of cutting-edge techniques are being developed.

"There are just a lot of exciting things happening out there right now," says the company official, who is based in Las Vegas. "Our guys look at their work as an art form ... and they try to be innovative in what they're doing."



Photograph courtesy of Richard Smith Custom Concrete

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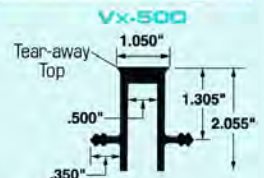
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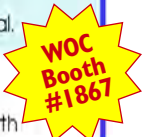
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## The joint jive

In all concrete work, there are basically three types of joints — construction joints, contraction joints and expansion joints.

Construction joints are surfaces where two different pours of concrete meet. Contraction joints are used to create weakened planes and control the location of cracks resulting from changes in thickness. Expansion joints separate slabs from other parts of a structure, and permit independent

movement between the parts, helping to minimize cracking when movement is restrained.

Various methods are used to create joints. One of the most common is to groove over concrete by using a grooving or jointing tool. The cutting edge of the grooving tool is “v” shaped so that a “v” joint can be cut partly into the concrete. This reduces the slab’s thickness so that cracking can be localized. As the concrete dries out and contracts, the joint opens up further to accommodate the volume change. A dummy joint can be installed after the concrete has been edged and prior to finishing the surface.

Decorative control joints are most commonly accomplished by scoring and saw cutting. For aesthetic purposes, the cuts need to be only ¼-inch deep, but to serve their function, they must be about 25 percent of the slab.

Scoring is done with a groover tool when the concrete is fresh. Score lines can be cut straight, but also may be done diagonal to the edges. Conversely, saw cuts are accomplished when the concrete is hardened. Geometric shapes can be saw-cut into the slab and then stained to create a contrasting look.

In recent years, contractors have begun cutting joints with electric or gasoline-powered saws equipped with shatterproof abrasive or diamond-rimmed blades. The blade cuts a joint into the hardened concrete as soon as it hits the



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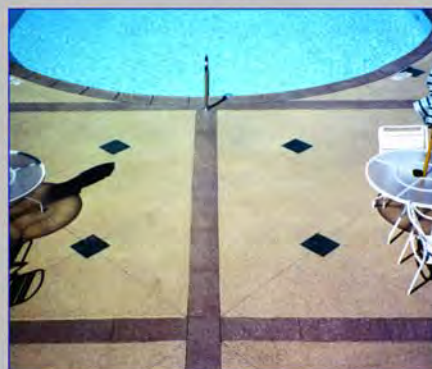
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surface, so as not to tear or otherwise damage the concrete with the cutting action. Newer, faster and cleaner versions continue to be developed, making saws increasingly attractive for use in decorative work.

But artisans like Levig prefer to cut all their joints by hand.

"We like to keep a more natural look in joints," he says. "We cut back and trowel right over the rounded edge to give it a more distressed look, being careful not to close the joint. You can stamp it and it becomes part of the pattern or look. It doesn't look hand made; it looks natural almost like slate or rough stone."

Although many contractors will never tackle a curved joint, Levig says it's occasionally worth undertaking for the sake of the design.

"You always run a risk when you turn a joint because that crack may not follow where you want it to go," he says. "If you do it, you have to do it by hand. With some, I like to back up the area and make it smaller for more joint control. You then take 1/8-inch piece of steel — almost like a chisel — and for the last trowel, break the concrete while it's still wet so it breaks where you want it to break."

Once joints have been inserted, the surface can be textured, preferably just after the water sheen has

disappeared and just before the concrete becomes non-plastic. To get the texture they're after, some contractors use such techniques as burlap drag, artificial-turf drag, wire brooming, grooving with a roller or comb equipped with steel tines, or a combination of these methods. The method chosen depends primarily on the environment, as well as the speed and density of expected traffic.

To seal the joint, manufacturers such as Vinylex Corp. have been developing products that take much of the headache out of decorative work. One of the most effective, says Mike Mitchell, the company's product manager, is VX-Seal. The product, which comes in a variety of custom colors, creates an abrasion-resistant joint seal that is easier and less costly to install than traditional sealant products. It features a tear-away top that recesses for superior abrasion resistance and finishing. Using the product also eliminates the need for other traditional sealants.

"It's installed at the time of the pour and it's permanent," says Mitchell. "So when the concrete is poured, you're done."

The best part, he adds, is that "It lasts the lifetime of the concrete."



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CIRCLE #37 ON READER SERVICE CARD



# Products in Focus

## Gypsum Floor Underlayment:

*An economical way to achieve durable, lightweight, fire-resistant and sound-rated floors*

**D**ue to its unique set of performance and installation benefits, the use of gypsum underlayment is growing rapidly in all facets of commercial and industrial construction.

U.S. Gypsum introduced its Levelrock Brand product line in 2000. The new line offers the highest compressive strength range in the industry (2,500 to 8,000 psi). A recent addition to the line, Levelrock Brand Proflow, is the first gypsum underlayment that can be used with a



**At the Erewhon Mountain Outfitters store in Orland Park,**

**Ill., a decorative topcoat is roller-applied over customer walkway areas where U.S. Gypsum's underlayment was used as a wearing surface.**

**The store is complete.**

**The light brown walkway areas are exposed**

**gypsum underlayment. All other sections of the floor were covered with carpeting and hardwood.**



high-performance coating to serve as a decorative wear surface system.

Gypsum concrete underlayment was introduced more than 50 years ago to serve as an alternative to cellular concrete in multifamily construction. It consists of gypsum cement mixed with sand and water. The resulting slurry mix is pumped and poured in place and then "screeded" to a level surface. Depending on the floor layout and the thickness of the pour, up to 30,000 sq. ft. of gypsum underlayment can be applied in a single day.

The product is now the dominant choice in multifamily construction, and its use is growing rapidly in commercial and retail markets. The commercial and retail growth stems directly from recent increases in product compressive strength and "flowability." Gypsum floors are now able to withstand heavy construction traffic as well as high-volume retail traffic, without powdering, chipping or cracking. The improved flowability offered by newer gypsum underlayments makes the product almost completely self-leveling, further reducing application time and costs and minimizing finished floor preparation time.

Gypsum underlayments accept virtually any type of floor covering, including vinyl composition tile, ceramic tile, wood laminate, glued-down hardwood and carpeting.

In new commercial construction, gypsum underlayment is typically applied over structural concrete or precast concrete planks to create a smooth, monolithic floor surface that delivers superior strength, sound control and fire resistance. The product sets quickly, allowing foot traffic within two hours and continued construction activities the next day.

Gypsum underlayment assemblies offer UL-certified fire ratings of up to

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four hours. The fire resistance of the floor results from the fact that gypsum is a naturally fire-resistant product. When exposed to flame, it releases moisture in the form of steam, thereby slowing flame spread.

Sound control is another key benefit. The excellent acoustical properties of a poured gypsum floor result from the product's mass combined with the fact that the underlayment does not shrink as it sets. Unlike portland cement products, which do shrink, gypsum underlayments seek and fill cracks and joints, a major source of sound leakage between floors. Gypsum underlayment floor assemblies deliver STC (Sound Transmission Class) ratings in the high 60s and IIC (Impact Insulation Class) ratings of 55 and higher, even with hard-surface floor coverings.

Gypsum underlayment requires minimal surface preparation. No time-consuming shot-blasting of existing concrete is required. In most applications, the only preparation work required is cleaning, sealing off any through-holes in the existing surface (to prevent the material from running down to the floor beneath) and priming. This makes the product the quickest and most cost-efficient option for transforming worn, cracked and uneven floors into level, high-strength surfaces ready for the application of finish materials.

According to Don Brandt, marketing manager for U.S. Gypsum's Industrial Products Division, developers and storeowners should specify a minimum strength of 3,500 psi for retail applications that will have a floor covering, and 6,000 psi for underlayments used with a high-performance wear surface coating.



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CIRCLE #41 ON READER SERVICE CARD



### The Concrafter

*A new tool that's destined to get your stamp of approval*

by Stacey Enesey Klemenc

If you're into stamping concrete (and who isn't these days!), here's a tool that should be part of your repertoire. Concrafter® LLC design stamps — the brainchild of Theo Hunsaker and his sons, Kip and Sean, out of Vernon, Ariz. — require no special forming or pouring to create decorative edges. The process is so simple and fast, the Hunsakers say, you'll literally gain “the edge” over the competition once you master the technique.

Describing the process as the “ultimate in edge and inset imprint finishes,” Sean points out that these unique design mats are integrated right into your normal monolithic concrete pouring process. “One pour, one day,” he stresses. “No custom form building. No joints that can cause the decorative edge to break away from the field.” And, as a bonus, these versatile tools that are used to create insets on concrete slabs can be used just as easily on tilt-up construction, stucco, plaster, drywall mud, curbing, concrete countertops or overlays.

“It's a great way to dress up existing driveways without having to spend a lot of money,” Sean says. Not to mention, he adds, the designs don't have joints such as those found in random stone patterns, so it's easy to keep the area clean.

Since the imprinted design is a light profile, “It will outlive the other stamping methods two to one because you're not fracturing the surface,” says Kip. “And we've done plenty of both. This way requires a whole lot less maintenance.” In colder climates, he adds, you don't have to worry about spalling either.

“You only need two mats to do any size job,” Sean says. “You don't use a powder release or liquid agent because the stamping is done a little later when



**The innovative Concrafter stamping mats are designed to be used as borders or centerpieces.**



**Whimsical creatures — from butterflies and geckos to eagles and kokopelli — can be imprinted as stand-alones or incorporated into one of the many Concrafter designs.**

the surface isn't as sticky or as susceptible to sticking to the mats. Plus, our mats have a perfectly smooth surface so they don't create the vacuum that others do when they're being pulled up. You can actually stay clean while you stamp.”

The whole process, he says, is “a lot less messy, a lot less time consuming and not as labor intensive as other stamping methods.” A 1,500-square-foot driveway, for example, typically takes two days — from prepping and pouring to finishing and sealing — to complete.

“We can take a highly defined design and stamp it in for staining purposes in a fraction of the time it takes someone to lay out similar designs and sawcut and stain them,” Sean says. “I stamped out a 2-foot-long pattern design in 30 seconds. I asked another contractor how long it would take him to do something

After a design has been imprinted and Concrafter's Surface Etch architectural retardant is applied to selected areas, workers typically cover the slab with plastic and return the next day with a pressure washer.

The water removes the retarded cement paste, exposing the aggregate and revealing the stone in the mix.



**If you want exposed aggregate to be part of your design, a worker needs to follow the stamper and liberally apply a medium viscosity surface retardant to the selected areas.**

comparable, to lay out that kind of detail. He said it would take him a half-day to lay it out and then two to three hours to sawcut it just to get it ready to stain. It literally took me 30 seconds. That's how fast it goes on fresh concrete.”

Unless you're doing centerpieces — which you also can create with the same two mats — you don't get out on the slab. And you don't walk on the mat either; you just tamp it lightly into the surface by hand or with a hand float. When an imprint is done, you simply lift and replace the mat to repeat the pattern.

This tool, which was introduced at the World of Concrete in 2000, is “the only stamping or design tool on the market that has a built-in measuring system that allows you to easily form borders from 2 to 18 inches wide,” Theo explains. When the concrete sets to the



brooming stage, simply place the design stamp at the desired width of the border using the measurement guides on each edge of the stamp to keep the border uniform and tamp with a hand float.

"If I want a 10-inch border, I line up the 10-inch markings on the form," Sean explains. It's that simple. "Just follow the leading edge." The tools are designed to follow any form or shape — from a radius or a curve to a straight edge or angle — for both horizontal and vertical applications.

To date, there are 35 different designs available, which include Mediterranean and Southwestern motifs, as well as Grecian keys, vines, waves and finials. "We add new designs regularly and continue to find more ways to use the current ones we have," remarks Theo, who adds that their signature series can be integrated one with the other to create even more unusual designs.

But the choices don't stop there. After making the imprint, contractors have several options. You can leave it as is, you can stain or color it, or you can apply a retardant where you want to expose the aggregate.

Besides its ease, the Concrafter method is economical, Sean says. Instead of a 40 percent to 50 percent net profit, contractors can expect 60 percent to 75 percent profit because the amount of materials used is much less than with traditional stamping methods. Instead of sealing the whole slab, he says, "you only need to seal the stained or exposed areas."

And you don't even need to do that, Kip interjects, "but it's greatly enhanced if you do."

To see the Hunsakers' handiwork up close and personal, drop by booths 1676 (indoors) or 21543 (outdoors) during this year's World of Concrete expo in Las Vegas. If you're interested in learning more about these innovative tools, you'll have the chance to enroll in a hands-on seminar at that time.

"Contractors will often look at our work and ask 'How in the world do you do that?'" Sean says. "But after they've attended one of our seminars they see that it's really a piece of cake."



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CIRCLE #35 ON READER SERVICE CARD



# Decorative Walls and Caps

*...Turning ordinary into awesome*

by Christina Camara

Concrete has always had advantages over brick- and stone-constructed walls — cost, strength and durability to name a few — and now concrete competes in appearance as well.

The growing availability of a huge variety of decorative form liners now allows contractors to make concrete walls match just about any kind of brick or stone wall out there. Add color to these realistic, textured surfaces and the result can fool even the most savvy home and garden buff.

Many customers, be they homeowners, developers or government highway officials, are looking for alternatives to utilitarian concrete.

They want their concrete walls to have the look of more expensive masonry materials and they're willing to pay for the craftsmanship to get it.

Decorative concrete walls are showing up on subdivision entrances, retaining walls, landscape structures and patios. On highway projects, contractors are building sound barriers or bridge abutments to look like stone walls from the region. Some serve as canvases for local artists, who have discovered that concrete can display fine detail.

Bob Ware, president of The Decorative Concrete Store in Cincinnati, Ohio, uses Increte Systems Inc.'s Stone-Crete, a patented poured-in-place concrete wall system that produces deep-relief stone walls in seven patterns.

For example, he says, Sedona, a rough-cut, weathered Arizona stone





pattern, is popular in the Southwest. Round river rock patterns are more common in Michigan and Wisconsin. Dry stack stone, with its many thin layers of rock, is popular in the Midwest. Cocina, a pattern with the appearance of sand and bits of shell, is popular in southern climates.

Ware says the form liners are made with a keystone system that disguises seams and prevents a repetitious look.

Custom Rock International's Jim Bohrer, director of wall systems, says the St. Paul, Minn., manufacturer makes 30-plus patterns that replicate rock, cut stone, brick, barn wood and more. As its name implies, the company can also make custom molds for any project by forming a urethane membrane or skin over an existing wall, or by making molds from stones sent to its plant.

Custom Rock can take a mold from a local landmark, such as a church or town hall, and reconstruct the look on a new bridge or wall in the community.

Custom Rock's forms, typically 4 feet to 10 feet long, are rotatable, reversible, and/or keyed to provide multiple looks that mimic nature. "Our surface textures are second to none because we're taking it off the real stone. We're not making it up," Bohrer says.

## A good long-term investment

Many contractors swear by flexible, reusable form liners for pour-in-place projects, because they are easy to handle and less expensive than standard forms. They come with varying life spans: some are disposable; some endure 10 or more pours; some 40 or more.

Contractors can rent form liners because buying them can be expensive — one 12-square-foot section may cost \$1,200 — but for wall contractors it's a good investment over time, Ware says, because the flexible rubber can be peeled off the wall and used again and again. "If it's just a one-time job, the throwaways might be the way to go. But if you're getting into the business, you might look into reusable forms." The result can be high profits for contractors, he says.

## ArcusStone ... for the limestone look

**A** California company has created a clever disguise — a concrete product that looks like quarried limestone block.

ArcusStone, based in Oakland, Calif., manufactures crushed limestone coatings and plasters that produce the finish of quarried stone, but with increased strength and durability due to the portland cement and polymers in the mix.

ArcusStone's technical director, Bill Tott, said the crushed limestone aggregate gives it its unique finish — it can be honed smooth or left pitted so it looks like cut limestone.

"The effect is to duplicate the look of a block of limestone or travertine, like quarried stone, but it's only  $\frac{3}{8}$ ths of an inch thick," Tott said. "That's what's so great about it."

ArcusStone is used in a huge range of residential or commercial applications, inside or out, from floors to ceilings.

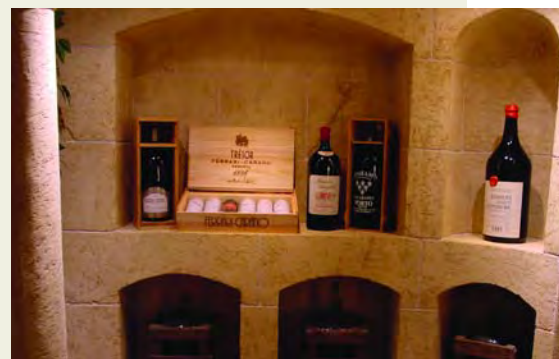
Inside, ArcusStone can be used to make wainscoting, arches, vaulted ceilings or even countertops. Outside, it's used for gateposts, courtyard entrances, landscaping walls, facades, pool surrounds (such as the Kea Lani Hotel on the island of Maui) and walkways.

The company also offers ArcusStone Plaster, a limestone plaster, for interior and exterior use. The natural materials in the plaster create a mottled appearance that can be used to create a weathered look.

Owner Carol Kavalaris said the obvious advantage to ArcusStone over quarried stone is cost, not only in the material itself, but also in transporting heavy stone and finding craftsmen to cut and install it.

Both products can be sprayed or trowel-applied to nearly any stable substrate — existing stucco, concrete or drywall for example — and the contractors have a variety of design options, colors and textures at their disposal.

Contractors who use ArcusStone products must be trained and certified by the company. Kavalaris said applicators have different styles — some specialize in the



plaster over an old stone wall).

In fact, the coating was developed in Europe in the early 1960s as a way to restore historic stone structures. ArcusStone adapted the technology to comply with American construction standards in 1988.

Kavalaris said she got into the business as an architectural designer who saw the endless possibilities with ArcusStone, a versatile and convincing substitute for cut stone. "The material itself really is stone, and that's what you're seeing even if it's only  $\frac{3}{8}$ " thick. It gives you complete control, and you can create things you can't with other materials, such as ceilings and arches."



*For more information on ArcusStone, visit them on-line at [www.arcustone.com](http://www.arcustone.com) or call (510) 535-9300.*

Photographs courtesy of ArcusStone Products Inc.



## More cost-effective, more durable than veneers

One way to create a more decorative exterior surface is to pour the concrete wall, then overlay it with a veneer of real stone or brick. But that gets expensive. Doug Bannister, owner of The Stamp Store in Oklahoma City, says the same effect can be achieved less expensively by pouring a concrete wall using a form liner. A concrete wall can be thinner, yet structurally sound, and since it's one piece, there's no risk of individual stones or bricks knocking loose from the mortar. "Concrete is more affordable and offers more design options than other materials," Bannister says.

He added that self-compacting concrete is the perfect finish for textured walls because it's tight and self-consolidating, so it fills in all the nooks and crannies of decorative form liners without leaving any gaps or holes.



Photograph courtesy of Increte Systems

## Coloring adds realism

But just pouring concrete into a realistic form liner isn't enough to give a wall the realistic look of rock, because real rock isn't one uniform, gray color.

Ware says a subtle integral color can be added to the concrete batch, and then, after the forms are removed and the wall is cleaned, two or three workers can use a colored release agent or an acid stain to randomly rub color into individual stones. Some contractors leave the natural gray concrete on roughly 40 percent of the stones, and shade the other 60 percent with light beige and reddish tones. Ware says even



Photograph courtesy of Scott System Inc.

the "good old concrete look" works in certain conditions. After two or three years of aging, it will take on its own natural staining.

Harlan Baldridge, manager of the decorative concrete division of Cut 'N Break Construction in Medford, Ore., prefers to spray on color hardeners, but

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out in the neighborhood," he says. Homeowners simply won't stand for an imposing concrete neighborhood wall backing up to a busy street or highway. They want something that replicates stones from their area or adds an artistic element to their community.

Scott's company has extensive experience working

with artists, highway officials and homeowners to create sound barriers and retaining walls that are eye-popping public art projects. Scott was one of the first to create textures in concrete. He invented the elastomeric-urethane form liner 30 years ago, and has created more complicated patterns and designs ever since.

The company recently worked with Denver artist Carolyn Braaksma to create molds for huge graphic elements along an eight-mile stretch of the Pima Freeway in Scottsdale, Ariz. A 67-foot lizard, cacti, and a range of textures in

notes there are many different methods for achieving a realistic look. "There seems to be a lot of people out there who are coming up with their own ways of making vertical concrete look as good as flatwork."

When walls are colored, a sealer is generally required. One or two coats

should be applied, and then no maintenance is required for up to 10 years. If it does need to be cleaned, simple soap and water will do. Custom Rock's Bohrer says the stains on their decorative walls have held up 14 years and will probably go another 10.

### Highway projects as art

Buck Scott, president of Scott System Inc., of Aurora, Colo., says more creativity is almost a must in the market place these days, even when it comes to highway noise barriers. "It's more than just pour some concrete and throw it

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CIRCLE #21 ON READER SERVICE CARD



mauve, sage and purple transform a utilitarian retaining wall into a work of art. The company is again working with Braaksma to produce liners for a 25-foot-tall buffalo, soaring swallows and an abstract map of Denver on huge retaining walls along Interstates 225 and 25, which run through the city.

Highway arts projects like these have not been vandalized, Scott says, while a smooth concrete surface would be a magnet for graffiti.

## Pre-cast wall systems

Another alternative to a plain concrete retaining wall is a brick-in-concrete wall. Scott System offers a precast wall system with  $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch brick integrally cast into concrete panels. Homeowners who abut sound barriers are opting for brick walls over plain concrete in their back yards, because it combines the sound-absorbing qualities of concrete with the beauty of brick. Scott System recently used this method to build brick-in-concrete fence posts across from Denver's Coors Field. Brick-in-concrete has been used on many sound and retaining barriers, including I-25 in Colorado Springs and a pedestrian bridge over Highway 610 in Detroit.

## Help for existing walls

There are ways to improve existing walls, too. Ware says Texture-Crete is a decorative overlay system that looks like stone or brick, cobblestone or other patterns. A stencil is



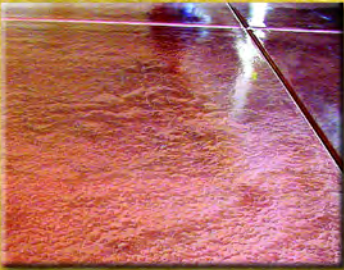
placed on a wall and a colored spray texture is shot onto it. When the stencil is removed, a gray concrete mortar joint and a textured surface are left behind.

He also recommended adding a decorative cap to put a new twist on an old wall.

Cameron Morgan, general manager of Pacific Concrete Images of Laguna Hills, Calif., offers a forming system for making poured-in-place decorative wall caps in six standard architectural profiles. One of their best-selling products is Pacific Formliner, reusable polyethylene form liner that is more flexible, durable and easier to handle than the foam alternative. The

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CIRCLE #31 ON READER SERVICE CARD



form liners can bend to almost any radius without breaking, he says, and it's reusable so it's popular with contractors. "Once they use our stuff, they get rid of all their others."

Morgan says residential use of these wall caps is booming, as a \$2 million home in Orange County is "no big deal."

Neighborhood associations require homeowners to make landscaping improvements to new homes, and the homeowners are responding by putting in decorative walls with caps. "It creates a little more grandiose appearance."

Bannister, who worked as a contractor for 30 years before becoming a supplier, has used Stegmeier Corp.'s forms for wall caps. Stegmeier makes wall cap forms that are reusable foam forms in five styles to pour concrete caps atop block walls, glass block walls, planters and more.

Bannister says contractors are adding more décor to vertical surfaces by adding color and texture, and the methods for doing so are many.

Contractors are using decorative form liners, which are removed after initial curing. Another application is troweling on or spraying grout on an existing wall and imprinting with rubber tools, much like stamping to replicate dry stacked sandstone or fieldstone. This material is carvable the next day.

More people are understanding the versatility of concrete, which can take any shape and any color, Bannister says. "There are now affordable techniques and accomplished craftsmen who can make concrete beautiful."



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CIRCLE #95 ON READER SERVICE CARD



# Communication with Questions

by Ken Lundin

**W**hen was the last time you gave a sales presentation, walked away and thought: "That's a sale!" How many times have you had that very thought only to realize later that you lost out to another company? Perhaps your analysis of the sales call looked something like this:

*I was dressed appropriately. We determined the color they wanted. The price was right. The square footage was dead on. I know my competitors. What could have gone wrong?*

The first question I would ask a salesperson of mine in this situation is: *What do you know about the prospect?*

This one simple question will open up a whole new realm of analysis:

*Why were they shopping for this change? What concerns did they have? What other alternatives had they explored? What are the names of the children? How much did they know about the process before you arrived? How much did they know after your meeting? Who were you competing with? Did you present first or second? When do they expect to make a decision? Who did you present to? Was the actual decision-maker in the meeting?*

Studies in sales process, negotiation technique and performance interviews all point to the same thing: To be persuasive, you must ask questions. Whether discussing a sales call or selling to a prospect, asking the right questions is more persuasive than any other action you can take as a salesperson.

Sales studies used to focus only on open and closed-ended questions. Open-ended: "Could you tell me more about that?"

Close-ended: "Are you making the buying decision?"

Since that time, Neil Rackham, author of "SPIN Selling," has shed light on four specific types of questions a salesperson can ask in residential and commercial sales presentations: Situation, Problem, Implication, Need-Payoff.

**Situation questions** are used at the beginning of a sales call to gather data. These questions are used to obtain background information. For example, "How long have you been considering this change?"



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**Problem questions** are used only after the buyer's situation has been established. These questions are intended to explore problems they are currently having or would like to avoid in the future. Inexperienced sellers usually breeze through this area of questions, when they should focus their efforts here to determine the prospect's motivations for change. For example, "Is it difficult to clean this surface?" "Does it stain easily?"

In residential sales you can be very successful while only asking situation and problem questions, but in commercial sales this is not enough.

**Implication questions** communicate the buyers concerns about the effects of the potential problems. They allow the salesperson to understand the problem's urgency and explore its potential effect on the customer. For example, "What effect does this have on your cleaning staff?" "What effect does this have on your customer satisfaction?"

According to Rackham, the **Need-Payoff question** is the fourth type of question asked by successful sales people. The purpose of these questions is to get the customer to tell which benefits they anticipate. For example, "If we could provide a seamless stain resistant floor, how would that help you?" It may seem obvious to you, but the key is having the prospect say it to himself.

The best professional salespeople across the nation are also the most curious. They don't just ask questions, they ask the right questions. They constantly study the sales process and take a real interest in their prospects' motivations and wants. They critique their own performance after each appointment and look for areas to improve upon. Through studying the sales process, you can become a better communicator through questions.





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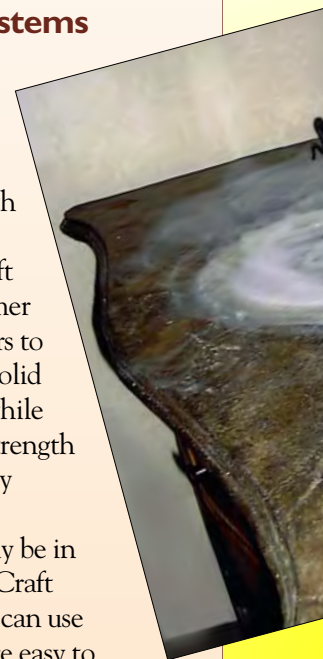
Until now, makers of concrete countertops have been plagued with several limitations and difficulties associated with the very properties of concrete. One of the biggest

improvements in the Stone Craft system is in mix-design. A polymer modified formula allows installers to pour a very thin coating over a solid substrate. This reduces weight while producing excellent structural strength in a fraction of the time normally required for concrete.

But the biggest advantage may be in the forming process, says Stone Craft owner Matt Jecker. Contractors can use custom, streamline forms that are easy to install and show improved detail. "These forms change the total appearance from massive to classic," Jecker says.

Furthermore, the method in which the stain and seal coats are applied locks in the unique, one-of-a-kind look. Countertops can usually be completed within four to five days. In many remodeling cases involving Formica, the existing surface can be used for the basic structure, making the system an even more efficient process.

Training seminars are available through Stone Craft, located in Springfield, Missouri. For information call (417) 888-2422.



## Renew-Crete

### Concentrated Stamp Overlay Mix

**T**he Renew-Crete® Stamp Overlay Mix was designed exclusively for decorative concrete restoration and is the product of years of research and development.

The ready-to-use "concentrated" mix has most of the sand removed. Since overlay mixes are usually about 70 percent sand, you'll realize quite a substantial savings in weight and volume and may save up to 65 percent in freight costs, the company says. "Our customers really appreciate having to ship only 2,500 pounds instead of 7,500 pounds to cover the same area, and saving the freight cost on the 5,000 pound difference really helps the bottom line."

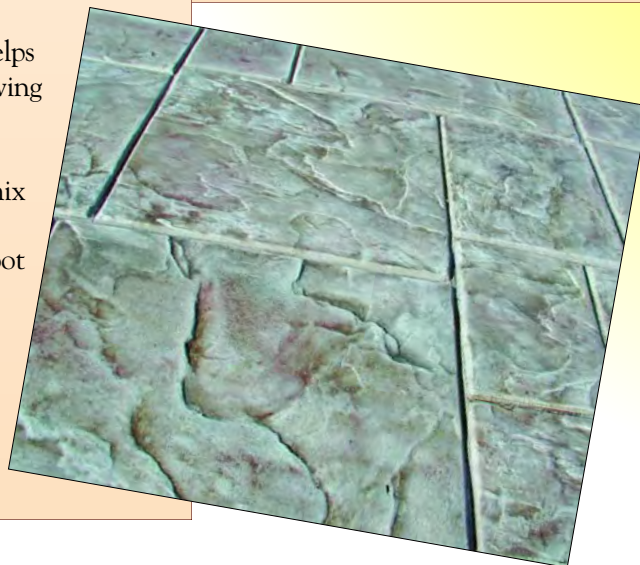
Add to this the fact that the modifier and color are already in the bag, and you have just simplified your mixing and increased speed and efficiency on the job. You'll also eliminate errors often associated with mixing. The stamp mix can be mixed

in anything from a five-gallon pail to a mixer.

Available in 30 pre-mixed colors, it's simple to use, requiring only the addition of sand and water. "Our customers' biggest request was to make the process 'idiot proof,' so we developed a simplified process using the highest quality ingredients available. Renew-Crete Concentrated Stamp Mix helps gives the contractor peace of mind in knowing that he is putting down consistent, quality product every time."

The cost per square foot for the stamp mix is one of the lowest in the industry, the company says, at just 71 cents per square foot at 1/4", 90 cents per square foot at 3/8" and \$1.11 per square foot at 3/4".

A complete line of Renew-Crete® products can be seen at [www.plasticforms.com](http://www.plasticforms.com), or call (888) 287-8962 for a free catalog.





## Anti-Growth from GSI/Camden Products

Every once in awhile, a product comes along that is truly in a class by itself. Anti-Growth, touted to be the most technically advanced algicide/fungicide product on the market today, falls into this category.

Although there are a number of cleaners and disinfectants whose sole purpose is to get rid of mold, mildew and algae — with regular household cleaners leading the pack — Anti-Growth is the only product designed to prevent the return of fungal and algal infection, says Jim Glessner Sr., vice president of GSI/Camden Products.

“Basically, we’ve taken one of those disinfectants that other people use to kill spores and encapsulated it into a holding vehicle to create a long-lasting surface film,” Glessner explains. Specifically, clear-drying Anti-Growth consists of DDAC (that’s short for Didecyl Dimethyl Ammonium Chloride), a proven safe fungicide, that is combined with an inert latex to create a product with superior efficacy. “Simply stated, the latex acts like a ‘cello-wrap’ on a variety of surfaces to keep the active ingredient from being washed away by the elements.”

In a nutshell, he adds, “It does what other products do but it keeps on doing it for a long time.” Anti-Growth works for up to two years in certain environments, he says, but always for at least six months before a reapplication is required. Generally, it will protect a porous (e.g., concrete, plaster, brick, wood or canvas) or horizontal surface longer than a dense (e.g., vinyl, ceramic or metal) or vertical surface. One coat usually does the trick for both interior and exterior applications.

The concentrated coating, which is mixed with water, costs pennies per square foot of coverage. It can be brushed, rolled, sprayed, sponged or ragged on, depending on the surface. Although it can be applied on everything from roofs, floors and siding to decks, basements and bathing areas where there is continual moisture, it wasn’t designed to be used in underwater environments, such as swimming pools or hot tubs.

For more information or to find the dealer nearest you, contact GSI/Camden Products at (252) 335-1768 or visit the Web site at [www.anti-growth.com](http://www.anti-growth.com).





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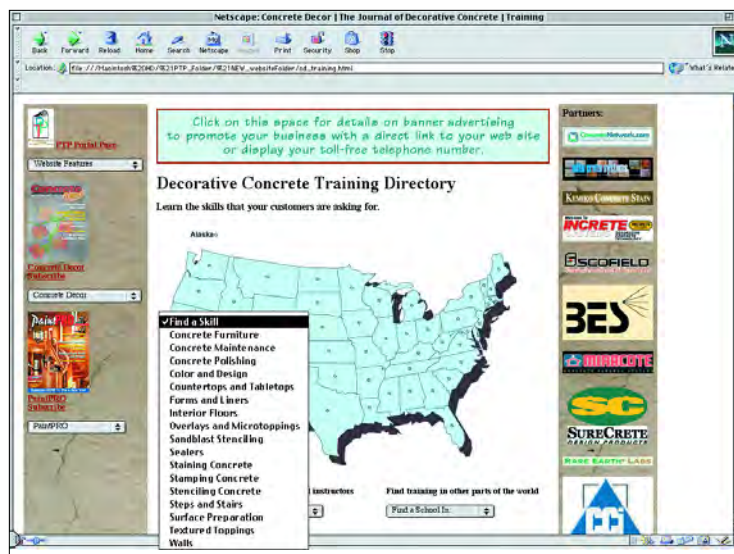
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## Dust buster

Shave Away, Europe, has introduced the Saw Muzzle GP for concrete cutoff saws. The Saw Muzzle is made of heavy-duty, fiber-filled ABS plastic and is designed to fit most gas-powered saws. It's lightweight, easy to install, unobtrusive, and will collect more than 95 percent of the dust created by cutting if used with a standard industrial shop vac. The Saw Muzzle is self-adjusting and can be used for vertical and horizontal cuts with 12" to 16" diamond blades.

Shave Away, Europe (619) 223-2154.  
www.dustmuzzle.com



## Find a new angle

The Angle Finder makes it easy to read any angle — inside or outside — directly from a scale. The Angle Finder can also be used to find the center of any cylindrical object, whether large or small. It functions as a miter gauge, combination square, bevel gauge and construction protractor. The tool costs \$14.95 plus shipping and handling, and can be seen at www.anglegauge.com.

## Power buggy takes on sand or mud

Multiquip has introduced the industry's first all-wheel-drive power buggy in a 16-cubic-foot capacity. The WPB-16EAWD allows operators to transport concrete



and other materials around the job site despite adverse soil conditions. It is ideal for concrete spreading, material sub-base distribution, job-site cleanup and a variety of

landscaping applications. A unique traction valve lets users activate the all-wheel-drive with the flick of a switch and without having to restart the engine. Driven by a powerful 18-horsepower Vanguard engine, the power buggy can load up to 2,500 pounds of material on dual wheels. Its unique tub design reduces concrete splatter outside the bucket. The buggy is available in gas or electric models. For more information, call (800) 421-1244 or visit www.multiquip.com.

## Water-reducing admixtures

An advanced System for Self Consolidating Concrete (SCCS) has been introduced by Grace Construction Products. Central to the system is Grace's new ADVA® Series of high-efficiency polycarboxylate superplasti-

cizers. ADVA Cast 530 is a single component, high-range water-reducing admixture that produces super-fluid SCC without segregation and achieves high early compressive strength. Other admixtures include ADVA Flow Superplasticizer, a high-range water-reducing admixture that promotes high slump, extremely flowable concrete that achieves high strengths while providing superior workability and pumpability; and ADVA Cast, a high range water-reducing admixture for use in all precast/prestressed structures where ultra high-range water reduction is desired. www.graceconstruction.com

## Ride-on shot blast system

The Blastrac® GPX 10-18 is a propane-powered, ride-on shot blast cleaning system that strips, cleans and profiles simultaneously. The environmentally friendly system features its own onboard dust collection system to control dust and contaminants. It is ideal for bridge deck repair, highway maintenance, line stripe removal, airport runway and tarmac maintenance, parking garage maintenance, industrial plant and warehouse floors and other large jobs. With a 10-inch blast cleaning path and a travel speed of up to 200 feet per minute, the GPX 10-18 features a production capacity of as much as 1,300 square feet per hour. Blastrac is a division of USF Surface Preparation Group. For more information, call (800) 256-3440.

## Fiber reinforcement for flooring

Grace Construction Products has introduced Strux 90/40 Fiber Reinforcement for Flooring, the latest addition to its growing line of high-performance synthetic structural fibers.

The product is designed to replace welded wire fabric, light rebar and steel fibers in flooring applications for both commercial and residential structures. It is engineered to impart tight crack control — not simply plastic shrinkage control — thereby making concrete tougher and more impact and fatigue resistant. Strux fibers also increase safety during installation because they weigh less and eliminate the risk for potential injury caused by cuts from steel fibers or welded wire fabric. The fibers do not corrode, and they eliminate problems with conductivity. For more information, visit www.graceconstruction.com.





### Alloy screeds

Marshalltown has added high strength screeds to its product line. The screeds are made of premium alloy and are extremely durable and warp resistant. The ends are capped to prevent concrete buildup. Several sizes are available, from 8- 24 feet in length. Marshalltown: [www.marshalltown.com](http://www.marshalltown.com)

### Portable shot blasting system

The Blastrac 1-8DEZ is a highly portable, lightweight shot blasting system that runs dependably on 120 volt power while it strips, cleans and profiles in one easy step. With an 8-inch blast pattern and a manual travel speed, the 1-8DEZ can prepare up to 250 square feet per hour. Common applications include small industrial floor areas, tight areas around equipment and obstructions, balconies, test patches and more. The system is also useful in the preparation of residential garage floors, pool decks, decorative concrete applications and concrete preparation prior to installation of wood flooring. For more information, call (800) 256-3440.



### Fast concrete repair

The FlashPatch™ concrete repair system from Thermal-Chem completely fixes cracks or gaps in concrete flooring. The repaired floor is ready for heavy forklift traffic or a new floor coating within 15 minutes of application.



It requires no mixing: just pour in the silica sand, wet it with the Flash Patch liquid, and immediately strike it level. Kits are available in two sizes, with the smallest filling about 144 linear feet of cracked floor surface. It works well on spalled surfaces, patching, nonmoving cracks, level uneven grade transitions and broken joint edges. For information, call (800) 635-3773.

### Sealer repels water

Okon has introduced the Okon W-1 Water Repellent Sealer, a one-coat system that effectively seals concrete and masonry surfaces from moisture penetration. The product reduces maintenance requirements, lessening environmental erosion such as dusting, chalking, cracking and spalling. It won't change the natural appearance of concrete and can be used under or over painted surfaces.

For more information, call (303) 377-7800 or visit [www.okoninc.com](http://www.okoninc.com).



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## Concrete countertop system

Versatile Building Products (formerly Versatile Deck Coatings) has introduced the Banco-Cast High Performance Counter Top System. Banco-Cast, designed for use in decorative concrete countertops and castings, is a specially formulated blend of fast-setting, shrinkage-compensated portland cement, additives,



aggregate and polymer. Installations are significantly faster than with other concrete blends, due to the use of a specially proportioned cement blend that rapidly hydrates mixing water. This eliminates the need for curing while providing an accelerated strength development that allows the installer to

seal, grind or polish the surface within four hours of pouring. Installations of Banco-Cast range from 1.5" to 4" in thickness. The product is supplied in a white base that can be tinted with 16 standard colors or custom blends. It readily accepts most stains, dyes and other topical treatments.

Versatile Building Products (800) 535-3325; [www.deckcoatings.com](http://www.deckcoatings.com); World of Concrete: booth 10917

## Self-leveling underlayment

Also new from Versatile Building Products is Liquid Rock Self Leveler, designed for use as a self-leveling underlayment or wear-layer to create uniform, flat surfaces for subsequent floor coverings and decorative concrete treatments. The blend of portland cement, additives, aggregate and polymer doesn't need curing and develops strength rapidly. Installations range from  $\frac{3}{16}$ " to 1½" in thickness in a single lift, and up to 3" with addition of appropriate aggregate. It is suited for use over pre-cast concrete, cast-in-place concrete, marble tile, ceramic tile, vinyl tile, terrazzo, wood and tile adhesives.



Versatile Building Products (800) 535-3325; [www.deckcoatings.com](http://www.deckcoatings.com); World of Concrete: booth 10917

## Pool trowels

Marshalltown has expanded its line of Golden Stainless Steel Pool Trowels. The trowels are now available with either wood or DuraSoft® handles in both 10" and 12" sizes. Both styles feature a blade made from the highest grade stainless steel, and both handle styles have aluminum alloy mounting and blades that are flexible enough to bend to almost any radius. They are comfortable to hold and lightweight.



## Concrete pavement saws

Sanders Saws & Blades has introduced a new line of Mercury concrete pavement saws. Five series are offered, all of which feature a laser-cut frame with heavy-duty hydrostatic transaxle drive (for improved straight-line sawing), a panel-mounted joystick for maneuverability and operator comfort, and a 12-volt hydraulic raise/lower system for blade control. The saws also include a self-enclosed blade shaft spindle assembly that uses oil bath lubrication for extended bearing life and reduced service



requirements. For more information, call (800) 486-0207 or visit [www.sanderssaws.com](http://www.sanderssaws.com).

## Coating and resurfacer

Kwik-Top is a multi-use cementitious protective coating and resurfacer designed for application over a broad range of surfaces such as concrete, brick, metal, masonry, and wood. It's available in white and natural concrete gray bases. A single package product, Kwik-Top consists of a proprietary Dry-Tech Polymer, specially formulated cement blend, aggregate, and modifying additives which are mixed with water by the applicator on the job-site. The simple no mix formulation, virtually eliminates onsite mixing errors and assures the end user that the applied product is of the same high quality intended from the factory. Use Kwik-Top to apply broom, troweled, knockdown and orange-peel finishes over sidewalks, pool decks, driveways or other floor surfaces. Versatile Building Products: (800) 535-3325 or [www.deckcoatings.com](http://www.deckcoatings.com). See the products at World of Concrete 2003, booth #10917.

## Deck-coating system

Versa-Deck Plus is an extremely tough, metal-lath reinforced fiberglass deck-coating system that is designed to be used over new and previously coated plywood and concrete walking deck surfaces. Versa-Deck Plus is resistant to UV degradation and freeze-thaw cycling, while providing a Class-A one hour fire resistive assembly when combined with appropriate construction. The system has been formulated to be the fastest installing system of its type on the market, with typical installations being completed in 1-2 days.

Versatile Building Products: (800) 535-3325 or [www.deckcoatings.com](http://www.deckcoatings.com). Or see the products at World of Concrete 2003 in booth #10917.

## Granite finish

Versa-Pox Granite Finish System will transform a garage floor into a beautiful surface that has the look of granite or terrazzo flooring. The product is designed to handle the punishment typically associated with garage floors. It is easy to clean, chemical resistant, economical and has excellent stain and



wear resistance. Most installations are completed in 2 to 3 days. The system incorporates a two-component CRU topcoat, giving it one of the toughest chemical, UV and abrasion resistant seals available. The system is designed suited for use in light-to-heavy industrial applications such as manufacturing bays, airplane hangers, service bays, garage floors, restaurants, and retail flooring.

Versatile Building Products: (800) 535-3352 or [www.deckcoatings.com](http://www.deckcoatings.com). See the products at World of Concrete 2003 in booth #10917.

### Rebar tying tool

Max USA Corp. has introduced a new rebar tying tool. The RB650 Re-bar-Tier uses 16-gauge wire to tie rebar up to #10 x #10. The tool, which weighs just 4.6 pounds, ties the wire around the tying area once, cuts and twists in less than one second. The speed dramatically reduces labor costs and increases productivity. Other benefits include reduction of carpal tunnel insurance claims and less time bent over at the jobsite. You can see a demonstration of the RB650 at the World of Concrete Show on Feb. 6 at the convention center in room N252. For more information, visit [www.maxusacorp.com](http://www.maxusacorp.com) or call (800) 223-4293.



## PROJECT FOCUS

(Continued from page 64)

blend different mediums together to get a desired end product.

Artflor is a cementitious and polymer mix that Tri-Co refers to as "architectural concrete." The look you're trying to achieve, the budget you have to work with and the existing substrate (if applicable) will determine the system that meets your needs. "It's more of a technique than a specific material," sums up Cilli. "It's not a specific product."

Trademarked about five years ago, Artflor can be made in any color imaginable, Steward says, as her company has a chemist on staff whose job it is to do just that. "We can match anything. All we need is a piece of carpet, a paint chip, a swatch of something or a Pantone color and we're there." There are 42 standard colors in the trowel line, she adds, "but we create custom colors all the time."

In addition to the integral color in the flooring, Artflor employs special techniques — with such names such as coral reef, splash and wash — to expand the custom design options.

The architectural flooring can also be stamped, grouted and divided with metal. Some of the systems can incorporate various aggregates into the topping, including crushed glass, flat button pearls, computer chips, even watch parts. Colors can be swirled, blocked, shadowed, accented ... the design potential is endless, Anderson says.

"We're always evolving," Steward says, "and we offer ongoing training and help from our technical department because we're constantly introducing new products and better ways of doing things." Concrete tiles made in San Diego, for instance, incorporate photo imaging. "We can place images on tiles so you could create huge murals. You wouldn't be able to see the image while you were walking on the tiles but you could see it from up high. It's a neat concept. I'd really like to do one of these in a courtyard where there is a cluster of high-rise buildings."

The Artflor systems are more popular on the West Coast than the East, but interest is spreading across the country, Steward adds. "We create works of art; no two creations are the same. Our people are more like artisans than laborers," Steward concludes. "There's not a lot of room for error. People walk on our jobs and have no idea that it's architectural concrete. And if we're doing our job right they can't tell and they really don't need to know anyway."



**With an Artflor system, you can create simple logos, such as the one seen at the convention center, as well as intricate designs that incorporate numerous colors and shapes.**

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# PROJECT FOCUS:

## Las Vegas Convention Center's South Hall

*Put this floor on your "must-see" list while you're in Vegas*

by Stacey Enesey Klemenc

**A**mid the razzle-dazzle of Las Vegas, you've got some pretty stiff competition if you're vying for attention ... especially if you're a lowly floor.

"A lot of times the floor blends into the surroundings and you don't even notice it," says Amedeo Cilli, president of Concrete Concepts of New Jersey Inc. and a licensee of Artflor by Tri-Co Floors. But that's not the case when you enter the food court of the Las Vegas Convention Center's South Hall, where two Christmases ago Cilli helped Artflor put in a floor to rival the most colorful in the city. "The colors on that floor are so vibrant — almost neon — that you can't help but notice them when you walk up. They are that stunning."

With names such as Caribbean Tide, Empire Blue, Majestic, Basalt Gray and Sangria Passion, to name a few, the colors live up to their lively monikers. And the Artflor™, as beautiful as it is, was installed in three weeks time in practically round-the-clock shifts.

### In the beginning

As the story goes, the project was a little behind, says Tina Anderson, president of Tri-Co Floors out of San Diego and the subcontractor for the food court's 21,000-square-foot floor. Her crew, an ensemble from Las Vegas, San Diego and New Jersey, didn't get in there until the third week in December, she remembers, and they needed to be done by early January.

"There was a real time crunch on this project," says Penny Steward, who works out of the firm's Las Vegas office as director of sales and marketing. Steward worked hand-in-hand with the architect of record, Jacobs Engineering, to tweak the floor's design. The convention center had a show booked for January, she says, and if Tri-Co was going to pull this off, they were going to need some help.

Artflor's part of the project entailed seven different colors of flooring for seven concession stands, which encompassed 12,513 square feet with 5,873 linear feet of saw cuts. Add in



**A solvent acrylic sealer was used on the food court floor in the South Hall of the Las Vegas Convention Center. The entire 21,000-square-foot flooring job was completed in three weeks.**

another 8,591 square feet, eight more colors and 2,692 linear feet of saw cuts for Starbucks and the food court — plus a logo for the convention center — and they were looking at a pretty hefty job.

"Tina called and said, 'What are you doing?'" recalls Cilli. 'Not much,' I said. 'How would you like to get on a plane tomorrow?' she asked. She needed help, and when a friend calls you go. I packed up five of our people and we jumped on a plane and flew to Vegas. We worked until Christmas Eve, flew back for Christmas and flew back the day after. We worked until New Year's Eve," when, he fondly remembers, he made his wife's New Year wish come true by coming home unexpectedly just minutes before midnight.

"We couldn't have done it without them," Anderson says about Cilli and his crew. A lot of sacrifices were made to complete the now memorable job.

### Delving into the floor

The convention center floor was created with Artflor, a series of several systems marketed by Tri-Co and installed by licensees nationwide. Touted as functional pieces of art that offer design flexibility to the max, Artflor can be applied both vertically and horizontally, inside and out. Some systems, such as the one used in the convention center, are troweled on. Other systems are self-leveling. The systems basically mix and

*(Continued to page 63)*

**Eight different colors were used to create the flooring for the Starbucks and restaurant in the convention center's South Hall. The floor, a functional piece of art created with an Artflor system, was troweled on.**





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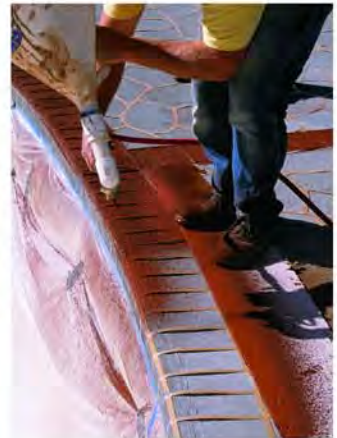
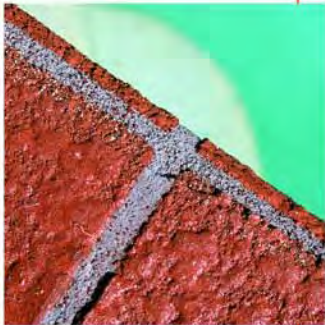
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# remarkable resurfacing



## SCOFIELD™ Texturetop™

■ **Stamp Grade** – formulated for application by trowel, gauge rake, screed, hopper gun or pump at thicknesses from 1/8 to 3/4 inch. It can be float, broom, swirl or trowel finished, or stamped with LITHOTEX® Pavecrafters® imprinting tools or embossing skins.

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and designer colors, SCOFIELD Texturetop is ideal for projects where good-looking exterior hardscapes or interior floors need to resist high levels of pedestrian or vehicular traffic.

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■ **L. M. Scofield Company**  
**Headquarters for Western USA and International**  
6533 Bandini Blvd., Los Angeles, CA USA 90040  
voice: 323 720 3000 fax: 323 720 3030

**Headquarters for Eastern USA**  
4155 Scofield Road, Douglasville, GA USA 30134  
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