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The Journal of Decorative Concrete

VOL. 3 No. 6 • DECEMBER/JANUARY 2004 • \$6.95



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NAME: Frank

DATES: Feb. 15

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until 7:15. What do you want me
to do?? Wendy

DAY	START	LUNCH	END	JOBSITE	WORK DONE	HOURS
Mon	7:00	1/2	3:45	Walby	Ext.	8 1/4
Tues						8 1/4
Wed						8 1/4
Thurs						8 1/4
Fri						8 1/4
Sat						
Sun						

Employee Signature: Frank Gomez

Total Hours: 41 1/4



THANKFULLY 40,000 OTHERS DO.



Created 2/13/2004 5:26 PM

Employee Report

Frank Gomez

Jobsite Name: **Walby Residence Pool**

Date Range: 2/9/2004 through 2/13/2004

Day	Start	End	Activity	
Mon 2/9	7:19 AM	12:02 PM	Prep	4:43 hours
	12:40 PM	3:39 PM	Prep	2:59 hours 7:42 hours
Tue 2/10	7:21 AM	12:06 PM	Formwork	4:45 hours
	12:37 PM	3:42 PM	Formwork	3:05 hours 7:40 hours
Wed 2/11	7:16 AM	12:04 PM	Formwork	4:48 hours
	12:33 PM	3:44 PM	Formwork	3:11 hours 7:59 hours
Thu 2/12	7:18 AM	12:25 PM	Texture/Seal	5:07 hours
	1:05 PM	3:42 PM	Texture/Seal	2:37 hours 7:44 hours
Fri 2/13	7:17 AM	11:50 AM	Texture/Seal	4:33 hours
	12:36 PM	3:41 PM	Texture/Seal	3:05 hours 7:38 hours

Signature

Frank Gomez

Frank Gomez

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CIRCLE #49 ON READER SERVICE CARD

It's Showtime...

Dear readers,

A very Happy New Year from all of us at Professional Trade Publications.

Believe it or not, *Concrete Decor* is now entering its fourth year in circulation. I wouldn't say these years have been a relaxing time, but they've been a valuable learning experience and I'm glad we made the decision to begin service to your industry. We are especially grateful for the wonderful new friendships *Concrete Decor* magazine has helped us develop. Many of those relationships are with talented craftsmen who we're honored to know, and still others are the advertisers who graciously support *Concrete Decor* and its mission to bring such unique, valuable and necessary information to us all.

In the start of 2004, *Concrete Decor* will push the threshold of its services by offering subscribers new opportunities and valuable added resources. First, I encourage you to reserve space NOW for the Walt Disney World Resort "Tour of Concrete," sponsored by *Concrete Decor*. This exclusive event, just prior to the start of the World Of Concrete show, is the first of its kind and is sure to give you a stimulating new perspective on concrete in 2004. (Please see the insert in this issue for more information).

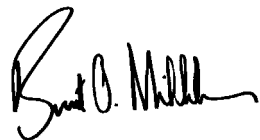
Second, *Concrete Decor* will have all of its previous articles online by the beginning of February. This will allow you to search for valuable information and cool photos previously published in *Concrete Decor*. Third, subscribers will get more value from their free online listing when we launch our newly redesigned findthePRO.com. Helping to promote your business and the awareness of decorative concrete is a service we are particularly proud of.

When you come to this year's WOC show in Orlando, please make a point to visit the companies you see advertised in *Concrete Decor*. Like yourself, they are companies that recognize the importance of this magazine and they are interested in serving you with innovative, quality products and service. You can also win valuable prizes and a free *Concrete Decor* T-shirt by utilizing the special Disney insert we've enclosed in this issue. Simply locate the "Disney event sponsors" at the show and have your insert rubber-stamped. Then return your completed insert to *Concrete Decor* at booth #BL-14 (main entrance lobby) or the Cheng Concrete Exchange booth #5587.

In 2004, *Concrete Decor* will begin rewarding its readers for using the Reader Service cards found in the magazine. When you send in these cards to obtain product information, it gives us important information on reader interests and also allows our advertisers to give you the professional attention you deserve.

With great sincerity, we thank you for your tremendous support and we look forward to continuing our service to you in the New Year.

God Bless.



Bent Mikkelsen
Publisher



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ON THE COVER: Colored concrete coming down the chute of a ready mix truck.
Photography by Kolin Smith, courtesy of Davis Colors.

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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!

Decorative Concrete Sealers

With the boom in the decorative concrete business, we have seen a dramatic increase in the use of concrete sealers. There are many types of sealers, and it can be confusing to pick the right sealer for the right job. I'm going to try to simplify it a little and share with you some of the things that I have learned.

We are going to keep it simple and focus on outdoor applications only. First of all, let's pick the right sealer aesthetically. If you want a glossy "wet look" appearance, your best bet would be a lacquer-based wet look sealer. If you want a more natural stone look, try a water-based acrylic sealer.

Lacquer-based wet look sealers are easy to apply and give you a gloss finish. They also tend to be easier to repair should a problem arise.

Water-based acrylic sealers enhance the color of the concrete and leave a more natural appearance. If a problem should occur, water-based sealers are more difficult to repair. This is why some people will tell you not to use water-based materials outdoors. However, many of our customers have

had very good results using water-based sealer outdoors.

Now let's focus on some potential problems that can arise with sealers.

Concrete is porous and it needs to breathe to let moisture escape. When applied at the manufacturer's recommended rate, most concrete sealers will remain breathable. However, a blushing problem can occur when sealers are over-applied or reapplied too often. Blushing is a white film that forms when moisture is trapped between the concrete and the sealer. The thicker you apply sealer, the less it can breathe, the more likely it will trap moisture and "blush."

With water-based sealers, blushing can be difficult to repair. If you're lucky, a little time may be the fix, but if you're not lucky you may have to remove the sealer with solvent-based strippers or citrus-based cleaners and then reapply.

Lacquer-based sealers are generally easier to fix. Many times a little solvent on the surface will break down the sealer and clear up the blushing.

It is also helpful to remember that sealers come with different solids content. Solids, depending on the type of sealer, either penetrate the surface to seal from inside the concrete or remain on top of the concrete to form a seal at the surface. Solvent holds the solids in suspension so the sealer can be applied by spray, brush or roller; then the solvent evaporates. Don't be surprised if a low solids content sealer costs more than one with high solids content. In California we have strict VOC regulations; solvents are very expensive. Less solids, more solvent, more expense.

Is a sealer with a higher solids content better? Sometimes yes, but generally no. A higher solids content sealer is thicker and more difficult to apply, and there's an increased chance of blushing.

Here are a couple of key things to keep in mind with sealers.

1. Moisture is your enemy.
2. More is not better.

Whatever sealer you choose, remember to apply at the application rate recommended by the manufacturer and make sure new concrete has had sufficient time to cure prior to the sealer application. You don't want to trap moisture with the sealer.

Whenever possible, put a sample down in an inconspicuous corner of the slab, to be sure get the look you want.



—Jeff Patterson, vice president, Muller Construction Supply



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ChemRex changes name

ChemRex will change its name to Degussa Building Systems as of Jan. 1. The company's brands and products include Sonneborn, Thoro, MBT Protection and Repair, ThoRoc, Hydrozo, SELBY, UCRETE, and Radiance.

The company has recruited a new team of senior executives to head up the company. Heading the team is president and CEO Mike Galasso, recruited from Sherwin-Williams, where he was president and manager of the international division. Controller Paul Nicolai joined from Fabcon Inc., a leading fabricator of precast products. Rounding out the ranks are vice president of marketing Steve Ostermann and vice president of sales and business development Doug MacRae, who were both executives with Harris Specialty Chemicals Inc.

Degussa appoints new execs

John Salvatore was recently appointed president of Degussa Corp., the North American subsidiary of Degussa AG. In addition to his new responsibilities as president, Salvatore will continue as business unit head of Degussa Construction Systems Americas and president and CEO of Degussa Construction Chemicals Inc.

Degussa has also hired Christopher Bauer as director of customer service and Jim Lee as director of distribution. Most recently, Bauer held the position of aftermarket products manager for Thiele Technologies Inc., a packaging machinery manufacturer. At Degussa, he will be responsible for leading customer service improvement initiatives and providing enhanced support for the company's internal team, including production, sales and marketing.

Lee most recently held the position of director of operations for Compaq Corporation, formally Vanstar Corp., of Indianapolis, Ind. At Degussa, he is responsible for directing logistics and managing internal distribution centers.

Marshalltown takes Trowel out of name

After 113 years in business, Marshalltown Trowel Co. has changed its name to Marshalltown Co. The company's foundation

has been built with quality brick and finishing trowels, but has grown to include many other types of tools. Today, its 231-page catalog displays more than 2,000 tools, with less than a third of those being trowels.

Marshalltown is one of the world's largest manufacturers of construction hand tools used with brick,

concrete, drywall, plaster, EIFS, tile, flooring, paint and wallpapering. Brands include Marshalltown, QLT by Marshalltown, Embee by Marshalltown, and Nu-Pride. The company operates manufacturing facilities in Marshalltown, Iowa, and Fayetteville, Ark. For more information, visit www.marshalltown.com.

Grace partners with Polymer Group

Grace Construction Products has signed an agreement to license the use of its STRUX 90/40 synthetic structural fiber reinforcement technology in the U.S. and Canada to Polymer Group Inc.

STRUX 90/40 synthetic structural fiber reinforcement is the latest addition to Grace's growing line of high performance synthetic structural fibers. It is designed to replace welded wire fabric, light rebar and steel fibers in slab-on-ground and precast applications. Grace will continue to market STRUX 90/40 through its own sales force, while PGI will expand that reach via its network of direct sales and manufacturers' reps. Grace and PGI will work together to educate the industry regarding proper performance standards of fiber-reinforced concrete.

Headquartered in Cambridge, Mass., Grace Construction Products manufactures concrete admixtures and fiber reinforcement. The company also offers liquid color pigments and products for architectural concrete, cement processing additives, fire protection, firestops, waterproofing, and masonry products. Visit the Grace Construction website at: www.graceconstruction.com.

Polymer Group, Inc. (PGI) is the third largest producer of nonwoven materials in the world, with 23 manufacturing facilities in 11 countries. Visit the PGI website at: www.polymergroupinc.com.

Reward opens new facility

Reward Wall Systems has added a new manufacturing facility in Wilsonville, Ore., near Portland. The new plant started producing Reward's iForm flat wall insulating concrete forms (ICFs) in November and will serve Reward's growing customer base in the Northwest. Since introducing the iForm in early 2000, Reward has increased its manufacturing capacity from one facility to five. For more information, visit www.rewardwalls.com.

Mapei beefs up decorative concrete division

Gary Powell has been named Mapei's new Concrete Repair Systems Terrazzo Specialist. Powell will be in charge of product development, marketing and sales of the company's new decorative concrete topping, Terratop Terrazzo. This topping allows for thin installations, which makes it much lighter than traditional



cement terrazzo. It has a quick turnaround time, and can be ground the next day.

Bruce Burton recently joined Mapei as associate product and sales manager. Burton specializes in Ultratop, the company's new self-leveling concrete topping. His years of experience with product development, manufacturing, training and installations have provided him the ideal background to oversee the development and launch of the decorative concrete product line.

Dave Wurst, formerly with the Sonneborn group, has joined Mapei as a CRS specialist and as the Florida sales representative specializing in concrete repair, protection and enhancement.



Versatile Building Products moves to larger facility

Versatile Building Products is relocating to a 28,000-square-foot facility in Carson, Calif., thereby tripling its capacity for inventory space. The company has realized growth rates of well over 100 percent in 2003.

"One of the differentiating factors that our company holds is our product availability," says Mike Meursing, president of Versatile. "Keeping a running stock of all materials so that contractors have no waiting time is extremely important, and the demand for our systems has increased to the point where we are struggling to keep product on the shelves."

Versatile moved to its new facility, at 20420 South Susana Rd. in Carson, in early December. To learn more about the company, visit www.deckcoatings.com.

New facility for Grace/Pieri release agents opens in France

Grace Construction Products has opened a new production facility in Larnaud, France, for its Grace/Pieri release agents.

The new plant enables Grace to increase sales of release agents around the world, manufacture the products with higher flexibility, and speed delivery time to customers. Operations in Larnaud are designed to reach a yearly production volume of more than ten thousand tones.

Grace acquired Pieri SAS in 2001, adding a comprehensive line of products, including surface retarders and form release agents, to its portfolio of additives for concrete, masonry and cement products. For more information, visit www.graceconstruction.com.

Grace promotes senior managers

In other Grace Construction news, the company has named three highly respected senior managers to new positions in its concrete and masonry products business lines.

Lawrence R. Roberts has been appointed Technical Fellow, Timothy A. Durning has been named manager of marketing and technology planning, and Gregory S. Freeman has been promoted to manager of commercial development.



Roberts, who joined Grace in 1968, is widely recognized as an expert in cement and concrete science. As Technical Fellow, he brings this expertise and stature to Grace's worldwide technical and customer relationship programs.

Durning, as manager of marketing and technology planning, is responsible for developing and overseeing strategic marketing initiatives surrounding Grace's business development and technology planning programs. He joined Grace in 1989 and has played an instrumental role in bringing important new products and technologies to market.



Freeman, as manager of commercial development, will direct the commercial development group and the concrete/masonry product development program.

For more information, visit the Web site at www.graceconstruction.com.



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CIRCLE #119 ON READER SERVICE CARD

Industry Spotlight

Association News

National Ready Mixed Concrete Association *NRMCA partners with OSHA for safety*

Workers in the ready mixed concrete industry will benefit from a partnership agreement signed Nov. 4 by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and the NRMCA.

Among the goals of the partnership are a 30 percent reduction over three years in the total case incident rate (TCIR) for member companies; to increase the number of ready mixed concrete producers who have formal safety and health programs; to decrease workers compensation costs for companies that participate in the cooperative agreement; and to increase the number of ready mixed concrete employees who successfully complete the OSHA 10-hour and 30-hour training courses.

The partnership will provide a number of benefits to participants. OSHA agrees to participate in two training seminars per year, including the NRMCA 10-hour safety course, annual convention seminars, and forum and expo sessions. OSHA also agrees to provide compliance assistance specialists to discuss and clarify general industry health and safety standards. The agency will help NRMCA identify Voluntary Protection Programs participants who can facilitate the partnership agreement by giving presentations to employers, associations and other groups within the industry. For more information, visit www.nrmca.org.

Portland Cement Association *Shepherd named director of sustainable development*

Portland Cement Association has named David D. Shepherd, AIA, as



David D. Shepherd

Director, Sustainable Development. In the newly created position, Shepherd will be responsible for developing and promoting sustainable applications for cement and concrete.

A registered architect, Shepherd joined PCA in 2000 as manager of residential technology and was responsible for coordination of research and training of technical issues and promotion of homes made with concrete in the U.S. market.

Shepherd joined PCA with a variety of experiences in the construction industry, including co-founder/principal of a residential design/build firm, assistant vice president of a national real estate investment firm, and project manager for a commercial general contractor.

Shepherd is a member of the American Institute of Architects and the American Concrete Institute. He holds a B.A. in architecture from the University of Illinois at Urbana/Champaign.

Change in cement formulation promises to reduce emissions

Members of the Portland Cement Association announced the latest effort by their industry to significantly reduce emissions and provide key environmental benefits by proposing a change

in the manufacture of portland cement. Tom Chizmadia, PCA board member and chairman of the association's Environment and Energy Committee, outlined PCA's proposal to allow for the inclusion of up to 5 percent ground limestone in the portland cement standard designated as ASTM C 150.

Speaking to the press gathered at the Greenbuild Conference and Exposition, Chizmadia underlined the importance of this change: "Such reductions could add significantly to the environmental gains already achieved by the cement industry, and are clearly in line with the nation's global climate policy goal of reducing greenhouse gas emission intensities." Chizmadia added, "With the addition of ground limestone, our industry can provide the same quality product as we do under current ASTM standards."

The proposed change would bring U.S. standards into harmony with those used in both Europe and Canada, where the addition of limestone has been used successfully for decades. The environmental benefits include a reduction in use of raw materials, reduced energy consumption, and reduced greenhouse gas emissions. Carbon dioxide would be reduced by approximately 2.6 percent per ton of product produced.

Chizmadia reinforced the cement industry's commitment to environmental progress by summarizing a three-part program to reduce carbon dioxide emissions per ton of product by 10 percent between 1990 and 2020. The plan addresses the areas of manufacturing, product formulation and product application.

Concrete Sawing and Drilling Association (CSDA) *Training classes boast 1,000 grads*

A milestone has been achieved with the 1,000th student graduating from

Concrete Sawing and Drilling Association training classes held November 6-15, 2003. Since the CSDA offered its first class, Cutting Edge, in 1993, 686 students have graduated from this program. Since Operator Certification was started in 1996, 161 students have graduated from this course, as well as 125 from the OSHA 10-hour Construction Safety course. A new Estimating course was introduced this year, with 30 students graduating from the first two classes.

Cutting Edge is an intensive two-day training course that provides students with a strong foundation in sawing and drilling operations and industry fundamentals. Operator Certification is a comprehensive six-day training course that combines detailed classroom instruction with the practical, hands-on application of advanced cutting techniques. The new Estimating course is a two-day course focused on the practice of estimating for the sawing and drilling industry.

"CSDA offers the most comprehensive training you'll find in the concrete cutting industry. The courses take an in-depth look at diamond tool technology, wall sawing, flat sawing, hand sawing, wire sawing, core drilling, advanced sawing and drilling techniques, and estimating," said lead instructor Rick Norland. "Operators who attend are among the most talented in the industry and they benefit greatly from listening to their colleagues discuss different approaches to similar problems and unique solutions."

The 2004 Training Programs in Clearwater, Fla., are scheduled to begin February 5-14, 2004, just prior to the World of Concrete. For more information, call the CSDA office at 727-577-5004 or visit www.csd.org.

International Concrete Repair Institute

ICRI Announces New Chapters in Minnesota and Virginia

The International Concrete Repair Institute (ICRI) announces the establishment of the Minnesota

Chapter and Virginia Chapter. The ICRI board approved its 28th and 29th chapters' charters during the ICRI 2003 Fall Convention in Tampa, Fla.

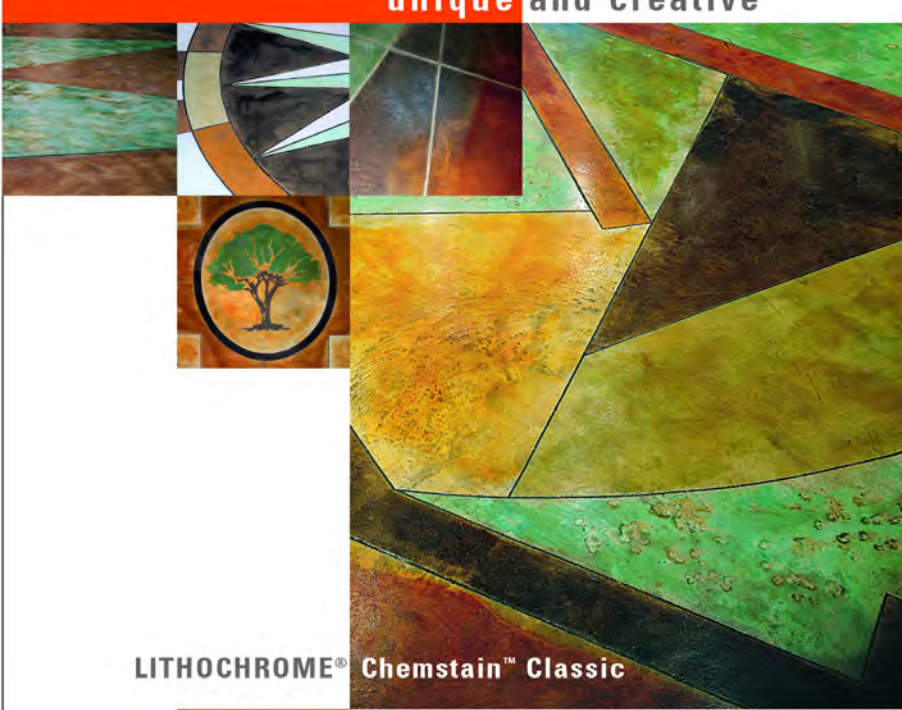
Anyone interested in joining either chapter or learning more about its activities should contact Minnesota Chapter president Steve Disch (952-595-9116; steve.disch@walkerparking.com) or Virginia Chapter president Pete

Lipphardt (757-671-8626; petel@stroudpence.com). ICRI also posts schedules and announcements for all of its chapters at www.icri.org.

If you are interested in starting a chapter in your area, contact Chris Jorgensen (847-827-0830; chris.jorgensen@icri.org), marketing/chapter relations coordinator.



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CIRCLE #73 ON READER SERVICE CARD

Michael Archambault: An American almost in Paris

by Stacey Enesey Klemenc

Right: Mike Archambault (back row, far right) with students in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Below: A demo panel in Johannesburg. A 16-year-old student (front row, far right in the top photo) drew the hunter and cut it with an 8" grinder. He had never seen a grinder before.



In his heyday, Michael Archambault was more than a casual contender. Back in the '70s, before he was 25 years old, the sassy lad who grew up in San Diego had Houston by its concrete tail. He not only owned a Patterned Concrete Industries franchise but eventually bought out the mother company and served as president. Archambault also sat on the board of the American Society of Concrete Construction and was very involved with the American Concrete Institute, serving on four different committees.

Yes, he was in the mix, caught up in the business, smack dab in the thick of things, he recalls.

"I worked decorative concrete [in that capacity] from 1977 until 1995," he says. But success had its price. Twice divorced, he finally figured out the source of his woes: He just wasn't cut out to run a big company. "It took its toll mentally on me," he says. So he did what most red-blooded Americans would do in his situation. He sold his shares of both Patterned Concrete of Houston and Patterned Concrete Industries and bailed.

Luckily, there was a parachute within reach.

Opportunities abroad

Right about that time, Archambault got a call for help from a contractor in England. "I decided to go for it," he says, which meant he spent the next couple of years shuttling between Houston and the UK.





Left: Stamping sand so that the customer can visualize what the drive will look like. This also gives inexperienced workers practice.

Below: A highway just outside of Cairo. This was the contractor's first stain job (with instructions from Archambault over the phone).



"Then I got a call to come to France," he says. The job involved helping with a project at Disneyland Resort Paris, where he had previously worked in 1991 and loved every minute. Working on the Disney project "opened huge doors" for him, he recalls, and before too long, L.M. Scofield Co., whose products he has always used, offered him a three-year contract as a consultant. Their relationship continues today.

Archambault moved to France in 1998, remarried and today lives about 10 minutes from the Disney resort with his French wife and their 3-year-old daughter.

For the past seven years or so, he has been teaching people all over the world how to work with decorative flatwork and colored concrete. Largely through the agreement with Scofield, he has trained crews throughout Europe, Africa and Asia.

Archambault says his years in Texas working with Mexican crews helped prepare him for his current job. "I've always had a knack for teaching," he says. "And I can teach the basics of concrete finishing to other people even though I don't speak their language."

To the finish

Archambault contends that the success of any project — decorative or not — depends largely on how the concrete is

put down in the first place. "A lot of people want to enter the concrete market by going directly into the decorative aspect," he says. "But most anybody can stamp concrete. There's a lot more to placing concrete and finishing it."

Many contractors who live in countries where concrete has not been widely used are impressed by things that most American and Australian contractors consider run of the mill — like integral color, broomed or swirled finishes, smooth edges and banded work. In these countries, stone has been used for exterior applications because it's always been so plentiful. But rock from quarries is becoming more

expensive, as is insurance and labor, Archambault explains, and alternatives are being sought.

And for alternatives like concrete, education is needed.

"The concrete people over here can put down an inside industrial floor fine, but you take that same company and they struggle with outside applications," Archambault says, noting that contractors are used to pouring a base and putting something on top of it, rather than finishing it to look good. "They lack the basic knowledge necessary for a durable and lasting finish," he says. "They don't understand that fluctuations in temperature can cause concrete to crack if the joints



Top: Disneyland Paris, a light broom job.

Middle: Pre-cast countertop project at Montana cabin.

Bottom: Completed countertop.



aren't properly placed or if there aren't enough of them."

Often, the seemingly simple things are the most complex, Archambault continues. "To the day I die, the most difficult thing [to teach] is running an edge and keeping them flat. I know it sounds so very basic and boring, but teaching a guy how to edge, float and trowel is extremely difficult."

Architects and engineers don't appreciate that part of the business, he says. "They think stamped concrete is the bee's knees. But prepping for the stamp, that's where the talent lies."

Some guys think that by the end of one class, they'll be experts, he says. But he figures it takes about 10 years. "It takes an incredible amount of time to learn everything you need to know to place concrete," he says, "and I don't think you can do it in less than that."

Tricks of the trade

Archambault says that one of his most reliable teaching tools is plain, ordinary sand. He first learned about practicing with sand back in 1974 during a summer job in Kansas when he was a tool washer who longed to be a finisher.

"My boss said if I wanted to finish concrete, I should go over to that sand pile and practice." That's what he did and that's what he still preaches today.

"By using moist sand, you can really go into depth with the students without having to rush," he says. Sand also gives the student the freedom to make bad errors that are easily fixed, he says.

"From the straight edge to the bull float — essentially all your hand tools — using these tools in sand is very similar to concrete," he explains. You can use sand for practically everything: fresno trowels, walking edgers, walking groovers, troweling, applying release and stamping.

He recalls using this technique in Egypt with two groups of 40 people in preparation for two large decorative concrete jobs, the Dream Park theme park in Cairo and the presidential palace in Alexandria. He had three weeks to whip the crews into shape. "Half the time I used sand, not concrete, to teach



A bar top for a local cafe in France.

with," he says. And what may surprise readers the most: "Screeding or straight-edging took much longer for the workers to master compared to stamping."

Hanging up the travelling shoes

These days Archambault would like to stay a little closer to home with his new

family. He says he's finally waded through the red tape and is very close to obtaining a small business license in France. His plans include working with microtoppings and cementitious overlays and making concrete countertops, projects he can do without a crew.

He took a friend's advice and bought a copy of *Concrete Countertops* by Fu-Tung Cheng. "It's the best \$35 I've spent

in a long time," he says. "It's incredible the amount of information I got out of that book. Grinding and polishing concrete is definitely a new thrill."

Still, he concedes, teaching still gets him excited and he doubts he'll ever truly stay put. From the Egyptian man he coached over the phone on how to use a chemical stain to the young artist in South Africa who brought crude drawings to life, people he has taught keep him invigorated.

"I like to preach the gospel of durability," he says. "A lot of times there is an easier way to finish the concrete, but the extra work makes the concrete more impervious. I like to do one or two more passes after what most people think is good enough."

Above all, he urges, heed this commandment: Don't be in the business for monetary gain. "Pay attention to the job first and satisfy the customer. Put down the most durable product and profit will come automatically."



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Adding integral color on the job site

by Gail Elber

Although your ready-mix supplier can supply you with truckloads of colored concrete, there may be some occasions when you want to color your own. Here's why and how.

The pros and cons of integral color

There are many reasons to add integral color to a batch rather than broadcasting color hardener. A slab may be too big for workers to access its middle. The customer may want the even color produced by integral pigments instead of the mottled look of color hardener. Integral color won't chip off. And integral color is the only choice for vertical surfaces enclosed in forms.

The biggest drawback of integral color is the difficulty of matching colors from the color chip to the job, from load to load, and even from one end of the truck to the other. Color chips can give the customer only a general idea of what to expect. For one thing, the chip was made to represent a batch made at the manufacturer's headquarters. In your area, cement and sand may be lighter or darker than what the manufacturer used, and additives such as fly ash will bring their own colors to the mix. For another thing, the color chip represents



an unsealed surface. Sealing the surface will make the color darker and richer. If the color is critical, as when existing concrete must be matched, a sample slab is essential.

Outwitting Murphy

Once you've developed a formula that makes a good-looking sample, much can go wrong when that sample is scaled up to production size. The color is extremely sensitive to how much water is in the mix and to the color of the cement and aggregate in the mix.

To minimize these problems, Lyle Langeliers of Alco Concrete in Eugene, Ore., always takes the task of coloring into his own hands, whether the job is large or small. "If three different truck drivers weigh out three different loads, you're going to get three different looks," he said. Accordingly, Langeliers weighs out the colorant and delivers the exact amount to the ready-mix plant. This practice doesn't entirely eliminate the opportunity for error, but it makes it easier to pinpoint who made an error, should it be necessary to redo the job.

Although many powdered colorants come in bags that are supposed to degrade in the mix truck, Langeliers requires the ready-mix drivers to open



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the bags and dump their contents into the truck. He explained, "The four corners of those bags have multiple folds, and about 25 percent of the time you'll get a big fist-sized ball of color wrapped up in that fold that doesn't disintegrate. It's always out in the middle of the slab. Someone has to climb out there and get it, and now the color has changed a little bit. The concrete drivers don't want to handle the color, but we ask them to open the bags and dump the color in. That always costs me some doughnuts for the truck drivers."

Doughnuts are powerful, but to make the job less messy and more fool-proof, Langeliers repackages the colorant in heavy-duty transparent plastic bags. So far only one driver has managed to drop a plastic bag into the load, he reported.

Even if you weigh out the color yourself, plenty can still go wrong at the ready-mix plant. Transit time variation, wash water left in the truck, the order in which ingredients are added to the mixer, and variation between different lots of cement or aggregate can all cause two truckloads prepared with the same amount of colorant to have different colors.

Don't just dump

For this reason, you might want to add your own color at the job site instead of at the plant. You'll also be adding your own color if you have a small job using a portable mixer. However, no matter what the size of the load, there's more to adding colorant than throwing it in and running the mixer for a while. "The manufacturers tell you in the specs that you can do it like that, but that's not the safe way to do it," Langeliers said. "It's virtually impossible to get an even color from front to back. The back of the load seems to absorb more of the material. Then as you are pouring it, you start to get the gray streaks of the natural concrete."

Instead, Langeliers suggested adding part of the colorant, running the mixer, then reversing it and starting to discharge the truck. "After you start to discharge, the load is lying in there flat. Now when you put more color in it, it will flow



Photograph by Richard Barnes

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forward [instead of staying in the back of the truck]. If you do that multiple times, you will get a consistent mix.” Both powdered and liquid colorants will mix better this way, and many manufacturers do recommend this procedure. Jerry Garceau of Butterfield Colors noted that reversing the drum for discharge before adding colorant will ensure that the pigments get into the concrete instead of accumulating on the fins.

Of course, if you’re using a portable mixer, add the colorant early in the mixing process per the colorant manufacturer’s directions, which generally involve adding part of the water and cement to the mixer, mixing, then adding the rest of the materials.

Another factor to consider when adding color at the job site is any additional water that the process brings to the mix. “When you add color at the

site, you have to wash the fins down,” Langeliers explained. “Every gallon of water that you add weakens the concrete. So, for example, if you order a load of 3,000-psi concrete, at a 4.5-inch slump, when you put color in and wash the fins down, you will add 10 gallons of water to the mix, and it will no longer be 3,000 psi. If you know you’re going to add color this way, order the concrete at a 3.5-inch slump.” Adding water also lightens the color by diluting the pigment — another reason to make it a rule to adjust slump with water reducers rather than with water.

The finishing touches

Finally, how you handle colored concrete after the pour has a big effect on the appearance. For the color to be uniform, the whole surface must have a uniform water:cement ratio as it cures. Late troweling, hard troweling, too-rapid drying of the surface, or covering the surface with plastic all can produce blotches by creating areas of higher and lower water:cement ratio. On vertical surfaces, leaky forms or those that pull away from the concrete can create areas that dry prematurely, creating dark blotches.

If you patch defects in the surface, remember that stiff patching mortar contains less water than concrete that is to be poured, and will come out darker if color is added in the same proportion as it was to the poured concrete. Replacing some of the gray cement in the mortar with white portland cement will adjust the color. Davis Colors recommends starting with a mixture of 3 parts sand, 1 part gray cement, and 1 part white cement, with aggregate added to match the rest of the slab. Patch as soon as possible after the pour so that the patches cure under the same conditions as the rest of the job.

The metal oxide pigments used in integral colors don’t fade with exposure to sunlight, but to keep the color fresh it’s a good idea to keep the surface protected with sealant, which will minimize dusting of the concrete itself.




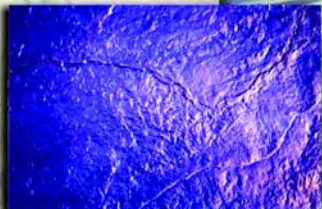
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CIRCLE #87 ON READER SERVICE CARD

Art at Large

Canvasses across America

by Stacey Enesey Klemenc



Decorative forms by Marvin and Lilli Ann Rosenberg.



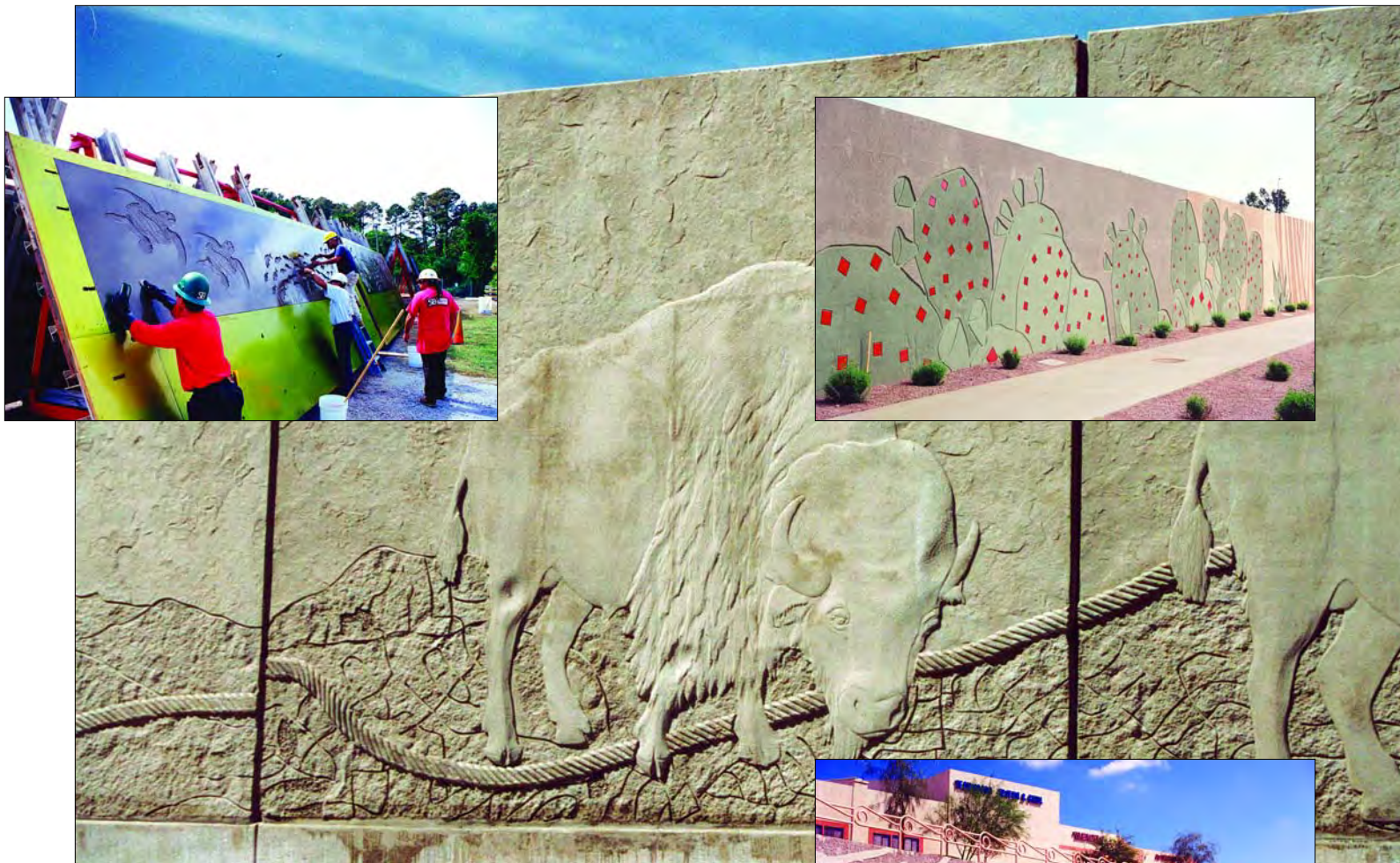
In communities across the country, ordinary concrete walls are being overtaken by everything from slithering lizards and leaping bluefish to giant cacti and rambling freight trains. But residents aren't apprehensive; they're thrilled.

Rather than monstrous monoliths of flat concrete looming on the horizon, extraordinary three-dimensional creations are popping up in cities and suburbs, along highways and beaches, next to mountains and in deserts — as one-of-a-kind works of art.

Participants agree that a lot of planning goes into these massive public projects, which usually involve highways, sound barriers and retaining walls. Depending on the scope of the project, the team may consist of architects, engineers, artists, general and concrete contractors and form-makers who work with the contracting government agencies and neighboring communities.

Simple technique brings great results

Whether the project is large, small or somewhere in between, "We [artists] like to be brought in at



the beginning,” says Lilli Ann Rosenberg, an artist from Jacksonville, Ore., who together with her husband, Marvin, has been working with concrete for more than 30 years. The two have been commissioned to dream up designs for such projects as skate parks, libraries, schools, playgrounds, hospitals, health clinics and housing developments.

Once the conceptual drawings have been done and the design approved, the couple use rigid insulation boards to make their decorative forms. Their technique is quick and easy, Lilli Ann says.

She draws the images and Marvin cuts them out. They glue whole boards or pieces together for extra dimension and use a soldering iron to create textures and patterns. Next, the Rosenbergs take the carved panels to the site, where they glue or screw the carved insulation panels to the plywood forms before the concrete is poured.

Lilli Ann says they first coat the carvings with liquid soap for easier removal. “When the concrete is totally cured, in the next day or so, we pull out the foam. Sometimes we have to power wash the design to get out all the little pieces.”



**Decorative walls by
Scott System.**



It's a fast way to make a flat, boring wall into something very attractive, Marvin says. And as soon as one job is done, he adds, there's another one waiting. "We're constantly getting business."

A mold for every need

"Architectural concrete is here to stay," agrees Buck Scott, founder of Scott System, a Denver-based firm that has played an important role in helping to advance concrete art technology. "It's becoming more and more prevalent in the marketplace. And people are demanding more intricate designs and patterns than ever before."

Back in 1969, Scott introduced the industry's first elastomeric urethane form liner, which mimicked the look of rustic wood in very fine detail. Today, Scott System can replicate more than 700 textures with molds the company has created from this pliable material. Plus, they can custom-produce virtually any image or logo by utilizing the talents of staff members and of sculptors and artists across the nation who are specialists in concrete art.



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The process begins with conceptual drawings, which eventually evolve into sculptured creations. The sculptor first creates the original work using a medium such as clay, plaster, urethane or wax. From this masterwork, a cast is made using a synthetic liquid rubber. Finally, from this cast, elastomeric urethane form liners are created in the reverse image of the original.

Elastomeric urethane forms can be used 100 times or more. "That's the key. They are reusable," says Scott. "They're not for small jobs or one-time use." He estimates the forms can cost anywhere from \$12 a square foot to \$120 on up. "It all depends on the depth of the liner, how deep the texture is, how much rubber is used." Overall, the more involved the pattern, the more expensive the liner.

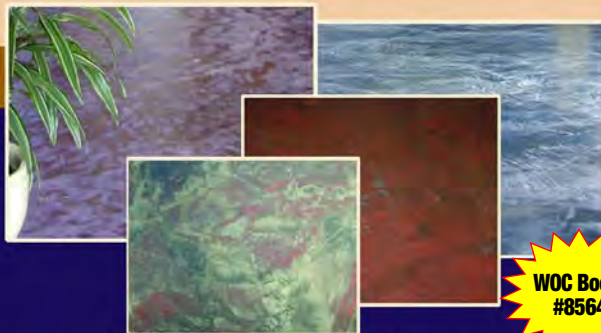
Scott System has produced form liners for a variety of public arts projects, with some liners more than 110 feet long to avoid joint lines. These form liners are so big, Scott says, that contractors have to handle them with cranes.

To fabricate the actual artwork, crews use a cast-in-place technique, pouring concrete into pre-constructed vertical molds at the site. The process



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involves setting the forms, installing form liners inside the forms, pouring colored or plain concrete and then stripping the forms. Some jobs involve staining the concrete artwork.

In addition to elastomeric urethane forms, plastic form liners are produced by a handful of companies, including Greenstreak Inc. out of St. Louis, a company that's been in the concrete construction business since 1951. "The architectural market has grown so much," says Kyle Loyd, technical sales engineer. Greenstreak entered the form liner business some 20 years ago, and it's now one of their main products.

Although Greenstreak's designs aren't as intricate as the ones created by Scott, the company offers 30 different stock form liners and will create logos to order. "We're trying to get more involved in the design aspect of the business," Loyd says, "and fit the needs of the industry as it changes." The company provides one-time plastic and multi-use rubber form liners for tilt-up, cast-in-place and precast concrete applications.

Computers assist in design and fabrication

J.D. Moore, owner of Concrete Artforms in Charleston, W.Va., says he, too, has been producing architectural concrete forms for nearly 20 years, but he deals only with custom orders. His projects have ranged from the very small, such as residential signs, to extensive works including citywide flood control walls that depict local history.



Decorative walls created by Concrete Artforms.



"The things we're doing now are more complicated and more formed than in years past," he says. He now has the ability to make formwork in one piece or to devise a design that can be curved around a hillside. "We can do both positive carvings and negative reliefs," he says. "The progression has been slow but steady and we've learned a whole lot in the process."

Depending on the individual clients' budgets and needs, he makes his one-of-a-kind forms with everything from insulation board, rubber and hardboard to cardboard, wood and polyethylene foam of various densities. "We make it our

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business to match the job to the materials we select for the form in order to provide the highest quality possible," he says, always mindful of the cost.

Moore creates many of the designs himself. Clients typically provide a rough illustration or a description of what they want and he uses his computer to build a three-dimensional design.

"Most of our sign work is done with a computer," he says, adding that computerized routers are used to make the master molds in his fabrication shop. Sometimes, he explains, the routers — "which can be really precise" — can do the whole job; other times he finishes the design by hand.

"We use the latest computer design software, which is compatible with the wide variety of cross-platform formats used in the design industry today," he says. And his forms, he adds, are precision cut using CNC (computer numerical control) machinery.

Some of Moore's artwork is precast, such as when he creates signs that involve multiple pours and several colors, while others are poured on site. Although various levels of relief will normally be enough to define most designs, Moore says he frequently uses color and textures to enhance the final product.

"Concrete is not a perfect material," Moore concedes, "so you never really know what's going to happen to it." But you can be sure that the outcome will be a creation that all can enjoy.



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Tips and Techniques for Stamping Overlays

by Susan Brimo-Cox

Photographs courtesy of Skookum Floors.



Photograph courtesy of Versatile Building Products. Overlay by Concrete Graphix.

Stampable overlays are increasingly popular in a broad range of applications.

Does a client have a limited budget? A stamped overlay might be a cost-effective solution when Italian marble isn't an option. "Overlays offer the advantage of near infinite color and design, oftentimes at a fraction of the cost of alternative installations of stone, granite, marble and slate," observes Mike Duarte, technical director at Versatile Building Products in Carson, Calif.

Need to enlarge a patio or refinish a concrete floor without removing the existing slab? Overlays make it possible. Clark Branum, area manager for Seattle-based Rafco Products-Brickform, reports, "A lot of times overlays will be used in remodel or retrofit situations, so you can achieve color and texture without using traditional materials such as concrete or stone or tile."

For versatility, overlays are winning a growing number of fans. "You can do

Stamping into walls and corners

Imprinting into corners or up against walls or other obstructions takes additional time, so plan your pours accordingly.

Special mats and tools can be used to imprint the pattern or texture in these tight areas. Flexible (or floppy) mats typically have about half the weight of a regular mat and thus can be bent to get closer to the wall or corner. To get even closer, some contractors use a texture roller that matches their mat design. Or, you can sacrifice one of your regular mats and cut it up into smaller pieces so that you can work right up to the edges.

Most experienced contractors develop their own unique techniques for working in tight spaces, but they generally fall into two different methods:

1. Work a little ahead of where you are stamping the main floor and use a touch-up (or cut-up) texture skin or texture roller to imprint a couple inches back from the wall or obstruction. Then use a flexible mat to bridge the distance from the normally stamped area to the textured edge. Use detail tools to hand-tool detail where the pattern is not complete.
2. Use a normal stamp to get about one mat's distance from the wall, corner or obstruction. Then use a flexible mat to cover the remaining distance, getting as close as you can. Along the edge, use a touch-up skin and continue the grout lines up to the wall using a joint tool.



Photograph courtesy of Versatile Building Products. Overlay by Richard Smith Custom Concrete.



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Photograph courtesy of Rafco.

overlays anywhere: inside on the 15th floor as well as outside ... and you don't have to worry about concrete trucks," says Janine Lutz, chief operating officer of Super Stone Inc. in Miami.

Contractors who are familiar with stamping concrete should be able to make the transition to stamping overlays pretty easily. Many of the tools are the same, or similar, and a few slight modifications in technique can be mastered with a little practice.

You may not need new tools

If you already have an inventory of stamps and texture skins, you may not have to buy more to begin stamping overlays.

"You can use mats specially made for overlays that don't have deep grout lines [or] you can use regular stamps if they don't have grout lines that are more than $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch deep," Lutz says.

One of the general rules is that the depth of the texturing tool should never exceed the depth of your overlay, Branum says, adding, "It sounds pretty basic, but you'd be surprised how often it happens!" Random stone and flagstone patterns are generally more aggressive and have deeper relief than slate or seamless texture skins, he says.

Also, make sure you have enough stamps or mats for the job. Jim Rowe, a Denver-based regional sales manager with Miracote, says, "It's a general rule of stamps to have enough to go across and halfway back. If you don't have

enough it's almost impossible to keep your pattern aligned."

Tools for cleaning up the joints and grout lines are the same as for concrete. S-tools, pizza-cutter style tools and chisels can all be used. Mat suppliers often have tools that match a specific pattern. Some contractors have tools they fashion themselves. Duarte says his favorite is a set of box-end and open-end wrenches that allow variation in joint size selection.

Know your product

When applying overlays, it is important to familiarize yourself with the product you are using. Products from different manufacturers act differently, so cure times and working times will vary from product to product.

"One difference depends on the polymer modification — some speed up [the cure time], some slow it down. Check with the manufacturer," recommends Marshall Hoskins, sales and technical representative for Specialty Concrete Products Inc. in Columbia, S.C.

"What's easier than working with regular concrete is that the cure rate of overlays is much more predictable,"

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Hoskins adds. "With concrete, every pour is different."

Contractors familiar with overlays agree that temperature greatly affects set time and the window of workability with these systems. Check with the overlay manufacturer for specifics regarding minimum, maximum and optimal temperature ranges.

Temperature is not the only consideration when timing a project. Another largely overlooked problem occurs during stamping operations in windy conditions, when air circulation over the mortar accelerates evaporation. This can lead to small unsightly shrinkage cracks on the surface of the mortar, resulting from shrinkage variation in the surface and sub-surface layers, Duarte says.

For outdoor projects, you might want to wait until conditions are more favorable. For indoor projects, some contractors recommend turning off air conditioning, heating and ceiling fans, which all increase air circulation.

Most will agree that the normal stamping window — in optimum conditions — is about the same as concrete, but the timing is important.

"If you stamp too soon, it might be susceptible to shrinkage," observes Rowe. "You wait too long and you're past your window and have a tough time getting the impression."

Many contractors use the finger test to be sure the time is right. Push your finger tip into the surface of the material and wiggle it side to side. If the overlay doesn't stick to your finger, it's ready to go.

The surface should offer some resistance, but not be hard, Branum says. "It should still be pliable to accept a texture."

Stamping overlays is often easier than regular concrete, Hoskins says, "because the depth of the overlay gives you less chance for an uneven stamp if it's too wet." The smaller aggregate used in overlay systems is a plus, he explains, because it molds easier. "There's no large aggregate to shift around and cause surface cracks."

Mark Donaldson, director of operations for Skookum Floors USA in Seattle, reports that his crew often just walks on the mats to add the necessary weight, rather than using tamping tools. "The material is not as tough or hard as standard concrete during the stamp process," he says.

Consider cleanup when choosing a release

Though both powder and liquid releases work well for stamping overlays, you might let the job determine which release you use.

"Releases are the same as for concrete," Donaldson says, adding that it's important to keep in mind that the wash-down stage is not always easy in an interior setting. "We prefer liquid

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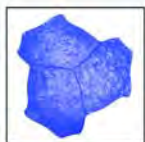
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releases and silica sand which are easy to clean and remove their residue."

The desired aesthetic appearance may also play a role in your decision, Duarte suggests. Liquid releases are typically clear solutions that impart no color during the imprinting process, although many contractors do use the liquid release as a vehicle to mix and spray powdered pigments to achieve a washed-down antiqued effect. Powdered releases impregnate the mortar surface with color, offering greater color saturation and uniformity.

But Duarte cautions: "It is important that a contractor test their respective liquid release agent with their stamping mats to ensure that the release agent will not cause the mats to swell."

So, in an outdoor application where thorough rinsing and scrubbing is not a problem, a powder release might work



Photographs courtesy of Specialty Concrete Products



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best. Indoors — and in applications where an adjacent wall could be stained — a liquid release might be better suited.

Develop some finesse

Removing a stamp from overlay material requires a special technique.

“Removing the mats requires more skill than standard concrete because

the topping material may want to stick to the mat or pull off the floor,” Donaldson observes. “It’s also more likely to clump or bulge if the mat is dragged along the floor.”

Hoskins advises, “Don’t just pull it up by the handles — you’ll get too much suction. Reach down and grab a corner and roll the corner up — peeling it — to release any suction.”

You may only have to roll up one edge, or you may have to roll up two. Just take it easy, he says.

Luckily, “overlays are user friendly,” reports Rowe. “You can pour when you want and how much you want because you mix it as you go.” But don’t neglect to plan your job, he says. “Where will you start pouring? Where you start pouring is where you’ll start stamping.”

Also know how much you can tackle at one time. “The size of the area you work depends on how many workers you have,” Lutz says. For example, she says, “three people could do about 1,000 square feet at once, if you have good weather and experienced workers.”

When it comes down to it, however, the final results rely in large part on a good foundation. Overlays may have greater flexural strength than concrete, but underlying control joints must be honored. And experts agree that the most important step is substrate preparation. After all, the strength of an overlay is in the chemical bond it has with a sound substrate. Be sure to clean, profile and prep the concrete substrate correctly. As Branum succinctly says, “Poor prep means overlay failure — it guarantees it.”

So, are you ready to try stampable overlays? Experienced overlay contractors say it’s easier to start out small, using non-complicated patterns.

Donaldson advises tackling a textured skin first. “This will develop your skills in stamping and is an easy pattern to fix and repair mistakes,” he says. “Once you feel comfortable with the stamping technique, try a random stone.” The most difficult patterns are fan patterns and straight tile patterns, he says.

Duarte recommends that beginners get off on the right foot by attending a hands-on training seminar with a quality manufacturer, and start with small jobs when they are ready to gain field experience.



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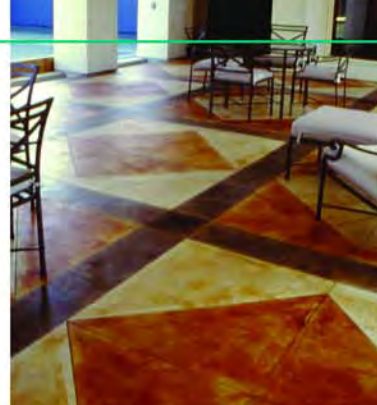
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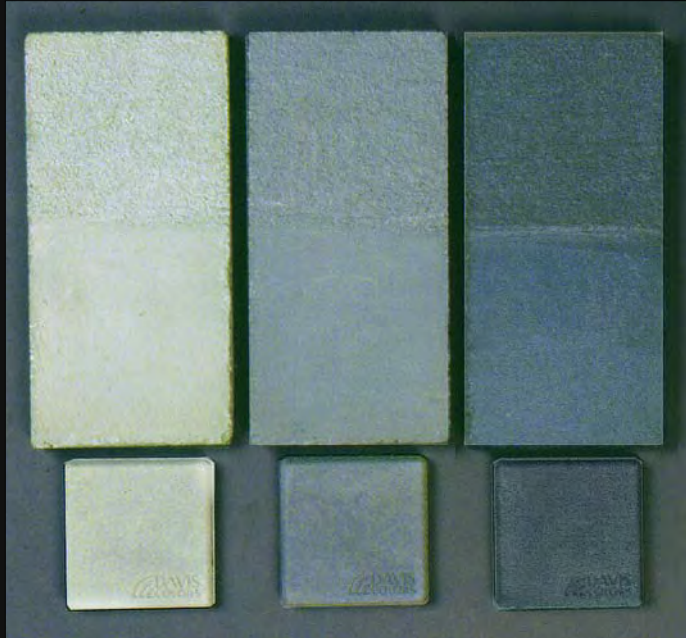


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Colored concrete chips show the tint strength advantage of carbon black. The light colored sample at left is an uncolored reference. The middle sample is made with 2 lbs/sack Iron Oxide Black and the darkest sample at right is made with 2 lbs/sack Carbon Black. The large chips have both a smooth trowel and broom finish to show the impact surface texture can have on color appearance.



T rue or false? When using a black pigment to integrally color concrete, black is black and that's that.

Answer: Absolutely false.

Black is widely used in the concrete industry. It can be mixed to darken other pigments, and it can be used alone to make light grays, dark grays or straight black.

It's commonly used in driveways — and especially in gas stations — because it hides oil stains and grime. It's sometimes used in highways and runways because black absorbs heat and discourages ice. In decorative concrete, integral black with a silver release is a popular combination.

“Black is easily one of our top five colors out of our 40 standard colors,” says Nick Paris, vice president of marketing for Davis Colors, the Los Angeles-based color manufacturer.

Black is black... Or is it?

by David Thompson



Black pigment for integral coloring comes in two forms, one made from iron oxide and one made from carbon.

Iron-oxide black is the most commonly used in black concrete, Paris says. "Most people find it black enough," he says. "But occasionally someone wants a super-dark black, and then we recommend carbon black. With carbon black it's possible to get a jet-black, like a bowling-ball black. Iron oxide just won't get that black."

Carbon creates the blacker black. It's also more economical. But it can affect air entrainment, and it can weather out of concrete over time. So just any black won't necessarily do.

Carbon black also has a bluish tinge to it that some people prefer to iron-oxide black's brownish tinge. "But then you're really splitting hairs," Paris says.

Carbon black has two to five times the tinting strength as iron-oxide



Photograph courtesy of Mark Dixon

The black in this mix is Davis Colors Black 860, an iron oxide pigment.

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Photography courtesy of Mark Dixon

black, so a little carbon black goes a long way. This makes carbon black the more economical of the two. But bargain shoppers beware: there are other costs.

In freeze-thaw regions, the loss of air entrainment becomes an issue. Air entraining admixtures, used to protect concrete against cracking in cold climates, introduce microscopic air

bubbles that allow water molecules in the concrete to expand when freezing without causing damage.

Some carbon black pigments absorb air entraining admixtures, rendering them useless.

"When you add carbon black your air content is going to decrease," says Terry Collins, a concrete construction engineer with the Portland Cement Association. "If you increase your air entrainment dosage, you should be able to bring your air entrainment back up to the same level. However, air entraining agents aren't free, so that may increase the cost of the concrete mixture. And you're going to have to spend time figuring out what the right dosage is going to be."

Another way to compensate for carbon black's appetite for air entrainment agents is to use a carbon black pigment formulated specifically to leave entraining admixtures alone. Davis Colors' liquid form of carbon

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black is such a pigment, though the company's powdered and granular forms of carbon black are not.

The loss of air entrainment can be avoided altogether by going with iron-oxide black for exterior concrete in icy climes.

"If you're in a freeze-thaw cycling area, and you want less potential for fluctuations in the air content coming into play and possibly producing concrete in some areas that isn't as durable as others, you might want to shy away from carbon black," Collins says.

Another big drawback to carbon black is that it can leach out of concrete when exposed to the weather.

Where iron oxide pigments bond with portland cement and become a permanent part of the concrete matrix, carbon black does not. As water evaporates from the surface of concrete colored with carbon black, it can draw out the carbon, causing the concrete to

fade. Sealing the concrete can prevent this, but the sealant must be reapplied periodically.

Surprisingly, carbon black is frequently used in swimming pool

plaster. Pool makers like it for the economy. It works because in a full swimming pool, the black plaster isn't subject to evaporation. But it's a different story if the pool's left empty.



Photograph courtesy of Mink Dixon

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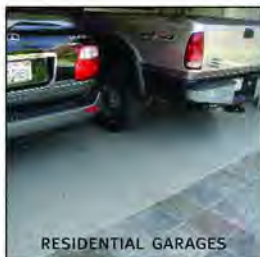
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Richard Solomon, president of Solomon Colors, an Illinois-based color manufacturer, doesn't care for carbon black at all. Although his company offers a carbon black to satisfy demand, it won't promote the pigment or even list it on the company's color cards.

"Carbon black is great for putting into automobile tires, but not concrete," Solomon says.

"The pigment itself is a good pigment, but the bond of the cement isn't tight enough to hold it," he says. "It should never be used outdoors. I've been doing this for too many years, and I haven't seen an exterior job yet where it won't weather out."

Sure, sealants will prevent carbon black concrete from weathering, Solomon says, "but the problem is it needs to be kept sealed, and you and I both know that doesn't happen."

On rare occasions carbon black is chosen precisely *because* of its

weathering characteristic. Nick Paris at Davis Colors sees such jobs once in a while.

"They're usually cities on the East Coast doing sidewalks," he says. "They use just enough carbon black to make the concrete kind of off-white, to make the new concrete look like old, dirty concrete when they patch a sidewalk. Eventually it weathers out and everything still matches."

Regardless of whether iron oxide or carbon pigments are used, black concrete (and any other darkly-colored concrete) will highlight efflorescence, the white powdery deposits that sometimes appear on new concrete as salts dissolve. Dry-brushing usually takes it right off, and chemical removers are available for stubborn cases.

Efflorescence might go unnoticed on uncolored concrete, but it's hard to miss on black.



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Release Agents

Both powders and liquids have their advantages

by John Strieder



If you want to impress gullible friends with the glamour and excitement of concrete contracting, tell them you work on a hands-on basis with “release agents.”

Only you will know the truth. Release agents are NOT highly trained government operatives who negotiate the exchange of political prisoners. They’re just powders and liquids.

But they do something that is just as thrilling, when it happens: They keep stamps from sticking to freshly poured concrete, insuring that every edge stays crisp when a stamp is pulled away.

“Its foremost purpose is primarily as a bond-breaker,” says Clark Branum, Northwest area manager with Rafco Products-Brickform.

Like many other tools of the decorative concrete trade, it also works well as an accent. Dark pigment added to a release agent will accumulate in the pits and valleys of a pressed design, such as the grout lines. The shadow effect makes grooves look deeper, corners more pronounced, and the whole pattern look more realistic. And older, which is why tinted release agents are especially helpful when antiquing.

But while both liquid and powder release agents separate stamp from concrete, only the powders come with color. Liquid release agents are usually clear. If you want to tint with them, you have to add the pigment yourself.

Liquid or powder?

Some manufacturers make only one or the other. Both have their uses. And just about everybody, it seems, has a preference.

“I like powder better,” says Paul Luckau, product manager for Cobblecrete International. “I just think it looks better. The transfer from stamp to concrete comes out more. With liquid releases, you don’t get the bite, the edge you get with powder.”

But Dan Cook, president of A.W. Cook Cement Products Inc., which makes CemTec products, favors liquids. “Liquid

release is just a little bit cleaner,” he says. “You don’t have all that powder floating around everywhere.”

Liquid releases are easier to work with, primarily in the cleanup stage, because they evaporate on their own, he says. Powder releases have to be washed away, which can be reason enough by itself to choose liquid for interior jobs and remodels.

When it comes to color, Cook advocates using clear liquid release and tinting the sealer instead. “I think you get a little more control over antiquing if you do it as a second process,” he says. “You can see what effect you are getting as you antique. With powder, you really don’t know what you are getting until you wash the powder off the next day.”

Branum of Rafco-Brickform, which sells both liquid and colored powder releases, says liquids work better in confined spaces, environmentally sensitive areas, and any other job where cleanup is a factor. That includes a lot of overlay jobs, he says, because many are indoor projects.

But powders are better for antiquing jobs and exteriors, particularly in extreme conditions, he says. “You can build enough of a blanket that water won’t seep through.”

Liquid releases are becoming more popular, Branum says, but beginning stampers still tend to use powders. “Powders are more user friendly,” he says. “They’re easier to use than liquids, especially if you are trying to achieve highlighting.”

Chris McMahon, president of a Levittown, Pa., outfit that does business as Architectural Concrete Design, says weather influences his choice. “Liquids are great when they’re usable,” he says. “But in some environments, they don’t work as well as powder.”

High humidity can cause problems for liquids, as can cold, damp weather, McMahon says. “It all depends on the moisture level of the concrete. The surface has to be drier for liquids to work.”

But he uses liquids whenever he can, tinting them as needed, because they make for a much cleaner job, he says.



"Liquid release is so much easier to use," he says. "Powder is so fine that it becomes airborne. It adheres to stucco and plaster. It gets everything covered in color."

Overlays are more controlled in terms of moisture levels, so liquid release works well on those jobs, he adds.

Powder release agents are composed of cement, iron oxide pigment for color, and moisture repellant that keeps the

water in concrete from clinging to the stamp. It's applied after the concrete slab has gelled but before final troweling.

Luckau recommends you sift the fine powder by hand before application to break up clumps. "It feels almost like silky water," he says. "It'll really fluff up."

Broadcast the powder in an even coat, and stamp right away, Luckau says. The powder should be thrown sidearm,

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like skipping a rock across a lake. But for even better results, he says, whisk it sidearm with a 2-inch by 6-inch masonry brush. A bucket of release will last longer that way. "The powder will stick on the brush just like paint. It'll just float right over the concrete."

Using a brush will also help you avoid clumping, Branum says. The powder doesn't throw as naturally as, say, aggregate-based color hardener. If you stamp a clump instead of concrete, you'll be left with a bare spot.

With release, you want 100 percent coverage, he adds, not 60 percent to 65 percent like with color hardener.

Leave the powder on for two or three days after stamping, Luckau says, so the color gets a good bite into the surface.

That way, you won't wash the color away when you finally come back to clean off the powder.

Liquid releases, for their part, are solvents mixed with mineral spirits. CemTec's liquid release is sold as a concentrate, with adding mineral spirits left to the contractor. It includes a fragrance to offset the smell.

Contractors have been tinting the clear, oily substance on their own for years. But Branum warns that there are no standards for this practice. "I wouldn't say anybody has come up with a proper system for doing it," he says.

When applying liquid, use a sprayer to coat the surface just ahead of the area that is being stamped. Don't treat the whole slab at once, because the release will evaporate before you finish.

Most contractors fog both the mat and the concrete, Cook says. Texture mats are more forgiving than brick or cobblestone stamps, he says, so fog the latter more often.

"As long as you can't see the concrete through it, it's thick enough," Luckau says.

If it's a little uneven, don't worry, Branum says. The worst thing that can happen is your stamp sticks a little. Then, you just fix it. "You don't want to overapply," he says. "You want to have a nice even coat on the surface."

It's also important to note proper stamping times, he says. If the concrete is too wet, it will cling to a stamp even after the application of release.

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Whether powder or liquid, McMahon says, use as little as you can. "You don't want too much powder because it takes away from the definition of the stamp," he says. "You don't want too much liquid because you don't want to liquefy the surface. If the surface comes up, you have one of two things — too little or too much. A lot of guys put down more and more, and they are only making the problem worse."

Many liquid releases take a while to dry, he adds, even to the point where you can't cure-seal the job on the same day. "It needs to completely evaporate first," he says.

Powder releases that are lighter than the base color can change the hue of the slab, Luckau says. Lay a film of light

gray over red, for example, and you can end up with pink. Darker releases are required for antiquing and shadowing — say, dark brown, black or charcoal gray for a red base. "It's like makeup," he says. "A lady who wants to cover up things uses light. If she wants to bring out her cheeks, she uses dark."

But a layer of lighter release can be buffed, McMahon says. Going over the surface afterward with a scrubbing machine, or simply letting wear and tear do the work, will allow the original color to bleed through. "You get a cool effect that way," he says.



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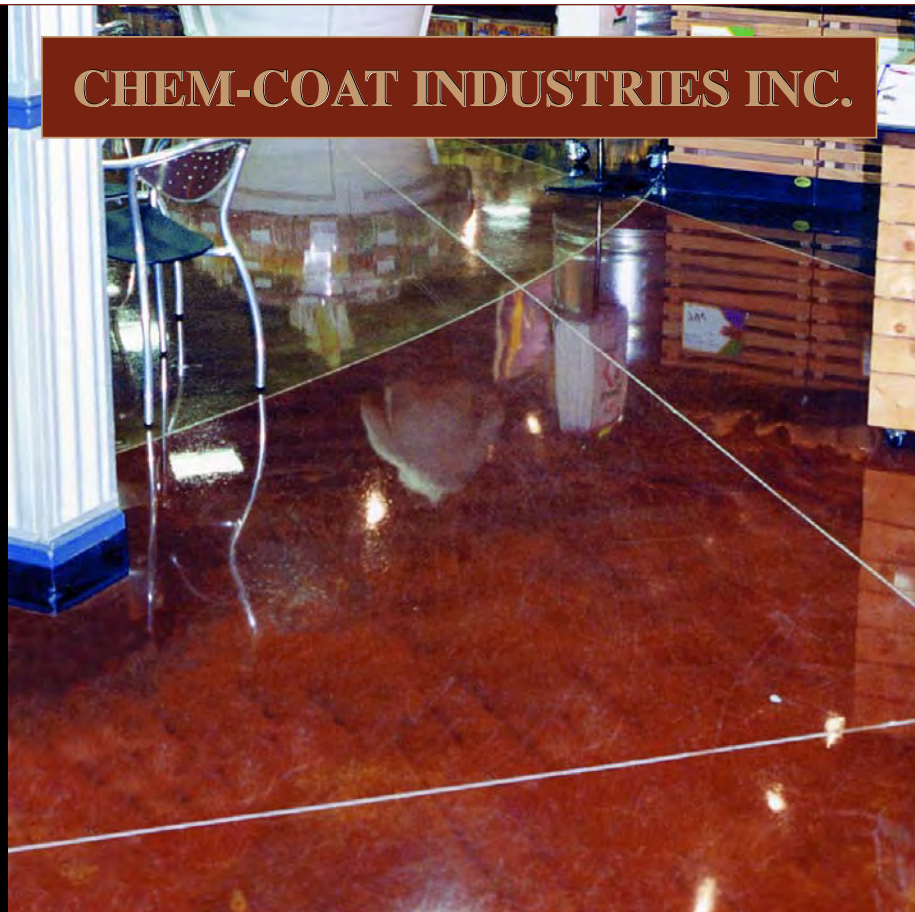
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Training Facility Debuts in Oregon

by Rosemary Camozzi

The Institute for American Craftsmanship (IAC) offered its first class in decorative concrete last month at its facility adjacent to Professional Trade Publications in Eugene, Ore.

The three-day workshop, taught by Wes Vollmer of San Antonio-based Alternative Finishes, offered hands-on training in preparing an existing slab, applying a cementitious overlay, saw-cutting, acid staining, stenciling and sealing.

The training school, started by *Concrete Decor* publisher Bent Mikkelsen, currently offers training in decorative concrete and decorative painting. "My ambition and my heart are in education," Mikkelsen says. "That's what led me to start *Concrete Decor* and *PaintPRO* in the first place."

Classes at the IAC are designed to help create standards for excellence in the trades, he says, with a goal of working with various trade associations to establish educational

standards and eventually, accreditation for contractors. "To keep this segment of the industry powerful, innovative and well-educated, we need organizations like the IAC," Mikkelsen says.

The Institute, a nonprofit educational institution, intends to work in partnership with training institutes in other areas of the country and will provide support not just to contractors, but to manufacturers and distributors around the nation.

While some classes will be taught by independent professionals who are experts in their trades, others will feature manufacturer's reps who will train contractors in the use of their products.

"The IAC is designed to attract the very best talents in the industry," Mikkelsen says.

"It is a place where model training classes can be developed. Although the facility gives companies the ability to be recognized for their support, our objective is not to promote a single product or company but



Photographs courtesy of Mark Dixon

rather, the methods for educating contractors on the use of products."

A number of companies have stepped to up offer their support to the new school. The Miracote division of Crossfield Products laid the ground floor — both figuratively and literally, by donating resurfacing products that included both textured overlay and microtopping materials. "These products have helped pave the way for this exciting industry resource," Mikkelsen says. "Quality products, coupled with quality training, are essential components in the educational process."

Tools and products donated by such companies as HoverTrowel, Midwest Rake and Decorative Concrete Systems also give contractors the tools they need to "work smarter," Mikkelsen says. "Utilizing these types of tools and materials helps contractors work more efficiently with better results."

Innovative products like those donated by Metal Expressions, a company that manufactures a coating process that creates a true metal finish, give contractors a fascinating look at ways to make their work stand out from the crowd.

The IAC is lining up a full series of workshops for 2004. Alternative Finishes intends to hold classes at the school on a regular basis, and several other companies and manufacturers — including Miracote and Colormaker Floors — have already signed up to hold training seminars at the 3,500-square-foot indoor facility.

"While the exact future of this new organization remains to be seen, it promises to be a vital tool for maintaining high standards in the rapidly growing decorative concrete industry," Mikkelsen says. "We are excited to join with the industry in elevating the awareness and importance of education and we look forward to working with other schools and organizations around the country to develop standards for accreditation in training programs."



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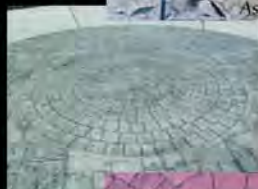
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The chairs have a large base for stability. They are available for concrete thickness from 3½ to 12 inches and bar sizes from #3 to #6. Because they are lightweight, easy to transport and eliminate the need for time-consuming wire ties, they reduce labor costs and increase production. Two hundred and fifty traditional concrete dobies for a 6-inch slab weigh about 480 pounds, whereas an equivalent amount of chairs weighs just 16 pounds.

"A lot of guys aren't very proficient at tying wire," says Lyle Langeliers, who invented the chairs. "You can take somebody who's inexperienced at tying iron, give him these chairs and he can be very productive."

Langeliers says he has used thousands of the chairs in his own concrete applications. "They snap in nice and easy, but hold the steel real well," he says, noting that most slabs require 18 to 30 chairs per 100 square feet, depending on size and spacing of the steel.

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Ardex LT-65 Lite-Tech

Ardex has introduced a unique, high-tech flooring solution — LT-65 Lite-Tech — that is engineered with the strength of portland cement yet weighs only 65 pounds per cubic foot — less than half the weight of normal concrete. It is designed for deep-fill, lightweight applications where design constraints limit the amount of dead load that can be added.

The product installs from ¾" to virtually any thickness in a single operation.

"It's an application of existing technologies," says Melissa Alliston, manager of international sales for Ardex. "We put products together that we've had for a long time to create something totally new."

Ardex LT-65 Lite-Tech combines a rapid-setting engineered cement powder with expanded polystyrene (EPS) beads. It is intended for use over concrete substrates as a lightweight fill which would then receive a smoothing layer of Ardex underlayment or topping. It accepts light foot traffic in 2-3 hours.

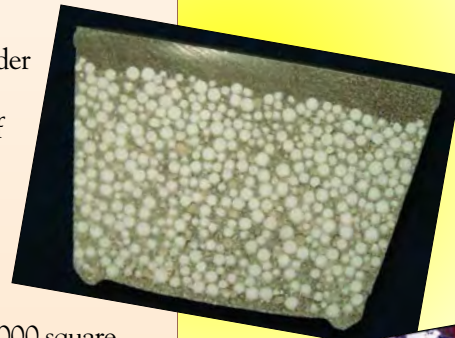
After just 16 hours, a final smoothing coat of Ardex K-15 Self-Leveling Underlayment Concrete is applied to prepare for the installation of finished flooring, or a coat of Ardex SD-T Self-Drying, Self-Leveling Concrete Topping may be applied and later sealed for a cementitious finished floor.

The product was used at a resort hotel and casino in Las Vegas, where 40,000 square feet of suspended concrete had deflected as much as 4.5 inches between the column lines. The old slabs had to stay, and adding new concrete would add too much weight to the existing structure. But it had to be strong, because the casino floors are continually subjected to 9,000-pound rolling carts with loads of cash and slot machine coins.

To fix the problem, Ardex LT-65 Lite-Tech was applied in increments of 8,000 square feet, while the rest of the casino remained open for business. Each increment needed only four days to install: one day to prep, one day to fill, one day to smooth and one day to apply the finished flooring. The project was finished on time and under budget.

In another example, a 5,000-square-foot roof on an existing two-story building was converted into a third story. The drainage slope had depths of 1.5 inches or more. The challenge was to level it off and add the planned flooring without overloading the building structure. Again Ardex LT-65 Lite-Tech was the solution. The product was applied at an average depth of 1.5 inches, but added only 9.5 lbs. per square foot.

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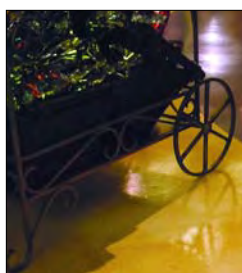
CIRCLE #143 ON READER SERVICE CARD

Manufacturer Profile: Colormaker Floors

by David Thompson



Gary Jones



Production supervisor Yonas Zeru.

The meditation room in San Francisco's new Asian Art Museum has a domed ceiling, a single bench and a gurgling fountain cut from a basalt boulder.

No paintings hang on the walls of the tiny 6-by-12-foot space, but artwork of a different sort lies underfoot: a polished concrete floor, integrally colored with taupe, stained with metallic salt, and washed with a hint of ochre that plays off the patina of the rock.

The floor was created with a cementitious topping known as Pentimento, a product from Colormaker Floors Ltd., a small company based in Burnaby, British Columbia.

Designed by Mike Miller, The Concretist, it was hand troweled by Gary Jones, Colormaker's president.

It's really not surprising to find a Colormaker floor in an art museum, considering that Jones describes his company as "An artistic operation using concrete as our medium, versus a concrete company with artistic applications."

Nor is it surprising to find Jones with trowel in hand at a client's pour. "Not only do we supply the materials, we go along with the materials," says Jones.

Jones and Miller are long-time associates, and Miller is part of Colormaker's network of artisans. But in the case of the meditation room, Miller deferred to Jones' skill with a trowel. "I've never found anybody who can trowel quite like him," Miller says.

Colormaker generally sells its product to end users rather than distributors so that the company can provide training and support. In most cases, Colormaker relies on a small network of regular clients who act as consultants and trainers, but sometimes Jones goes himself. The company also teamed up recently with Bob Harris of the Decorative Concrete Institute in Atlanta, who will provide training and distribute its product line on the East Coast.

Colormaker's overlays can be found throughout the U.S. and Canada in locations such as Starbucks, Whole Foods grocery stores, Sur La Table kitchen stores, Rainforest Cafe restaurant and retail outlets and the Bootleggers chain of restaurants and brew pubs.

"Our main clients install floors for restaurants, clothing stores, high-end retail, art galleries and projects of that nature," says Jones. "Residential is the smaller side of our business; I'd guess it's about 30 percent."

Skill with a trowel a plus

Colormaker's overlays aren't for everyone. They're aimed primarily at artisans adept at hand troweling. "We're a little different in that respect," says Jones. "Everybody's pushing for

self-levels because it's very easy on installers. We try to create more of an artisan finish. There's more training on our side."

In fact, Jones won't even sell Pentimento, Colormaker's core product, to anyone who hasn't been trained to install it.

Based on an old Italian formulation that Jones has updated with modern admixtures, Pentimento produces a marbled, highly polished finish. It goes on about 1/8-inch thick and can take multiple re-trowelings, with each pass giving the surface an increasingly polished appearance. One or more layer of Pentimento Finish can later be applied to enhance depth and color.

Jones regularly organizes seminars and workshops on Pentimento and its color possibilities, but the best training happens at a job sites, he says. "We have an agreement with some of our installers where we can bring somebody on and teach them," he says. "You get two or three jobs under your belt, and you get so much more confidence than just seeing it go down at a seminar."

For highlighted trowel textured concrete floors, Colormaker produces Sgraffino, which goes on paper-thin and has a grainy consistency. Trowels tend to skip over the surface, creating a chattered finish with subtle color variations. Different applicators can be used to achieve other looks, such as a broom or stippled finishes. Sgraffino can be used indoors or outdoors, on horizontal or vertical surfaces.

The company's newest topping is called Rotofino, which gives a polished finish but requires less skill to use than Pentimento. For polished concrete floors suitable for stamping, Colormaker offers Pasto, which goes on thicker than Pentimento.

All of these overlays come in gray or white, and all can be integrally colored, stained, dyed or any combination thereof.

Colormaker's coloration supplies include:

- Colorfast, a blend of iron oxide pigments and rapid dispersing agents that installers mix on site for integral color. Primary colors can be blended and load levels altered to produce thousands of different colors.
- Patina Etch, an acid stain that reacts with free lime in the cement to highlight irregularities. It creates variegated earth tones, similar to the patina of bronze or the oxidation of copper.
- Deco Graphic Dyes, solvent-based penetrating colors that are sharp and translucent, are suitable for overlays or existing concrete.
- Someru Dye, a water-based dye for a pastel watercolor look. It works well when layers of color are desired.

The company is currently developing a line of colors made with all-natural pigments, which allow for more variance within a color and a more natural look, Jones says. "Think of the age-old colors of Europe, in Italy and countries like that, where they use natural pigments mined from the earth as opposed to



manufactured iron oxides," he says.
"We've started pushing down that road."

The company has also started to push beyond North America, with Colormaker toppings now available in Japan and in Jones' native Australia.

Rainy climate inspires shift in business

It was in Australia that Jones started working with concrete toppings, back in 1972. "We'd mix three shovelfuls of pebbles to one shovelful of cement, lay it down about a half-inch thick, then wash it off to expose the aggregate for exterior decks," he says. From there he moved to installing slate tiles.

In 1989, he married a Canadian and moved to Vancouver, where he opened a slate business. On the side he did stamped concrete, but the demand for concrete soon outpaced the demand for slate, and he shifted to concrete entirely in 1992.

Before long British Columbia's rain encouraged another shift. "I thought 'how can you run a business by the weather?'" Jones says. "So in '93-'94 we started pushing more into the interior market, and by '95 we were solely doing interiors and just dropped doing stamped concrete altogether, although we still have the product range."



Wayne Jones handles the business in Australia.

Jones and Miller have been working on each other's jobs since the early 90s, when Jones saw Miller's work at a World of Concrete show and hired him to develop a stain formulation. Miller was impressed by the pioneering work Jones was doing with overlays.

"He was doing overlays back before people were doing overlays," says Miller. "And they were overlays that actually worked. They didn't crack up and they didn't delaminate and so forth."

At the time Jones' overlay formulas were similar to the thinset formulas used to set slate, Miller says. "Where it was new technology for architectural concrete, it was old technology for stone," he says.

Like Miller, Jones embraces a freeform approach to decorative concrete, though he dislikes that term and prefers to call it "tactile and sensory concrete." He looks at a floor as a starting point in much the same way a painter looks at a canvas. He likes the hand-crafted look, and would rather not spend a lot of time cutting grids, bands, borders and whatnot.

"We're actually using the floor as a piece of artwork," Jones says. "It seems destructive to cut up the Mona Lisa into squares. You leave her alone."



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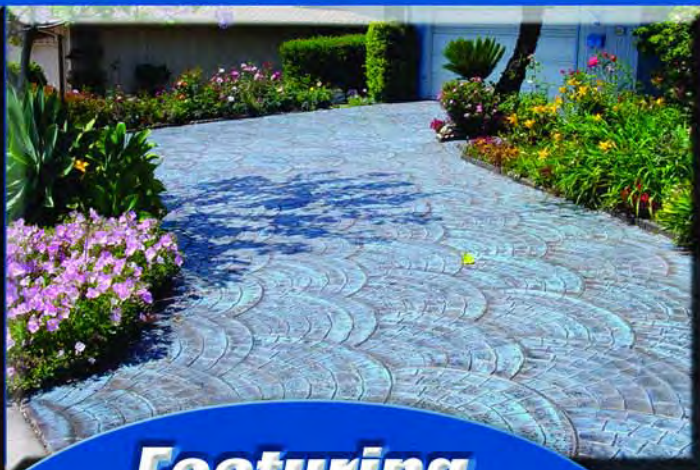
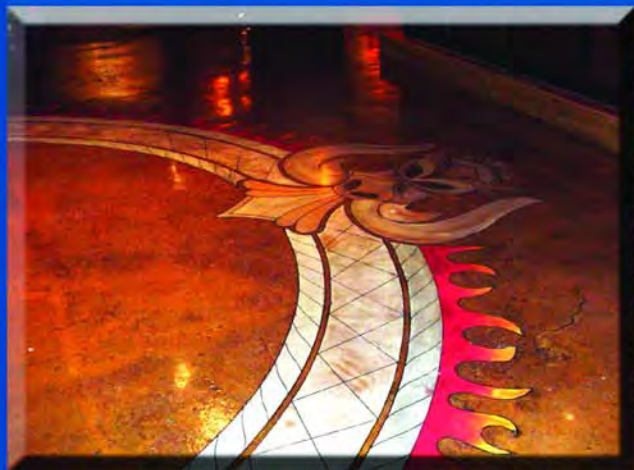
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Safety First!

Cement your health with these safety precautions

by Bruce Hackett

Veteran concrete contractors are generally well aware of the potential health hazards of working with dry portland cement and wet concrete, and the necessary precautions that should be taken to avoid illness or injury. But it's wise to review those hazards and precautions every now and then to ensure against harmful exposure.

Cement and aggregate both contain trace amounts of crystalline silica, alkaline compounds such as calcium oxide, and hexavalent chromium, all of which can result in serious short-term or long-term health problems. For example, when concrete workers are using sanding equipment, dumping out bags of cement, or making dry sawcuts for decorative concrete applications, they create substantial volumes of airborne dust. This dust, if inhaled repeatedly over prolonged periods, can cause silicosis, a lung disease that can

be disabling or even fatal. Exposure to cement dust containing crystalline silica can also cause serious eye irritation, chemical burns, or, in extreme cases, blindness. Some workers may find that airborne dust can cause mild skin reactions as well.

A small percentage of cement workers is likely to develop a hypersensitivity to the hexavalent chromium found in cement. This typically manifests itself in any number of allergies, most notably skin reactions or respiratory problems such as wheezing or asthma-like symptoms.

In addition to these maladies associated with cement dust, working with wet concrete can also pose serious health hazards. Because of its abrasive, caustic and drying properties, wet concrete that comes in contact with the skin for even short periods of time can actually penetrate and burn the skin if not promptly detected and

washed off. Wet cement that makes continuous contact directly with skin or through soaked clothing can cause first-, second- or third-degree burns that may require skin grafts and months of convalescence.

With all these potential health concerns, one might come to regard concrete as a hazardous substance. However, thousands of concrete contractors work with cement all day every day without incident, notes Andrew O'Hare, Vice President of Governmental Affairs for the Portland Cement Association. "Although workers can theoretically have the potential for getting silicosis over a lifetime of exposure to silica, the incident rate is not even measurable. There is no significant documentation of cases in our industry as there is in, for instance, the sandblasting environment, or in the aggregate industry, where you're crushing stone day in and day out

and the risk is significantly greater. The good news for concrete workers is, these potential health problems are easily remedied through the use of proper personal protection equipment. If you follow simple, common-sense precautions, injury and illness can be totally avoided."

Simple precautions guard health

First and foremost is the use of adequate eye protection and dust masks or respirators for workers who are repeatedly exposed to cement dust. Safety glasses with sideshields, or goggles, are the best choice. "It's always a good idea to protect your eyes because they're so vulnerable to dust," says O'Hare. "You should also wear a mask, particularly if your work site is not sufficiently ventilated. The type of mask you choose depends on the duration of your exposure to dust. If you're around it all day, you should probably have a high-quality mask or respirator, but if it's just an occasional part

of your job, then the temporary masks so many workers wear should be fine. Generally, cement dust particles are in the 10-micron range, which are captured by the inexpensive masks."

Limiting exposure of wet cement to the skin is easily achieved through the use of waterproof or rubber gloves, rubber boots, and long sleeves and long pants. If skin comes in contact with wet cement, it should be immediately washed with cool clean water. "Below the knee and below the elbow are the areas of primary concern," O'Hare notes. "Pick gloves sturdy enough not to rip but flexible enough to allow for dexterity. For those who must sometimes stand in wet concrete while it is being placed or finished, the boots you select should be high enough to

prevent concrete from getting into them. Don't forget to wash thoroughly with pH-neutral soap and clean water at the end of each shift."

The Portland Cement Association, the American Society of Concrete Contractors, and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration offer printed materials, videos and other information about on-the-job safety training and procedures. Visit their websites at: www.portcement.org, www.ascconline.org, and www.osha.gov.



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CIRCLE #141 ON READER SERVICE CARD

Solving problems caused by moisture

by Christina Camara

Moisture intrusion is one of concrete's biggest enemies. When moisture creeps in, so can cracks, discoloration, delamination or even bigger problems. Concrete Decor presented three common moisture problems to experts in the decorative concrete industry and asked them to offer solutions. Here's what they had to say:



Your customer calls six months after the job is complete and complains about white stuff on the concrete (... and it's not snowing).

Terry Tomlinson, technical director for White Mountain Products, had a few questions about the above scenario: Has a sealer been used? If so, was it water-based or solvent-based? And most important, why did the "white stuff" appear?

That "white stuff," or efflorescence, shows up when moisture has moved through the slab, carrying minerals with it. A white residue is left behind when the water evaporates.

One way to gather more information about the problem is to make a \$10 investment and purchase a calcium chloride test kit that will determine excess moisture or moisture vapor problems. The dry calcium chloride collects water if moisture is

present. The amount of weight the calcium chloride gains indicates how much moisture is coming through, Tomlinson said.

If the job has not been sealed, Tomlinson suggested a simple cleaning with a broom, following up with an efflorescence remover if needed. Applying a solvent-based acrylic sealer will also make the efflorescence disappear.

"What's happening is the salts dissolve in the sealer, and in the dissolved state they're invisible," he said. "When the sealer dries, there's no change. The salts remain dissolved in the resin." Keep in mind, though, that the high-gloss finish will give the project a whole new look.

If the job is already sealed with a solvent-based acrylic, Tomlinson suggests correcting the problem by reliquifying the sealer with a solvent, allowing it to repenetrate the slab, and then touching up the sealer with a light coat. If a water-based sealer was used, it must be removed chemically.

Of course, moisture can also be a problem in a newly installed slab. Bart Sacco, owner of Concrete Texturing Tools & Supply, said moisture can get trapped between the slab and the sealer membrane if the sealer is applied before the concrete has cured completely. High-gloss, solvent-based sealers can give a project a high-end look, but if they're not breathable, moisture problems can result.

If concrete is poured on Tuesday and pressure washed, dried and sealed on Thursday, that's not nearly enough time for all the moisture to come out of

the slab, Sacco said. If the concrete has a white hazy look, it's likely that moisture is fogging between the solvent-based sealer and the slab.

He suggested first allowing the concrete to naturally aspirate the moisture before taking any corrective measures. "Let it do its thing, and then come back in a week or two and give it a bath with a solvent, a liberal coating," Sacco said. "I would use xylene. Spray it on and let it emulsify. It lets moisture out when the solvent burns off into the atmosphere. Then put another sealer on top of it."

Do a spot test first. If it dries crystal clear, go to work on the rest of the slab, he said.

In the case of chalky-looking efflorescence on a slab, Sacco agreed with Tomlinson, saying that it would be a good idea to strip the sealer, and then clean the surface with an efflorescence remover or TSP. Then allow it to dry thoroughly and reseat.

The most important thing to do is solve the moisture problem, not just cover up the evidence, Tomlinson said. "If you have poorly drained soil, then you have to correct the drainage problem."

If the concrete was placed over damp soil, then nothing needs to be done except giving it time to dry out and evaporate through the slab. In some cases, he says, that can take as long as a year.

"It's a hard thing to tell people they have to be patient, but the reality is if they're not, the problems just reoccur," he said.



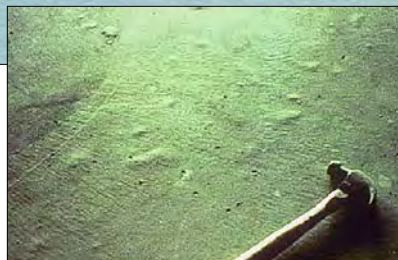
You want to pour an overlay and you can see that the slab has moisture problems. What is the best way to take care of the moisture and ensure that your application will be successful?

Overlays have long been used to repair cracks and other damage in existing concrete surfaces, while creating a fresh look. The general rule of thumb, however, is that the overlay is only as good as the substrate.

Solve the moisture problem first, the experts say, because the key to success is a good bond to the existing concrete surface. The slab must be dry, structurally sound, and free of sealers, coatings, paints, oil, dirt or any other contaminants that will break the bond.

Bob Ware, owner of the Decorative Concrete Store in Cincinnati, Ohio, said it's important to determine if the moisture is a one-time problem or a continuing issue.

Ware said he would first shotblast the concrete to remove sealers and other contaminants. He then likes to seal the surface with an Ardex or Mapei product, particularly Mapei's Planiseal 88, which he applies in two thin layers. "It's a moisture-proof material that doesn't allow moisture to penetrate or come up from the bottom," he said. For example, if the



contractor is planning to apply a quarter-inch overlay material and then stain it, "this assures the client that the material won't debond itself and come up off the floor."

But having said that, he added that he might refuse a repair project if there's moisture on the floor. If he did take the project on, he'd be hesitant to give it a lengthy warranty, as there are so many unknowns. "There are a lot of things to consider if there's water under the concrete floor."

Peter Golter, product manager for Mapei Corp.'s concrete restoration systems, suggested conducting three tests to clearly understand the problem, which is typically related to moisture vapor transmission. (*See sidebar for more information on the tests.*)

When concrete surfaces are blocked off with tight or non-porous toppings, the moisture builds up in the concrete until it is completely saturated, he said. The un-reacted cement in the



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CIRCLE #61 ON READER SERVICE CARD

concrete — called free-lime — is soluble in water. This salt water attracts fresh water, creating osmotic pressure, which can exceed 200 psi. "If the concrete's tensile capacity is less than the osmotic pressure, the mode of failure can be a rupture in the concrete substrate," he said.

What to do?

Golter said Mapei has developed a new product, Planiseal MRB (Moisture Reduction Barrier), that can bring a high-moisture slab back into compliance for decorative toppings, including epoxy and urethane topcoats. Planiseal MRB will take up to 12 pounds/1,000 square feet/24 hours of moisture vapor transmission, or up to four times the safe limit, he said.

He recommends prepping the surface by shotblasting or diamond cut grinding to remove contaminants and open up concrete pores. Make sure the surface is free of dust. Apply the Planiseal MRB according to Mapei's instructions and cure for 16 to 24 hours. "The decorative system can be applied on top of the

Three tests for moisture

- The first test is the calcium chloride test. The flooring industry considers a moisture vapor transmission rate of 3 pounds/1,000 square feet/24 hours safe for all flooring. The problem is that even low water-to-cement ratio concrete takes about 86 days to dry out to that safe rate, and that's at a conditioned environment of 73 degrees and 50 percent relative humidity. This also assumes that the concrete is on an impervious surface — a vapor barrier with no holes in it.
- The second test measures the moisture retained in the concrete slab, which is done with moisture probes. Typically the safety level is 70 to 75 percent relative humidity. If the relative humidity is higher, then the pores of the concrete are starting to fill up with water.
- The third test is a direct tensile bond test. The minimum tensile strength recommended by the American Concrete Institute is 175 psi. The three tests together will help a contractor determine the risk/success level of an application over a high moisture concrete slab, he said.

— Peter Golter, Mapei Corp.

Planiseal MRB using an epoxy-based primer followed by the topping," he said. "Then stain the surface, wash it and seal it as you would a typical system."

Another company, Applied Concrete Technology, offers the Protecrete Floor Saver System, which provides permanent waterproofing for

portland cement concrete subfloors. Part One of the system is sprayed onto the bare concrete slab. It penetrates deep into the concrete, forming a permanent gel-like barrier against moisture, said co-owner David Johnson. Even under the severe conditions like hydrostatic pressure,



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moisture will not enter the dense concrete slab. Part Two is applied with a roller or squeegee and creates a tough, but breathable membrane with excellent bonding properties.

The Mix Water Conditioner is a chemical added to the mix water before coming into contact with the portland cement, creating tight, high-quality concrete at a reasonable cost, Johnson said. This product hydrates more of the cement in the mix for the overlay, making it denser and less permeable. Johnson said his company's Web site, www.Protcrete.com, contains answers to many questions about moisture problems.

Customer No. 3 has a pond with faux rock features that are in constant contact with water. He's having problems with discoloration and spalling. How can you correct the situation?

Dave Sletten, director of national sales at Custom Rock, said minerals in the water that build up over time could cause surface discoloration. Mineral deposits will wear off with periodic cleaning, but won't go away permanently. Discoloration could also be caused by efflorescence. "If it's an existing surface, the best solution would be a sand blast to get back to bare concrete," he said. "Get all the paints and stains off and go with a cementitious product like Thoroseal that can be painted over the surface without changing the surface texture, and repaint over that."

Spalling can occur when there is a poor bond between the texture coat and the rough coat. When moisture is drawn into the rock, the water pushes the texture coat off. "The only thing to do with that is just to patch those areas. Get the loose materials off the surface, get a good bonding agent to reapply the texture coat, make sure it's well-cured and then do sealer, paint, etc.," Sletten said.

Johnson, of Applied Concrete Technology, said he's seen discol-

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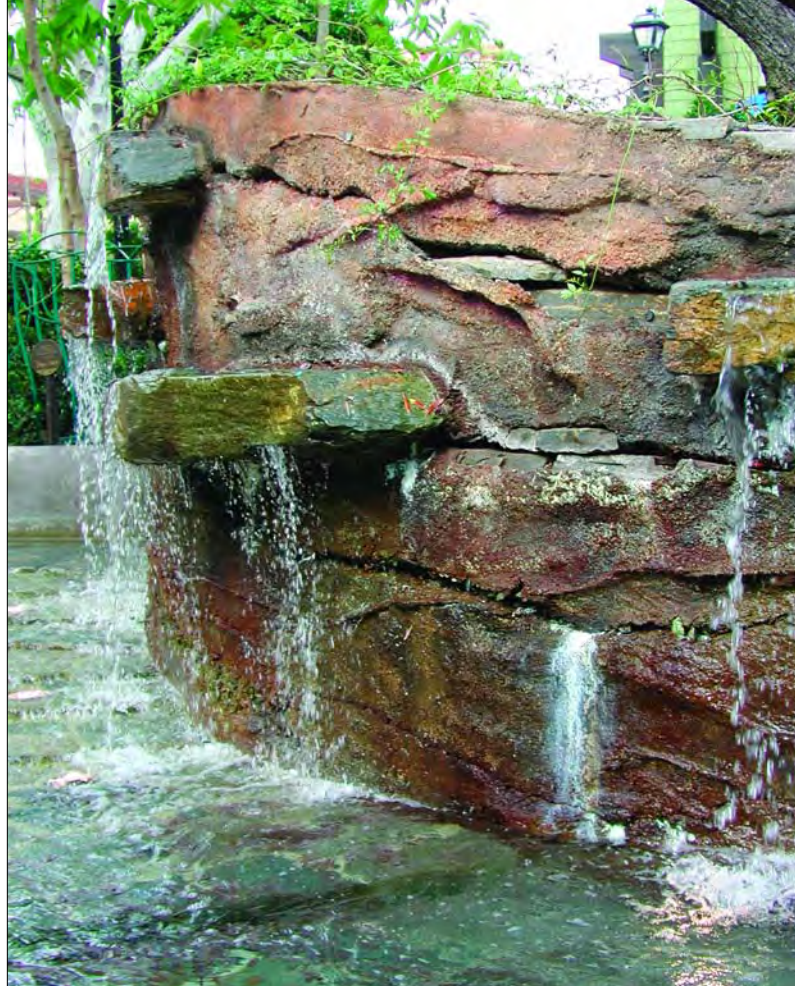
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oration come from limestone that's either part of the cement or placed around the base of the water feature. The company's Repeller is being used to stop fading on painted concrete surfaces. It also prevents the concrete or limestone from discoloring or leaching into the water and killing the fish in the pond, Johnson said. The company's Densifier — a spray-on, permanent waterproofer — will stop spalling and efflorescence.

David Long, of the Lakeland Company, said poor application methods and low-quality materials usually cause moisture problems on water features. The first thing he would do is to check out the damage. "The biggest thing is a thorough inspection, and a good knowledge of weight load and footing applications."


Just as a painting contractor wouldn't paint over wet dry wall, decorative concrete contractors should make sure the feature is worth saving. "In some instances, you're better off completely removing the product and starting over," he said.

If the faux rocks are hand-plastered over rebar and a wire cage, the feature could be constantly crumbling. Contractors can shotcrete over it and then carve the rocks.

"You have to make a judgment," Long said. "Can I warranty this repair?" The client is searching for someone to eliminate the headaches from the last "bad guy" who did a poor job, he says. "If we can't come up with a good long-term solution, we're the new bad guy."



If you have questions about any aspect of decorative concrete, please direct them to *Concrete Decor's* editor, Rosemary Camozzi, at rosemary@protradepub.com. We have industry experts on tap who are happy to help. Questions will be answered in future issues of *Concrete Decor*.



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Training Seminars and Industry Events for 2003

A calendar of Decorative Concrete Training Workshops and Industry Events scheduled for the United States and Canada. **Click on the Company name for a link to more information and registration services.** Please note that the calendar is updated often, so dates may change and events added or deleted without notice. Be sure to check back regularly for updates.

To include your training services schedule, email [Concrete Decor](mailto:ConcreteDecor@ptpub.com) or call 541-341-3390. This value-added service is available exclusively through Concrete Decor magazine.

August		
August 7-9, 2003 Arizona Polymer Flooring Glendale, Arizona Training Seminar	August 21-22, 2003 Concrete Solutions San Diego, California Training Class	August 15, 2003 Cheng Concrete Exchange Countertop Workshop Albany/Berkeley, CA Hands-on mixing, pouring, finishing countertops
September		
September 12, 2003 Cheng Concrete Exchange Countertop Workshop Albany/Berkeley, CA Hands-on mixing, pouring, finishing countertops	September 12-13, 2003 Stencil Systems Wichita Falls, Texas Stenciling New and Existing Concrete	September 18-19, 2003 Concrete Solutions San Diego, California Training Class
September 18-20, 2003 Arizona Polymer Flooring Glendale, Arizona Training Seminar	September 18-20, 2003 American Society of Concrete Contractors Dallas, Texas Annual Conference 2003	
October		
October 10, 2003 Cheng Concrete Exchange Countertop Workshop Albany/Berkeley, CA Hands-on mixing, pouring, finishing countertops	October 10-11, 2003 Stencil Systems Two Locations Stenciling New and Existing Concrete (Espanol)	October 16-17, 2003 Concrete Solutions San Diego, California Training Class
November		
November 6-8, 2003 Arizona Polymer Flooring Glendale, Arizona Training Seminar	November 13-14, 2003 Concrete Solutions San Diego, California Training Class	
December		
December 11-12, 2003 Concrete Solutions San Diego, California Training Class		

Photo Courtesy of Engrave-A-Crete

Check out our [Decorative Concrete Training Directory](#) for companies that offer decorative concrete training seminars regionally, nationally or internationally.

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Flexible finish bridges cracks

With its new Powerwall finish, Sto Corp. has released an economical option to elastomeric finishes. Powerwall is a ready mixed, flexible-textured wall coating used as a decorative and protective wall finish over prepared concrete, masonry and plaster/stucco substrates. It is available in Fine, Medium, and Swirl textures.

The acrylic-based finish is flexible, so it bridges hairline cracks while maintaining excellent adhesion and weather-resistance. Because it is water-based, it is nontoxic and cleans up with water. For more information, visit www.stocorp.com or call (800) 221-2397.

Rip-R-Stripper takes it all off

General Equipment Co. has introduced an electric-powered floor-covering scraper. Ideal for removing such materials as carpet, ceramic tile, linoleum and mastic, the FCS16 Rip-R-Stripper offers high productivity, an ergonomic design and multiple removal accessories.

With an exciter unit mounted directly to the driveshaft, the scraper uses downward force to bore into and strip away the applied floor covering and adhesive. External weights can be added to provide extra force for removing tough residues and to increase material removal rates. Several blade options are available, including 8- and 12-inch scoring blades for removing materials from concrete surfaces.

With a unitized, welded steel-plate frame and only one moving part, the Rip-R-Stripper is built to handle the rigors of most job sites

while requiring minimal maintenance. For more information, call (800) 533-0524 or visit www.generalequip.com.

New tool really nails it

Powers Fasteners is taking the final step in completing its gas-fired fastening system with the introduction of Trak-It Model TI-C concrete nailing tool. The tool is lighter than most concrete gas nailing tools and has an easy access latched opening on the nosepiece that enables the operator to clear misfeeds without having to remove the handle.

The tool's speed and convenience makes it ideal for high-volume, repetitive firing applications — most notably laying drywall track into concrete — and for installing grids,

channels and furring strips. The Power's TI-C tool has a 42-pin magazine capacity that reduces the amount of time spent loading on the job, and it can accommodate pins in lengths up to 1-½ inches, including Powers' new ½" diameter steel pin called The Penetrator, which is used for fastening into steel I-beams. The tool also features a "click on" nickel hydride cordless battery, with a second battery included in the kit. For more information, visit www.powers.com or call (914) 235-6300.

Texture coating speeds projects along

Sherwin-Williams new UltraCrete Solvent Borne Texture coating is formulated to overcome project delays that can often be caused by poor weather or by poor surface conditions on new concrete construction.

Formulated for spray application on tilt-up, pre-cast and poured-in-place concrete, the coating improves the appearance of large commercial buildings without adding undue cost or time to the job. Because the product is engineered to be applied at temperatures as low as 20-degrees Fahrenheit, and can even be applied over damp concrete, weather-related delays will virtually eliminated. Once applied, UltraCrete Solvent Borne Texture coating delivers long-term resistance to UV damage, as well as to efflorescence.

The coating is also designed to provide excellent adhesion despite incomplete removal of minor surface dirt or form release agents, so extra preparation steps can be eliminated and the project wrapped up faster. For more information, visit www.sherwin-williams.com.



Waterproofing system receives ICC-ES listing

Miracote's Miraflex II system recently received its ICC-ES listing — ER 5452. A cementitious waterproofing system for concrete or wood, Miraflex II is excellent for new construction and a great application where restoration is required. The system also has a Class A one-hour fire rating approval.

The Miraflex II system over wood starts with metal lath. Miracote Repair Mortar underlayment encapsulates the lath, then Membrane A to waterproof. Next, Miracote Protective Coating (MPC) is applied.

This restores and protects concrete and allows custom architectural treatments. The work is finished with a sealer topcoat. The process differs slightly when the



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application is over concrete. It begins with Miracote Membrane A, eliminating the metal lath and repair mortar underlayment.

Applications include outside decks, parking decks over office buildings, deck conversions from wood to solid surface and more. Shown is a deck conversion from redwood to solid surface with faux flagstone pattern, stain and a sealer topcoat. For more specification and product information, visit www.miracote.com or call (877) 647-2268.



Saw designed for concrete removal and repair

Sanders Saws has a new Diamond Wire Saw, designed for numerous remodeling, restoration and demolition applications.

The compact, hydraulic DSM-10A saw from Hakken can be attached to a variety of concrete structures or anchored to the floor. This powerful unit operates at 3,000 psi. Its drive feed system utilizes an electric torque converter that permits a quicker response to the wire load while

at the same time extending the diamond wire's life.

Individual saw components weigh less than 55 pounds, allowing operators to easily maneuver the saw. The DSM-10A is ideal for concrete removal and repair while installing

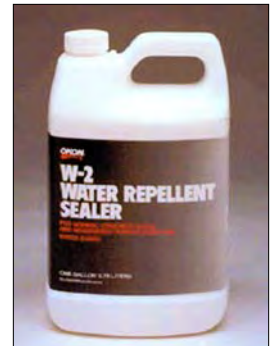
doors and windows, and on anchor mounts in factories and warehouses. The saw, which has a total weight of 330 pounds when fully assembled, comes standard with a control system for the electrical feed system, electrical connecting cable, a ratchet wrench, and single-ended spanner. Available accessories include a safety panel and stand, add-on pulley and idler pulley.

For more information, call 800/486-0207 or visit www.sanderssaws.com.

Sealer keeps water out



Okon W-2 economically seals regular concrete block and other moderately porous surfaces such as old weathered brick and heavily textured stucco. Offering superior water repellent performance, it is formulated with a proprietary blend of the highest quality acrylic micro-emulsions and a silane-siloxane solution.

The micro-emulsions penetrate the surface to establish a water-repelling barrier in the subsurface of concrete and masonry. Besides bridging hairline mortar cracks and filling pores and capillaries, the silane-siloxane component chemically reacts with concrete and masonry to form additional protection against water intrusion.



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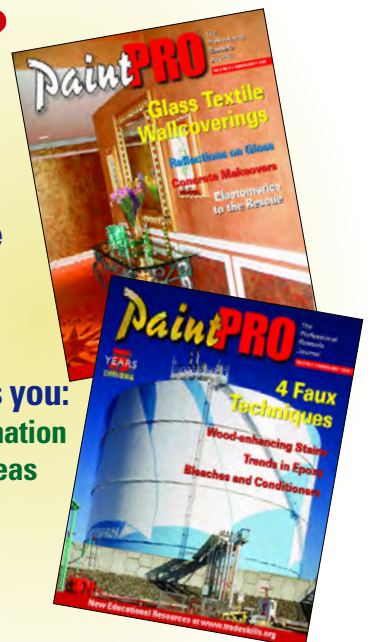
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A ten-percent-solids, water-based sealer, Okon W-2 also reduces maintenance requirements by minimizing environmental erosion such as dusting, chalking, cracking and spalling. When applied as directed, it will not change the natural appearance of concrete and masonry and can be used under or over painted surfaces. The low VOC sealer is harmless to vegetation, non-flammable, low-odor, and easy to apply and clean up. For more information, call (303) 377-7800 or visit www.okoninc.com.

Hacker debuts sound control products

Firm-Fill 3310, a new gypsum concrete underlayment, and Hacker Sound Mat II, an environmentally friendly and cost-efficient new sound mat, are now included in 82 UL listings and available nationwide from Hacker Industries, Inc. The UL listings detail floor assemblies utilizing a Hacker Floor underlayment as an integral component to achieve one-, two-, three- and four-hour fire ratings.

Firm-Fill 3310 can be poured before or after drywall and delivers compressive strengths up to 3300 psi. The product's low water demand rapidly eliminates water, allowing for accelerated drying time and superior surface hardness. Firm-Fill 3310 delivers fire resistance, sound control and a resilient surface for virtually any finished floor covering.

The new Hacker Sound Mat II is engineered to provide optimum sound control, versatility and unsurpassed value to acoustical engineers, architects and developers. When used in conjunction with Hacker Floor underlayments such as Firm-Fill Gypsum Concrete, Firm-Fill 2010, Firm-Fill 3310, Firm-Fill High Strength or Gyp-Span Radiant, Hacker Sound Mat II offers ease of installation and resilient sound deadening properties.

For more information about Hacker Industries, please call (800) 642-3455, visit www.hackerindustries.com or e-mail info@hackerindustries.com.



Overlay offers ultra-smooth finish

Micro-Finish, from Elite Crete Systems, is a pre-mixed, "just add water" overlay system designed for creating an extremely smooth finish. It is sold as white, but can be

custom colored with Portion Control Colorants to achieve over 30 base colors. It can also be stained with Chem-Stone Reactive Stain or Ultra-Stone Antiquing Stain for additional highlighting effects. Micro-Finish costs a fraction of self-leveling type overlays and creates a finish like that of a hard towed surface with very little effort or time. Its precisely

engineered mix design contains the exact cement and aggregate size, shape and composition to ensure high performance, ease of use and product consistency. For more information, call (888) 323-4445.

Countertop vibration system produces dense finish

The new Vibra-Beam Countertop System is a state-of-the-art, patent-pending countertop vibration system. This lightweight system can be attached to any standard sawhorse to create a high-quality vibration table that produces an extremely tight, dense and void-free finish. The Vibra-Beam is ideal for both new construction and remodeling contractors.



Available in either 115-volt power or pneumatic air, the Vibra-Beam System can be adapted to fit any size countertop casting by simply adding additional Vibra-Beams. VIBCO recommends installing one Vibra-Beam unit for each 4-foot section of countertop.

Scaled down from the some of the best qualities of VIBCO's time-tested, larger-scale vibration tables to be easily portable for smaller applications, the Vibra-Beam still provides the quality-engineered product for which VIBCO is known.

For more information, call (800) 633-0032 in the U.S. or (800) 465-9709 in Canada. Visit on the Web at www.vibco.com.



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The Final Pour



Airspeed Skateparks' work was featured on the cover of last year's *World of Concrete* issue. Since that time they have started incorporating both color and texture into their work, and decorative concrete has become a valuable extension of their skate park design services.

Airspeed constructed this funneling full pipe — 17 feet in diameter at the front and 10 feet in diameter at the back — at a skate park in Reedsport, Ore. They made the unique custom form out of plywood. "It's the first loopable pipe that you can go upside down," says Mike Dahl of Airspeed.

For a slide show featuring more of Airspeed's work and some awesome photos, visit the *Concrete Decor* Web site at www.concretedecor.net. Click on the current issue, then follow the link to The Final Pour.

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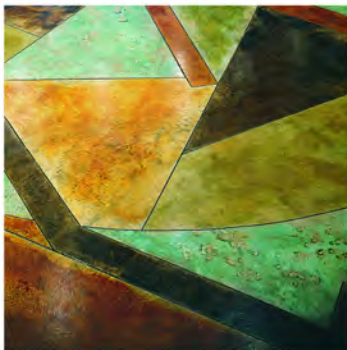
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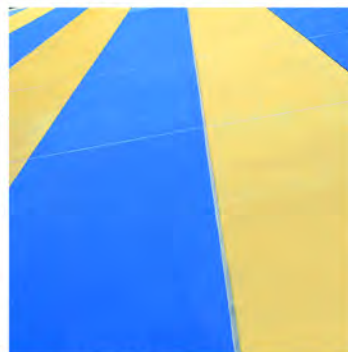
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