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Vol. 7 No. 2 • March/April 2007 • \$6.95

Concrete

The Journal of Decorative Concrete

Decor

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Project Profile:

A Hawaiian Restoration

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Employee Time Card

Name: **DAVID B.** Date: **4-13**

Day	Start	Lunch	End	Jobsite	Activity	Hours
Monday	7	1/2	3:30	Brentwood	Gen	8
Tuesday	7	1/2	3:30	'	'	8
Wednesday	7	1/2	4	'	'	8 1/2
Thursday	7	1/2	4	Crestview	'	8 1/2
Friday	7	1/2	4	'	'	8 1/2

Employee Signature: *David B.* Total Hours: **41 1/2**

WHEN YOU CAN HAVE THIS.

Employee Report

Burns, David Date Range: 4/9/2007 through 4/13/2007

Day	Date	Jobsite	Start	Stop	Cost Code	Hours	Total
Mon	4/9	Brentwood	7:08 AM	12:05 PM	Prep	4:57	
			12:41 PM	3:22 PM	Prep	2:41	7:38 hours
Tue	4/10	Brentwood	7:12 AM	12:07 PM	Formwork	4:55	
			12:43 PM	3:23 PM	Formwork	2:40	7:35 hours
Wed	4/11	Brentwood	7:12 AM	12:02 PM	Formwork	4:50	
			12:46 PM	3:49 PM	Formwork	3:03	7:53 hours
Thu	4/12	Crestview	7:17 AM	12:19 PM	Prep	5:02	
			12:50 PM	3:46 PM	Prep	2:56	7:58 hours
Fri	4/13	Crestview	7:13 AM	12:07 PM	Formwork	4:54	
			12:44 PM	3:39 PM	Formwork	2:55	7:49 hours
Total						38:53 hours	

Signature: *David B.* Burns, David

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Publisher's Letter



Dear Readers,

Se habla español? If so, *Concrete Decor* encourages you to visit our new Spanish-language Web site, www.decoreconconcreto.com, which we launched Jan. 1, 2007.

Each new issue of *Concrete Decor* is now being translated, in its entirety, into Spanish and posted on this Web site for the growing number of Latin American contractors who are recognizing the valuable benefits that decorative concrete adds to their business.

Needless to say, this is an exciting step for *Concrete Decor*. This valuable new tool shares important information with other cultures and promotes the numerous benefits that both new and existing concrete offer to builders and their customers.

The other day I visited a new natural and gourmet foods supermarket here in Eugene, Ore. Heading toward their deli section for lunch I was amazed at the concrete below me. This floor had it all. It included alternating integral colors. It had been seeded with recycled glass and aggregate. It was stained, it was polished and it looked fabulous. A similar treatment was even added to the concrete stairs leading to a second-floor eatery that overlooked the store's glamorous decor below.

Enjoying lunch upstairs with my wife and our youngest son, Kannen, I had this incredible vantage point from which to reflect, literally, on the exciting new ways concrete is being utilized in today's building environments. Considering the look of concrete floors in a grocery store 30 years ago, I was challenged to imagine what concrete might look like 30 years from now.

With so many noticeable benefits that concrete now offers, both structurally and aesthetically, it's increasingly important to note how critical education and training are to ensuring a project's success, a company's growth, and a reputation that concrete is gaining as one of the world's most preferred building products.

To this end, the more we share our knowledge with one another, the more opportunities we have to influence the world around us and the way concrete will look 30 years from today.

Enjoy another great issue of *Concrete Decor*. Made possible by you!

Sincerely,

Bent Mikkelsen
Publisher



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This password changes monthly. To continue receiving both the print magazine and access to our archives, start your subscription today. *Concrete Decor* is the industry's foremost magazine on decorative concrete.

Concrete Decor now features the industry's ultimate online 'search' tool for finding just about anything related to decorative concrete. Start by logging on to www.concretedecor.net. At the top of the page simply enter a keyword such as "stencil," "integral color," "admixture" or "rock features." In less than a second we'll search more than five years of articles and information from the pages of *Concrete Decor* and provide you with an extensive list of results.

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Features



24 Project Profile: Kukui Grove Center, Lihue, Hawaii

The floors of this 80,000-square-foot outdoor mall on the island of Kauai were patchy, cracked and worn out. One sweeping restoration changed everything.

by Amy Johnson



28 Artisan in Concrete: Mike Moncrieff, New Edge Design, Lynden, Wash.

Once, he labored on boring flatwork. Now, he creates one-of-a-kind sinks and countertops for upscale homes and businesses.

by Chris Camara



34 Staying on Top of Stenciling

Stencil toppings are thin but strong. Get to know them better.

by Loretta Hall



38 Restore, Refurbish, Maintain: Caring for Colored Concrete

You don't have to stain in vain – restoration and maintenance can fight age and wear on just about any colored concrete slab.

by Stacey Enesey Klemenc

On the Cover: Mike Moncrieff, owner of New Edge Design, creates and installs all of his own concrete art from shower stalls to kitchen countertops and islands, like this one. Learn more about Moncrieff and his art on page 28.



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Simple operation on hand or at hose. Low rate pressure discharge from this Industrial Acid Stripping Sprayer from Chem International Inc. The models are perfect for both field use because of the ease of both the application and further removal.

This Industrial Acid Stripping Sprayer is compared with industrial grade acid removal units and selected for its ease of use and low cost.

The sprayer is designed to spray acid at low pressure; the triggers allow over filling and cleaning. The sprayer also sprays acid through high pressure rated hoses. A "kick-off" feature to prevent accidental discharges, removable gun guards and adjustable nozzle (this allows for coarse streams and fine mist). The internal flow valve results in better acid distribution inside, uniform and consistent pressure rates.

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1/www.chemintl.com

42 • www.ChemicalWorld.com • March/April 2005

Business St

Clayco Industrial Acid Staining Sprayer

Disinfect Industrial Acid Staining Sprayer

Several generations can benefit from this sprayer, because generations that find the Industrial Acid Staining Sprayer from Chap International Inc. The words are printed in bold block letters on the side of both the 1-gallon and 2-gallon versions.

Both Industrial Acid Staining Sprayers are equipped with industrial-grade acid-resistant seals and gaskets for maximum resistance to acid stains. While openings to the brushes allow easy filling and cleaning, the sprayers also sport automatic high-pressure internal valves, a "lock-off" feature to prevent accidental releases, adjustable poly pumps, and an adjustable nozzle that turns out coarse and fine sprays and streams. An optional 30-second nozzle lock helps the user distribute products, nozzles and accessories (price varies).

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[illegible]

by Peter Wagner, CSI

During the time of the 1990s, the U.S. economy was in a state of stagnation or decline, the rate of unemployment was high, and the country was just about bankrupt. Looking back, that is the best world that we have in its 430-year-old important period to live in. The country was in a state of decline, but it was still a place of opportunity and growth. It was a place where people were still working hard and trying to make something out of it. It was a place where people were still trying to make something out of it. It was a place where people were still trying to make something out of it.

Faux Effect intensifies decorative finish

From a black, neutral-toned base, the new introduced EcoGrip® is a flexible decorative finish that's made for both interior and exterior decorative exterior applications.

EcoGrip incorporates advanced polymer technology formulated to work in a variety of environments that require a highly durable finish. It is scratch-resistant, mildew- and freeze/thaw-resistant, durable under even the most intense, especially extreme EcoGrip from the chemical resistance and longevity properties that exterior applications require and is a cost-effective finishing of floors, from tile and masonry.

The product is available for multiple floor grades: EcoGrip Flex and EcoGrip Sporty Grip. Both are the eighth member (seventh grade of EcoGrip, while considering prior the finish coats of the three grades EcoGrip is available in the Faux Effect). The EcoGrip is available through True Effects Licensed Finisher, thanks to the worldwide distributor only.

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54 • www.enr.construction.com/resources/special/ March/April 2017

Fox Effects releases decorative birds

[illegible]

156 • Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry and Neurology • March/April 2003



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Photo courtesy of
Appalachian Contracting
Group, Adairsville, GA.

Floor and car collection
the property of George
Shropshire, Cartersville, GA.

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Letter to the Editor

I have read your article in the Dec/Jan 2007 issue on sealers ("Sealer Trouble" by Bart Sacco) and I agree with the article to a point.

Looking at your pictures in the article, (I can say that) we have these issues come up from time to time, and what I have found is that sometimes contractors leave too much antiquing release on the surface. By leaving too much release on the surface, your sealers tend to "peel up" in different spots giving the surface a freckled appearance. So sometimes it is not a sealer issue.

Thank you.

- Jeff Kelly

Irving Materials Inc.

www.irvmat.com

Correction:

In the February 2007 issue of *Concrete Decor*, we mistakenly identified the lead photo on page 56 (in the "Tooling" section) as courtesy of HTC. The photo is courtesy of Appalachian Contracting Group, a Adaisville, Ga., customer of StoneOlogy by Eagle Solutions.

Industry News



QC and Newlook join forces

QC Construction Products and Newlook International Inc. have penned an agreement giving QC exclusive distribution rights to Newlook's eco-friendly concrete stains throughout the United States and Canada. This product line is private-labeled as Newlook by QC and was released to QC distributors in March.

The Newlook by QC Solid Color Concrete Stain and Newlook by QC Transparent Color Enhancer Stain are easy to use, available in 80 standard colors, will not alter surface texture, do not require sealers and have excellent recoatability. Newlook stains are free of VOCs, acrylic and acids.

■ www.qcconstructionproducts.com

VIC certifies green polisher

VIC International has announced the first concrete polishing "green" certification program in the industry, with full implementation scheduled for mid-year 2007. VIC International is now certified as a "green" process by Green Spec and is being listed in the Green Spec Directory.

To become certified as part of the VIC International Certified Green Appli-

cator program, a contractor must have: professional experience polishing a certain amount of square feet of concrete; a history working with larger customers; a truck, trailer, grinding equipment, generator, and manpower; credit approval; and at least five references. In addition, the contractor must attend quarterly applicator meetings held and catered by VIC International.

In the wake of the new certification program, VIC International has named a new management team for its surface prep division. Bill Beres has been named director of the division, Shannon Stone and Don Dagenhart were named technical sales and support, and Brent Knox was named to technical support and acting architect.

Furthermore, VIC International has forged a relationship with Middle Tennessee State University Concrete Industry Management Program, the first four-year program in the United States to offer a B.S. degree in concrete industry management. VIC International has been appointed to the program's executive advisory council.

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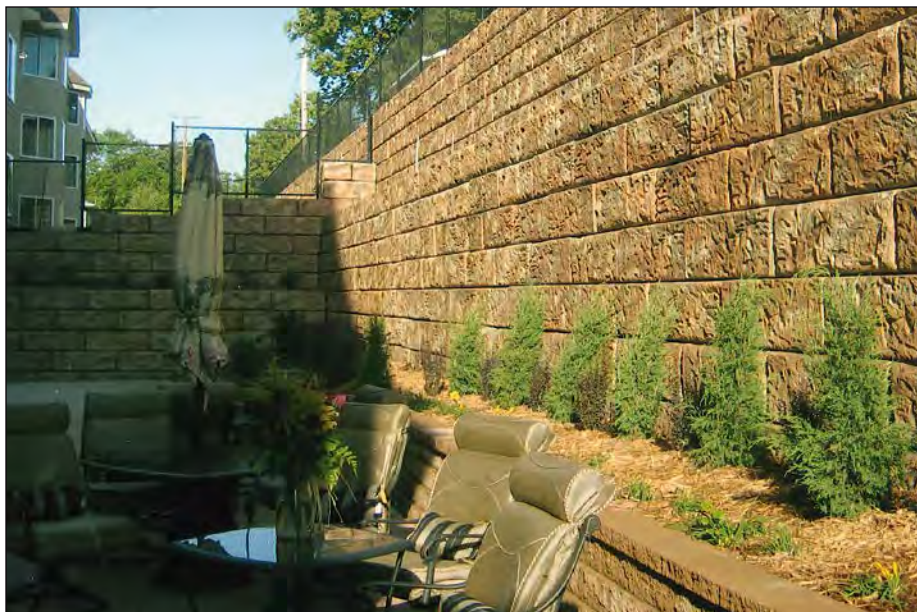


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A retaining wall, courtesy of ReCon

ReCon Wall Systems Inc. of Minneapolis, Minn., created a retaining wall 600 feet long and 20 feet tall for the back end of a condominium development in Cannon Falls, Minn.

The wall cut into the side of an existing slope on a property with a 20-foot elevation change. Challenges on the job included fine sandy soil, the lack of a temporary easement to cross the property line, and the destabilization risk of a basement excavation.

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🌐 www.reconwalls.com/block

Partnership brings Meadows compound into VIC fold

VIC International and W.R. Meadows Inc. have joined forces to create a polished concrete team that offers products and certification.

As part of the partnership, Meadows' Liqui-hard densifier and chemical hardener compound will be integrated into the VIC Certified "Green" Applicator polished concrete system. Liqui-hard is a ready-to-use, colorless liquid, consisting of proprietary active chemicals that progressively penetrate deeply into concrete. Through a chemical reaction process, Liqui-hard chemically solidifies all component parts into a homogenous concrete mass. This unique blend of chemical reactive ingredients provides a high level of hardness and protection.

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Solomon featured on ABC

Solomon Colors Inc. donated ready-mix concrete materials to the ABC television program "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition," for season 4, episode 13, "The Thomas Family," which aired in February.

"Extreme Makeover: Home Edition" and M/I Homes, an Ohio based home-builder, teamed up with dozens of area contractors, distributors, businesses and



volunteers in November 2006 to build a new home for Jason Thomas and his family. Solomon supplied dry pigment, ready-mix concrete products in the hue of Color No. 306 (Canvas) to blend with paver stones in the exterior landscape architecture areas, including the front porch, service walks and driveway.

Solomon ready-mix concrete pigments are available in 48 unique colors, and Solomon's Color Laboratory system

is available for custom blending and color matching services.

■ www.solomoncolors.com

Allied to distribute Sika

Allied Building Products Corp., a leading distributor of roofing, siding, waterproofing, windows and building materials, has agreed to distribute Sika Corp.'s line of sealants, epoxies, concrete repair mortars, waterproofing materials



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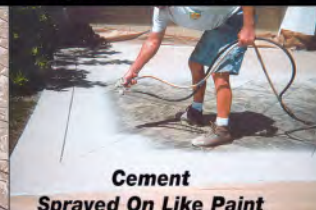
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■ www.alliedbuilding.com

Architectural Enhancements expands

Architectural Enhancements Inc. has purchased a new plant in Lake Crystal, Minn., and will be moving in this spring, gaining additional space for manufacturing, shipping and receiving.

Architectural Enhancements has made some bagging agreements with other companies. In addition, the company has begun packaging in buckets, and its packaging sports a new logo. A new product catalog was released in March that features 50 core products and hundreds of colors and stamps.

Finally, the company has added a number of new stocking distributors. They include Burnsville Architectural Enhancements of Minnesota Inc., Complete Concrete Solutions Inc. (Maryland), Architectural Enhancements of the Carolinas Inc. (North Carolina), Architectural Enhancements Florida Inc.,

Architectural Enhancements of Colorado, RTG Inc. (South Dakota), Kirk Dennis (South Dakota), Silvermere Inc. (Sri Lanka, India), and Tim Butler (Ireland).

☎ (507) 364-7667

■ www.decorativeoverlays.com

Sakrete has California covered

Paragon Building Products Inc., of Norco, Calif., has been named a licensee for Sakrete products in Southern California. Paragon's main coverage area in California includes Imperial, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, San Bernardino, San Diego and Ventura counties.

The Sakrete producer for the remainder of California is Basalite, headquartered in Dixon, Calif. Together, Basalite and Paragon provide Sakrete with six manufacturing facilities that support the California market.

The Sakrete brand is owned and managed by Oldcastle APG/Bonsal American Inc.

☎ (800) 738-1621

■ www.sakrete.com

Florida terrazzo murals honor medical pioneers

Using his revolutionary colored concrete process, internationally renowned artist Steven Weitzman designed, fabricated and installed three dynamic 7.5-foot by 8.5-foot terrazzo murals at the new College of Medicine facility at Florida State University in Tallahassee.

"Triad of Medicine" consists of large-scale, polished terrazzo panels featuring portraits of three predecessors of modern medicine: Hippocrates, Florida physician and scientist John Gorrie, and Elizabeth Blackwell, the first woman to receive an M.D. degree in the United States.

Steven Weitzman has been creating outdoor terrazzo and controlled colored concrete murals for decades. He is currently fabricating his next terrazzo monument: a 6-foot by 30-foot mural depicting Martin Luther King, Jr., Rosa Parks, Duke Ellington and Bessie Smith. This monument will be installed in a park in the District of Columbia near the end of 2007.

■ www.weitzmanstudios.com

Bomanite goes global

Bomanite Corp. and BGI (Bomanite Group International) have finalized a three-year expansion phase establishing a global network of Regional Management and Manufacturing facilities in eight regions: Central America, South America, Northern Europe, Southern Europe, the Middle East, China, the Far East and Southeast Asia.

This network supplies quality products and services to specially trained and licensed concrete contractors in more than 45 countries worldwide.

Matt Casto has assumed the role of Vice President of Business Development for BGI, focusing his efforts in international marketing, specifications, technical services, and licensing. Previously, Casto worked as the Vice President of Business Development for Bomanite Corp. in the United States.

☎ www.bomanite.com



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Venetian plaster workshops offered at Seattle school

Seattle Architectural Finishing School is offering new Venetian plaster workshops.

The lineup consists of: "Venetian Plastering I, Basic One-day Workshop," for those with little or no experience with hawk and trowel applications who are interested in learning the basics; "Venetian Plastering II, Intermediate Three-day Workshop," a TexSton Certification Course that teaches a wide variety of decorative plaster finishes using TexSton's line of natural lime and cement-based materials; and "Venetian Plastering III, Advanced Three-day Workshop," which offers different approaches to achieving impressive decorative design elements.

The first classes are scheduled in Seattle for April and June 2007.

☎ (206) 838-5888

🌐 www.seattleafs.com



Workshop teaches RsCrete

An RsCrete Decorative Concrete Finishing Workshop will be held July 12 and 13 at FE Dallas Inc. in Addison, Texas.

The workshop will feature RsCrete, a new decorative finish from Faux Effects International Inc. It will focus on learning the opportunities available through RsCrete, applying the skills

learned to create decorative finishes on vertical surfaces, and bringing these skills to horizontal surfaces, including floors, patios and countertops.

☎ (800) 270-8871

🌐 www.fauxfx.com

DVD teaches engraving

Engrave-A-Crete Inc. has released "Mastering Concrete Engraving — The Basics," a new training DVD that teaches skills involved in decorative concrete engraving.

The 1 hour and 40 minute DVD covers surface preparation, pigmented stain application, acid/RAC stain application, Engrave-A-Crete machine operation, and sealing and maintaining decorative concrete projects.

☎ (800) 884-2114

🌐 www.engraveacrete.com

Quad-Lock promotes Hatfield

Quad-Lock Building Systems Ltd., which manufactures and distributes insulating concrete form systems, announced that John Hatfield has accepted the position of Sales Manager, U.S. Mountain Region. Based in Littleton, Colo., Hatfield's territory includes Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, southern Nevada, Utah, Wyoming, western Nebraska and western Kansas.

Hatfield has represented Quad-Lock products within Colorado for the past four years.

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QC overhauls Web site

QC Construction Products has launched a new, comprehensive Web site.

Improvements include an expanded image gallery, online brochures, color selectors for all coloring products, quick links to all technical and application data, more comprehensive offerings in Architect/Specifier, Contractor and Distributor sections, and a revamped image gallery.

Additional features to be added by Summer 2007 include a flipbook-style online product binder and a distributor login for online ordering.

■ www.qcconstructionproducts.com

USG retools Levelrock site

USG's Specialty Products Division has revamped its Levelrock brand Floor Underlayment Web site.

The new site design enables visitors to better access product descriptions and specifications for the complete line of Levelrock underlayment products. Downloadable details and CAD drawings depict various applications, including fire-rated and sound-rated systems. Products on the site are organized into four classifications — general, radiant heat, steel deck and decorative — with properties, uses and applications given for each category.

■ www.levelrock.com



Safe for food

Valspar Flooring, a division of Valspar Corp., has published a guide highlighting the advantages of its Flowfresh and Descoglas systems for the food and beverage industry.

Flowfresh Heavy Duty Urethane Concrete, a product of Flowcrete PLC, features Polygiene, a nonchemical silver ion-based antimicrobial. Descoglas Reinforced Wall & Ceiling Systems help create smooth seamless environments by wrapping or tying the wall and ceiling into the floor and base and by rounding inside corners, eliminating the cracks and crevices that harbor dirt and bacteria.

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■ www.valsparflooring.com

DCI expands into West Coast, Europe



Mark Haen

Decorative Concrete Institute Inc. has joined forces with industry powerhouses Mark Haen of Adobe Coatings, located in the Phoenix, Ariz., area, and Mike Archambault and Frederic Ljung of

Moderne Methode, located in France, to launch a West Coast Division and Europe Division of the Decorative Concrete Institute.

Haen has owned Adobe Coatings for the last nine years, but has been involved in the coatings industry for the past 17 years. He has conducted training seminars for a variety of manufacturers and was instrumental in the production of both of the Decorative Concrete Institute's DVDs.

Mike Archambault has conducted several training classes with Bob Harris of DCI in Germany, England and Spain as well as here in the states. Archambault's partner, Frederic Ljung, is the founder and general manager of a distributorship in France that services all of Europe with decorative concrete products for several large American and European manufacturers.

☎ (770) 562-1441

■ www.decorativeconcreteinstitute.com



Mike Archambault and Frederic Ljung



Blastrac Academic Resource Center

Blastrac Global will offer Surface Preparation Academic Resource Center classes May 15-17, June 12-14 and July 10-12, 2007, in Oklahoma City.

SPARC is a surface preparation training program taught by factory experts skilled in Blastrac equipment and Sawtec hand tools. The classes are intended for anyone in the surface preparation industry, from beginners to highly experienced technicians.

The class teaches participants what kind of surface preparation equipment to use and when to use them for different applications, allowing participants to lower operating costs and to be more efficient. Class sizes are usually 15 people or less, and customized training sessions are available for companies that want multiple employees trained simultaneously on the best applications for surface preparation products.

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🌐 www.blastrac.com

Valspar resurfaces museum's deteriorated floorin

The Spurlock Museum at the University of Illinois, which opened its doors in 2002, was home to an unsightly collection of cracks in its concrete floor. The popping that accompanied the cracks was loud enough to set off alarms. Just as important as eliminating the pops and cracks in the 24,000-square foot gallery was the need for a floor that could withstand the high traffic of a museum. The museum also

wanted an earth-toned floor that would compliment but not detract from the exhibits.

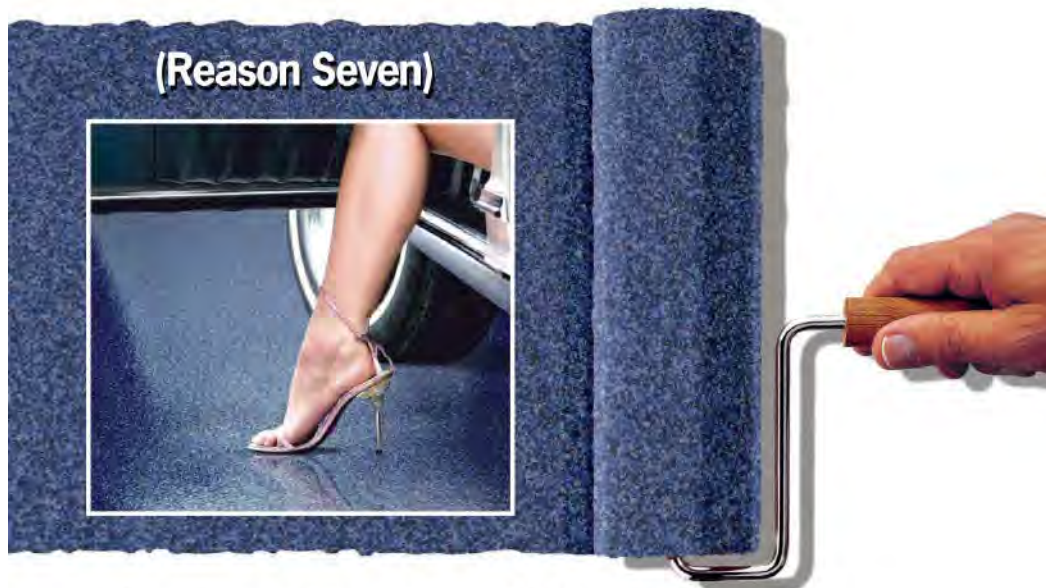
Fortunately, experts from Rite-Way Concrete Seal Systems Inc., of Wolcott, Ind., knew exactly which Valspar products could eliminate the persistent concrete problems and produce a beautiful, durable finish. Rite-Way applied the Valflex membrane, followed by a color-customized version of Valspar's Quartzite decorative flooring system, which blends ceramic-coated quartz grains with a clear polymer matrix to create a

wide range of finishes and textures. To complete the system, Valspar Flooring's Satin Finish Epoxy Coating was used to provide durability and excellent UV stability. The entire process was completed without shutting down the museum during the fix.

Three years later, the loud pops along with the buckled, cracked concrete are all gone. And the Valspar Valflex system is still hard at work protecting the floors at the Spurlock Museum. 📞

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- 6) Excellent decorative accent. Complements other decorating materials. Great for accent walls and for highlighting architectural elements like arches, columns, kitchen backsplashes and fireplaces. Also well suited for finishing decorative accessories.
- 7) Incredibly versatile. Multicolor can be used for both interior and protected exterior applications. It can be rolled, sponged or sprayed over most surfaces. Multicolor shown in photo was spray applied and protected with a high performance, clear gloss topcoat.

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Photos courtesy of Doug Carlton

Resealing stamped concrete can provide huge profits and keep your projects looking top-notch.

I could hardly believe my eyes. Their advertisement read that they did it all, every type of decorative concrete work. Stamping and stenciling, overlays and stains, concrete counters and polished concrete, sandblasting and etching, basement walls and foundations, and I almost forgot this part, no job too small. I have been in the decorative industry a long time, and I'm here to tell you the only things this guy didn't do are body piercing and broken heart repair.

Don't get me wrong — I am all for business expansion and introducing

fresh applications into our decorative business, but if you are promoting your business like the one just described, there is a much easier way.

You see, staying busy and profitable is not about how many different decorative services you offer, but specializing in the types that are the best fit for you and your crew.

I completely understand how this guy got himself in the jack-of-all-trades predicament because I fell into the same trap myself. Tell me if this sounds familiar to you. We start out, let's say,

doing stained concrete. We run across a floor that isn't stainworthy, and obviously the only answer is to overlay the floor to give us a new canvas. There is one problem — we don't know how to overlay — but that is easy enough to fix. Everything is going along well until our next client loves their new stained floor so much they want concrete counters to match. Oh boy, here we go with another seminar and a plane ticket. By now you are probably getting my point.

Decorative concrete has become the fastest growing segment of the concrete

industry. But in part because of this, the decorative market rarely allows individual contractors to effectively master and install each type of decorative concrete.

Decorative concrete roots have now spread in so many directions that it is nearly impossible to be good at everything. I can assure you it is not a good idea to try dollars-and-cents-wise for at least three reasons:

1. It's too confusing for you and your crew to switch back and forth from day to day. Try to limit your crew to two or three types of decorative work.
2. It makes it more difficult to be efficient and competitive. Repetition is profitable. Crews can be creative yet repetitive from step to step.
3. It's extremely difficult to organize the necessary tools for every decorative trade. And not having the correct tools and products on-site is the kiss of death. You may have noticed that most decorative concrete is very time-sensitive and will not wait for us to run back to the shop.

Pick just a couple

A couple of years ago my crew and I realized we didn't enjoy some types of decorative concrete as much as others. It just seemed that, as they say in NASCAR, we were running loose and sometimes out of control trying to be everything to everyone. We decided to streamline ourselves, offer just a couple of services and establish a referral network for the other decorative services we no longer covered. This was a little bumpy at first, because companies that we once competed against were now receiving our referrals. But our goal was to make sure our customers were being taken care of and not simply being passed along.

Here were a few of the benefits of doing this:

1. Other contractors referred work to us that we specialized in and we did the same for them. Not only did both contracting parties benefit, but the customer received better service and quality.
2. We were able to inventory more of the decorative products and colors we used a lot, as well as receive

price breaks for bulk orders.

3. Since all of our decorative specialties are built around placing concrete, we were able to purchase a volumetric mixer. Supplying our own concrete gave us greater control of pour times, mixes, water-cement ratios and so on. This also allowed us to save on material costs.

Find your niche

What types of decorative work to specialize in will best be determined by a couple of things. My recommendation is to pick the kinds of jobs that come easiest for your crew and supply your business with the most profitability while still taking care of the customer. Not everyone wants to build a

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large company, and you may be the type that enjoys working with one person or two. In this case I would advise types of decorative work that are less sensitive to timing and require less labor.

When choosing specializations for your company, consider these issues too:

1. What is the competition doing, or should I say, not doing?
2. How much of an investment does the decorative niche involve? Concrete polishing machinery can be expensive to purchase, but that may limit the competition. Staining can be less expensive to take up but more competitive.
3. Your region may have a short window for outdoor decorative work because of weather limitations. I would recommend specializing in at least two types of decorative concrete, including interior and exterior offerings.

Profitabilit

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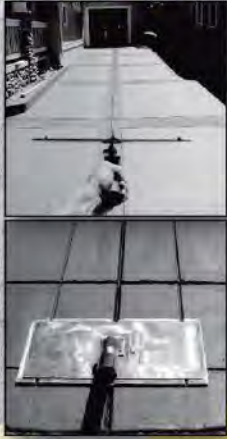
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in saying that profit will follow close behind. Specialization should create an increase in your bottom line the first year it's implemented.

Here are a few things to try to help boost that bottom line:

1. If staining is your thing, then I recommend establishing a maintenance program that is aggressive in marketing waxing to both your customers and your competitors. I have found most companies simply want to stain a project and move on to the next. This maintenance offering is not only good for your bottom line but assures your projects will always look top-notch for potential customers.
2. If stamping or stencil work is your thing, I recommend establishing a person or two that specializes in nothing but resealing exterior concrete. This should be marketed to both your clients as well as your competition. My company started this a couple of years ago and instantly saw an increase in profit.

Note: Be careful to test sealer compatibility if resealing competitors' projects.

It can be difficult to tell customers that you no longer offer a service, but a simple explanation usually works.

3. If concrete counters are your choice, I recommend adding custom concrete molds. These molds are available for purchase and come in a number of styles. A good mold can be used for years and will simplify your counter fabrication. No reason to reinvent the wheel, so purchase molds that fit into your market.

4. If your niche is custom concrete, like colored and rock salt finishes, then I recommend adding a volumetric truck to your business. This will not only give you more control but will allow you to sell concrete to homeowners and other contractors after your crew has poured out. Be sure to research aggregate inventories in your area to make sure they are available and affordable.

You may find yourself hesitant to surrender potential business by specializing and limiting services. I sure did, but the end result is more than worth it, if for no other reason than simplifying your day-to-day activities. It can be difficult to tell customers that you no longer offer a service, but a simple explanation usually works. I recommend working closely with your client during the hand-off to another contractor so everyone involved feels comfortable. 📁

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Warm water-based stain applied to the overlay and the existing concrete made an ordinary colored surface look extraordinary.

No More Trouble in Paradise: Kukui Grove Center, Lihue, Kauai, Hawaii



Every square foot of floor concrete at the mall was made the same shade of gray by applying an overlay to mismatched sections.

Despite the idyllic setting, there was nothing breezy about restoring the concrete at the Kukui Grove Center in Lihue, Kauai, Hawaii. This 80,000-square-foot outdoor mall project presented just about every challenge a concrete contractor could imagine.

For one thing, it was old. In more than 20 years, it had been walked on millions of times. It bore the marks of constant, relentless traffic and human abuse — litter, grease, chewing gum and who knows what else. Frequent heavy rains took their toll on the concrete, spreading contaminants and providing perfect growing conditions for unsightly, slippery black moss.

The concrete had been added onto, patched and repaired. Over the years the mall had grown, and new concrete was poured next to old, not always with a perfect match. Patches showed where utility trenches had been dug. Cracks opened as slabs settled. To add insult to injury, a red finish applied to brighten up some areas had worn to an unappealing dull look. Barry Toy, president of Barto Construction Company Inc., of Kapaa, Kauai, summed it up when



Before the restoration, concrete at the Kukui Grove Center had many different haphazardly arranged finishes and patches.

he said, "It had all kinds of challenges."

In fact, the concrete restoration was so daunting that when the mall was renovated four years earlier, the concrete work recommended by the architect was shelved. But it couldn't be postponed forever, so after some research, Barto Construction was called in. The owners' representative suggested that Toy look to Miracote, a supplier of decorative and repair overlay products, for a solution. Toy attended a Miracote seminar, where he met consultant and trainer Julio Hallack, CEO of Concrete Innovations by Hallack. From there, things began to fall into place.

With help from Miracote regional sales manager Jim Rowe, Hallack and Toy chose Miracote MPC (Multi-Purpose Protective Coating) to apply as an overlay over the concrete that had been patched or colored red, a total of 5,000 square feet spread throughout the mall. They selected Mirastain II Decorative Aqueous Stain to color both the new overlay and the existing concrete and tie them together. One reason for choosing a water-based surface treatment was to keep the project on track. This stain does not require neutralization, so large areas could be stained at once and sealed quickly. Finally, they chose Miracote HD II Sealer to lock in the stain color and provide a long-wearing surface. "With this water-based stain, you can seal within an hour," Rowe says. "You don't have to neutralize it, so as soon as it hits the surface and dries you can seal it."

Then the pair devised a work plan that utilized their crews to their best advantage to finish the job in a short time under challenging conditions. The mall would remain open seven days a week during renovation, so all the concrete work had to be done after hours. Fortunately, Kauai's weather cooperated for the scheduled stain-and-sealer application. Subsequent sealer coats were delayed by rain showers, which can be frequent and unpredictable on the Garden Isle.

First, Barto's team cleaned the concrete, pressure-washing it at 3,500 psi. Then they applied the MPC overlay in 30 different areas

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Free-form saw cuts complement the colors and update the look of the mall.



Two complementary colors of water-based stain were sealed with three coats of heavy-duty sealer with a clear synthetic aggregate for slip resistance.

of just a few hundred square feet each. Now the entire mall was a neutral gray concrete color.

Next Hallack went into action. He brought three experienced staining specialists from his headquarters in Turlock, Calif. They used equipment to match the scale of the job. "I adapt heavy-duty farm equipment sprayers for a large project like this one," Hallack says. "No way can you tackle a big commercial job with a little 2- or 3-gallon pump. Our electrical sprayer holds 25 gallons. We applied all the stain (80,000 square feet) in three nights." The architect's drawings from the earlier mall renovation were used to guide free-form decorative saw cuts, and two colors of the stain, Fire Brick and Provincial Tan, were used to visually tie the floor to the earth tones of the buildings.

Hallack is a believer in using best practices, whether they come from the concrete industry or not. In this case he used some painting techniques to keep the job moving quickly. Because of the large areas and the constant threat of rain, there was no time to mask walls, columns and planters. Instead he protected them with painter's cardboard, which was lightweight and could be put up and taken down easily. "Experience and common sense helped us move fast — you have to improvise," he explains. "You have to borrow from other trades, in this case painters."

In fact, it was Barto's paint contractor, Arcadia Painting, that came through practically on Hallack's heels, rolling the sealer on with extra-wide paint rollers. Hallack was impressed. "These were professional painters — you cannot believe how fast they were moving." Crews were moving so quickly behind the crew ahead that Hallack required they all wear spiked shoes to keep from walking off the stain.

Three coats of heavy-duty sealer were applied to lock down the stain. A water-based stain does not react with concrete like an acid stain does, so it can wear away. The sealer makes it easier to keep the concrete clean (for example, it makes gum removal much simpler), and it protects the color from weather and traffic. When the sealer is worn, it will be much easier to simply reapply it than to have to repair and renovate the concrete again.

The sealer has the added advantage of improving traction, a real bonus in this wet climate. "The moisture and mold make the concrete slippery, so we used a slip-resistant coating, with synthetic aggregate incorporated in the sealer coat," Toy explains. "It is a clear, fine product that you can't see. It doesn't change the aesthetic of the floor." The synthetic stays in suspension better than simple sand, which falls to the bottom of the bucket. This means the aggregate is evenly distributed without frequent stirring.

Hallack credits the Barto management for the success of the project. "The beauty of this project was teamwork," he says. "It was coming together as an industry to use knowledge and talents of other contractors. Barto was aggressive and wanted to make a difference, so they were willing to go outside their own expertise to look for help and pay the right money to get the job done the right way."

Hallack also believes this project will open doors for other decorative concrete contractors. "I think it is a wonderful project. It's going to make a difference for many retail spaces in the United States. Many remodels don't include concrete. Now this project proves it can be done. The fact is, we've changed the look of 20-year-old concrete, saved two or three weeks, and there was no demolition." 🛠️

Got Milk?

What your sealer shouldn't look like and how to fix it

We are currently at the tail end of a great project of more than 18,000 square feet. We are shot-blasting, applying a microtopping, then staining and sealing. The sealer we are using is a water-based epoxy sealer from a manufacturer we had used before without problems. This particular sealer goes down milky white and turns clear as it cures. We finished two large sections of the floor with no problems, and we were scheduled to do the next sections a couple of weeks later.

In the meantime, the client went to clean the floor with water, and the floor turned white. We had no idea why, and after brainstorming with the manufacturer, it turns out that we got a bad batch of sealer. Moisture was passing through the sealer, which turned it white again, because the moisture now could not escape back out once the sealer cured. We were told to put down this manufacturer's new improved sealer, and all

would be well again.

Imagine our surprise when the floor turned white and stayed white. What no one thought about is that because this is a water-based system, the moisture was again passing through the original sealer, and then locked in by this second coat of sealer.

Our foreman came up with the solution. He applied acetone to the floor, which released the moisture from the first two coats of sealer and allowed the sealer to cure. He then applied a third coat, which went down fine.

Decorative concrete can be temperamental. Materials we have used for years can suddenly become problems. It is always best to brainstorm with both your crew and the manufacturers to come up with the best solution. Sometimes a problem can be fixed by allowing people to think outside the box. 🛠️

If you've solved the problem of a job gone wrong, and you'd like to share your solution with our readers, please write to editor@concretedecor.net. We look forward to hearing from you!



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Mike Moncrieff, New Edge Design

Lynden, Wash.



by Chris Camara

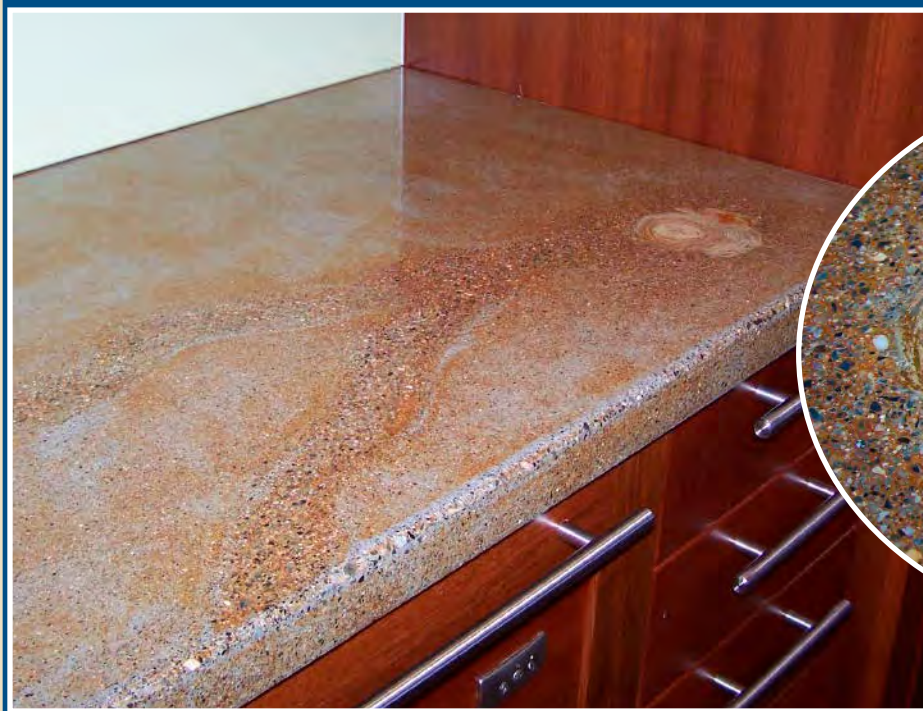
Like many entrepreneurs who break into decorative concrete, Mike Moncrieff was driven to a more creative outlet by the monotony of flatwork.

"I've always been a very artistic person, from drawing to painting and graffiti to tattooing and even music," Moncrieff says. Working for his father Sam's construction business, Moncrieff Construction, gave him practical, hands-on experience pouring concrete slabs. He became a talented finisher and was supervising the flatwork crews by the age of 23. What the job didn't give him was a passion.





Mike Moncrieff installed this countertop while his clients and their friends watched. "It came out twice as good as they expected," he says.



Bored one day after pouring a small driveway, Moncrieff made molds for a couple of concrete benches. He liked how they came out. Then he tried a coffee table, which he liked even more. Moncrieff started researching decorative concrete and discovered Fu-Tung Cheng's hugely popular book, "Concrete Countertops." He was hooked.

Cheng is a pioneer in the craft of concrete countertop design, and Moncrieff had to learn from the master, taking one of his first training classes. After experimenting like a madman, Moncrieff eventually felt comfortable enough to start his own business with

his wife Tara and one employee. New Edge Design LLC and its first product line, Monart Concrete Countertops, were launched about four years ago in Lynden, Wash., where Moncrieff creates one-of-a-kind sinks and countertops for upscale private homes and businesses.

It's pretty easy to create a concrete countertop that looks like a garage floor. But branching out from flatwork to countertops means embracing completely different ideas on aesthetics and performance, not to mention learning different skills. And because concrete countertops are growing in popularity, homeowners are at risk of hiring a con-

tractor who is not well practiced in the techniques needed to create the glasslike texture, subtle colors, precise edges and unusual forms that are in demand today.

Moncrieff has clearly made the leap. He took Cheng's advanced class about a year ago, and his work has been recognized with six awards at Cheng's first three annual design competitions.

Monart's biggest selling point, in fact, is the artistry of Moncrieff's designs. He likes to work with clients to incorporate their personality into their countertops. For example, a client who traveled extensively asked that coins from around the world be inlaid into the



surface. Another asked Moncrieff to use chips of petrified wood she collected as a child. Many people give him rocks gathered from beaches or lakes near their homes. He has even embedded a tiny vial of ashes so a client could remember her cappuccino-loving mother every time she poured a cup of coffee.

One homeowner raves about her countertop on Monart's Web site, Newcountertops.com: "We were able to showcase several meaningful rocks from back home by embedding them in our new island countertop. Everyone wants to touch and feel it. It has become a real conversation piece and a gathering spot.

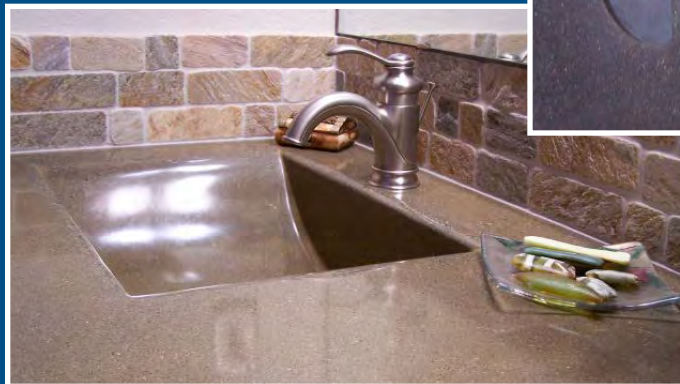
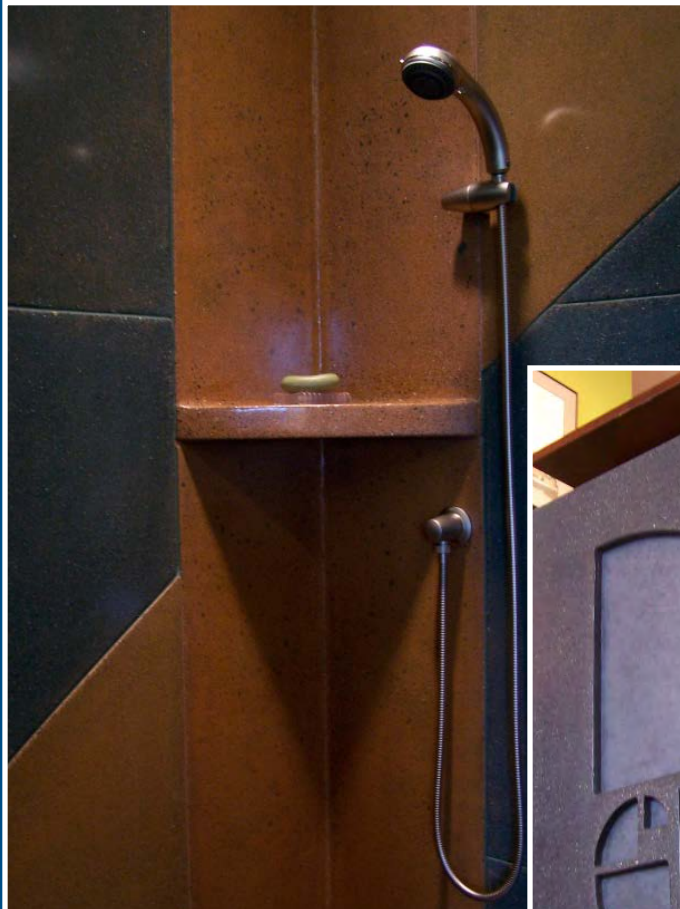
We're thrilled with how it turned out."

Moncrieff has developed his own molds, as well as what he calls "concrete on steroids." His homemade mix results in a surface that is smooth and stain-resistant. His countertops are precast at his shop. Moncrieff doesn't pour in place because he has less control over conditions, including the distraction of having other contractors on the scene.

One mold was particularly demanding to build, involving a nine-inch lip on one side and a four-inch lip on the other. Exacting techniques were needed to make perfect edges fit to an existing lower countertop, and Moncrieff had

the added pressure of installing for an audience. As Moncrieff fiddled around, waiting for the homeowners and their friends to leave, he realized they were happily anticipating the outcome and weren't going anywhere. "It came out twice as good as they expected," he says.

Moncrieff readily acknowledges that concrete sinks and countertops are not for everyone — the fact that it's a hot new trend in upscale kitchen design isn't enough. Homeowners have to love the characteristics of concrete and be willing to pay for the labor involved (\$80 per square foot and up for standard 1.5-inch-thick countertops). Moncrieff has



found that people who want concrete do a lot of research online, and an attractive Web site is a great marketing tool.

However, Moncrieff wants to keep his business small and manageable. "I really want to keep every job in my hands," he says. "Customers appreciate that."

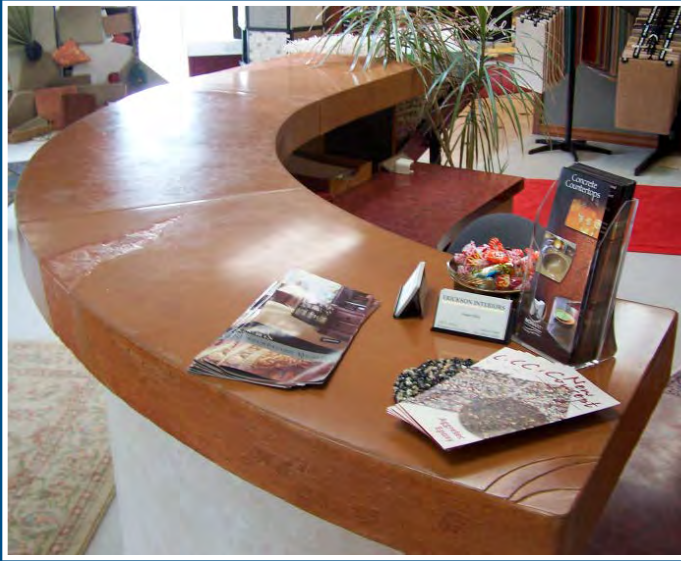
Moncrieff has also made fireplace hearths and mantles, wall caps, outdoor kitchens, shower stalls and desks. He'd like to do more designs of islands as the focal point of a new kitchen. That way, he'd be involved in the design on the front end rather than coming in afterward.

While concrete countertops are taking off, Mike and Tara Moncrieff still find lots of people who don't know much about them, and they're happy to do the educating. "I'm not really a big people person — I try to stay away from crowds," Mike says. "But when I talk about concrete, you'd think I loved talking to people."

Tara says many visitors at a recent home show confused her husband's concrete countertop with granite. When people ask her why they should choose concrete over granite, she has a simple answer: "There's no other surface out there that can be customized and per-

sonalized like concrete can. You're not just getting a countertop, you're getting a piece of art." 🖼️





Staying on Top of Stenciling



Photos courtesy of Decorative Concrete Institute

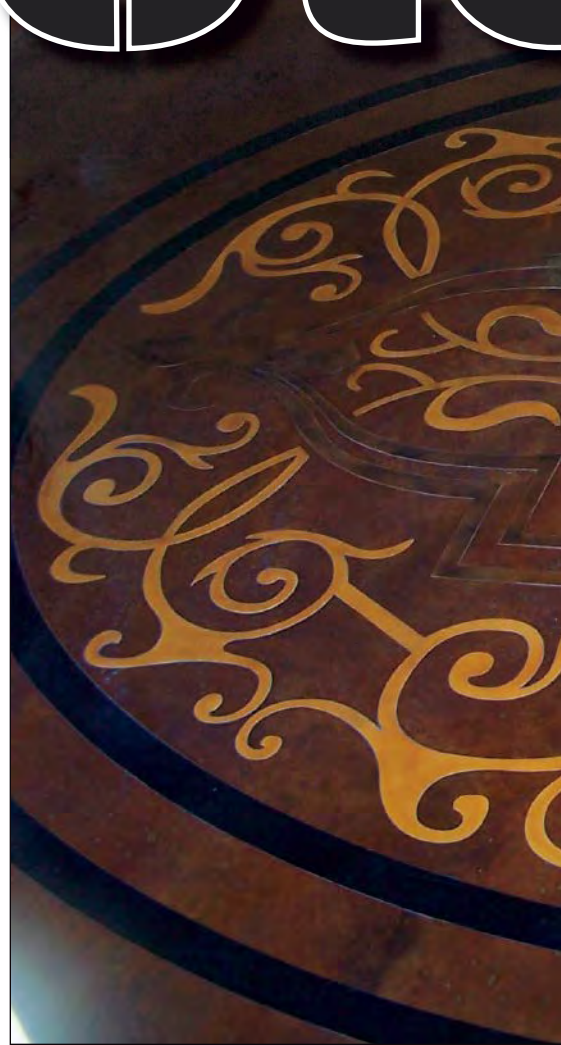


Photo courtesy of Ramcrete

by Loretta Hall

Several companies have developed polymer-modified concrete toppings formulated specifically for stenciling. Bob Harris of the Decorative Concrete Institute in Temple, Ga., says these products differ from general-purpose overlay materials in two ways — the polymers that are used and the gradations of the aggregate. “A lot of times with a traditional overlayment, maybe even a microtopping, it’s a much finer sand,” he says. “In some cases they even have ground sand, which is silica flour.” The special-purpose stencil toppings, on the other hand, generally use slightly coarser sand.

Many times, these types of products are air-applied with a hopper gun. However, some manufacturers suggest troweling as an alternative.

Application techniques and final properties of special-

purpose stencil toppings differ from general-purpose overlays in several ways.

Thickness

One way stencil-grade toppings differ is thickness. “The specifically formulated ones are designed to go down very thin,” says Matt Shields of Ramcrete in Owasso, Okla. He often uses Colormaker’s Sgraffino, which is troweled on in ultra-thin coats that are less than 1/32-inch thick. More commonly, stencil-grade toppings are applied at thicknesses of 1/32 inch to 1/8 inch, compared with general-purpose overlays, which are applied at thicknesses of 1/4 inch to 3/4 inch. The stencil-grade products can be built up in layers if a thicker surface is desired.

“The thinner route is where I like to go,” says Kirk Berry

Stenciling



A Modello Designs pattern and Colormaker Sgraffino fine overlay with integral color and dyes.

of The Outdoor Living Co. in Denver, Colo. "You still have the look, but it's not going to become an issue as far as grabbing too much dirt. It's just more manageable to sweep or dust-mop it." Besides, he says, "You're saving product, meaning profit."

Strength

The stencil-grade toppings are formulated for strength despite the thinness of their application. "In a lot of ways, thinner is stronger," Berry says, explaining that with a thicker buildup, there's more chance to catch an edge with something and cause a topping to flake. Shields notes that these surfaces are also less likely to chip when they get hit.

Manufacturers claim various degrees of strength for their products. For example, literature from the L.M. Scofield Co. says that after 28 days, its Texturetop Stencil Grade has a

compressive strength of 4,500 psi, which is 13 percent greater than the strength of the same company's stamp-grade product. Literature from Specialty Concrete Products says its Stencil-Crete Overlay System develops a compressive strength of more than 6,000 psi after 28 days.

Stencil-grade products are also designed to form a strong bond with a properly prepared existing concrete surface. For instance, Stencil Systems Inc. reports that laboratory tests show its Cover-Tex overlay adheres to existing concrete with a strength exceeding 435 psi. In the tests, opposite-direction forces were applied to the tops and bottoms of three samples of Cover-Tex covered concrete. The concrete substrate failed in two instances; in the third sample, failure rates were 75 percent in the concrete and 25 percent at the bond. Stencil Systems is one of the manufacturers that recommend users



The brown and gold stenciled overlay (depicted on the previous page), here shown at an earlier stage of the work.

prepare an existing surface with an acid wash followed by pressure-washing and a primer coat. Others recommend surface preparation by grinding or sandblasting. Cracks must also be repaired before applying the stencil toppings.

Abrasion resistance

The polymer formulations and coarser sand of stencil-grade overlays increase their ability to resist abrasion, which can be important for areas of vehicular traffic or heavy pedestrian use. Manufacturers of stencil-grade toppings generally tout their products as having great abrasion resistance qualities. Scofield's technical data bulletins get specific, listing abrasion resistance test results for its Texturetop Stencil Grade. Samples of the topping and ordinary concrete, both aged 28 days, were each subjected to 1,000 cycles of mechanical abrasion by a 1,000-gram load. The stencil-grade topping lost 0.35 grams of material — 30 percent less than the concrete, which lost 0.50 grams of its surface. Although Scofield's product can be applied as thin as 1/32 inch, the company recommends an application thickness of 1/8 inch in areas where abrasion might be a problem, in order to ensure an adequate wearing layer.

Stencil release

A specially formulated overlay is made to let the stencil be pulled out without tearing and catching, says Berry. "It's just stronger, and it's allowed to release easier." Still, he says, skill level and timing are important to remove the stencil for the best effect. He suggests starting at a corner and peeling it off on a diagonal. "Take what it gives you at that particular time, instead of just picking it up and ripping it back," he says. "It's about taking care and taking your time, and that could be variant on how hard it is and what it happens to give you at that particular pour or coverage."

Shields agrees that a good overlay material will help the stencil come up easier. The right tools are important too, he says. His favorite is a weeding tool supplied by Modello Designs. "It's just a real sharp needle with a handle on it," he says. "You can reach in and pluck the stencil out with it."

Shields uses mostly vinyl stencils, but other materials may be more appropriate for certain applications. For example, Harris explains that paper stencils may be more economical for large surfaces. "A lot of times, I'll just make my own stencils, depending on the complexity," he says. "I may use fabric tape, which is a tape that doesn't break when you remove it once the material is sprayed over it. Or I cut simple shapes out of plywood or masonite and use them as templates."




Photos courtesy of Decorative Concrete Institute



The general-purpose alternative


Installers who use special-purpose stencil toppings seem to appreciate their advantages. On the other hand, some stencilers are satisfied with general-purpose overlay materials. "I've not used anything that's been specially formulated for stenciling," says Jeremy Monroe, a technical advisor with Decorative Concrete Impressions, a manufacturer of adhesive poly stencils located in Webb City, Mo. "We've used general-purpose bag mixes and different polymers from a variety of manufacturers. There are some differences, but there are a lot of good quality general-purpose toppings out there." He cautions, though, that they must be applied in a thinner layer than usual for stenciling. "The biggest consideration is to not bury your stencil so deeply under your topping that it is difficult to pull it out afterwards," he says.


Monroe adds that what matters most is that the installers know how to use each product and how to deal with ambient conditions such as temperature and humidity. "It's absolutely critical that you always keep in mind the specific circumstances of where you're working, because every day and every job is different," he says. "And every topping is different too. How quickly they will cure and set up dictates when you will pull that stencil out. That's the case with most of the concrete world — timing is the key." 🛠️



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The Rahway Train Station in Rahway, N.J., is power-washed on a regular basis to maintain and preserve its hues.



Photo courtesy of L.M. Scofield Co

by Stacey Enesey Klemenc

There's no argument that refurbishing colored concrete is less expensive and disruptive than ripping it out and replacing it.

"One advantage to a color restoration project is that superficial imperfections may be corrected during the restoration phase," says Scott P. Thome, director of product services for L.M. Scofield Co., a full-service manufacturer of concrete materials. "Maybe by changing the sealer the project will have a longer service life."

Restoration projects done with the proper products allow contractors to make repairs and changes that blend into the existing floor instead of standing out like a repair, says Peter Wagner, vice president of marketing and product development for AmeriPolish, which specializes in polished concrete products.

Restoration also gives property owners a second chance to maintain the floor properly if they hadn't been doing a good job before.

Using the proper products to restore a floor is essential. "As far as going back and adding color [to a polished floor], using dyes is really the only way to do it with consistency," Wagner says. "And before we had our penetrating agent, we couldn't always get the penetration of color we were looking for. We would have to regrind, dye and repolish. Now we can often add color without having to redo the whole thing."

Restoration projects can be time-sensitive and closing a business to restore a floor is very costly. That fact is what makes Newlook water-based stain so popular and well received. The stains were developed to fix common problems such as discolored, wrongly colored, blotchy or badly stained concrete, as well as to maintain colored concrete surfaces.

On a typical driveway, says Newlook International Inc. president and CEO Reid Langston, you can pressure-wash the surface, apply two coats of Newlook stain and be done by noon. People can walk on the surface two to four hours after the job is done.

Using this stain is also great for residual business, he adds. He has one client who has him touching up a surface every six months to keep it looking pristine. "Contractors can go over it again and again without it costing the customer an arm and a leg," he explains.

However, one of the disadvantages of his product, he admits, is that if you use patch material, the different texture will show. The stain doesn't change the texture of the surface and it won't fill in any cracks.

Before accepting a restoration project, you should have knowledge about the project and experience with the product you plan on using, advises Thome. "Look into why the restoration is taking place and determine what the owner wants in

Restore, Maintain: Caring for Colored Concrete



Photo courtesy of L.M. Scofield Co



Photo courtesy of Newlook International Inc.

the end. Sometimes these expectations do not match up.

"Developing skills to alter and enhance another contractor's work is challenging. Having a good understanding of color development is a skill that comes from experience. Training seminars do not give you enough information. Placement techniques can be taught but that's not enough. To restore a project is not just covering it up. It is working with what is there and then providing a solution that owners can accept within their budget."

On the road to recovery

Sometimes, the problem with stained concrete is that the sealer or wax has become dull, while the surface below remains abrasion-free, says Sherry Boyd, director of marketing for L.M. Scofield Co. "In this case, the sealer can be stripped off and the surface resealed carefully following the manufacturer's technical information."

Other times, she says, the concrete needs to be restained or resurfaced. Either way, the surface needs to be prepared before any work is done. If you're restoring a floor, it's best to talk to the manufacturer of the products used to color, seal and texture the concrete to determine if it's best to use a power wash, a coating remover or even a grinder to get down to clean concrete.

Boyd believes it's very important to seal interior and exterior stained concrete in the first place, typically using a roller or an airless sprayer. After they're sealed, interior floors should be regularly waxed with a maintenance product, she says.

Langston says his products used to restore color don't need sealers, although they are compatible with them and contractors could offer sealer as an option. "That's a big selling point," he says.

Maintenance is key

All this said, when it comes to colored concrete, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. So why not maintain it?

"When property owners select colored concrete there is an expectation that the appearance of the surface will be clean, neat and protected per the installation specifications or manufacturer's recommendations," says Harry Moats, president of

L.M. Scofield Co. "The beauty and color intensity won't last unless the surface is properly maintained."

Like other surfaces in or around a home, routine maintenance is required to keep colored concrete fresh and new-looking.

"We don't hesitate to clean and wax the kitchen floor when it gets dull, scratched or dirty," Moats says. "So why won't we do the same to our decorative concrete? This is a small price to pay to keep that new, fresh and clean look that we started with. Contractors need to communicate to the property owner about the need for regular maintenance."

Wagner agrees. Any polished concrete surface should have a maintenance program, he stresses, whether it's wet mopping or auto-scrubbing. Dirt particles grind down the finish, open up the floor to further abrasion and cause the surface to wear faster. Keeping the surface clean with the right agents will prolong its life. Sulfates and hydroxide, which attack and degrade concrete, can affect the polish and dull the floor.

A good walk-off mat system is also a must for a floor's longevity, as it acts as a sink for soils and dirt, Wagner adds. But it's still necessary to clean and maintain the mats.

Maintaining a pristine look is high on the list with many residential customers who are concerned about curb appeal, says Langston of Newlook, but it's especially important for commercial applications. "It projects a good-looking image if the concrete is maintained, and that's very important to such places as restaurants, supermarkets and theme parks." 🚗



Photo courtesy of AmeriPolish

Colored concrete's fountain of youth

Here are a few products that can be used to breath new life into old concrete:

— Newlook's Solid Color Stain penetrates the surface of porous concrete and forms an opaque, breathable finish that resembles integrally colored concrete. The stains, which will completely cover any discoloration or stain, can be used on concrete flatwork, concrete blocks, pavers, imprinted concrete and exposed aggregate. They work with sandblasting stencils and over most microtoppings and overlays. The stains come in 80 standard colors and can be custom-colored to match anything from a paint chip to a car. They are applied with a special broom-like brush.

— Newlook's Transparent Color Enhancer Stain is a translucent stain designed to be used over Newlook's solid stain as a contrasting color. It can highlight or enhance areas of relief or texture on stamped concrete surfaces to create an antiqued look. The Enhancer is also used to create a faux finish by blending and layering additional colors.

— L.M. Scofield's Colorcure Concrete Sealer can be used to restore integrally colored concrete or surfaces colored with a dry-shake color hardener. The low-VOC, two-component curing and sealing system enhances depth of color while creating an easy-to-maintain, low-gloss finish that resists surface staining from materials such as automobile grease, oil and food spills.

— AmeriPolish is a translucent dye that's formulated using extremely fine molecules of color designed to penetrate and color any

cementitious surface. Although it was created for polished concrete, it can be used to touch up integrally colored concrete and overlays, as well as concrete colored with dry-shake hardeners or acid stains. The company also makes a penetrating agent to improve dye penetration in tightly troweled concrete or polished concrete, in many cases providing an opportunity to add color to previously densified concrete. AmeriPolish water-based dyes with the same color range as solvent-based dyes were introduced at 2007 World of Concrete and will be available for distribution later this spring.

— Cem-Coat from Brickform is an opaque color substance that can rejuvenate existing colored concrete or create an antiqued look on textured surfaces with multiple colored wash-coats. Ideal for creating brightly colored concrete surfaces, Cem-Coat is available in 40 standard colors, with custom colors available upon request. The simple two-part mixture is extremely UV-resistant and is designed to reduce the effects of fungus.

— Spray-Top from Concrete Solutions is a polymer cement product that's applied in the same way as paint to restore old, stained, smooth or stamped concrete to a like-new solid color or decorative finish. The thin coating, which preserves the existing texture, looks similar to professionally installed color hardener or integral colored concrete. As its name implies, the coating is sprayed onto the concrete with a special piece of equipment to achieve a smooth hand-troweled appearance. It's available in any color.



Acid and Solvent Sprayers

Chapin Industrial Acid Staining Sprayer

Several sprayers can handle acid stain, but none promote that fact like the Industrial Acid Staining Sprayer from Chapin International Inc. The words are printed in big bold block letters on the side of both the 1-gallon and 2-gallon versions.

Both Industrial Acid Staining Sprayers are equipped with industrial-grade acid-resistant seals and gaskets for maximum resistance to acid stains. Wide openings to the buckets allow easy filling and cleaning. The sprayers also sport auto/manual high-pressure relief valves, a “lock-off” feature to prevent accidental discharge, serviceable poly pumps, and an adjustable nozzle that turns out coarse streams and fine mists. An optional three-piece nozzle kit helps the user distribute washes, sealers and semitransparent stains.

☎ (800) 950-4458

■ www.chapinmfg.com



Chapin Xtreme Industrial Concrete Sprayer

Chapin International Inc.'s Xtreme Industrial Concrete Sprayer is resistant to the most extreme chemicals, including high concentrations of acetone, toluene and xylene.

The sprayer is made from Tri-Poxy lined steel that protects against corrosion, rust and denting. Its wide mouth aids filling and cleaning, its holster secures wands and tips, and its chemical-resistant hose is reinforced with nylon braid. Brass fan spray nozzles deliver 0.5 or 1.0 gpm, and the spray handle is brass as well.

Chapin's Xtreme conversion kit includes hose, sealers and bottom valve that help make the sprayer acid-safe.

☎ (800) 950-4458

🌐 www.chapinmfg.com

Floric Polytech Solvenator

The Solvenator Premier Concrete Sprayer from Floric Polytech Inc. is a standard hand-pump model retooled with fixtures and seals that stand up to solvents. This sprayer applies solvent-based materials and can be cleaned with solvents, too.

The basic steel sprayers are manufactured by Chapin Manufacturing Inc. with Floric Polytech's name on them. Workers at Floric Polytech retrofit the sprayers for solvents, replacing rubber seals, O-rings and gaskets with parts made from solvent-resistant polymers and plastics. They also replace the plastic check valve in the pump barrel with a brass valve engineered to withstand the 200 pounds of pressure needed to spray solvents. The machine, which sports a 3.5-gallon tank, was designed to spray Floric's CS-101 Clearseal, but will apply other sealers and solvenated urethanes as well. Brass fittings at the bottom of the pump resist corrosion.

☎ (866) 435-6742

🌐 www.floricpolytech.com

Graco Xtreme NXT airless sprayer

The Xtreme NXT airless sprayer from Graco is built to handle the toughest protective coatings and corrosion control applications.

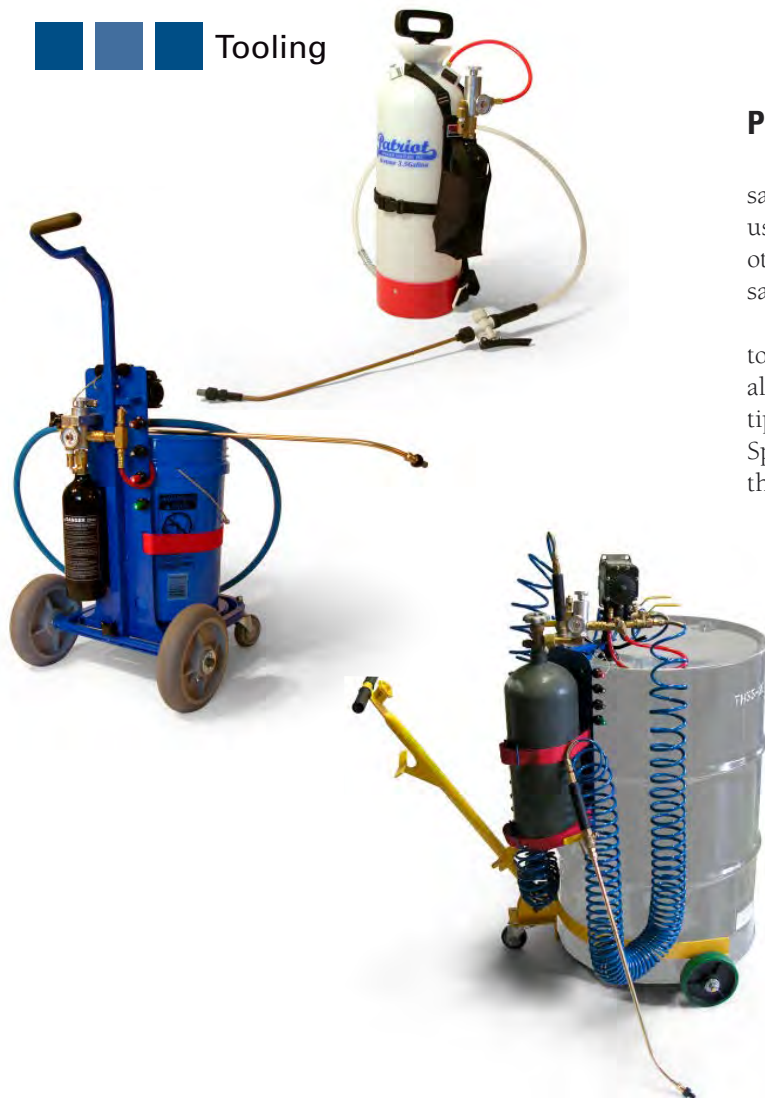
The sprayer features the Graco NXT air motor and an array of new technologies and options. Offering more capabilities and user control than ever before, the motor is available with DataTrak, an electronic monitor that tracks and records volumetric flow and material usage. DataTrak also provides pump diagnostics and runaway pump prevention, a feature that automatically shuts the pump off. Integrated air controls with built-in filtration are mounted on the front of the unit. The motor is available with either De-Ice or Low-Noise options.

The Xtreme NXT is available in 11 configurations, with three motor sizes and seven Xtreme lowers to choose from. This range allows contractors to select appropriate models for their flow and pressure requirements.

☎ (877) 844-7226

🌐 www.graco.com





Patriot Spraysafe System

Initially developed to spray acid stain, the Patriot Spraysafe System from Patriot Sprayer Systems Inc. also allows the user to apply acetone dyes, cure-and-seal compounds, and other topical treatments and coatings with consistency and safety.

The low-pressure sprayer uses carbon dioxide cartridges to propel liquid through its nozzle, and the uniform pressure allows consistent atomization of the liquid. Onboard spray tips come in five sizes. By incorporating carbon dioxide, the Spraysafe System has eliminated electricity and propane from the job site, which helps when spraying solvent-based dyes and other materials that could catch fire.

The Patriot comes in three models. The Patriot 500 cart model pumps 3 gallons per minute without tip and delivers 60 psi of tip pressure. The portable Patriot 350 delivers 40 psi. The Patriot 5500 attaches to large drums and allows a flow rate of 5 gallons per minute without tip and maximum tip pressure of 90 psi. Five color-coded tips help the user apply very fine mists or heavy coarse sprays.

The 350 and 500 units take 20-ounce carbon dioxide containers. The 5500 can use a 5-pound or a 10-pound container and support one or two spray wands.

☎ (800) 592-9320

■ www.patriotsprayer.com

SMK DW5GA and DW5GA-ACID cordless sprayers

The DW5GA and DW5GA-ACID cordless sprayers, both new from SMK Industries Inc., offer a fresh way to spray concrete sealers, stains, curing compounds, acids and hardeners.

Powered by cordless tool batteries, they are designed to fit on top of the 5-gallon buckets that concrete-related liquid materials often come in. Each sprayer fastens securely to the lids of the buckets by virtue of a patented locking handle. The user unscrews the pouring spout cap, guides the suction tube into the pouring spout hole, locks the sprayer onto the lid, inserts the battery and starts spraying. The SMK Cordless Sprayers are designed to spray a wide variety of liquid compounds in up to half the time of conventional hand-pump sprayers.

Both models are based on the same basic design. The DW5GA comes equipped with brass fittings, metal spray trigger and a 24-inch brass wand. The DW5GA-ACID is the same sprayer with the exception of poly fittings, poly spray trigger and a 16-inch poly wand. SMK utilizes Chapin spray triggers, wands and spray tips for both models. 🛠️

☎ (641) 622-3900

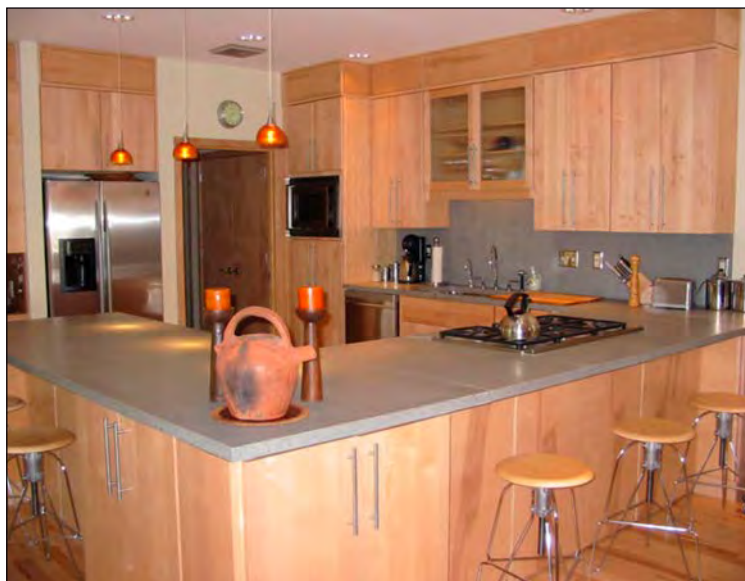
■ www.smkindustries.com





Business Strategies by Lane Mangum

Marketing and Selling Concrete Countertops



This gray kitchen countertop presented such challenges as a full-height backsplash and a drop-in cooktop. The designer understood the project process, so everything was well coordinated. The original sink the homeowner wanted did not fit in the cabinet, so the designer helped the team quickly settle on a different sink that was in stock to keep the project on track.



Photos courtesy of the Concrete Countertop Institute

This red bathroom vanity combined a complicated shape with an unusual sink. The designer helped the installation team understand exactly how the sink should be mounted. She also made sure the cabinets were the height they needed to be so that the 10-inch thick countertop would end up being the right height ergonomically.

Concrete countertops are countertops. They just happen to be made out of concrete.

This should affect your marketing and selling techniques. If you understand how countertops are most commonly and most effectively marketed and sold, you will be much more successful at marketing and selling concrete countertops.

This is not to say that the fact that concrete countertops are made from concrete is unimportant. Concrete is what makes concrete countertops so beautiful, versatile and unique. It also makes concrete countertops high-end, as they are custom-made from scratch for each client. But these properties are merely features of these particular countertops. General countertop marketing principles still apply.

High-end countertops are most commonly used in kitchen and bath remodeling projects, or in truly custom new homes. Large developments of cookie-

cutter or semicustom homes are unlikely to use high-end countertops, since they want to use something cheap, fast and with broad appeal.

Knowing this, think about how homeowners buy high-end countertops. They don't buy them from a large builder like Centex. They don't buy them at Home Depot. They seek out the countertop maker themselves, or they use an interior designer or kitchen designer to help them.

When seeking out a countertop maker, high-end countertop buyers use the Internet to search. They do not use the phone book, except perhaps to find a plumber in an emergency. A Web site is one of the most important marketing tools in your arsenal. It can serve as an electronic brochure, portfolio and information source. It lends credibility and professionalism to your company. And it can generate leads for you — if people can find it.

If you simply create a Web site, nobody will find it in the search engines. Just creating a Web site is like sticking a little sign in your front yard — hardly anyone will see it. However, using a contractor listing service is like having a billboard on a superhighway. The purpose of a listing service is to drive traffic to your Web site.

A good Web site for high-end countertops needs only a few pages: a home page, a contact page, an "About Us" page, a portfolio page, and a product information page. The product information page is particularly important with concrete countertops, since there is so much misunderstanding and lack of knowledge about the material. Your product information page can answer common questions such as "Does concrete stain?" and "Will it crack?" and therefore pre-qualify your leads.

A Web site is essential, but it's a passive, impersonal form of marketing. So



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For more Information visit www.SkimStone.com

are print ads. I do not recommend print ads for startup concrete countertop businesses because they are so expensive in comparison to their rate of return. You will have many ad sales representatives trying to sell you print ads by saying, "One job per month could pay for the monthly cost of the ad." Your response to that should be, "Yes, but I can spend a lot less on more effective forms of marketing to get that same project."

To be truly effective at marketing concrete countertops, you need relationship marketing. Relationship marketing is the art of networking with the influencers who will help you sell more product. In the case of concrete countertops, kitchen designers are the most powerful influencers.

Think about it. How many friends and family do you know right now who are remodeling their kitchens? None? One? Five? So if someone had made a beautiful concrete countertop for you and you wanted to give them a glowing referral, you would have maybe one to five people to refer them to. How many people do you think a kitchen designer knows who are currently remodeling their kitchens? Probably 50 or more. So who is the better source of referrals?

Let's back up and talk a little about what a kitchen and bath designer is. A kitchen and bath designer is an educated professional who understands how to combine all of the elements of a kitchen or bathroom for a workable, livable space. (As shorthand, I generally use the term "kitchen designer," but most of these professionals also design bathrooms.) Kitchen designers understand cabinets, countertops, sinks, faucets, appliances, floor finishes, lighting, tile and other design elements. They are like general contractors for the kitchen, and in fact some kitchen designers are actual general contractors.

Kitchen designers have showrooms where they display the cabinet, countertop, fixture and appliance brands they carry in appealing vignettes to help the customer make selections. They also keep a library of samples.

The ultimate goal is to get your concrete countertops displayed in the high-end kitchen and bath showrooms in your area, creating a virtual sales force for your product. But before you can do that, you



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need to develop relationships with these professionals. Kitchen designers need to have confidence in you and your product, to know that you are going to do a good job for their clients.


If you are just starting out in the countertop business, the prospect of getting displays in these fancy showrooms may seem daunting. But it all starts with a simple phone call, with the modest goal of getting an appointment. Kitchen designers want to keep up to date on all the latest products. They will be happy to receive a phone call simply introducing your company and asking if you can show them some samples. Usually they will agree to a quick meeting, but if not they will likely agree to let you drop off some samples and a brochure.

When you get a meeting with a kitchen designer, the goal is just to make a good impression, leave samples, and educate. If the outcome of the meeting is that they are confident in you and your product, they will agree to keep the samples and show them to clients who might be good candidates for concrete countertops.

A Web site is one of the most important marketing tools in your arsenal. It can serve as an electronic brochure, portfolio and information source.

Once you've done a good job on a few projects with a kitchen designer, he or she may want you to install a display in their showroom if they have space. Be aware, though, that even if you leave samples or install a display, kitchen designers will not actively sell concrete countertops unless they understand them. In larger kitchen and bath showrooms, there are often multiple designers who work for a vice president of sales. You may have convinced the vice president of sales to put a large, prominent display in the showroom, but if the individual designers are not educated about concrete countertops, they will steer customers away. Make

sure that you educate all the designers, and check in at least once per quarter to see whether there are any new designers and to give them samples of new colors, new edge styles or updated brochures. Maintain the relationship.

There are lots of other ways to develop and maintain relationships with kitchen and bath designers, as well as other design professionals such as interior designers and architects. You can network at meetings held by the National Kitchen & Bath Association or the American Society of Interior Designers, have a grand opening of your shop, present to architects at lunch-and-learns, and so on. The same principles apply: Find the influencers, network with them to develop a relationship, and educate them so that they will feel confident in you and your product. 

Lane Mangum is customer service director for the Concrete Countertop Institute. She can be reached at (888) 386-7711 or by e-mail at lanem@concretecountertopinstitute.com.

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Photo courtesy of Makita USA Inc.

Concrete Countertop Polishing

Concrete countertops are a very hot item these days, and fabricating them can be much easier than you think — when you use the right tools and technique. This is the key to eliminating frustration and ultimately producing a quality product. However, I have found that many of the tools concrete countertop fabricators are getting locally or via the Internet are not designed for use on concrete.

I have extensively tested all varieties of tooling in the last three years and have been able to determine which tools actually work well and which tools should stay in the granite world. Using the wrong tools for concrete polishing can adversely affect the quality of the countertops you produce.

Precast polishing

The tools I recommend for precast polishing are the Makita PW5001C 4-inch Electronic Wet Stone Polisher, 5-inch Ultra Speed Pads, 5-inch Alpha Rigid Backer Pad, 5-inch Alpha Flexible Backer Pad, and an apron. Don't overlook the apron; you will get wet! Polishing

pads come in a series of grits that are as follows: 50, 100, 200, 400, 800, 1,500 and 3,000. If you are looking for the exposed aggregate look, I recommend using 5-inch Ultra Speed polishing pads starting at a 50 grit. If you are just polishing the cream, you will start with a 400 grit (and go very lightly). You will then work your way through the different grits until the desired look has been achieved. On some mixes, 1,500 grit will be the last pad that you will use, although other mixes will still continue to polish at a 3,000 grit.

Pads from 50 grit to 400 grit are actually grinding and removing material in preparation for the polishing stages. It is more cost-effective and safer (because of the dust) to do these stages wet. You are removing material and working the pads very hard at this point, and if there is no water to cool the pads' resin, it turns soft and releases the diamonds. The 800 to 3,000 grits are where the magic happens. If you are looking for a nice polish with a smooth feel, use the ultra-speed pads for your top grits.

If you're going for a super-high

sheen, then running your 800-plus grit dry will pop a shine that many didn't realize was achievable. At this point, the pads will not be removing any material, so you will see little to no dust at all. The hot pressed pads are by far the best dry pad for an ultra high shine.

Poured-in-place polishing

It is easier and more cost-effective to build precast concrete countertops, but occasionally, you or your customer will insist on having no seams at all and a poured-in-place application will be necessary. This is the only situation where I would recommend polishing dry all the way through your polishing steps, and it wouldn't be a bad idea to charge a little more to make up for additional tool wear and added headaches.

To do this, you will need the Makita 9565CV 5-inch Angle Grinder, 5-inch hot pressed pads, a Pearl Vacu-Guard, and a 5-inch aluminum backer pad. Once again, you will need to decide whether you will be exposing aggregate or polishing the cream on top. The same grits used for wet polishing will be used

dry, but not the same polishing pads. When polishing dry, the hot pressed pads will be used all the way through the different stages of grits.

Now that we have the correct tooling covered, here are some tips and tricks to make your project look its best.

Surface polishing

The key to flat polishing is keeping the head of your polisher flat and level with your slab top. Every time you tilt or dip your grinder, swirl marks could follow. I would recommend using a rigid backer pad for this, because a flexible backer will allow your polishing pad to bend on the edges. Also keep in mind that while the polisher has a handle, you don't have to use it. Try putting one hand on the head of the polisher. This will keep the weight in the middle of the pad instead of off to one side.

Five-inch pads are better for top polishing than 4-inch pads. I know that this size difference is minimal but it helps a lot to go with a 5-inch pad because they give you a bigger base. It also doesn't hurt that they cover more surface area. Even though there is only a 1-inch difference in diameter, you will finish quicker.

It depends on how much money you want to spend on tooling, but if your budget will allow it, definitely look into the DS 301 Planetary Polisher from Intertool. It's one of those machines where, after you use it, you will ask yourself, "How did I ever do this before?" The DS 301 will cover 12 inches in one pass instead of the 4 or 5 inches that you would cover with a single-headed unit. And any problems with swirl marks go away because the machine has three points of contact, which makes it almost impossible to not be flat on the surface.

Edge polishing

Often when I tell customers that they can polish their edges with a handheld polisher they find it hard to believe. Think about it — granite fabricators polish edges all day, every day, with the same polishers. Sure, it is a bit harder to learn, but once mastered, you will be polishing your edges in a fraction of the time that it took you to do it with hand pads. Lose the hand pads for edge polishing!

If you have a radius edge that you want to polish, try a flexible backer pad. Just a little bit of flex in the backer will bend around your radius and eliminate lines that can occur from using a rigid backer. That said, using a rigid backer on the flat edge will help you to stay flat the same way that it does when top polishing. For example, if you are attempting to polish a standard 3/8-inch round over, use a rigid backer on the flat edge underneath your round and a flexible backer for the actual radius. Move your polisher left and right across your edge. Do not roll it up and down — this will make your edge wavy.

This information should be a useful guide on correct tooling and techniques. However, this is 101-level instruction to concrete countertop polishing. I highly recommend attending one of the many informative seminars that are available from companies such as Concrete Countertop Institute, Cheng Design, Buddy Rhodes Studio, Decosup, and Brickform. Just like with anything else, there are tricks of the trade, and having some-

one teach you these things firsthand can eliminate a lot of wasted time and money.


Most importantly, concrete countertop fabricators must always strive for perfection. Countertops differ from most concrete work that is done on a larger scale. We are talking about a much smaller area that is in the most important room of any house and a lot closer to eye level. If you wouldn't put the countertops in your own home then your job isn't done. The only thing that will limit you in concrete countertops is your imagination, so keep an open mind and don't be afraid to try something new.

Check out the next issue of *Concrete Decor*, where I will be writing about polishing under mount and integral sinks as well as edge profiling.

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New Countertop Sealers



What happens when a client isn't told how to treat a countertop. If the client wasn't supposed to leave wet glasses on the countertop overnight, the countertop maker should have said so beforehand.

The ideal concrete countertop sealer would be a product that provides protection from stains, looks and feels like bare concrete and is safe to use.

It is nearly impossible to have both perfect aesthetics and perfect protection. But newer sealers are safer to use than those in the past.

There are three relatively new and very different types of sealers marketed specifically for concrete countertops. They represent three different philosophies and spectrums of possibilities, according to Jeff Girard, founder of the Concrete Countertop Institute in Raleigh, N.C.

First, Fu-Tung Cheng now uses a hybrid topical sealer created from a water-based acrylic. Second are hybrid lithium silicates such as Consolidex LS Guard, sold by Prosoco, and Counterguard, available through Convergent Concrete Technologies. And third, V-Seal/TARA Distribution Group Ltd. sells a water-based urethane and epoxy concrete countertop test kit consisting of O-S/W Substrate Conditioner, StoneLok E3 Epoxy and StoneLok 2K water-dilutable

polyurethane. The kits can be changed to achieve maximum results.

"These are three 'trimetrically opposed' sealer approaches," says Girard. "I've worked with all of them, and they all have very different characteristics, appearances, and workabilities."

The Cheng sealer is a partially penetrating, thin-film application, a single-component product that is diluted with various degrees of water. Very little material is left on the surface. It is closest to a true-coating approach and is very easy to use, Girard says.

The lithium silicates are reactive coatings with a polymer component. Application is similar to the Cheng method and leaves a thin coating with a hard transparent surface.

"The difference is that the lithium silicate is a reactive process," says Girard. "It takes a considerable amount of time to fully reach its properties. Until it does, it is potentially prone to being damaged by water and acid." Also, he adds, lithium silicates sealers are extremely sensitive to the method used to apply them.

Lithium silicates are very new to the countertop sealer market. Girard sees them as an intermediate approach to sealing, a balance between looks and performance criteria.

The V-Seal process is closest to traditional concrete countertop sealers. It is water-based and emits little odor and few VOCs. "If someone brought us something that worked better, we would probably push that," says Jay Tarantino, president of the TARA Group, a research and consulting group partnered with V-Seal that studies cementitious substrates and surface defects.

Girard likes the way the epoxy bonds with the concrete in the V-Seal process. "This isn't a new product, but people have only recently been made aware that it exists," he says.

Buddy Rhodes Concrete Products also sells a water-based acrylic sealer that isn't new to the market, but its Satin



Concrete countertop makers ought to be putting their sealers through extensive testing so they truly understand how the sealers will behave. Then, they can explain that behavior to clients.

Sealer formula has been changed to make it more user-friendly and less likely to streak, says Buddy Rhodes vice president Susan Andrews.

The new sealers stand up to stains fairly well, although the consensus is that no sealer is truly stain resistant. The key to avoiding stains, says Andrews, is to clean spills immediately, and that advice extends to the new sealers.

Are these countertop sealers really safe for food? Yes. The water-based sealers are both food-safe and easily cleaned with water. To keep the countertop clean and nontoxic, Andrews recommends using beeswax, while Lloyd recommends a food-grade carnauba wax. "There have been leaps made in the past ten years," says Girard. "You clean up with water, there are no fumes — it is very safe to use."

Even though these new sealers are being marketed for use on countertops, there are some varying opinions as to whether or not they can also be used to seal concrete floors. Evan Lloyd of Solid Solutions Studio in Fresno, Calif., says there is no real difference between sealers used for countertops and floors. "Concrete is concrete," he says. "It is chemically the same on a floor or counter."

While they might be applied differently, the sealers work pretty much the same on either surface, and durability is similar. "You have more foot traffic that

wears on a floor," says Lloyd, "but a countertop is washed more frequently."

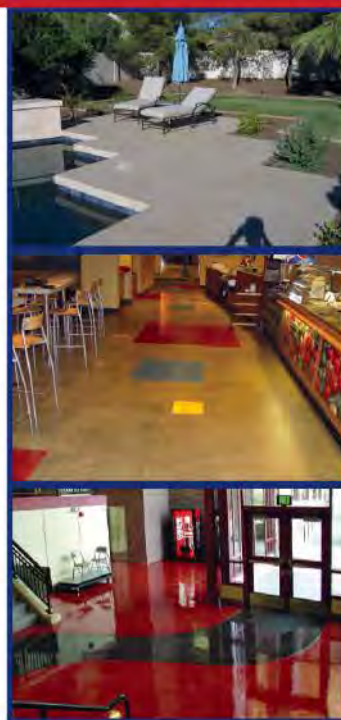
Andrews said to not use her company's countertop sealer on a concrete floor — it probably isn't as tough as what you'd need. But her company makes floor tiles sealed with the same sealer used for concrete countertops. She also said she doesn't see a great deal of difference between countertop and other concrete sealers.

"From a sealer standpoint, there is not much difference between a concrete and floor sealer," says Girard. "But from a performance standpoint, there's a lot. You don't look at individual spots on the floor. You're more willing to overlook the flaws. The sealer is designed for periodic maintenance. Countertops are not like that. Most homeowners aren't willing to do any maintenance, and people are very particular about the look."

"It's the performance issue that sets sealers apart. It could be the same sealer, but people will hold them to different standards."

The bottom line is the new sealers are like any other sealers. They are good for either looks or protection, but they aren't perfect.

"People want the holy grail of sealers," says Lloyd. "They want a penetrating sealer that wipes or sprays on easily, that won't stain or scar, and that has a nice gloss. But that sealer doesn't exist yet."



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Photos by Peter Wagner

Spray it Forward

Finding the time. Whether it's finding the time to give back, finding the time to invest in learning or finding the time to write this column. Finding the time can seem just about impossible some days, but in this busy world that we live in, it's the most important priority to have.

I recently had the opportunity to be part of something that effectively met all of these criteria, and quite frankly it felt great. Last month I took part in a three-day regional learning opportunity held at the Walla Walla County Fairgrounds in eastern Washington. Ken Heitzman of Decorative Concrete Systems, based in nearby Milton-Freewater, Ore., sponsored the event. DCS represents and distributes decorative concrete manufacturers' products throughout the Pacific Northwest. Ken and his crew are "get it done" people, and quite frankly, assembling the group

of attendees and distributors that he did in Walla Walla was a sales job in its own right. Please don't get me wrong, Walla Walla is located in beautiful wine country, but the airports are 50 miles away in Pasco and Pendleton, and the major highway is State Highway 11. That said, over a period of three days, several hundred people found their way there and participated in learning, meeting new people and giving back. As you know, I'm a polish guy who turned into a dye guy, but up in Walla Walla I finally saw overlays, stampings, fountains and countertops created from scratch. And the best part of all was that the majority of the work the artisans created are to become a permanent working part of Walla Walla County Fairgrounds.

To put things in perspective, Walla Walla is something of a farming town whose population of 29,000 is the "cul-

tural center” of the wine and farming area for 50-plus miles in every direction. So take this picture, and then realize that manufacturers have come to Washington’s heartland from Atlanta, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Portland to teach an eager group of both experienced and new contractors. Everyone involved became part of a modern barn-raising. I knew where I was when I found the fairgrounds and one arrow pointed to parking for the show, and the other said “Rodeo parking only.”

The reaction to the word “free” can be a very cautious one, as Gail, who is responsible for the fairgrounds, alluded to at the group dinner on the last night of the event. When Ken came to her and suggested the use of her venue for his annual show, she responded with equal parts of “This is great” and “How good can anything free be?” Well, she and her staff had nothing to worry about, because the results were exceptional. In fact, Gail half-heartedly complained because her staff kept on sneaking over to the project sites during the day to see their new overlay or water feature or stamped concrete.

Industry people from Brickform, CPS,



enCounter, Fossilcrete, HTC, Miracote, Patriot Sprayers, L.M. Scofield, Super-Crete, White Mountain and other companies participated in creating works for the fairgrounds, and did so side by side. Their work blended together, their work effort (a classic mix of indoors, outdoors, rain and logistics) was unparalleled, and they gave a permanent gift to the local community. If tools, products, expertise, or just more hands were needed, they were shared.

But it wasn’t just that industry people

were working together in the heartland. It was the fact that people in our industry were the types to realize that there is great worth, not only in learning, but also in giving. Yes, ultimately everyone was there to enhance their chance to make money and earn a better living, but anytime we put “giving” in front of “getting” shows the solid foundation our industry is built on, especially when a part of “getting” is the pure satisfaction of the heart for time given and a job well done. 🛠️

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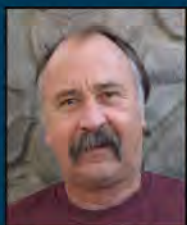
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Product Profil



Dec-O-Vent

It's a classic dilemma. The more beautiful the outdoor decorative concrete, the more those ugly drain and vent holes stand out. A half-circle of corrugated pipe poking into a carefully crafted design can thwart the best artistic intentions.

Luckily, there's a product that puts a lid on this issue once and for all: the Dec-O-Vent. This plastic half-pipe with a grated top can be used in valve boxes, foundation vent wells, and anywhere else a slab needs a hole. It can even be used for terracing on slopes.

The Dec-O-Vent is 12 1/2 inches deep with a diameter of 28 inches. Its lid is adorned with a picture of a tree, and both the lid and the top part of the plastic well come in five colors — light gray, beige, brown, charcoal gray and green.

A downspout drain is well served by one Dec-O-Vent. An installer (or the manufacturer) can create a patio or yard drain easily by placing two of the units back to back and caulking them.

Besides the well and lid, Dec-O-Vent

accessories include stainless screws to lock down the lid and an expansion shield for cold-weather climates. A protective lid decal can be pulled off after the area around the drain is painted or sealed.

Dec-O-Vent was introduced to the marketplace by a contracting outfit that did decorative swimming pools, but today it's the joint property of Wes Norton of Ashland, Ore., and PolySteel Alternative Building Systems Inc., a concrete contracting company based in Central Point, Ore.


PolySteel president Darrin Thornton discovered the Dec-O-Vent at a World of Concrete conference about five years ago. His company became one of Dec-O-Vent's biggest customers, stockpiling units and even reselling them to other companies and contractors. "Literally every house we've done since then, we've used at least one," he says.

When he poured stamped concrete all the way around the perimeter of one house, he placed 50 or so in crawl space vent wells. He preserved his design with-

out impeding the flow of air to the crawl space, an arrangement that pleased the inspector and the homeowner too.

The half-circle vents have been helpful to him as a decorative contractor in other ways as well. The 90-degree corners of squared-off vent wells are crack magnets, requiring joint-cutting that can intrude on a design, he says. "This doesn't dictate where I put my control joints in decorative concrete."

The lids prevent unwary guests from stepping into the vents and hurting themselves. They will also keep leaves and other debris from clogging the holes.

PolySteel acquired the rights to the accessory in December 2006. The former owners were having the plastic vents made well in China, but after one more shipment, PolySteel is going to begin having them made by a plastics company in the state of Washington. 

☎ (541) 944-3626

🌐 www.polysteel.org

(under construction as of March 2007)



Faux Effects releases decorative finis

Faux Effects International Inc. has introduced RsCrete, a durable decorative finish that's made for both interior and exterior decorative concrete applications.

RsCrete incorporates advanced polymer technology formulated to work in a variety of environments that require a highly durable finish. It is translucent, tintable, and forms a beautiful, durable veneer over any substrate, especially concrete. RsCrete boasts the chemical resistance and durability properties that exterior applications require and it is easily repaired by patching or filling, then fine sanding.

The product line includes three grades: RsCrete, RsCrete Fine and RsCrete Super Fine. Floors use the slightly coarse standard grade of RsCrete, while countertops enjoy the finish coats of the finer grades. RsCrete is marketed under the Faux Effects Pro Line and is available through Faux Effects Licensed Training Studios for professional finishers only.

☎ (772) 778-9044

■ www.fauxfx.com



Stamp tools depict compass, horses, sun

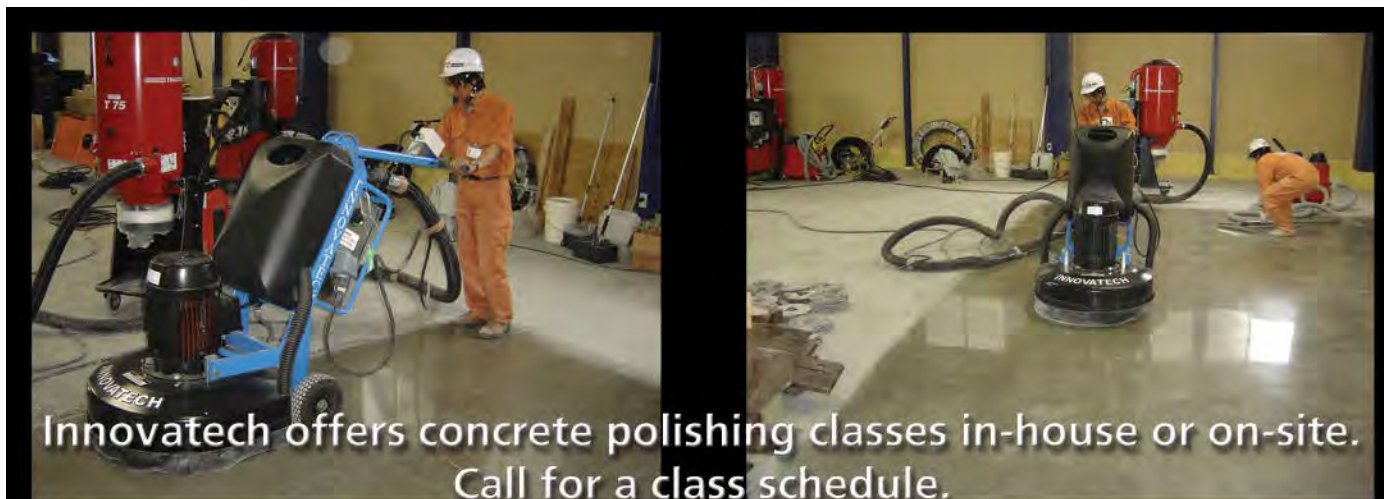
Proline Decorative Concrete Products has added several new decorative concrete tools to its catalog.

First, Proline has taken the compass design to a new dimension with its new 4-foot-wide compass stamp. Unlike one-dimensional designs made with stencils or smooth texture mats, Proline's compass incorporates various types of texture in each segment.

Proline has added "Wild Mustangs," which depicts horses, to its line of single-piece, bendable border stamps. Also, a 3-foot-wide "Flaming Sun" design was developed after many requests from decorative concrete contractors.

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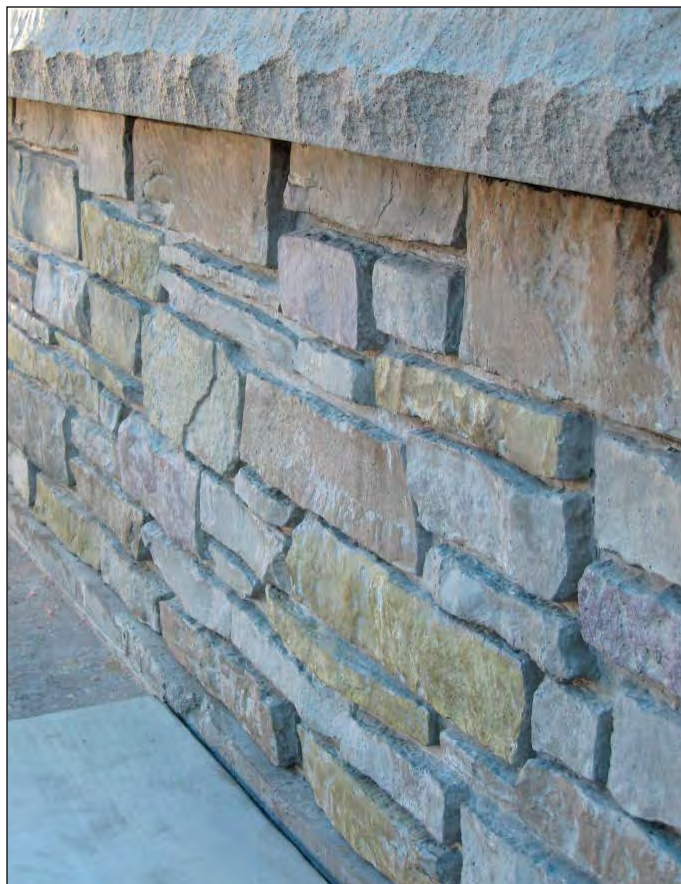
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Busy Butterfiel

Butterfield Color Inc. has introduced several new products, including stains, wall systems and a sealer.

The company's new architectural form liner system gives a natural stone face to vertical concrete pours. The liners are molded using a high-grade, reuse-friendly polyurethane and are available in 2-foot by 7-foot and 3-foot by 7-foot sizes. They interlock seamlessly from side to side and top to bottom using the system's filler stones, which are also used to complete the pattern at the ends, corners, tops and bottoms.

Elements Transparent Stain for Concrete is formulated with micronized oxides that will readily permeate a concrete surface and create translucent color variations similar to reactive acid stain, but with a much wider range of possible colors. The non-filming stain resists fading. It is an excellent substitute for reactive chemical stains on substrates that are minimally reactive with acid stains or when extensive cleanup after an acid stain application is prohibited.

The Cantera Vertical Wall System

consists of the new Cantera Vertical Wall Mix and a set of stamping tools that together create a natural stone look. The Mix is a polymer modified cementitious topping formulated for resurfacing clean, structurally sound vertical surfaces, including concrete, drywall, cement board, masonry and stone. The lightweight, non-sagging overlay is suitable for interior or exterior applications and is freeze-thaw resistant.

Clear Guard WB Urethane Sealer is a high-performance, two-component aliphatic polyurethane coating. The water-reducible urethane is VOC-free and nonyellowing. It provides a high-gloss, abrasion-resistant film suitable for sealing interior concrete floors and countertops and exterior concrete hardscapes.

Renovatio Opaque Concrete Stain is a high-performance, polymerized coloring stain. The concentrated three-component system penetrates and bonds within the substrate. It provides a uniformly colored, no-gloss, abrasion-resistant surface suitable for coloring existing concrete floors and exterior concrete hardscapes. It can be used to recolor unsealed decorative

concrete or to renovate weathered or discolored concrete surfaces. A companion product, Renovatio Translucent Accent Stain, creates translucent variegated color or antiquing effects on stamped or textured surfaces, and may also be used to create faux finishes. Renovatio Clear Seal can be applied for additional protection or a gloss finish over Renovatio Opaque Concrete Stain and Renovatio Translucent Accent Stain.

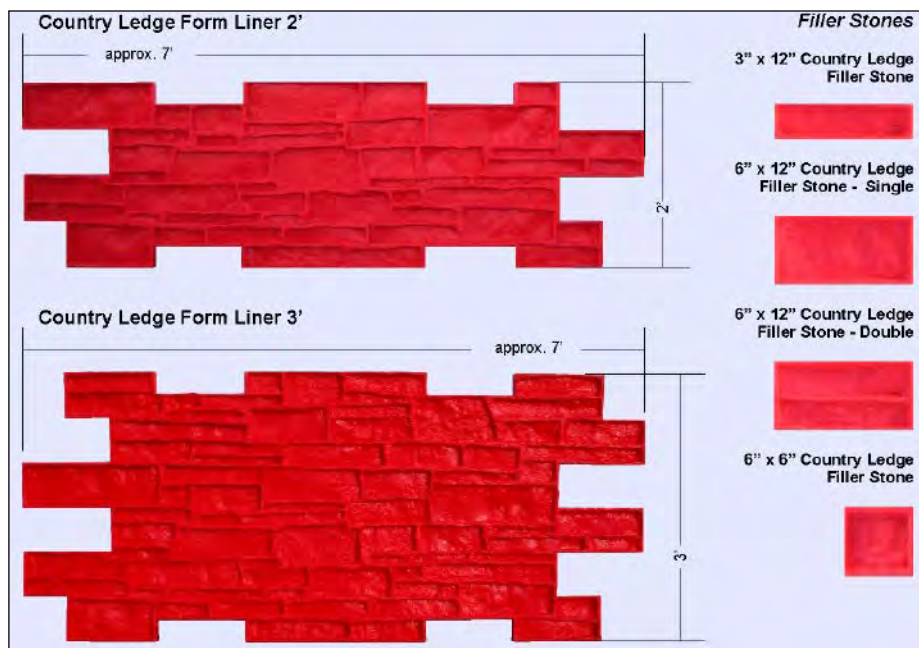
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Stamps, stains from Scofield

L.M. Scofield Co.'s original acid stain, Lithochrome Chemstain Classic, is now available in a kit with eight 14-ounce bottles. It may be ordered as eight bottles of one color or a mixed kit of all colors. Lithochrome Chemstain Classic is a reactive, penetrating concrete stain that creates unique color effects on existing concrete or cementitious toppings. The antique, mottled, variegated patina is popular for faux finishing and graphics.

Scofield has also introduced new



Lithotex Pavecrafters imprinting tools and flexible embossing skins. The colored tools are manufactured with a new, improved composition for added strength and durability. Three-part ABC tools are now available in three different colors for easy identification. What's more, the line now includes a wider range of textures.

☎ (323) 720-3000

🌐 www.scofield.com

Elite Crete debuts dye stain

Hydra-Stone Dye Stain, new from Elite Crete Systems Inc., is not an acetone, alcohol or water-based staining product, so it can promise more color penetration, UV stability, non-tracking features and overall longevity than those options.



Hydra-Stone Dye Stain was designed to be a stain product for obtaining base colors on Elite Crete's overlays. It comes in 20 base colors that can be diluted using Hydra-Stone Reducer to achieve hundreds of addi-

tional tints. A vast array of colors can be achieved with a transparent finish as the end result. Unlike some other colorants, Hydra-Stone can be used outdoors and does not require rinsing or neutralizing.

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The covering is produced on a canvas backing. The texture is primarily plaster, with 15 percent additives for strength and durability. The product is cut, cracked, and colored by hand in one of 22 standard colors or a custom color. It is manufactured in pre-cut sizes, but can be cut to any size or shape.

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A new angle on brushes

The new Auto Glide concrete finishing brush from Marion Brush Mfg. Co. automatically adjusts its brush angle depending on whether the user is pushing or pulling. This eliminates the need for contractors to lift the brush across the pour.

Auto Glide is available in five color-coded texturing brush inserts and in 24-inch and 36-inch widths.

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■ www.marionbrush.com

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PolyUrea 5073, new from Versatile Building Products Inc., offers a 73 percent solids rate while maintaining a VOC level of 50.

The coating uses the same basic technology as Versatile's 100-percent solid PolyUrea 5000, but Versatile has lowered the viscosity, increased the open time, increased the chemical resistance and shortened the cure time. Its lower viscosity makes it comparable to a CRU. At the same time, 5073 still boasts the gloss of the 5000 Series. The cross-

linking of the film in the cure makes it exceptionally tough and durable, allowing it to maintain its gloss far longer than comparable systems.

☎ (800) 535-3352

■ www.garagecoatings.com

Architectural Enhancements pours it on

Architectural Enhancements Inc. has added several new products to its line of vertical and horizontal overlayment materials.

Tru Finish is a versatile overlayment product that can be applied on vertical or horizontal surfaces. The stampable, carvable overlay allows workers to stamp early yet holds moisture content for longer workability. Its high levels of multiple portland cements and polymers makes for smooth, defined lines and textures.

A/E Micro microtopping can be applied on vertical or horizontal surfaces. The lighter-weight Tru Top countertop mix has excellent polishing characteristics and can be applied as an overlayment or up to 4 inches thick for solid tops. Luster Low-burnishing Microfinish Microtopping helps create brilliant, smooth finishes when low burnishing is desired and can be applied on vertical or horizontal surfaces.

Mediterranean Texture, a lightweight overlayment used to give an Old-World traditional appearance to vertical surfaces, contains proprietary polymer technologies and a high percentage of recycled materials. Temporal, a traditional faux product that produces a rugged marbled look, also contains a high percentage of recycled materials. Tamarillo is a faux overlayment product containing a spectrum of quartz aggregates. It has a subtle texture with many different variations. Mediterranean Finish offers a quick cure time and outstanding color characteristics.

☎ (507) 364-7667

■ www.decorativeoverlayments.com

That familiar beach feeling

Specialty Solutions Manufacturing Inc. has introduced Sand-Rich, a waterproof flexible stone overlay decking system that is the only watertight resurfacing system with a rich sand finish and

luxurious feel.

Based on proven European technologies, the flexible coating process consists of a waterproofing membrane overlaid with a tough flexible stone coating that has the texture of what its manufacturer calls "that familiar 'beach feeling.'" Sand-Rich renews and beautifies surfaces on rooftops, balconies, concrete and pool patios, tile floors, and wood decks. The environmentally friendly, liquid-applied, fully adhered system is 1/8-inch thick and weighs 20 ounces per square foot.

■ www.ssmincorporated.com

■ www.sandrich.com

Three from Daich



Daich Coatings, which offers "spreadable stone" alternatives to expensive concrete, is promoting Roller-Rock, SpreadRock and SpreadStone. All three products are pre-mixed blends of ground stone and high-performance polymers ready to apply with a roller or a trowel.

☎ (866) 463-2424

■ www.daichcoatings.com

Kemiko takes it Easy

Kemiko's Easy Shine is a new water-based acrylic polymer floor finish. This polish gives a high-gloss finish without buffing, is easy to apply, easy to clean, and offers high durability against water and scuffing. Kemiko Easy Shine may be used over sealed decorative floor projects in residential, commercial or retail settings. It mops or sprays on and is very easy to remove or recoat.

Easy Shine was formulated by Ep-mar Corp. to protect and enhance Kemiko and Sta-Crete sealers that have been applied over Kemiko and Rembrandt concrete projects.

☎ (903) 587-3708

■ www.kemiko.com

Coyote pretty

Art Stamped Concrete presents Coyote Sun, a new and unique decorative concrete design in a Southwest style.

Coyote Sun is 18 inches square and the design makes an impression that is 1/4-inch deep. This design adapts to stains and dyes to create more drama in selected areas. A commercial grade polyurethane rubber gives the tool durability and strength.

☎ (928) 345-1036

■ www.artstampedconcrete.com

New from Sherwin-Williams

Sherwin-Williams is expanding its Loxon line to include Loxon 40% Silane Water Repellant and Loxon Siloxane Water Repellant. Loxon 40% Silane Water Repellant is a premium coating that offers complete water protection by penetrating concrete to seal out moisture and chloride. Loxon Siloxane Water Repellant emits zero VOCs and exceeds expectations for water and chloride repellency at a lower price point. Both repellants meet ASTM standards for water repellency and will not mar glass or flashing.

Sherwin-Williams has also introduced SherCrete Flexible Concrete Waterproofer, a single-component, water-based formula that combines the waterproof protection of a two-part coating with the ease of a one-part coat. The combination of acrylic resin and mineral aggregate is engineered for a variety of vertical or horizontal substrates. Its ability to repel rain and humidity makes it suitable for areas where water and moisture can assault the substrate. The film surface breathes, allowing moisture vapor to pass through while preventing water from migrating into interior surfaces. The waterproofer also bridges hairline cracks.

■ www.sherwin-williams.com

Water reducer

Sika Corp. has introduced Sikament 686, a multipurpose admixture that acts as a multidosage water reducer by providing increased dispersion of water reduction through the entire dosage range.

Sikament 686 can be used in cast-in-place concrete as well as precast applications. It works as a normal (ASTM C494 Type A) water reducer at its lowest rec-

ommended dosage, as a midrange water reducer, and as a high-range water reducer (ASTM C494 Type F) at its highest recommended dosage. Increased workability is provided with no delay in set time.

☎ (201) 933-8800

■ www.sikaconstruction.com

Pool-coaters, take note



Steelcote Epo-Lux 221SP is a direct-to-concrete, high-build masonry coating that requires no primer and provides exceptional coverage for swimming pool repaints.

Designed for use on poured-in-place, aged concrete as well as fiberglass, Epo-

Lux 221SP provides superior resistance to chlorine and other chemicals with one less coat required than usual. The coating has excellent resistance to moisture penetration from constant immersion, tolerates solvents and oils, can be applied to new or existing pools so construction schedules can be accelerated, and offers excellent gloss retention above the waterline. The high-build formula can be sprayed, rolled or brushed on. For exterior applications, this product requires a UV-resistant topcoat to prevent chalking.

■ www.chemline.net

■ www.steelcotemfg.com

Time for T

The T-form, the newest insulating concrete form from Reward Wall Systems Inc., is designed for use with the company's iForm to make building interior demising walls more efficient.

The T-form is intended to reduce material waste and reduce labor costs in the field. It is 11 inches wide with a 6-inch concrete core for both the intersecting and longitudinal walls. It is designed for both below-grade and above-grade use. It

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is also intended to make building interior concrete walls more cost-effective.

■ www.rewardwalls.com

Bon news



Bon Tool Co.'s 2007 product line of contractor-grade hand tools and materials includes more than 250 new products, including more than 50 decorative concrete items.

The updated 296-page Bon Master Catalog is the most expansive yet, featuring 3,000 products for masonry, concrete and decorative concrete finishing, drywall, plastering, E.I.F.S., flooring and general construction trades.

☎ (724) 443-7080

■ www.bontool.com

VMAC touts compressor

VMAC (Vehicle Mounted Air Compressors) has developed what it calls one of the most compact, lightweight under-hood air compressor systems available.

Despite the small size and compact installation of the VMAC under-hood unit, one of them can run two jackhammers or 10 angle grinders simultaneously with a 100 percent duty cycle. Benefits include increased efficiency, lower costs and maximized truck payload.

■ (250) 740-3200, ext. 3376

Superior suction

Nilfisk-Advance America has introduced the CFM 125 industrial vacuum. Well-suited for use with walk-behind and hand-held concrete surface preparation tools, the CFM 125 features superior suction generated by two 800-watt bypass motors.

A disposable paper bag filter captures the bulk of collected debris, and an optional upstream HEPA filter ensures 99.995 percent efficiency down to and in-

cluding 0.3 microns. The system includes an external filter-shaker handle to reduce filter clogging. Large, fixed rear wheels and swivel front casters provide excellent maneuverability. The unit also features 10 gallons of collection capacity.

■ www.pa.nilfisk-advance.com

New saws from Makita



Makita USA Inc. has introduced the 7 1/4-inch Magnesium Hypoid Saw (model 5377MG), 7 1/4-inch Magnesium Circular Saw with LED Light (model 5007MG), and 7 1/4-inch Magnesium Circular Saw with LED Light and Electric Brake (model 5007MGA).

On these new saws, Makita has reduced the weight, improved the ergonomics, and included a powerful 15-amp industrial motor. Ergonomic improvements include clearly visible depth and bevel markings and hand grips. Large rubberized levers provide quick, one-handed adjustments for more efficient work.

The 5377MG utilizes a hypoid gearing system for maximum power output. Hypoid gears are sealed in an oil bath so they never need maintenance. They allow for more surface contact so more power is transferred over a wider surface, providing increased power and durability.

☎ (800) 462-5482

■ www.makitatools.com

This wax won't wane

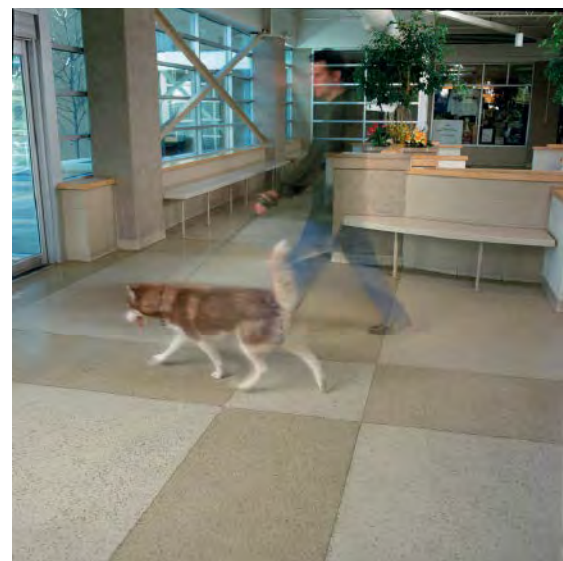
Super Wax Polish is a water-based acrylic and wax co-polymer that forms an abrasion-resistant, clear, non-yellowing topcoat polish to protect existing sealers and finishes. Formulated for use on interior concrete, especially acid stained floors, it can be used on newly sealed floors and to restore shine on previously sealed concrete floors.

Super Wax Polish resists scuffs and

marks while enhancing the gloss of the finish underneath, and it increases slip resistance. The co-polymer offers excellent gloss and can be stripped with conventional wax polish removers. Its toughness protects the existing finish and acts as a sacrificial coating for the hard-sealed substrate. It covers 1,000 square feet per gallon per coat. Two or three coats may be preferred, and a high-speed buffing will maximize luster.

☎ (615) 872-9099

■ www.ccc-usa.com



Valspar retools EC-17

Valspar Flooring, a division of Valspar Inc., has reduced the volatile organic compound emissions of its EC-17 Ultra UVR Epoxy coating to comply with VOC regulations in all fifty states.

EC-17 is a water-clear, 100 percent solids epoxy coating with superior UV stability that safeguards flooring from discoloration, yellowing and fading. The coating is differentiated from conventional epoxies by its outstanding chemical resistance and low viscosity. It can be applied in a variation of 5 mils to 10 mils and can be used as a clear or pigmented stand-alone coating, a system topcoat, a quartz system grout coat, or a binder in a slurry system. It adds high-gloss appearance while providing long-lasting protection against dusting, chalking and yellowing.

☎ (800) 637-7793

■ www.valsparflooring.com



New machines blast off

Blastrac has introduced grinders, scarifiers and a walk-behind scraper.

The Blastrac POD-2000 is a virtually dust-free grinder, with patent-pending Point of Development technology that allows grinding dust to be collected immediately. The machine features high-velocity dust ports that rotate with the diamond tooling. While other diamond grinders allow dust to get airborne, POD technology lets air constantly circulate through the diamond tooling, keeping the diamonds clean and cool and extending their lifetime by 25 to 30 percent. Because dust is collected as it forms, no cleanup is required. The POD-2000 gets within 2 inches of walls, grinding 500 square feet to 700 square feet an hour with a 22-inch cleaning pass.

The new Blastrac BMG-2500MKII plug-style diamond grinder offers an improved dust control system and a new line of beveled segment diamond plugs that reduce vibration when grinding. The machine also cuts down on scratch marks when polishing. The dual-head machine cleans, planes, removes coatings and polishes. An optional slicing attachment is used for removing elastomeric and rubberized coatings and adhesives. Twin grinding heads produce a 22-inch grinding path, helping the machine's production rate exceed 600 square feet per hour.

Also, the Blastrac BMG-435MKII planetary grinder is now available with new tooling and tooling-mount improvements. The new line of metal bond diamond consumables offer increased production rates and longer life.

As for scarifiers, Blastrac has

launched a new line of four performance-tested scarifiers that are economically priced. The scarifiers remove oil and other contaminants, smooth uneven surfaces and trip hazards, and cut safety grooves in ramps and concrete walkways. Each includes a quick lift-off feature and microdepth control. The 8-inch, 10-inch and 12-inch scarifiers are available in gas or electric, while the 7-inch is electric only.

Finally, the Blastrac BS-180 is the first walk-behind floor scraper developed for removing hardwood and ceramic tile flooring. The scraper is self-propelled with forward and backward range. Blade sizes vary from 2 inches to 16 inches, and the tool can remove 600 square feet of ceramic and hardwood flooring per hour. 🛠️

☎ (800) 256-3440

🌐 www.blastrac.com

American Concrete Institute

ACI considers cracks, other concrete issues

The American Concrete Institute has released five new publications:

224.1R-07: Causes, Evaluation, and Repair of Cracks in Concrete Structures — This publication summarizes the causes of cracks in concrete structures, presents procedures used to evaluate cracking, and describes techniques for crack repair.

332.1R-06: Guide to Residential Concrete Construction — This guide covers concrete work for one- and two-family dwellings with a maximum height of two stories above grade and a basement that is either cast-in-place or placed as precast elements. Information on materials, proportions, production, delivery, and testing is provided. Separate chapters on footings, walls, and slabs provide information on subgrade, forms, reinforcement, placement, consolidation, finishing and curing. Insulation and hot and cold weather are considered. Common problems and repair solutions are also addressed. The discussion of specific design provisions and all drawings provided by this guide are intended to offer illustrations of typical practice and should not be interpreted as meeting the requirements of specific codes or project specifications.

350-06: Code Requirements for Environmental Engineering Concrete Structures and Commentary — This document covers the structural design, materials selection, and construction of environmental engineering concrete structures used for conveying, storing, or treating liquid or other materials, such as solid waste. This code presents new material as well as modified portions of the ACI 318-02 Building Code that are applicable to environmental engineering concrete structures. ACI 350-06 is written as a legal document.

437.1R-07: Load Tests of Concrete Structures: Methods, Magnitude, Protocols, and Acceptance Criteria — This report

provides recommendations regarding selection of test load magnitudes, protocol, and acceptance criteria to be used when performing load testing as a means of evaluating safety and serviceability of concrete structural members and systems.

546.3R-06: Guide for the Selection of Materials for the Repair of Concrete — This document provides guidance on the selection of materials for concrete repair. It offers an overview of the important properties of repair materials.

☎ (248) 848-3800

🌐 www.concrete.org

ACI honors Atlanta engineers

The American Concrete Institute named Uzun & Case Engineers LLC as the recipient of ACI's Distinguished Achievement Award, being presented at the ACI 2007 Spring Convention in Atlanta, Ga., in April.

Uzun & Case Engineers was recognized for advancing concrete applications through the courageous use of new design applications, innovation, and "hands-on" techniques. Uzun & Case has grown from its inception in 1992 to being one of the largest structural engineering firms in Atlanta. The firm has an extensive portfolio of high-rise, office, parking, hotel, residential, public-use and retail buildings. Uzun & Case has received multiple awards from the ACI Georgia Chapter, including first place for Georgia Aquarium and 1825 Century Center.

☎ (248) 848-3800

🌐 www.concrete.org

ACI members enjoy upgrade

The American Concrete Institute has introduced six new benefits for members.

The benefits include free downloads of ACI documents and archived papers and access to a "Concrete Knowledge Center" that collects practice-oriented technical information. A membership directory accesses detailed contact information and can conduct detailed searches by job category. Also, ACI members can now earn up to 0.8 free CEUs (8 PDHs) each year online. Members simply log in to ACI's Web site, read the provided ACI committee report or article, and take a short online exam to demonstrate their proficiency.

While all ACI members will continue to receive Concrete International magazine each month, they will now have more choices on additional periodicals. They may choose from ACI Structural Journal, ACI Materials Journal, or the International Concrete Repair Institute's Concrete Repair Bulletin.

Finally, ACI members looking to land a new job in the concrete industry can visit ACI's new Career Center to search targeted job postings. Employers seeking qualified candidates can advertise in the Career Center.

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🌐 www.concrete.org (click on "Membership")



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Association of Equipment Manufacturers

Challenging children about construction

The Association of Equipment Manufacturers announced the formation of the National Construction Challenge, a youth-oriented critical thinking and creative problem-solving competition that AEM has developed in partnership with experts at Destination ImagiNation Inc.

The National Construction Challenge is part of AEM's ongoing efforts to attract the best and brightest young people into the construction industry. The challenge will focus on three areas: awareness of construction-related jobs, construction equipment and manufacturing, and infrastructure awareness.

AEM is urging member companies and others in the construction industry to sponsor teams of high school students to participate in the challenge finals. Each sponsor receives promotion opportunities related to the challenge.

The Challenge includes six regional events to be held across the United States in January 2008. Winning teams qualify to participate in the National Construction Challenge finals competition, to be held March 2008 during AEM's international CONEXPO-CON/AGG exposition in Las Vegas.

To further promote the construction industry to young people, AEM is also sponsoring the 2007 "global finals" of Destination ImagiNation's "team challenges" program, in particular the "Direct Flight" challenge. In this event, teams create aircraft and mechanisms to raise and release them. The teams perform aerial maneuvers with their craft, then successfully land them in designated landing zones. The finals for this challenge will occur in May 2007 at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville.

☎ (414) 298-4114

🌐 www.aem.org

🌐 www.constructmyfuture.com

Portland Cement Association

PCA DVD takes on decorative concrete

"The Art of Decorative Concrete," the latest Portland Cement Association DVD, explores the processes and materials used to generate beautiful textured concrete driveways, patios, walkways, and interior floors.

Hosted by Bob Harris, concrete artisan and president of the Decorative Concrete Institute in Temple, Ga., the video shows the variety of techniques contractors-turned-artists use to form stunning spaces. Harris walks viewers through the possibilities of stamping or staining concrete, applying microtoppings, polishing concrete, and exposing the embedded aggregate. Designed as a resource for consumers and contractors considering decorative concrete applications for their next project, the video not only highlights ways to enhance newly poured concrete, but illustrates how polishing and microtopping can transform a gray concrete area into a visual focal point. 📺

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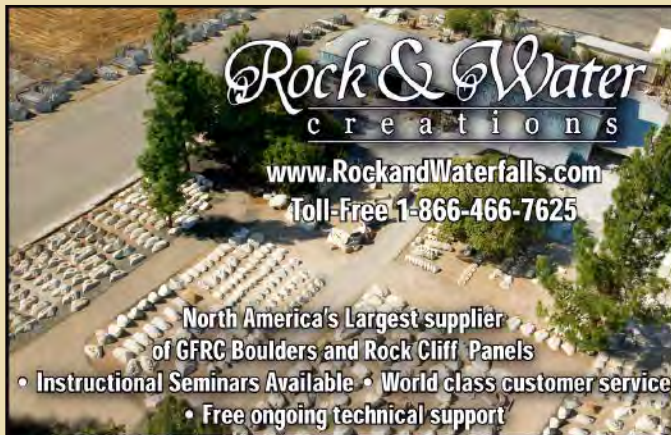
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Harmony Table

Shelley and Guy Chomistek of Rafter C Precast Concrete in Medicine Hat, Alberta, Canada, built this outdoor table on common ground between their customers, a couple.

"The clients wanted us to create a multifunctional yet artistic table that contained clean lines," Shelley says. "The couple, however, had very different personalities. He was very practical and wanted something functional. She was interested in design and style and wanted a unique piece of furniture."

The Chomisteks call this piece the "Harmony Table." The concrete table depicts harmony between earth, fire and water. At the same time, it maintains the harmony within their clients' household, Shelley said. "He can enjoy the function of his 'cooler table,' and she has a very unique piece of furniture that can be decorated with simple elegance."

For this project they used Cheng Design products: Charcoal NeoMix, Cheng Sealer and Cheng Wax. The 2-inch top is a precast bottom-pour piece that was polished with diamond pads from 50 to 1,500 grit to expose a variety of rocks and jade insets — the jade symbolizing love, inner peace, harmony and balance. After the final polish, it was sealed and waxed for maximum protection.

"Guy has taken training from Fu-Tung Cheng and Buddy Rhodes, and this piece shows characteristics of both their styles," says Shelley. "The legs on this table have a Buddy Rhodes influence, as the solid legs are hand-pressed with a very dry mix. The veined look is then achieved by using a darker slurry to fill the voids."

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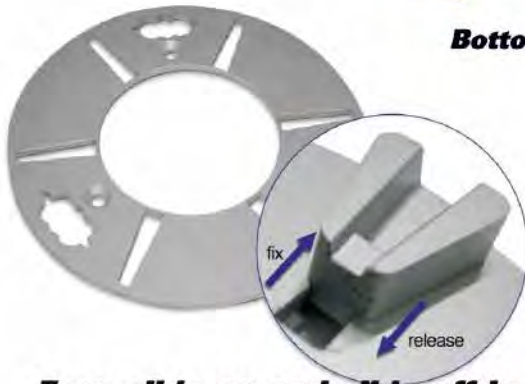
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