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# Concrete

The Journal of Decorative Concrete

# Decor

## Special Effects With Stains

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## Getting Edgy

*New border tools and stamps*

## Kitchen Countertops: Safety First

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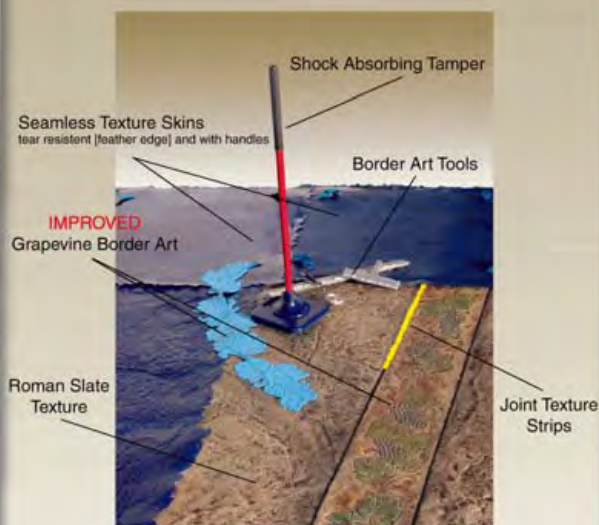
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**38:53**

Hours Bill Owen  
worked last week

**933:56**

Total hours: Forming/Rebar  
Placement

**252:59**

Total hours: Pouring

**254:19**

Total hours: Finishing

**1441:14**

Total hours to date:  
Crestview Project

## WEEKLY TIMECARD

NAME: Bill Owen DATES: 11-15

	START	LUNCH	END	JOB CODES	JOBSITE/PROJECT	HOURS
Mon.	7:00	1/2	3:30		Brentwood	8
Tues.			3:30			8
Wed.			4:00			8 1/2
Thurs.			4:00		Crestview	8 1/2
Fri.			4:00			8 1/2

SIGNATURE: Bill Owen TOTAL HOURS: 41 1/2

GUESSWORK

## Employee Report

Owen, Bill

Date Range: 6/11/2007 through 6/15/2007

Day	Date	Jobsite	Start	Stop	Cost Code	Hours	Total
Mon	6/11	Brentwood	7:08 AM	12:05 PM	Placing	4:57	
			12:41 PM	3:22 PM	Placing	2:41	7:38 hours
Tue	6/12	Brentwood	7:12 AM	12:07 PM	Placing	4:55	
			12:43 PM	3:23 PM	Finishing	2:40	7:35 hours
Wed	6/13	Brentwood	7:12 AM	12:02 PM	Finishing	4:50	
			12:46 PM	3:49 PM	Finishing	3:03	7:53 hours
Thu	6/14	Crestview	7:17 AM	12:19 PM	Placing	5:02	
			12:50 PM	3:46 PM	Placing	2:56	7:58 hours
Fri	6/15	Crestview	7:13 AM	12:07 PM	Finishing	4:54	
			12:44 PM	3:39 PM	Finishing	2:55	7:49 hours

Signature: Bill Owen Owen, Bill

Total 38:53 hours

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## Publisher's Letter



### Dear Readers,

My wife's grandfather is turning 98 years old in a month or so. Having lost his wife a couple of years ago, Papa, believe it or not, still lives at home by himself.

On a recent visit to Papa we sat, as usual, in his family room talking about a lot of things, like the way things used to be and, for obvious reasons, our concern for his health. During our conversation Papa told me in a matter-of-fact tone of voice that he had suffered a heart attack a couple of weeks earlier. Shocked by the news, I asked if he had seen a doctor or spent time in the hospital following that ordeal. Papa responded by saying "Oh yes, one night. My legs feel numb but I'm getting better." Pressing for more information, he added, "... when I had the heart attack I was afraid I was going to die — however, a moment later, I became afraid I wasn't going to die." Saddened as we both were by his news, this announcement caused us to laugh at the ordeal. Laughing seemed to help us shed some discomfort with this conversation.

We both realized, I think, that his response to this crisis — sharing a laugh with someone else — was the way we often respond to threatening situations in life.

In my youth, my parents made sure that I acknowledged my elders whenever possible. As uncomfortable as it was at the time, my greeting others and making them feel welcome was a part of my parents' routine in training each of their children to show respect and appreciation for others. And so, with each new acquaintance in my life, there came the challenge of making my introduction.

The challenge of teaching my own children social etiquette is also a big job. While our daughter, the oldest, is quick to make new acquaintances, Matthew, our one in the middle, would rather crawl into a hole and hide than face the uncomfortable task of meeting new people. While he's learning to persevere in social environments, he's also learning to face difficult situations that he'll likely look back on one day and laugh about with his dad or granddad.

Often, we judge both situations and people indiscriminately because of mannerisms we have adopted during our life. These so-called habits unfortunately create barriers that often become missed opportunities to make new friendships or business alliances.

In my opinion, obstacles that prevent us from taking the opportunity to meet new people and make new friendships are tragic, because experience has shown me that relationships not only teach us a great deal about ourselves, they also give us someone to laugh with when times are tough.

Enjoy!

Bent Mikkelsen, Publisher

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# Features



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Once 5-year-old Michael Littlefield touched uncured concrete, he couldn't keep his hands off it. Today, his obsession is his livelihood.

by Stacey Enesey Klemenc



## 34 Choices in Fiber Reinforcement

You won't find this kind of fiber in bran muffins — learn about the fiber additives that strengthen concrete.

by Loretta Hall

## 36 Countertop Maintenance

From "food-safe" to "sacrificial coating," kitchen concrete countertop maintenance will have you upgrading your vocabulary along with your tool kit. Here's how to speak the language.

by Christina Camara



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by Sue Marquette Poremba

## 44 Special Effects With Concrete Stains

The nation's best decorative concrete artisans have years of experience laying down color combinations that glow, spark and shimmer. Even better, they're willing to share their secrets with you.

by Susan Brimo-Cox



## 50 Hands Across The Ocean: International Training

As decorative concrete goes global, American experts take the lead in showing contractors around the world how it's done.

by Rob Spiegel



**On the Cover:** This panel was created at a training class held at the Decorative Concrete Institute. DCI owner Bob Harris comments: "I was teaching saw-cutting techniques and after I demonstrated saw-cutting many of the students practiced their skills. I started adding color to this panel while teaching. We used acid stain and both water-based and solvent-based dyes." Learn more about color and techniques from many of the industry's well-known experts on page 44.



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# Departments

## Industry News



**8 Builders get together**  
Eighteen companies, including...  
The meeting was held...  
The meeting was held...  
The meeting was held...



**Seven goals from Texas**  
Seven goals from Texas...  
The meeting was held...  
The meeting was held...  
The meeting was held...

## Project Profile

by Elizabeth Gillette



**An Oasis in the Hills: Griffiths Home, New Braunfels, Texas**  
It was the recently in the...  
The Griffiths Home...  
The Griffiths Home...  
The Griffiths Home...

## Technology

by Amy Johnson



**New Polyacrylate Terrazzo**  
Terrazzo is one of the most...  
The new polyacrylate...  
The new polyacrylate...  
The new polyacrylate...

## Tooling



**Curbing Machines**  
Curbing machines...  
The curbing machine...  
The curbing machine...  
The curbing machine...

## Product Profile



**CT-8 Cleaner and Toughener from Smith Paint Products**  
For over 20 years, Smith Paint...  
The CT-8 Cleaner...  
The CT-8 Cleaner...  
The CT-8 Cleaner...

## Product News



**CT-8 Cleaner and Toughener from Smith Paint Products**  
For over 20 years, Smith Paint...  
The CT-8 Cleaner...  
The CT-8 Cleaner...  
The CT-8 Cleaner...

## Pottery With a Twist



**Pottery With a Twist**  
The pottery...  
The pottery...  
The pottery...

## Product News



**Pottery With a Twist**  
The pottery...  
The pottery...  
The pottery...

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***"I've learned enough to go back and begin making countertops immediately. The class was very comprehensive." - Corey, IL***

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## In The Archives



Can't find it in this issue? Visit our online archives. There's a complete library of stories and how-tos covering all the hottest trends in decorative concrete, including more on topics featured in this issue, such as concrete countertops and special effects with stains.

## Training and Events



As the international training story in this issue attests, training is a booming business in the decorative concrete field these days. Online, scroll through an array of opportunities offered around the United States. There may be a seminar taking place right in your neighborhood.

## Buyer's Guide and Product Index



Use the online Decorative Concrete Buyer's Guide to find products that make ordinary concrete extraordinary — for example, border stamps and tools like those described in this edition of the magazine. Search by type of stamp tool or by brand name to discover what a company makes and how to get it.

## Concrete Decor E-Newsletter



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# Industry News



## A Nawkaw get-together

Nawkaw Corp. played host in May to corporate level employees and licensed territory owners from around the world. The event, held in Athens, Ga., gave more than 35 Nawkaw attendees the opportunity to network with each other and with CEO Russell Gray.

Nawkaw Midwest hosted annual training certification for Nawkaw crews and crew chiefs. The training was held two days prior to the corporate retreat, at Nawkaw's Midwest Office in Chicago.

☎ (706) 310-9339

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

## Green guide from Grace

Grace Construction Products introduced "Building Green with Grace," a guide that helps architects and specifiers select products that achieve the

prerequisites and points needed to meet the demands of the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System. It was introduced at the AIA 2007 National Convention and Design Exposition.

Developed and administered by the United States Green Building Council, the LEED Green Building Rating System is the nationally accepted benchmark for the design, construction, and operation of high-performance green buildings. LEED gives building owners and operators the tools they need to have an immediate and measurable impact on their buildings' performance. The system is designed to promote sustainable sites, energy/water efficiency, recycled materials, indoor environmental quality and innovation in design. In each category, there are prerequisites and criteria for which a project can earn points. "Building Green with Grace" identifies how Grace Products can help a project meet prerequisites and earn points in the LEED-NC (New Construction) Version 2.2 Rating System.

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

## ICF maker expands

Tritex ICF Products has added two production facilities to serve customers in the Pacific Northwest and southeastern United States. Tritex insulated concrete forms will be produced by Tegrant, formerly SCA Packaging of North America, in its Wilsonville, Ore., plant. In the southeast, Tritex forms will be manufactured by Cellofoam in Orlando, Fla.

Plants in Oregon and Florida will bring Tritex ICF production closer to more customers. Forms made in the Orlando and Wilsonville plants will be available in May. The expansion brings the number of plants producing the Tritex ICFs to five, including plants located in Colorado Springs, Colo., Conyers, Ga. and Plymouth, Wis.

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

## Poly Meta plus pervious equals peerless pads

Poly Meta Forms from Metal Forms Corp. were used to construct the pads

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### MAPEI supplies contractor group

The ReSource Commercial Flooring Network announced at a recent Network Exchange meeting that MAPEI has joined its preferred supplier group.

As a leading manufacturer of adhesives, mortars, grouts and concrete waterproofing and repair products, MAPEI

gives this national network of professional commercial flooring contractors a reliable source of flooring installation systems.

"We believe our wide selection of adhesives for every flooring need makes us an ideal business partner for RCFN members," said MAPEI Americas president and CEO Rainer Blair in a news release. "As MAPEI grows, we continuously invest in research and development that bring contractors the best products in the business. We work with our distribution partners throughout the Americas, making it easy for RCFN members to get the installation products they need on time nationwide."

The ReSource Commercial Flooring Network is a member-owned network of professional commercial flooring contractors located throughout the United States.

☎ (800) 426-2734

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

### Sponsor named for conference

The Concrete Countertop Institute has announced that Concrete Network

will be a major sponsor of the 2007 Concrete Countertop Industry Conference, to be held October 25-27, 2007, in Charlotte, N.C.

Concrete Network will take the Star Sponsor role, providing hospitality and entertainment for attendees. Jim Peterson of the Concrete Network will kick off the conference by introducing the keynote speaker, then host a party the first evening. Concrete Network will also have a pavilion in the exhibit area for the duration of the conference.

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🌐 [www.CCIC2007.com](http://www.CCIC2007.com)

### Architectural Enhancements hires sales director



Dulcie Osmonson

Architectural Enhancements Inc.

has introduced Dulcie Osmonson as its new director of sales.

Osmonson will be working out of the company's facility in Lake Crystal,

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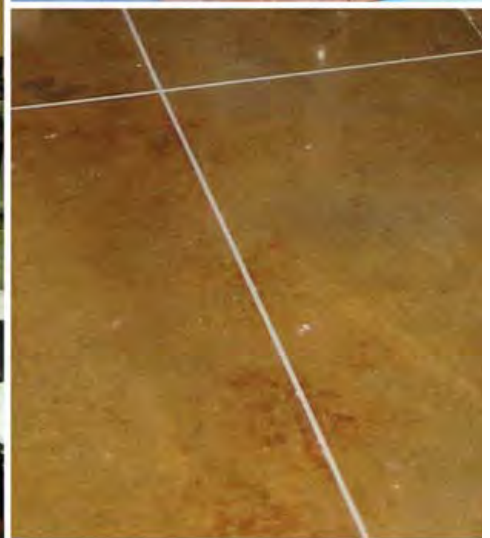
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## B.E.P. names sales rep

B.E.P. Forming Systems Inc. appointed Michael Overturf of Overturf Enterprises LLC as a new independent sales representative.

Operating out of his office in Norwalk, Iowa, Overturf is responsible for sales, service and support to residential and commercial concrete contractor customers in Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, Wisconsin, the western half of Indiana, and the eastern halves of Kansas, Nebraska and South Dakota. He will assist B.E.P. Forming with market growth in these key concrete contract states.

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

## Blastrac staff makes moves

Blastrac Global named Stephen



Stephen Klugherz

Klugherz as its global vice president of strategic business development. Klugherz was previously Blastrac's North American vice president of sales.

Klugherz will oversee a concrete polishing market expansion and introduce shot-blasting to the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Aviation Administration. Under his leadership, Blastrac will expand into South Africa and Brazil this summer, and a Blastrac "Center of Excellence" will be established for concrete polishing training in Europe and North America.

Donna Gordon, Blastrac vice president of marketing and national accounts, is now in charge of the entire North American sales organization.

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

## Propex promotes sales manager

Michael Carter has been named southeast regional sales manager for Propex Concrete Systems.

In his new position, Mr. Carter's primary responsibilities include overseeing Propex southeastern territory managers, directing sales and promotional activities of the southeast sales team to support the full fiber-reinforcement product line, and supporting the sales team through key customer and industry involvement. Prior to his promotion, Carter was responsible for sales and promotion of Propex Concrete Systems' full line of concrete reinforcement fibers in the Virginia territory.

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

## School for sealers

The Concrete Countertop Institute has announced the first ever advanced class designed for experienced concrete countertop makers who are having technical difficulties with mixes and sealers. The two-day tutorial, titled "Mixes &



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Sealers 301," teaches scientific principles that will prevent problems and result in more satisfied customers. Led by Institute president Jeff Girard, the inaugural class will be offered July 26-27, 2007, at the Institute training facility in Raleigh, N.C.

Girard, a licensed professional civil engineer, designed the new class to teach students not just rote formulas and procedures, but the engineer-

ing that goes into creating high-performance concrete countertop mixes from local materials and optimizing concrete countertop sealer performance. Girard will explain how he designs the mixes he makes from scratch and the scientific testing procedures he uses to evaluate any new sealer.

The class covers concrete countertop mixes on day one: concrete fundamentals, strength development, curing,

pozzolans, admixtures, aggregate gradation, fibers, all-sand mixes, lightweight concrete and self-consolidating concrete. Hands-on mixing is included, and students receive exact formulas for two different from-scratch concrete countertop mixes. On day two, students learn about concrete countertop sealers: types of penetrating and topical sealers such as densifiers, repellants, acrylics, epoxies and urethanes, how to test the performance properties of sealers, how to set customer expectations for sealers, application methods such as rolling or spraying, and hands-on application of two different commercially available concrete countertop sealing systems.

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## Customers Who Need Handling

**A**s a young man I would watch my grandfather close each deal with a handshake. He would build large projects during the week but would do concrete "side jobs" on Saturday. These weekend homeowner projects created an opportunity for my family to work together. Looking back I can see what a great deal this was for me, because he paid us well, yet took care of the hassles that come with business. I can't remember any written contracts, just a friendly handshake between the decision makers. Actually I recall two handshakes, with the second handshake being the deal sealer, and it was usually followed with something like, "Thanks for the work."

Now that I run my own decorative business I know the last handshake was so much more than a deal sealer. It was about two people that agreed to be respectful and reasonable enough to work through any and all differences. Man, how times have changed. Each year that I add a new article to my contract I realize more and more how we cannot litigate integrity. We must realize that contracts are a necessity to the decorative concrete industry whether we like it or not. Having said that, I will tell you something that a \$400-per-hour lawyer won't: You cannot write a foolproof contract in the decorative industry. It is up to each of us to shake out the buyers to avoid.

We all need new business, but distin-

guishing between reasonable and unreasonable buyers is important. The difference between a deal breaker and an issue that is merely an obstacle can be a loss or profit of thousands of dollars. Sometimes it may come down to a personality compatibility issue. Most forms of decorative concrete are best suited for open-minded buyers.

That said, spotting the buyers to avoid can be a little challenging, so let's look at the worst of the worst and how to spot them.

### Unrealistic Expectations Buyer

By far and away this is the number-one red flag. The buyer with unrealistic expectations must be spotted well before the project starts. Contractors must know the questions to ask that will trigger the red flag and not be afraid to ask them.

Each type of decorative concrete will require different trigger questions. My company specializes in decorative stamping so we have developed questions related to this trade. On my first meeting with the buyer I might ask, "I noticed a few cracks in the city sidewalks on your street.

Have you ever noticed them?" Most folks will reply with something like they never really noticed, or that concrete cracks and they realize this. Beware of the ones that say their new concrete better not crack or that cracks drive them crazy. You have two choices at this point and one will be easier if you left your truck running. The other is to educate your buyer about the fact that concrete cracks, and you will do everything possible to control it but will not guarantee against it. This puts everything back into their court. Make a quick exit if they continue to argue their case. If the education is working then be sure to highlight the cracking disclosure portion of your contract when signing.

For the guys in the business of concrete counters or stained floors, beware of the clients that say phrases like "bulletproof" or "no maintenance," because I know of nothing in this business that doesn't require some form of maintenance or is truly bulletproof. Polished floors may be the closest. Develop a few expectation questions and work them into your first meeting. You're not looking for trouble but simply trying to sort good buyers from bad.

## Something For Nothing Buyer

Luckily, these are easy to spot because all questions seem to be related to cost. Save yourself some time by prequalifying your buyer early on. Avoid the buyers that are looking for five bids before making a decision. Their project will usually go to the contractor that makes a mistake in estimating the project. A good prequalifying question would be, "Completed projects like this have usually run around \$10 per square foot and this area is around 1,200 square feet so we should be in the neighborhood of \$12,000." Watch closely for signs of shock. Be sure to distinguish between the buyer that will not pay that much, even if gold-plated, and the buyer that needs more information to see the value. Some people enjoy the art of negotiation so don't be afraid of friendly bargaining. Most of us like to feel we received a bargain.





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## Undecided Or Unorganized Buyer

I'm not sure which is worse, but both of these will affect your bottom line and patience. The undecided buyer will be easy to spot because they will want to see one more sample, again. I have seen this type even go as far as to want to decide on color as we are coloring the project. A line must be drawn in the sand with these types early on. Let them know you have a short window for scheduling and a decision must be made or you will have to move on.

The unorganized buyer is always too busy and can't seem to make time. This can be a back-breaker if you are relying on these folks to clear a work area or finish a project before your phase of work. Spot this type of buyer early and stress, in writing, that an extra charge will apply if you show up and the job is not ready. Both types make me laugh because they are usually the ones that complain about how long their job is taking to complete. If you have been doing decorative work for awhile you know exactly what I'm talking about.

The one thing all the above types of buyers have in common is that the longer they wait for you to start the project the more their true colors show. Hold their contract unsigned until just prior to starting the project if you have any doubt at all. It is much easier to kick them to the curb if the contract is unsigned.

be best for the overall project. Our project manager spent one to two hours per day on-site justifying what and why. This guy was a royal pain just south of the belt line.

When one slips through the cracks, you generally have only one choice and that is to cut your losses as you finish the project. The best way to gain control is to plan daily job walks with the buyer documenting all talking points of concerns and changes. These will appear to be a waste of time but will pay big dividends at the job's end. The goal is to confront small battles daily to save a war at the job's end. Remember, they are holding your money so it does little good to win the battle but lose the war. Let them see you writing down all items of concern and adding this information to the job file. Be sure to discuss and solve all concerns daily. This will eliminate compounding problems from day to day. Present your job invoice in person as soon as possible after finishing the project. Have the completed job file in hand to eliminate the buyer from resurrecting old complaints. Stand your ground on new issues that were not concerns before. Most of these types of buyers are unhappy with their personal lives and carry it into business.

Move on to your next project and chalk the last one up to a lesson learned. It's all part of doing business regardless of what business we are talking. Sorting through the buyers to avoid is simply a small price for being part of a great industry.

## The Ones That Fall Through The Cracks

Well, these are the ones that make us ask ourselves why we got into the decorative business. A few will weasel past regardless of how hard we attempt to weed them out. My company had a customer recently that sent up a few red flags but we needed the work coming off winter and felt we could control the project. This homeowner had plenty of time on his hands and didn't have a problem reminding our crew of how invasive our type of work was. Our daily progress meetings were spent planning ways to circumvent a sour buyer rather than planning what would

## One last note

There is a growing issue in the decorative concrete industry that is a little concerning. Some unhappy customers are calling multiple contractors for opinions or judgments concerning the quality of work of the installation contractor. This usually turns out to be an expectation issue more than a quality concern. The outcome usually puts all parties in an uncomfortable position as well as creating discontent among competing contractors. My advice is stay out of these situations and let the installation contractor work through it. 📞

Doug Carlton can be reached at [carltondoug@sbcglobal.net](mailto:carltondoug@sbcglobal.net).



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## Relationship Marketing to Grow Your Business

**D**ecades ago our country moved from an industrial economy to a service-based economy. More recently, that service-based economy has further evolved into an experience-based economy. Customers are wanting — and businesses are providing — an added experience and feel to complement customer service. This added feel has given “company branding” a more comprehensive meaning. Branding is no longer just a logo; it is the thought that is seared in someone’s mind when they think of your company and services. At the heart of every experience is a relationship.

Everything that your company does must be designed to establish and maintain relationships. It is not enough to provide service that is timely, accurate and available. To capitalize on this opportunity, you should consider formalizing your relationship marketing plan. Relationship-building in your community will be imperative to creating that good brand.

There are many different types of relationship marketing. We’ll discuss networking groups, community organizations and sponsoring charitable events.


The first step is to join a “leads group,” or networking group. Though this may be outside your comfort zone, there are many different types of leads groups available for you to join. One example is BNI (Business Network International). BNI is the world’s largest business referral organization, with chapters around the world. It provides an environment in which you can develop powerful relationships with dozens of qualified business professionals. Joining networking groups can be tricky because different memberships can produce vastly different results. Interview some of a group’s current members before you join. Make sure that, as you give, you also get. Don’t be afraid to make a switch the minute you sense that being a part of the group will not be beneficial.

Additionally, consider forming your own “business alliance.” We’ve seen alliances of home service providers work very well. A home service provider alliance is a group of contractors and other businesses, taken from a wide range of trades, that provides services directly to homeowners. Recruit a reputable plumber, electrician, builder and so forth to be part of your group. Create service standards that make the group known as the best of the best. Be sure to actively use each other’s services. Create a logo and

market the group. Make sure your best customers are using the group’s services, and likewise with other members.

Community organizations are another great activity that can add to the brand image of your company. The key is to pick an organization and get involved. Don’t join only to attend meetings. Join a committee and make a contribution. In this environment, serve yourself by serving others. Working with groups in committees will not only build strong relationships and increase your potential return, but may also help you develop the essential leadership skills needed in your company. Some potential community groups that need you include Kiwanis, Rotary, and your local Chamber of Commerce.

Sponsorships and charitable giving can often be an undercapitalized activity. The more your company gets involved in “do-good” activities, the more people you’ll meet and the more people will want to buy from you. Consider sponsoring a road race or a walk that benefits a charity. Consider getting your employees together to paint a community center. A lot of companies give to charity in the form of donated work and time, but do their customers know about it? If you organize a charity day, make sure that your good deed does not go unnoticed. Talk to people about it. Invite loyal customers to attend. Ask a local deli to donate lunch. Promote the experience and include as many different groups as necessary. Contact your local newspaper and TV news team to capitalize on the trend of “good news reporting.”

Finally, let’s talk about where to start. One of the best things you can do right now is to document the 100 people you know that can help you succeed. This is your “inner circle” of relationships. Be sure to include significant customers and employees. Next, systematically go through the list, taking advantage of every opportunity. Make a plan to stay in touch with your inner circle via e-mails, thank-you notes and phone calls. Use the relationships you develop for your own good as well as for others. Respect the relationships and know your boundaries. 

*Brian Nolan is managing partner of Nolan Consulting Group Inc. and Andrew Amrhein is an associate with the company. Located in Havertown, Pa., the company works with contractors nationwide, assisting them in achieving profitable growth through planning and implementing business systems that lead to more consistent and predictable results.*



## An Oasis in the Hills: Griffiths Home, New Braunfels, Texas

It is said that necessity is the mother of invention, and this rings true in many situations where a new decorative concrete technique is born out of a difficult situation. Whether it's a tight timeline or budget, finding a new way around the same old thing makes all the difference.

In a recent project at the Griffiths home, a colorful house located in New Braunfels, Texas, Details Decorative Concrete employed a technique they'd previously developed themselves. The company has created and developed many decorative concrete projects from scratch, but this home was different: It contained many interior decorative concrete surfaces already in place, in-

cluding floors, tub and shower, but all of them needed to be refurbished in order to reflect the client's tastes. The typical techniques used when starting from scratch weren't going to work.

"The floors in the home were plain-Jane stained concrete," explains Details Decorative Concrete owner Melissa Cuthbert. "And the owner just hated them. She's eclectic, loves bright colors, and needed the surfaces to correspond with the movement on the walls and throughout the house."

The home's rusty-orange floors and deer antler chandelier, among other features, were typical of the hill-country Texas region. The new homeowner was an attorney who had relocated to



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the area and wanted something more imaginative and less in line with the local vernacular. She had already personalized the home with a huge, colorful mural and festively painted walls throughout, and was in search of a company that could come in and refinish her concrete floors to match. After speaking with just about every concrete finisher in the area and being told that she was stuck with how her existing floors were finished, she finally stumbled upon Details Decorative Concrete. Cuthbert's interior design background suited her to create surfaces that tied in with and enhanced the home's newly creative décor, but it was her ability to refinish the already stained concrete that made her a perfect fit.

Several years ago, on a particularly challenging project, Cuthbert developed a technique that allowed dye and sealer to be applied together to already-finished concrete floors, creating a new finish on top of the old. Contracted by a local television station that was redecorating a set over a weekend, she faced



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an impossible deadline and minimal working time. Because the set needed to be ready for filming on Monday, contractors were given only two hours each over the weekend to finish their respective projects. When Cuthbert and her team arrived to finish the concrete floors, they discovered the set's floor had been sealed every year for more than 40 years. It couldn't be stripped, so they had to find another way to seal it with a new finish. They decided to mix dye in with the sealer and spray it on together. After applying several coats, it worked and the new finish stuck. What this told them, says Cuthbert, was that they could take concrete that couldn't be stained and actually create a new look. They called the mixture of dye and sealant "intensifier."

Fast-forward several years to the house in Texas. The technique allowed Cuthbert to take the boring plain-Jane floors and create a something new.

The client gave Cuthbert creative license to rejuvenate the floors in whatever way she saw fit. She started by stripping the concrete floors through-

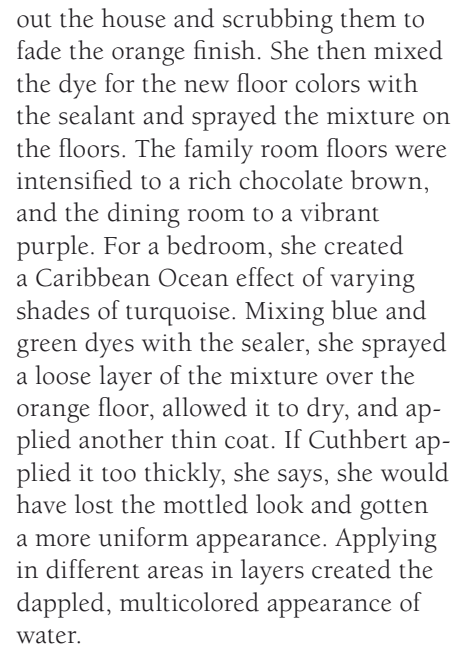


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For the foyer, Cuthbert wanted the floor to match the large mural, so she painted a large, brightly colored sun

A photograph of a wooden door with intricate painted decorations. The door features two panels, each with a central diamond motif and four corner motifs, all enclosed in a decorative border. The floor is highly reflective, showing the door and the surrounding environment.



## Project Profile

What is certain, however, is that new techniques are still evolving out of unique situations, allowing for homes to be rejuvenated and customized with much less work than would normally be expected. 🛠️

whose rays extend down the stairs. For stairs leading to the kitchen, she created a hacienda style with a tile effect by scoring the concrete for decoration before staining and dying differing colors. Using the intensifier, refinishing all the floors in the entire home took only about four days.

Cuthbert says that since discovering the intensifying technique, her crew uses it on about 75 percent of their projects.

“Acid stain does what it wants to do on concrete; you have very little control,” she explains. “We sell this technique as ‘We can do what you want, as opposed to acid stain which is less controllable.’ The intensifier just provides such consistent color.”

Cuthbert also says it works great on surprise spots on floors that won’t take color for one reason or another. Because it’s so good for blending trouble spots and mistakes, it can be used on just about any project at any time.

When approaching a project with intensifier, Cuthbert says, do a wax test first, regardless of what the client says has been done to the floors, because you never know if they have the floor’s whole story. If the intensifier is applied over wax, it will curdle and ruin the finish. She also says to be sure to use a quality sprayer and hose — the acetone in the dye can eat through a hose, causing it to unexpectedly break and spew dye. Also, they’ve found that because the dye usually doesn’t contain a UV protectant, the finish’s color can fade if used outdoors. They have experimented by putting several layers of clear-coat with UV protectant on some outdoor projects, and while it appears to work, the long-term effectiveness is still unknown.

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# Michael Littlefield Custom Concrete Design Wells, Maine



Photos courtesy of Custom Concrete Design



by Stacey Enesey Klemenc

**M**ichael Littlefield's first close encounter with concrete happened in the spring of 1980 when he was just 5 years old. His family was building a new house, he remembers, and he was mesmerized by the goings on of the concrete contractors as they poured the garage floor.

"I had never seen anything like it. I was fascinated with how the concrete flowed out of the truck," he says.

For the rest of the day, he kept sneaking back to check on the floor. "I kept touching it with my fingers as it set. I suppose it was a little obsessive," the Maine native admits, adding: "Not much has changed."

Back then, just like now, once he touched the liquid stone, he couldn't keep his hands off of it. Today, he is the owner of Custom Concrete Design, a company he founded in Wells, Maine, almost 10 years ago.





## Finding his niche

When Littlefield was 15, he worked for his older brother's flatwork company doing pool surrounds, garages and basement floors. He continued the job in the ensuing summers and during college breaks, mastering the basic skills.

After two years of studying business finance at the University of Maine, he decided he wasn't cut out for a white-collar job, being that he was, as he says, "more of a hands-on type of guy." Rather than immediately returning to work for his brother, he decided to commemorate the break and spend some of his hard-earned

money on a backpacking trip to Australia and New Zealand.

Four months later when he returned home to Maine, Littlefield was up for another challenge. While again working for his brother, he discovered decorative concrete was in demand and no one in the area near his small town in the coastal Northeast was offering those services. "I had been around the product enough to know what was lacking in the industry, so I decided to break away and try something creative and new," he says.

Before starting his own business in 1998, he was fortunate to be invited to Illinois to work with a company that spe-

cialized in stamped concrete, and lucky enough to be coached by one of the masters, Steve Johnson, before Johnson went to work for Solomon Colors. "He's helped me out of a lot of jams over the years," Littlefield says, adding: "When first getting into the industry, I highly recommend having a mentor — someone who has seen and dealt with it all."

## Getting down to business

In addition to Custom Concrete Design — Littlefield's company that specializes in stamped concrete — there's Melange Studio, which Littlefield founded in 2006 so he could transition his



business away from stamping and into interior applications, furniture and decor. Melange offers creations such as concrete countertops, tables, lampposts, sinks, fountains and fireplace surrounds for residential and commercial applications. “Every piece is one of a kind,” Littlefield says.

He set up this new business because he was getting tired of the repetition of stamped concrete. “Stamping in the Northeast has taken its toll on my body. I needed to pursue a creative outlet that allowed me to work year-round and gave me the freedom to explore the product in a controlled environment.”

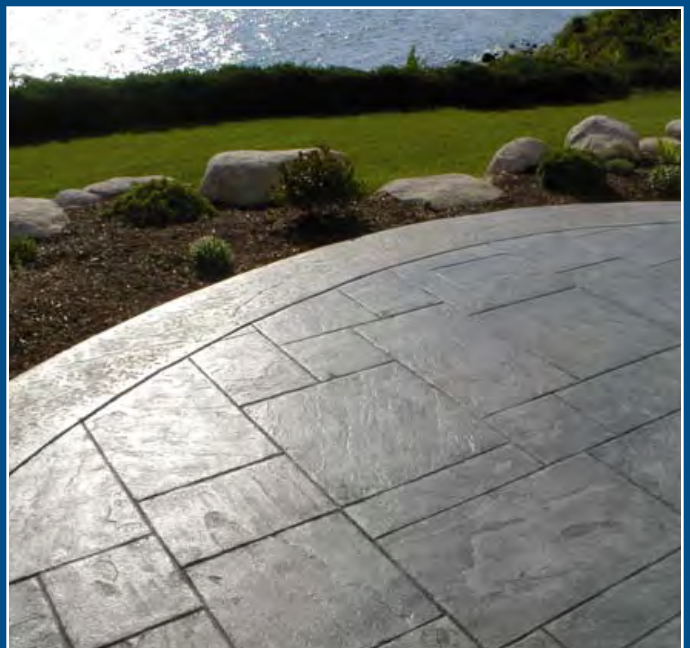
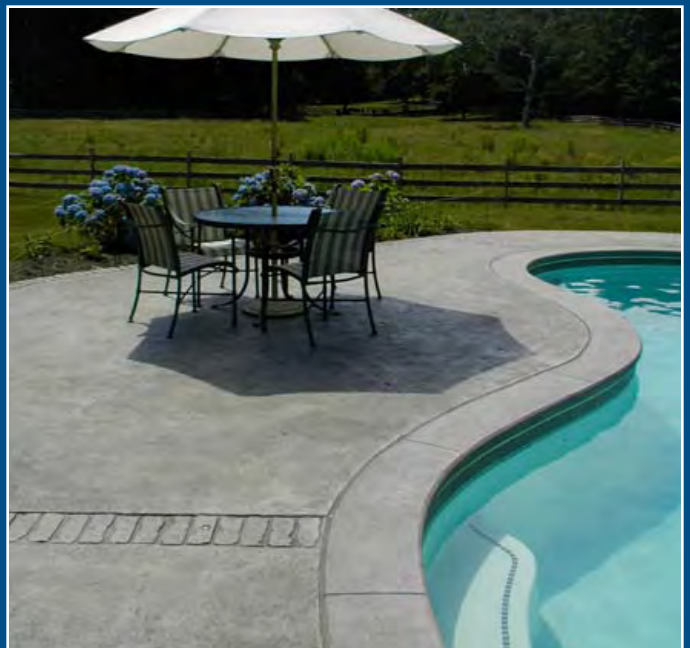
Littlefield says his companies were founded on the philosophy that in nature, all matter takes unique and individual forms. He strives to translate that into all of his work. “I’m fascinated with the idea of building something original, indestructible and incredibly unattainable by the means of the average individual,” he says. “Thought, meaning and permanence, that’s the level of work I want to do — that’s the mark I want to leave.”

His goal now is to create products that are more natural-looking, with less of a synthetic finish. “I want my designs to show movement and flow — to represent the product’s mostly organic com-

position,” he says. “I’m trying to get away from making concrete look like something it’s not and, rather, celebrating it for what it is.”

Creating furniture is really rewarding, he says, and it allows him to really push the limits of what concrete can do. “I really enjoy creating the illusion of mass, like coffee tables that look mammoth. Though they are heavy, our creative mold-making techniques actually make them quite manageable.”

Between both businesses, Littlefield employs between two and five employees. “We keep it small because I’m on every job and I’m limited to how many places I



can be at one time. This has hindered the growth of the business,” he admits. “But it’s hard for me to let go and allow someone else to do the work.”

The work will be hard, he continues, but challenging and rewarding. “You’re in for a beating and you will have to make sacrifices,” he says, adding there are days he’s so involved that he doesn’t take breaks or stop to eat so he can finish a project.

He also offers this advice to those just getting started in the business: “Be sure to have a good accountant, a great lawyer and an amazing masseuse.”

## A complex relationship

Littlefield describes his relationship with concrete as complex. “There are times that we argue,” he explains. “Sometimes it doesn’t want to cooperate with me. When I think I have a handle on the product, it surprises me once again. When I think I’ve finally got it figured out, then something goes wrong and some new obstacle arises. Concrete is a very rewarding product to work with, and I’m not satisfied unless we’re getting along.”

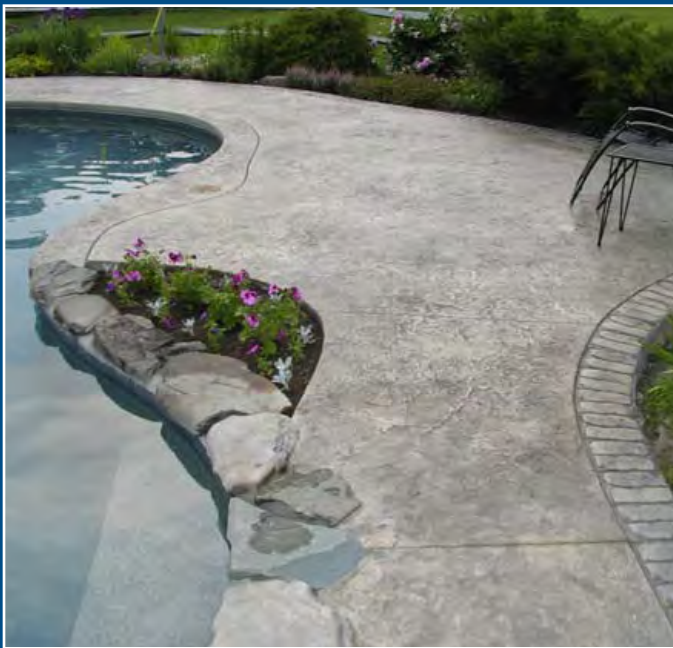
In many ways, Littlefield continues, he feels like he’s competing with concrete

— almost as if he’s in a race. Sometimes, he’s just trying to keep up with it. Other times he’s trying to get ahead of it.

And still other times, he’s trying to conquer it, trying to make it do something it hasn’t done before, trying to make it take a shape that’s out of its comfort zone.

Over the years, the relationship has mellowed. “I’m much more relaxed when the truck pulls in than in the past,” he says. “I used to feel very anxious.”

The night before a job, he recalls, he’d lie in bed trying to figure out how he was going to pull off doing some huge section that had to be done in one pour, and he



wouldn't be able to sleep until he came up with a solution.

But then he came to grips with a fact experienced concrete workers accept. "There's no constant in this industry," he says. "Every job is different and there are always varying obstacles to overcome."

And one way or another, he always finds a way to overcome those obstacles.

Working with concrete, says Littlefield, has kept his life interesting. "It's all I know; it's all I've ever done," he explains. "I'm always trying something new, and I'm never totally satisfied. What other product gives you that freedom? The freedom to continue to progress and evolve?" 📱



# Choices in Fiber Reinforcement

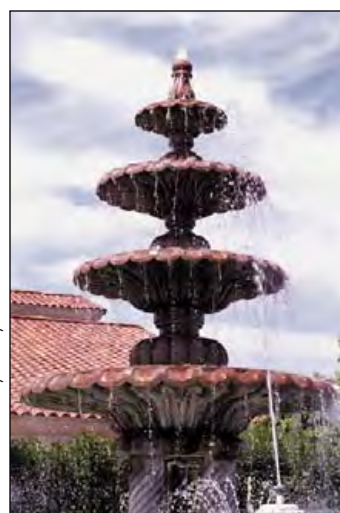
by Loretta Hall



Fiber reinforcement protects concrete in two ways. Mainly, it minimizes cracking from plastic shrinkage that occurs as the concrete dries during the first 24 hours after placement. Also, it helps hold the concrete together if cracks develop after the concrete has hardened. Several types of fibers are available for decorative concrete applications.

## Polypropylene

Sandy Stewart, marketing manager for Propex Concrete Systems, recommends her company's Fibermesh 150 product. "It's a microsynthetic monofilament, or single-strand, fiber," she says. "The reason you would use a monofilament fiber is for finishing and aesthetics."



Photos courtesy of Nycon Inc.

The fibers are compatible with regular finishing techniques, and any fibers that might appear on the surface would be worn away by foot or vehicle traffic, according to Propex brochures. Typically applied at a rate of 1 pound per cubic yard of concrete, Fibermesh prevents 80 to 100 percent of all plastic-state cracks. The company's patented e3 technology produces varying lengths and thicknesses of fibers. Stewart says this helps distribute the fibers throughout the concrete,

much like graded aggregate improves distribution.

"Our fiber is a mechanical aid," says Don Smith, senior corporate technical advisor for Propex. "We don't disrupt or change hydration, or affect many of the other hardened concrete properties." The fibers have been used in many kinds of decorative work, including stamped, patterned and colored concrete, plus overlays and toppings. Smith says polypropylene doesn't react with acids that are typically used for cleaning or staining concrete. And although he is not aware of a project using the fibers in stenciling, Smith believes there would be no problem with that application. "Our fibers wouldn't do anything to interrupt concrete-to-concrete bonds," he says.

Fibermesh is sold in water-soluble bags that can be tossed directly into the concrete while it's being mixed, either at the plant or at the job site. "It's easier if they're added at the plant," Stewart says. "We sell through ready-mix companies, so if

someone's ordering concrete, they just order it with the fibers." She said the cost varies across the country, but that it is small in comparison to the concrete it will protect.

## Nylon

Nycon Inc. manufactures a variety of concrete reinforcing fibers, but for use in decorative concrete, Nycon president Bob Cruso generally recommends nylon fiber products. "The nylon fibers don't leave any residual fiber on the surface, so you can actually finish it as you would plain concrete," he says. "You have to take more care with a polypropylene-type fiber. You have to be sure the concrete's not too wet, because then you may have fibers coming to the surface and balling up while you're brooming or troweling it."

One reason nylon fibers don't rise to the surface during finishing is that they absorb water. This moisture gain enhances hydration of the cement particles that are adjacent to the individual fibers, increasing the bond between the mortar and the fiber. As a result, the mortar encapsulates the fibers, keeping them from being exposed during finishing. Another factor that makes nylon fibers less likely to float to the surface is that their specific gravity is 1.16, compared with 0.91 for polypropylene fibers.

Nylon fibers absorb coloring added to concrete, and acid staining doesn't damage the fibers. "The acid stain is going to be on the surface, and the fiber will be just below the surface," Cruso says.

Unlike polypropylene, nylon fibers are resistant to ultraviolet (UV) light. "Fibers are there to stop the cracking, but if a crack does occur, they're there to hold the concrete together after it cracks," Cruso says. If cracks occur, sunlight can penetrate through them and reach subsurface fibers. Nycon literature reports that after 500 hours of UV exposure, nylon retains 95 percent of its breaking strength, but polypropylene retains only 2 percent of its strength.

Cruso cautions against adding the fibers at the job site. "Ready-mixers are the manufacturer of the concrete product. If you start adding ingredients to the ready-mix truck on the job site, you may lose any warranty that might be available from the ready-mix producer."

The application rate for nylon fibers is typically about 1 pound per cubic yard of concrete. "Depending on the market and what part of the country you're in, the fibers would add somewhere in the range of \$5 to \$10 per cubic yard," Cruso says.

Nylon fibers are somewhat more expensive than polypropylene. For instance, Concrete Fibers Inc., another manufacturer, charges 25 percent more for its nylon fibers than for its polypropylene product.



## Fiberglass

Nycon also produces glass fibers, which company literature says are used to "enhance the life span and serviceability of concrete flatwork, precast products (and) architectural/decorative surfaces." However, Cruso generally does not recommend them for decorative concrete. "Because it's a stiffer fiber, it has a tendency to stick up through the surface," he says, "whereas the nylon doesn't do that because it's a much more pliable material."

## Steel

Fibercon International manufactures steel reinforcing fibers for concrete. Its literature says adding steel fibers increases the flexural strength of mortar or portland cement concrete 25 percent to 100 percent, depending on the proportion of fibers added and the mix design. Application rates range from 20 pounds to 120 pounds per cubic yard of concrete.


"We don't do a whole lot with decorative concrete," says Keith Foley, Fibercon's vice president for sales and marketing. But when steel fibers will be used, he advises choosing the stainless steel variety to avoid discoloration from rust.

Because steel fibers are stiff, finishing must be done carefully to keep them from being exposed. Sometimes, exposure can be a plus. "At World of Concrete, we get some people who are doing countertops," Foley says, "and they use a stainless fiber and then they go back and sand it down and get some shininess from the fibers."


## Proven technology

"Propex has been in the fiber reinforcement business over twenty years, and has more than 25 billion square feet of concrete placed out there," Stewart says, "so it's definitely proven performance."




Likewise, Nycon fibers have been used in concrete for almost 20 years.

It is important to use fibers that have been specifically designed for reinforcing concrete, Cruso notes. 

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# countertop Maintenance



Photos courtesy of Buddy Rhodes Studio

by Christina Camara

**T**he growing popularity of concrete countertops has prompted manufacturers to upgrade their sealers, making them more stain-resistant, scratch-proof and easier to maintain than ever.

But while decorative concrete contractors may find it easy to promote custom concrete countertops these days, questions about food preparation, FDA ratings and safety may not be resolved so easily.

Contractors should be sure they can answer these fundamental concerns as concrete countertops become more commonplace in America's kitchens. As always, job number one is to understand the products you're working with: how they perform, how they stand up over time, and how they can be maintained.

"There is no ideal sealer because there are always trade-offs," says Lane Mangum of the Raleigh, N.C.-based Concrete Countertop Institute. She cites performance, stain resistance, aesthetics, ease of application and cost as some of the factors a contractor must consider.

"If you're able to offer a wide range of performance capabilities, you're able

to reach a wider customer base," Mangum says.

Contractors who want a natural look often opt for a penetrating sealer, but penetrating sealers won't repel stains as well as others do. A stain-resistant sealer may be more prone to scratching, and they tend to be time-consuming and tricky to apply, Mangum says. Some concrete countertops can be cleaned with bleach; others can't.

Concrete countertop expert Buddy Rhodes, of Buddy Rhodes Studio in San Francisco, has been experimenting with sealers for years. All have their pros and cons. He has settled on using a penetrating sealer, then a water-based topical sealer that provides a satin finish rather than a high-gloss sheen. A beeswax paste is the "sacrificial" coating on top of that.

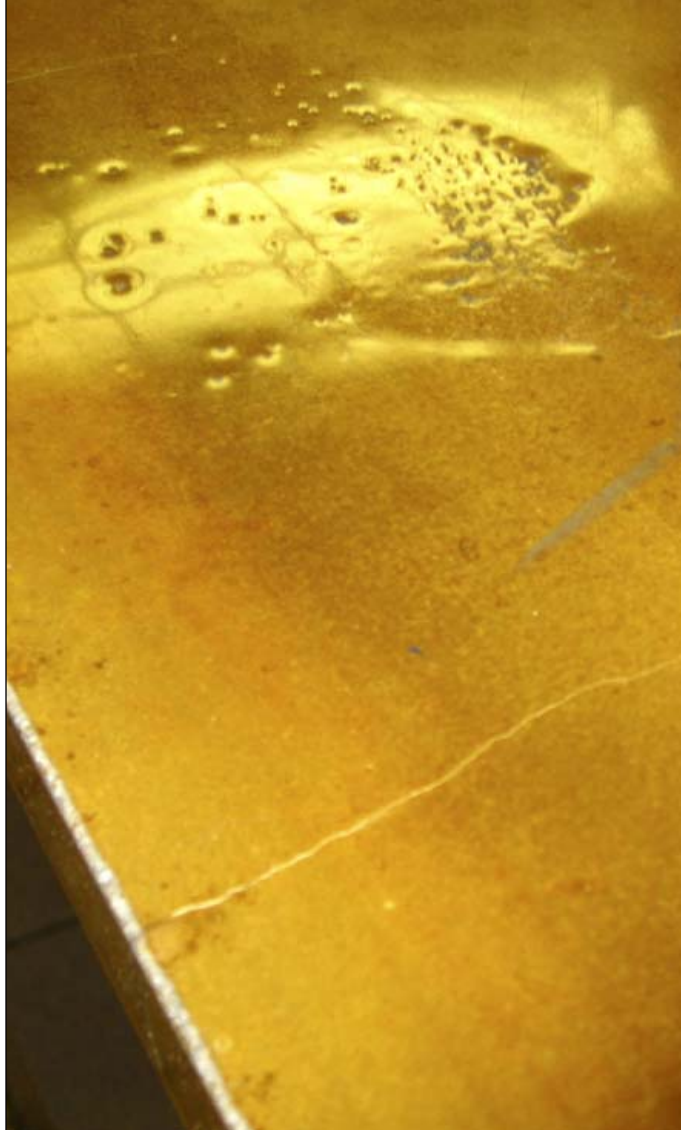
"There are stronger sealers out there, but they take a long time to set up and they're hard to apply and they're toxic," he says. "So this one's a nice balance — it's easy to apply and friendly to the homeowners."

Rhodes offers three finishes: a "hard-troweled" finish, in which the

A close-up photograph of a light-colored, textured concrete countertop. In the background, a bouquet of yellow tulips with green leaves is placed on the surface. The word "nance" is overlaid in a large, green, outlined font.

# nance

Photo courtesy of Buddy Rhodes Studio



trowel marks are left on the surface, a “pressed” finish, which is made with a mold that leaves voids that are filled with one or more colors, and a “ground” finish, where the troweled surface is ground away exposing the aggregate beneath.

He says maintenance is basically the same for all three finishes. He recommends homeowners apply his food-grade beeswax topping every month or two to protect the sealer, prevent stains and provide a pleasant patina. Also, clean up spills quickly and use a cutting board because the sealer is not completely scratch-proof, he says.

Brad Berg of Architectural Enhancements of Montgomery, Minn., says he offers a countertop mix that has high portland-cement and polymer content, making it very tight and nonporous, “so when you trowel it off, it has a sheen to it on its own without being polished,” he says. “Even without a sealer it’s really resistant.”

He says contractors tend to have their favorites, but he’s a believer in using a thin but strong layer of epoxy topped with a urethane with performance capabilities of 10,000 psi to provide a scratch-proof sheen (matte or gloss) that resists stains from coffee, ketchup, wine and other foods. “With the proper sealers, they’re almost bulletproof,” he says.

But are they safe? The Food and Drug Administration doesn’t approve sealers per se, but it does offer FDA ratings for sealers. Nancy Pierson, CEO of Sound Specialty Coatings

Corp., a manufacturer of environmentally safe sealants, paint and other products, says customers should ask whether a product complies with FDA rating standards. For example, her company’s Aquaply FDA Sealant is rated under FDA 21 CFR 175.300, which covers resinous and polymeric coatings, and 21 CFR 176.170.

“If they can’t answer that question, either demand that they make it food-safe, or go to Google and find a product that is,” she says. That goes not just for the sealants, but the colorants too.

Pierson recalls fielding a call from a contractor using Thompson’s Water Seal on a concrete countertop. “You can’t even use that inside, much less on a countertop.” She’s also heard of people using silicone sealants, which are a no-no in a food environment.

There are plenty of safe products that perform well, she adds; it’s all a matter of education. “You don’t have to give up artistry for the sake of food safety. You can have beauty and you can have functionality, and it can also be food-safe.”

Jeffrey Girard, president of The Concrete Countertop Institute, wrote in a blog on Concretenetwork.com that there is “no easy answer” for sealers. “High-performance solvent-based sealers can be the least environmentally friendly because most of them contain volatile organic compounds. Many manufacturers have come out with water-based sealers, but these seal-

ers tend to be less effective and more problematic than their solvent-based counterparts.”

He also wrote that fears about countertops being unsanitary are unfounded. The surface should have no pinholes or voids that can trap dirt, food or other debris. Sealers provide a waterproof barrier, and some sealers are enhanced with antimicrobial products that prevent bacteria from surviving on the surface.

Concrete countertops can also stand up to common kitchen situations, but as always, it's important to know what products perform the best. Sometimes, common sense is needed. If you cut directly on a concrete countertop, you're likely to scratch the surface and dull your knife. Use a cutting board. A hot pot may cause cracking or yellowing of the sealer. Some sealers can tolerate more heat than others. Trivets are recommended.

With concrete countertop work going for \$100 a square foot, it's critical for contractors to know their stuff. Some look at what they can charge and think countertops are easy money. But Mangum points out that floors are one thing, countertops are quite another. “The precision required is an order of magnitude different,” she says.

Because the concrete countertop industry is relatively young, it pays for contractors to differentiate themselves from the crowd by providing references, samples of work and product tests under a number of different conditions.


“They're countertops first,” Mangum says. “They happen to be made out of a wonderful, versatile material — concrete — but they need to perform like countertops.” 



Photo courtesy of Buddy Rhodes Studio



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Wild Mustangs Stamp from Proline Concrete Tools.

# Border Tools and



Floral Corner Design from Art Stamped Concrete.

by Sue Marquette Poremba

**T**he decorative concrete business has given home and property owners the opportunity to develop an aesthetically pleasing, yet durable, look outside their buildings. Steve Cook, sales and marketing manager at Kraft Tool Co., knows border tools are a big part of that look.

"A lot of people are looking for a nice border around a driveway or patio with a color concrete," Cook says. "That's what I find most people are looking for. Think of wallpaper with a border. It's the same type of thought."

In the mid-1980s, Matcrete was one of the first companies to offer soldier-course border tools for straights. A soldier course is a row of bricks or cobblestones laid long side against long side or in a stacked fashion. "Border tools have evolved from banding tools like our brick, stone and cobblestone designs into imprinting ballerinas or cowboys and Indians into a surface," says Kris Kaitanjan, senior vice president of Matcrete.

One of Matcrete's most popular and well-known border tools is the Classic Stone, which comes in a 9-

inch by 36-inch or 18-inch by 36-inch tool. "The Classic Stone is a consortium of broken pieces of earth and rock," says Kaitanjan. "It has a unique appearance that only a border can get away with. It works very well as a detectable warning for vehicular traffic and maintains an organic look."

Larry Freeman, the vice president of sales at Proline Concrete Tools, says his company's most popular border tools are the Hammered Edge Grapevine, Dolphins, Fleur-de-lis, Acanthus Leaf, and Wild Mustangs. The Wild Mustangs are among Proline's newest borders, along with Tropical Fish.

Cook says Kraft Tool has not introduced any new border tools recently, but the company does sell a variety of single and double edgers, some with groovers.

When it comes to patterns on the



# Designs



Thunderbird Border Design featuring the Thunderbird and Diamond stamps from Art Stamped Concrete.

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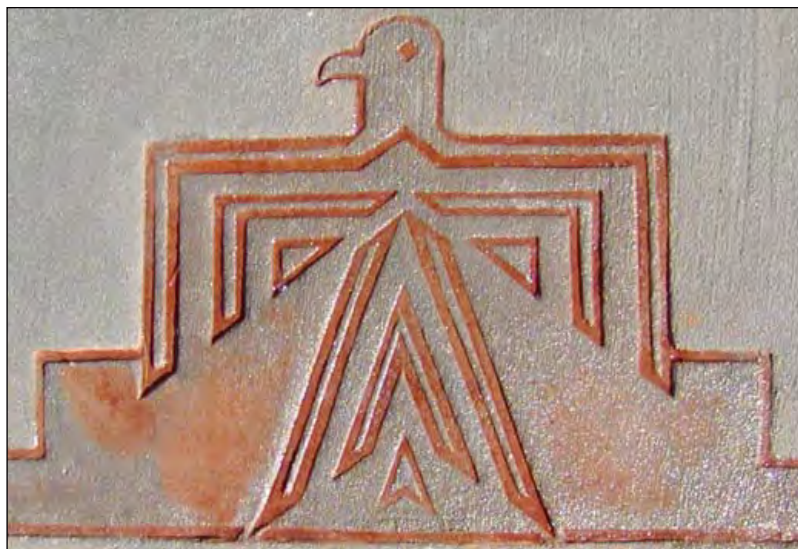
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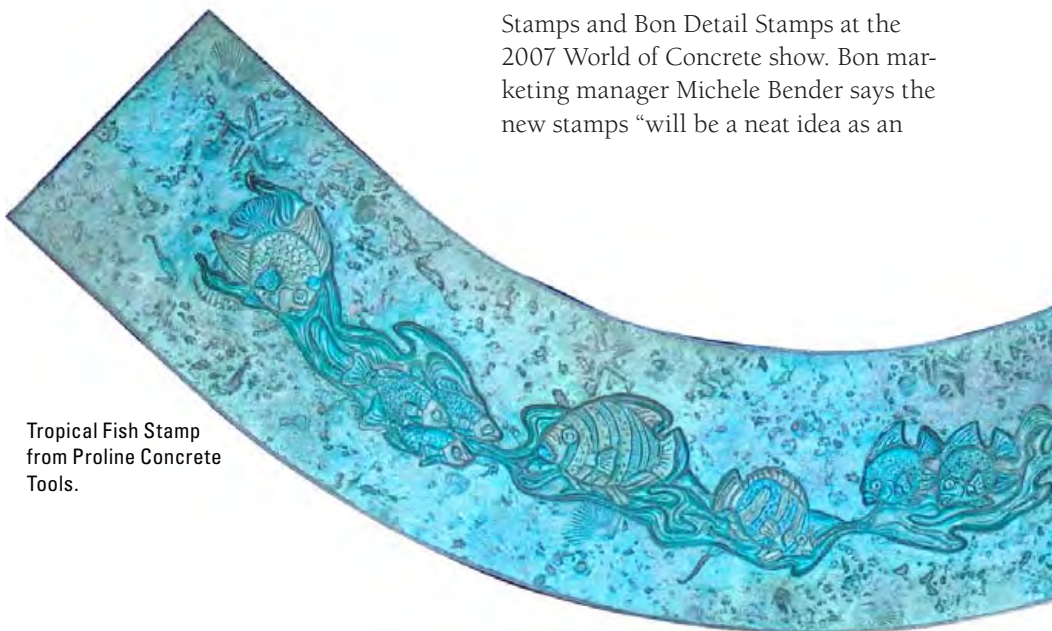
concrete, there is no right or wrong answer when deciding whether to use repetitive or abstract patterns. Cook says he thinks that while repetitive patterns look better on long lengths of concrete, "it depends on the job and the look you want."

"It depends on the imagination and creativity of the owner," says Freeman. "While a repeating border like the grapevine or the Mustangs would impress many, as well as be very easy to use on a long run, the more imaginative individual would probably want to incorporate our individual accent pieces like the butterfly, dragonfly, hummingbird or moose. They are the right size to work around any of Proline's decorative border tools."

In addition to the borders, the stamps are vital to creating the right look and pattern.

"We introduced miter stamps and radius tools for decorating the corners of the borders where the soldier courses were used or half rounds were desired ... so that a border would not just start and stop but have a continuous flow and maintain a free form," says Kaitanjan. "Those stamps were created to eliminate the inevitable symptoms of laid brick, cobbles and pavers when used alongside a different field pattern." At Matcrete, the stamps are made so the look of the concrete resembles natural materials in both traditional styles and contemporary patterns.

Stamps continue to evolve. Bon Tool Co. introduced new Border Concrete Stamps and Bon Detail Stamps at the 2007 World of Concrete show. Bon marketing manager Michele Bender says the new stamps "will be a neat idea as an



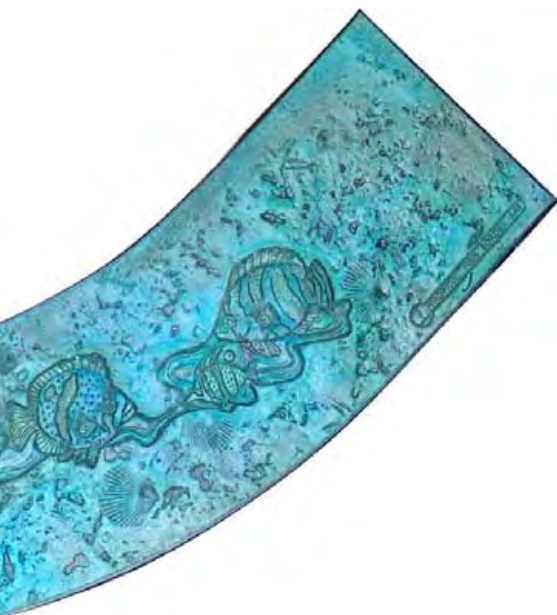
Tropical Fish Stamp  
from Proline Concrete  
Tools.



Diamond Stamp from Art Stamped Concrete.

alternative to the natural brick and stone look of traditional stamps."

The type of look desired may also have something to do with geographic area. "European markets seem to be using the very traditional ashlar, Appian and cobblestone styles," says Freeman of Proline. "The U.S. market seems very similar. However, the Random Stone, Belgium Slate and Random Boardwalk are all good sellers. Casinos seem to be big on the seamless texture mats. The Wild Mustangs are big, of course, in horse country, and the Tropical Fish border as well as the Coquina With Shells are big in the coastal states." 📱



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**D**ecorative concrete artists have become quite creative in using acid stains, water-based stains, dyes and paints on concrete. Acid stains offer the most earth-like, weathered and warm colors. However, because of their iron oxide base, acid stains are available only in a limited color palette — earth tones. For a virtually unlimited palette, there are water-based acrylic stains. Dyes, too, come in more or less any color, with the exception of white.

Depending on whom you talk to, however, there can be some challenges with acrylic stains and dyes. While water-based stains eliminate the problem of neutralizing acid stain residue, some contractors express concerns about acrylics peeling in some conditions. Others are concerned about the colors of dyes fading with UV exposure, even though some dye products are said to be UV-resistant. Acid stains, for their part, are known for their color permanence.

Experienced contractors wisely spend time talking to the manufacturers of different colorant products about where and how they should be applied. Even in the same product category, there are differences in products across manufacturers. And while some decorative concrete artists may prefer to use only acid stains, others mix and match products with great results.

The real fun with stains and dyes is in the creation of special effects. Just look at some of the effects shown in the photos accompanying this article. If you're wondering, "How'd they do that?" you'll enjoy this sampling of tips and tricks from some clever and talented decorative concrete artists and experts from across the country.

# Special Effects Wit



Photos courtesy of Brad Berg



*With the range of products* available today, artisans in the decorative and faux markets have almost unlimited design capabilities. Years ago, five or 10 colors were the norm and you could make variations from there. Now artisans demand 50 or more colors to make their combinations.

There are many ways to achieve creative effects on concrete. There are so many options now. We have a neutral gel that can be used in stains, colorants or dyes so you would apply your colored gel in the designs, then apply color to the entire surface for vivid effects. You can also reverse the process for deep rich colors.

For logos or veins a large syringe filled with dyes or stains will give a lot of control for spectacular effects; air-powered is another option. Vinyl stencils and antiquing are very popular this year. Stain or dye your entire floor, put down your stencils, take Tru Blue and adjust your color, then pull your stencil for a custom antique floor.

**Brad Berg, Architectural Enhancements,  
Lake Crystal, Minn.**



Photo courtesy of Tamryn Doolan

# th Concrete Stains

***Tips and tricks that will help artisans get creative***

*We developed a different technique* for stenciling that does not require sandblasting. We call it “flattooning,” and it uses a gelled acid for the etching. The method works equally well on horizontal and vertical surfaces.

I’m able to achieve the effects I get by laying down a background of acid stain and then using multiple colors — acid stains, acrylics, water-based colorants, dyes — whatever I need to get the required effect. As I add colors I seal the ones below to protect them from the next steps. I keep a cloth handy to wipe or blot any extraneous drips or extraneous brush strokes on the sealed areas. I use brushes to apply the color — the more detailed the coloring, the higher quality brush I use.

I almost always use acrylics with acid stains when doing trademarks and logos. I also use pigmented acid stains, Smith Paints and acrylic colors to achieve all the effects we’re looking for. There’s no one system that works for every project. Find the system that works for you and make it happen!

**Tamryn Doolan, Surface Gel Tek,  
Mesa, Ariz.**



Photo courtesy of Tamryn Doolan



Photo courtesy of Gaye Goodman

*We prefer acid stains because* of their transparency and depth. We like to use techniques borrowed from watercolor artists. We lay thin painter's plastic dropcloths into the wet stain either wall to wall or in "rivers" across the floor and leave it down during the entire cure time. Gases well up from the slab during the reaction; this lifts areas of the plastic, creating negative spaces. Hence you get wonderful organic patterns which resemble dragonfly wings or mottled leaves. Plastic also helps to ease color transitions when you are mixing two stain colors on the slab wet-into-wet.

Any absorbent natural material can be soaked in a darker color of stain, drained in a plastic colander, and laid or sprinkled onto the original stained background color. Our current favorites are straw and alfalfa, which give calligraphic effects.

We often use artist's acrylic paints to faux-paint over bucket rings and stain blotches where the floor has been patched. We mix the paint with clear gel medium and dab it on with a sea sponge in thin layers to keep the multicolored effect of the stained floor. We can also "shift" the entire color of the floor in one direction or another by adding artist's acrylic paints to our clear water-based sealer for the first few coats.

**Gaye Goodman, Faux Real,  
Albuquerque, N.M.**



Photo courtesy of Bob Harris

*On a regular basis we* use acid stains, water-based stains and dyes.

With acid stains we'll often use a resist — a clear sealer — that we apply with a sea sponge or rag, then come over it with the stain. We'll also use eyedroppers to bleed stain upon wet stain.

With dyes, use an HVLP sprayer. We use torn paper edges for veins, waves and other effects.

You can use a variety of faux finish techniques with water-based acrylics: ragging on and off, sponging on and off, blending, bleeding, layering, and more. You have more time to work with water-based acrylics.

We also frequently combine methods. For example, apply an acid stain as a base color and then clean, and for more color contrast or intensity consider using an acrylic stain or a dye or a combination of the two.

Other effects techniques include ripping old bed linens into strips and applying them wet or dry onto wet stains, sprinkling kitty litter or rock salt on a wet stain to draw the stain to it; or scattering aluminum shavings on acid stain for a chemical reaction.

**Bob Harris, Decorative Concrete Institute,  
Temple, Ga.**

*For versatility, I make a* lot of my own acid stains. I re-search old formulas from the 1930s and 1940s. I like acid stains because they don't fade or peel. They have permanency and they are fun to work with.

I'm more of a subtle user of effects. I use a lot of water. I wet the surface to have movement of color, like a watercolor. Sometimes I spray the surface; other times I puddle the water. Depending on how much water you use you can have very subtle or rich-looking effects, or something that looks wack — you can do whatever you want to do.

I'm very conservative with techniques. I use crumpled tissue paper to create a crinkly leaf effect. I use sand to block out areas — and that can give real cool effects when using multiple colors. Sawdust does the same as sand to block an area.

We will be seeing change in the marketplace as dyes get better. With dyes you'll be able to get colors you can't get now with acid stains.

**Steve Johnson, Decked Out,  
Sacramento, Calif.**



Photo courtesy of Steve Johnson

*For me, stains are similar* to watercolors. I use sealers as resists and metallic salts to create more intense or less intense areas. The only difference between stains and watercolors is that stains variegate through chemical reaction as well as through the application technique.

You can always count on acid stains to do what you didn't count on them to do. Their variegation and unpredictability is what's both good and bad about them.

So, if you're going to be in the stain business, you also need to be in the dye and tint business. Dyes' consistency and penetrating and transparent characteristics give you fine color control you can't get with stains. Tints offer color consistency as well as opacity; an ability to hide.

For tinting over acid stains, I purchase pigments as a raw material — super-finely ground pigments, essentially the same chemicals and colors as in paints and integrally colored concretes, but so finely ground that they penetrate into the pores. I generally mix pigments with a solvent carrier and a small amount of acrylic resin to apply.

**Mike Miller, The Concretist,  
Benicia, Calif.**



Photo courtesy of Mike Miller



Photo courtesy of Steven Ochs

*We create site-specific murals on* concrete, and we use Smith Paints Color Floor stain — the pigments are very finely ground. We buy it in concentrated form so we can control the viscosity for airbrushing, wet-on-wet or other techniques, using it much like an artist.

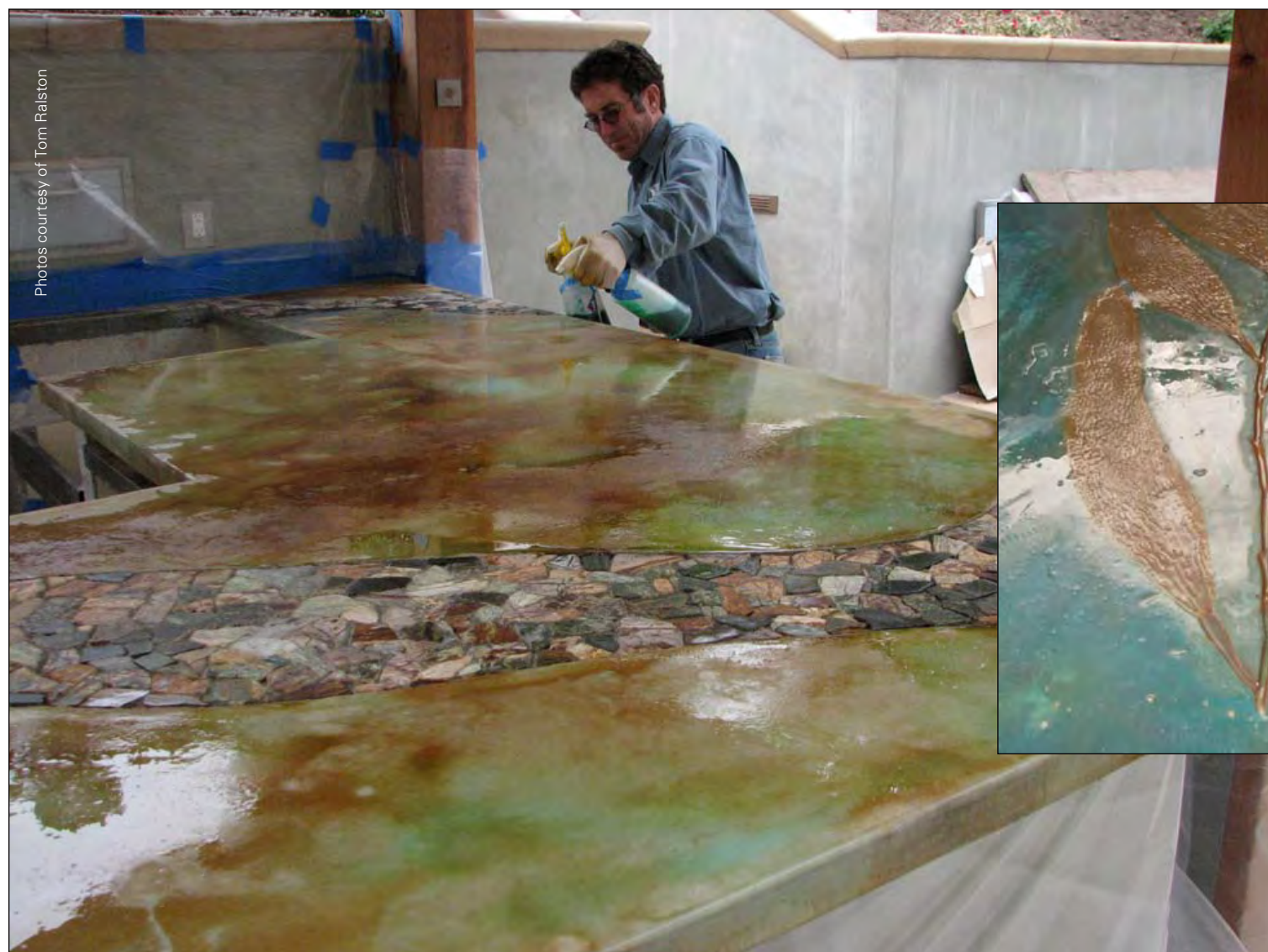
The techniques we use are the same as a fine art painter uses: watercolor techniques, acrylic techniques, airbrushing, stipple, wet-on-wet, dry brushing and more.

I usually work from light to dark colors when using paints with good opacity, or vice versa with paints that are more transparent for additional versatility. Highly transparent paints I apply with an airbrush.

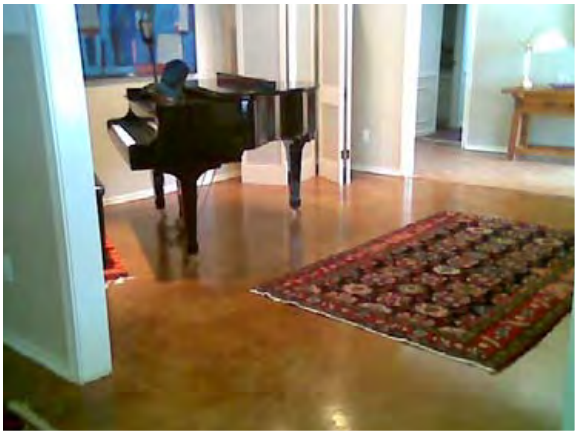
For a coin mural I used black and white pigments and layered metallic silver on top to create an illusion of relief.

With the paints we use we don't have residue cleanup or sealer-bonding issues. And, because most of the pigments I use are iron-based, they are very colorfast. I give the pigments 24 hours to dry before sealing.

**Steven Ochs, Images in Concrete,  
El Dorado, Ark.**



Photos courtesy of Tom Ralston



ects  
Tips and tri

*I use acid stains made* by a variety of manufacturers. I use different brands for different color options, and I have also gotten raw product to make my own custom colors. Because they are made from iron oxides, acid stains stain concrete very much like iron oxides stain rocks — it's very natural-looking.

We prefer not to use brushes when applying acid stains — we use spray bottles. You can spray multiple acids this way, and the mottling you get by spraying you can't achieve with brushes.

I've thrown Miracle-Gro into acid stains for an intensely turquoise color. You can use shoe polish, wood dyes, and Sharpies — whatever stains your hands you might consider for staining concrete.

We like to create effects that are artful, effects that come from nature. We may make an impression stamp from nature,

such as seaweed, and then use acid stains to color the stamped concrete. We'll use acrylics sometimes for special colors or when acid stains don't perform as expected.

**Tom Ralston, Tom Ralston Concrete,  
Santa Cruz, Calif.**

*I think acid and acrylic* stains are good, depending on the effect you want. If you want a distressed, mottled look acid stains are the answer. Acrylic stains, on the other hand, have really opened up the color palette, and you can use them as a touch-up or where acid stains don't take.

You get different effects depending on how you apply stains; for example, if you broom on or spray on a stain. Coffee grounds put little specks in the color.

To make veins, lay string down on the surface. Long strips of plastic wrap crinkled up in a long tube will also create veins. The stain collects where the plastic rests on the wet stain.

Try taping designs or using stencils — you can stain one color and then lightly sandblast the stencil. You can dilute stains, too, for a washed-out look.

No matter what stain you use, it is important to choose compatible coatings. Call the stain manufacturer and get recommendations to save time and avoid headaches. 🛠️

**David Tatom, Chem-Coat,  
Dallas, Texas**

# Hands Across the Ocean

***As decorative concrete goes global, American experts take the lead in training***

by Rob Spiegel

**T**he Europeans have beautiful stone and centuries of expertise — but now they're fans of concrete too. "I'm blown away when countries like Greece and Italy — with some of the world's most ingenious architecture — ask the DCI to come over to teach them how to use this artificial stuff," says Bob Harris, president of the Decorative Concrete Institute in Temple, Ga.



A Brickform workshop in Holland.

Decorative concrete was developed in the United States, but it's growing in popularity overseas. Artisans in Europe particularly have started to develop expertise, but people in Asia and South America are showing interest as well. This presents a big challenge when it comes to training and maintenance. Some American companies send their employees overseas to train new contractors, while others use international consultants for training. In March 2007, Harris partnered with a European distribution associate to open the DCI Europe Division and bring the complete package of training, products and technical support to the doorstep of European decorative concrete artists.

The U.S. has long been the international leader in the development and promotion of decorative concrete, so it's not surprising that the rest of the world turns to U.S. experts for their know-how. "Decorative concrete is still a new market overseas," says Harris. "America is the innovator of the products and techniques. DCI outsources its training and consulting services overseas to Italy, Greece, Germany, and South Africa, just to name a few."

When decorative concrete was first introduced overseas 10 to 15 years ago, those producing the product were not eager to share their expertise with foreign contractors. "Manufacturers used to be the only source of information," says John Anderson, an area manager for Nevada, Arizona and Europe at Brickform in Rancho Cucamonga, Calif.

That changed in recent years, and now those who spread their expertise around the world are a congenial bunch who are not fearful of foreign competition. People such as Harris, Mike Archambault of Moderne Methode, Marshall Barbash of Patterned Concrete and Matt Casto of Bomanite Group International helped the industry grow by sharing information, Anderson says. "If the inventor of the light bulb kept it to himself, we would all be living in the dark."

It makes sense that the popularity of decorative concrete is on the rise globally, says Chris Forgey, marketing manager at Grace Construction Products in Cambridge, Mass. "It's more cost-effective than mining natural materials, easier to work with, functional and timely when it comes to the length of time from beginning of construction to end," he says.

Of all the foreign markets, Europe is the furthest along in adopting decorative concrete. "In Europe, construction practices are more advanced than in the rest of the world," says Forgey. "Europe is rich in aggregate, which is why exposed aggregate is most likely to be used as a resource for decorative construction in Europe." He notes, however, that stamped concrete has not gone over well in Europe.

When it comes to training, there are a wide variety of solutions, but ultimately, the trend is toward shifting knowledge to local firms. "We do training in several countries, including China, Hong Kong, Japan, Singapore, Thailand, France and Italy," says Clark Branum, director of technical services at Brickform. "Ideal Work offers training in Treviso, Italy,

Photo courtesy of Brickform



Decorative Concrete Institute training in Greece.



Brickform training in India.



Brickform training in India.



Brickform training in the United Kingdom.



Brickform training in the United Kingdom.



Brickform training in Greece.

All photos courtesy of Brickform


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and American IT does training in Southeast Asia. Moderne Methode does training throughout France.”

Grace Construction also trains locals across the world. “Since Grace has offices around the globe, we have local people train in the art of decorative concrete and they become Grace employees,” says Grace’s Forgey. “And local companies then contract with Grace on many different (decorative concrete) projects.”

People in foreign markets often mistakenly view concrete as similar to stone, which is vastly different when it comes to maintenance. “Maintenance is not a concept that is familiar to many countries, as they are used to using stone surfaces for finished areas,” says Brickform’s Branum. “Stone surfaces require very little maintenance as the surfaces are denser and in some cases highly polished. The perception is that concrete flooring requires the same amount of maintenance as stone floors, but that’s an incorrect assumption, as the concrete floors tend to require continual maintenance to keep them in good condition.”

Those working to spread decorative concrete globally have focused recently on building a market in Europe. “The next five years in Europe will be very interesting now that there are several high-quality manufacturers supported by some highly educated technical experts,” says Brickform’s Anderson. “In September I will return to Europe to help develop the market with what I’ve learned here in the U.S.” 📱

by Amy Johnson

# Technology

Photos courtesy of Floric Polytech Inc.



## New Polyacrylate Terrazzo

**T**errazzo is one of the most beautiful and long-lasting floor technologies in the world, as is evidenced by European examples several centuries old. It is prized in this country for its color and ease of maintenance as well as its durability. Terrazzo is often found where there is high traffic (airports, malls, retail) or frequent cleaning required (hospitals, restaurants).

Now, a new material, PT-300 Polyacrylate Terrazzo from Floric Polytech Inc., overcomes the design and performance limitations of existing matrix materials and offers concrete craftspeople a new business opportunity. Floric Polytech chemists worked with contractors to develop a product that would meet their requirements for handling, rapid installation and finished appearance.

### Color is its strength

The most notable feature of terrazzo is its color. Colorful aggregates, especially glass and mirror, are mixed in a matrix colored to compliment or contrast. But until now contractors had to make some color trade-offs. Epoxy materials could be brightly colored and they were pliable enough to hold a high concentration of glass aggregate, but they were not stable under sun exposure. They could never be used outside. Even sodium or halogen indoor light systems could cause epoxies to fade. Cement materials were too stiff to hold glass aggregate, while polyacrylate was too soft. Glass was prone to pop out during the grinding process. The industry recommended that aggregate used with these materials contain no more than

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10 percent glass. In addition, the color palette for the matrix itself was limited to subdued tones.

PT-300 was formulated to eliminate both of these problems. Its nonsilica formulation ends the problem of glass popping out. Daniel Chavarria, owner of DC Flooring in Temecula, Calif., and Ohana Flooring in Honolulu, Hawaii, was an early tester and advisor on the development of PT-300. "Glass is not porous like marble, so there is nothing to grab on to the matrix," he says. "With PT-300 I can use 100 percent glass. The colors I achieve with this material are unbelievable. I can use mother-of-pearl or mirror to make the colors pop." Chavarria consulted with Floric during product development and now works with them in training contractors how to use it.

The formulation also holds vibrant colors and is completely resistant to UV fading. "We use high-end infrared reflective pigments that reflect light, so the colors are stable under sunlight," says Brent Strait, president of Floric Polytech and the lead chemist developing PT-300. "They also reflect heat, so you can have a black surface outside that won't get hot. Iron oxide and synthetic pigments are not UV stable." Pigment packs are supplied in 45 stock colors, and the company is developing a library of custom colors as well.

Chavarria describes a project where this color capability was crucial. A compass rose — a popular design for terrazzo as well as decorative concrete — was specified for a project in Las Vegas. The compass was set in a doorway, so half would be inside, half outside. It was originally specified as cement terrazzo to avoid the problem of epoxy fading, but the owners wanted brighter colors. Only Floric PT-300 could deliver everything the customer wanted.



## Fast and green

One reason epoxy is more popular than cement is that it can be installed relatively easily and cures quickly for grinding and polishing. Cement can require up to a week to cure before polishing, and cured cement often has pinholes and craters that must be filled. Old-style

polyacrylates are also slow to cure. PT-300 is designed to cure and be ready to grind in eight hours. Quick curing is essential in places that require a rapid return to service. Strait gives the example of a mall project where retail space generated \$180,000 per day, a significant loss every day the mall was closed. "If you can shave a day or more off their closed schedule, they are willing to pay," he says.

PT-300 can be installed vertically with the addition of a thickening additive on-site. "Some people are going up 30 feet high because terrazzo is so beautiful and durable," Strait says. And unlike other polyacrylate products, PT-300 can be washed to expose the aggregate for a rustic terrazzo finish.

One reason epoxy is not popular is the solvent used as a carrier and for cleanup. "When you work with epoxy you have to throw your clothes away," Chavarria says. What's more, because of the solvent content, epoxy cannot be used at all in certain settings like hospitals or commercial buildings with common ventilation systems. In contrast, the acrylic polymer used for polyacrylates is water-based, so there are no harsh chemicals and cleanup is easy. PT-300 is also completely free of volatile organic compounds.

It is even possible to buy recycled glass and stone aggregates that are LEED-compliant, making terrazzo floors made with PT-300 even more attractive for green building.

## Poised to grow

Terrazzo installers have long been a relatively exclusive group, but Floric Polytech is making it easier for high-end decorative concrete contractors to add this technique to their repertoire. "If you can grind and polish concrete, you are half-way to doing terrazzo," Chavarria claims.

Strait believes that terrazzo is where stamped concrete was in the 1970s — poised to grow. To help that happen, Floric is offering training to help contractors and artisans qualify to purchase and install their products. The hands-on training also silences skeptics. "We make a mix with 100 percent glass aggregate," Strait explains. "We pour in the morning and polish later that same day. You can hear a hush fall over the crowd about 2 o'clock in the afternoon." 📞



Contractor and consultant Daniel Chavarria uses cartoon characters to show potential customers the vivid colors possible with PT-300 Polyacrylate Terrazzo from Floric Polytech Inc.



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## Curbing Machines

### Curbmate Cobra curbing machine

The Curbmate Cobra, new from Curbmate Corp., is marketed as the first curb-maker in the industry with a stainless steel body and a removable stainless steel hopper.

With its re-engineered power train, the Cobra is a fast, efficient, powerful extruder. Its stainless steel body and hopper are strong and durable. The machine offers easy access to the bottom-end assembly for cleaning, and the hopper comes off in seconds. Other features include quick-release slip forms, a sliding tie rod, forward and reverse brakes, and variable stroke length. Its

wider stance provides stability, while its wider wheels float on sand. The free-tracking wheel allows tighter circles, and brakes provide rolling resistance on hills. The Cobra is available with either a 3-horsepower Honda gas motor or a 3/4-horsepower electric motor.

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### Curbmate 509 extruder

Curbmate Corp.'s new Curbmate 509 Commercial/Residential Extruder is billed as "The Fastest, Best Compacting, Most Versatile Extruder."

The 509 is powered by a 4-horsepower Honda engine with centrifugal

clutch and speed adjustment. Smooth, hard compaction handles aggregate easily, cutting trowel work time and eliminating voids. The undercarriage, forms and rams are interchangeable for residential and commercial flexibility. The machine can be adjusted to suit for long strokes, medium strokes, fast speeds or slow speeds. Its wide stance, large tires and low center of gravity increase stability. Residential and commercial slip forms are available. Mortar sand, concrete sand and stone aggregate all come out firm and solid with fewer voids.

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### Edgemaster extruding machine

The cornerstone of the Kwik Kerb turnkey business system, the Edgemaster continuous extruding machine from Edgetec International Pty. Ltd. is capable of turning out 300 feet of molded free-form concrete border edging per hour, all while operated by only one person.

Both the electric and gasoline models have a slip-steering mechanism that allows turns as tight as 14 inches and enables them to be operated in gardens and landscaped areas without damage to established plants. Because it is light, self-propelled, and has a variety of profile designs, including parking lots and mower-edge, the machine is extremely versatile. Operators do not have to spend time preparing boxing or forms for concrete, because the machine prepares its own form as it lays.

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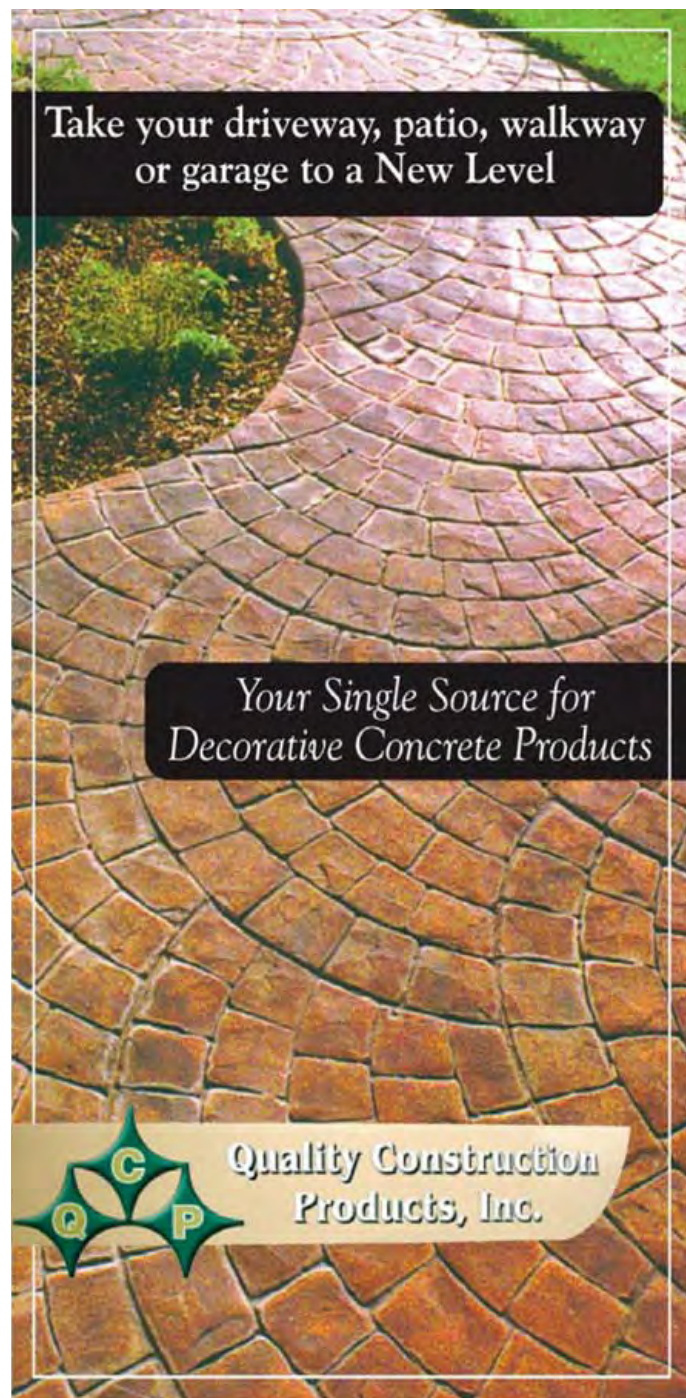
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## Tooling



### Tygar Bengal TG1000 curb machine and Ultimate Curbing Package

Tygar Manufacturing LLC has designed the Ultimate Curbing Package as a complete turnkey solution for contractors. Capable of producing both commercial and residential concrete borders, Tygar's package includes the Bengal TG1000 Curb Machine, the SC1000 Sabertooth Sod Cutter, a custom curbing trailer with attached concrete mixer, and all the necessary accessories to get started. In addition, the Ultimate Package offers a wide variety of integral colors, release agents, and special additives that were formulated specifically for concrete curbing. Tygar also provides a range of six other turnkey solutions for contractors who wish to enter the business of concrete curbing.

Tygar's Bengal TG1000 curb machine is the workhorse of landscape concrete curbing. It is capable of extruding 24-inch walkways, landscape curb with imbedded accent lighting, and more than 30 different stamp patterns that match brick, slate, stone and other designs. Up to 25 distinct molds and attachments are quickly and easily interchangeable. The machine accepts up to 3/8-inch rock aggregate for commercial applications, and it curbs up to 16 feet per minute.

The 185-pound Bengal's other features include vertical and lateral steering adjustments to match grades, a ram-type self-propelled drive system, a 3-horsepower Honda OHV gas engine, and a gear box with 40-to-1 gear reduction in the gas-driven model and 20-to-1 in the electric model.

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### Decorative Curbmaking Machines 227 and 205 curb-making machines

Decorative Curbmaking Machines Inc. makes the only patented hydraulic auger-driven curb-making machine.

Robert Parrish and his father Walter, a hydraulics engineer, invented the model 207 and model 225 machines. These machines extrude true concrete, unlike competitors that can only extrude mortar. True concrete lasts much longer than mortar and is three to four times stronger. Decorative Curbmaking Machines are fast, productive, easy to use and will last for years. The company also offers a Skid Steer Attachment.

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## Lil' Bubba EP curbing machine

The Lil' Bubba EP machine is Concrete Edge Co.'s top seller. It outsells the company's other three machines 90 to 1, perhaps because its unique drive mechanism outperforms the other models as well as competitors.

The Lil' Bubba EP's plunger drive creates a consistent flow of concrete with each revolution. The unique motion of the plunger scores the concrete as it packs it into the mold (unlike other plungers or ram machines) to prevent flat spots and weak areas that cause cracking. The EP drive also eliminates concrete bridging in the hopper, since the plunger actually moves seven inches upward into the hopper, agitating the concrete, with each revolution. Lil' Bubba was designed to create continuous decorative concrete borders and walkways, allowing the user to follow any existing landscape bed design, place borders as close as two inches to any stationary object and make turns with a radius as tight as 14 inches. The EP will switch from decorative border curbs to 24-inch walkways with just a twist of the four bolts on the front of the machine. No internal changes, upgrades or extra parts are necessary. 🛠️

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# Product Profile



Photo courtesy of Steven Ochs

## CT-8 Cleaner and Toughener from Smith Paint Products

**F**or starters, Smith Paint Products' new concrete cleaner, CT-8 Cleaner and Toughener, does what all cleaners should. Like a trisodium phosphate or citrus detergent, it wets the concrete and suspends loose particles of dirt and grease so they can be washed or swept away.

But CT-8 doesn't just remove dirt. It chemically changes concrete to strengthen the adhesion of decorative stains and sealers. The toughener reacts with the loose calcium hydroxide in cured cement to create calcium silicate hydrate. This bonding of loose particles creates a foundation that enables decorative stains, overlays and sealers to adhere more strongly.

CT-8 is mixed one cup of powder

to one gallon of water, preferably warm water that will help break down the calcium hydroxide granules more rapidly. The user pours it onto the slab and agitates with either a stiff bristle broom or a floor scrubber. If a pump-up sprayer is used, use a plastic sprayer. Let it stand for 15 minutes and rinse it off.

"The best technique is to vacuum up the water along with the suspended particles," says Smith Paints Products chemist Mike Eshleman. "Rinse with clean water and vacuum again."

"After the surface has dried, conduct a tape test using clear packing tape. Rub the tape onto the surface and wait for approximately 5 to 15 minutes, then pull it off quickly. When you hold it up to the light and look through it, what

do you see? Is it clear with tiny particles and sticky to the touch? This is acceptable, but if you see fine particles that cause cloudiness and they interfere with the adhesive on the back of the tape, this reduces the bonding strength of your next step."

Smith ships CT-8 in powder form to reduce weight and the chance of leakage. This way, the customer is buying 100 percent active ingredient.

For a second opinion on CT-8, ask Hugh Monteith III. The owner of AmeriDream in Ventura, Calif., has made it his cleaner of choice for the last six months.

"CT-8 stays wetter longer, works better on removing stains, and rinses easily and more thoroughly," he says. "The concrete is cleaner than I have ever seen; in fact, it even looks etched."

In the past, when Monteith would hand-brush solvent sealers in a corner or along the edge of a wall, he would sometimes pick up a little color, he says. Using CT-8 has eliminated this aggravation. "This tells me that even the most difficult areas to clean are still bonding well with the water-borne stains."

Because the majority of Monteith's jobs are exteriors and he is able to power-wash with ample amounts of water, he has developed his own set of application techniques. He sprinkles the CT-8 directly on wet concrete and wets it again. Then he uses 80-grit concrete brushes with a floor machine for agitation, allows the cleaner to set for 15 minutes or more, then power-washes. How much he can clean at once depends on temperature and other job conditions. "I do as much as I can while keeping wet the previously scrubbed areas," he says. "The CT-8 will continue to work at cleaning the substrate as long as it is kept wet. I'm careful not to let it dry before it is fully rinsed off."

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# Product News



## Grace in the mix

The OPTEC line from Grace Construction Products recently introduced two new admixtures, OPTEC Paver Enhancer and OPTEC EC-875. Both offer excellent plasticity and machinability.

OPTEC Paver Enhancer is formulated to reduce the cost of paver and segmental retaining walls by achieving comparable strength properties with less cement. It can enhance color dispersion and help minimize secondary efflorescence. OPTEC Paver Enhancer provides a medium swipe on the surface of the

unit for better water control. It is supplied as a liquid ready for use in production plants.

OPTEC EC-875 is a color-enhancing and efflorescence-controlling admixture formulated to enhance the appearance and color vibrancy of SWRs and pavers, architectural units, roof tiles and other low-slump concrete products. It improves the dispersion of the cement throughout the mix, resulting in more complete cement hydration and higher strengths. It may also allow for increased water in the mix, promoting more complete cement hydration.

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## New Anvils dropped

Anvil Paints and Coatings recently launched several new materials for coating concrete.

Anvil 1750 High Adhesion Grip-Tite Concrete Prime can be applied directly to clean, porous concrete to overcome the problem of concrete surfaces improperly prepared for painting or staining. Grip-Tite penetrates into the concrete and improves the adhesion of the topcoat. It forms a surface that improves the workability and durability of the topcoat, delivering a uniform appearance.

New Anvil 1700 High Performance Epoxy Show Coat Concrete & Garage Floor Coating combines the durability of epoxy coatings with the ease of water cleanup in a single-component coating. When applied to a properly prepared surface, it is highly resistant to hot tires and delivers a solid-color satin finish that can be topcoated with Anvil Wet Look Sealer for a beautiful-looking garage floor.

Anvil 2350 Wet Look Sealer adds extra durability and a wet-look gloss to painted or stained concrete floors. The acrylic, self-cross-linking, nonyellowing sealer can be used for both interior and exterior applications.

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### Blastrac debuts shot-blaster, ride-on scraper, scarifier line

The new Blastrac 1-8DPS30 is a self-propelled 8-inch shot-blasting system used to prepare concrete surfaces prior to the application of paint, coating or overlays.

The 1-8DPS30 is designed for small or medium-sized jobs up to 8,000 square feet. The shot-blaster works well around immobile equipment and obstructions on industrial floors, and it provides complementary shot-blasting in tight areas on larger jobs. It strips, cleans and profiles in one easy step, providing a cost-effective, time-saving and environmentally friendly method for preparing concrete surfaces. The 4-horsepower drive motor for self-propelled forward and reverse operation improves productivity and promotes a more consistent surface profile, preparing up to 430 square feet an hour. The 1-8DPS30 features a slide-out screen in the shot hopper for easy debris removal, and it consumes less than 9 pounds of abrasive per hour.

Blastrac's BMS-220BX ride-on scraper now features extended battery life. Other scrapers on the market have a run time of 30 minutes to an hour, while the BMS-220BX will last two to three hours on one charge. The compact unit fits easily through doorways and into tight areas and is light enough for standard elevators.

Finally, Blastrac now offers a high-endurance, performance-tested line of 7-inch, 8-inch, 10-inch and 12-inch scarifiers that are economically priced within

the concrete flooring industry. A variety of cutter teeth and quick-changing drums allow for easy reconfiguration to meet specific job requirements, from light cleaning and grooving to heavy coatings removal. The scarifiers easily clean and remove oil or other contaminants from concrete, smooth uneven surfaces and trip hazards, and cut safety grooves in

ramps and concrete walkways. For greater control and easier handling, all Blastrac scarifiers include a quick lift-off feature and micro depth control for fine-tuning the cutter depth. The 8-inch, 10-inch and 12-inch scarifiers are available in gas or electric, while the 7-inch is electric only.

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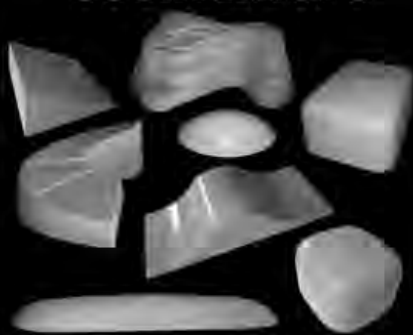
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### QC debuts dye

QC Concrete Dye is a translucent, micronized, chemically inert and non-reactive pigment that, when applied to overlays, profiled or polished concrete, will provide intense coloring effects without creating a film or coating that can be worn away.

The dye is manufactured as a ready-to-use product both in water-based and solvent-based formulations. Available in 16 standard colors, it can be field-diluted with a variety of liquids, from water to acetone, to yield a broad range of hues. QC Concrete Dye is available in 1-pint, 1-gallon and 5-gallon containers, but it is for interior use only.

☎ (800) 453-8213

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

### Three from Mapei

Mapei has released new products for patching, grouting and leveling jobs.

Tri-Patch is a versatile concrete patching compound that allows users to patch, skim-coat, level, ramp and color embossed surfaces by simply varying the water-to-powder ratio. The material can be used for filling holes and cracks up to 1 inch per lift. When mixed with a smaller amount of water, Tri-Patch can be applied in higher builds for ramping up to 4 inches. Mix the material with Mapei Patch Enhancer to use it as a leveler. Tri-Patch is fast-setting, has high compressive strength and is shrinkage-free.

Ultraplan Easy is billed as the easiest-to-use underlayment on the market: Just clean, prime with a Mapei primer

and pour. Developed with proprietary High-hydrated Cement Technology formulation, the quick-setting material develops high compressive strength and abrasion resistance in hours. The self-smoothing underlayment allows light foot traffic within 2 or 3 hours, and it is compatible with a wide variety of coatings. It can be applied from feather-edge to 2 inches per lift.

Opticolor Stain-Free Grout takes advantage of advanced water-modified, resin-based technology. It can be applied with the ease of portland-based grout and without the challenges. It offers long-term performance without the slumping, shading, staining and cleaning challenges of other grouts, and it comes in 36 colors. Opticolor Stain-Free can be applied in joint widths of 1/16 inch to 3/8 inch and boasts impressive nonsag properties. The grout's built-in chemical resistance stands up to everyday cleaning products as well as foods and beverages, while its BioBlock technology resists mold, mildew and bacteria.

☎ (800) 426-2734

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



### Comfortable to use, built to last

CDCLarue's new Hum-B profileers are ergonomically designed surface scarifiers that cover more square feet in less time with less effort, maximizing comfort and increasing productivity.

The Hum-B is ideal for preparing concrete, terrazzo, stone and masonry, and great for removing paint, adhesives, and epoxy floor coatings. It's available in 6-inch, 8-inch and 10-inch

configurations with zero depth height adjustment, a centrally located drum assembly that provides better balance and less vibration, and a swivel vacuum port for dust-free performance. With its heavy-duty hex shaft, sealed bearings, toothed belt and heavy-duty construction, the Hum-B Profiler is built to last.

☎ (866) 954-9700

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

## Sika gets hydrophilic

Sika Corp. has introduced a new polyurethane chemical grout, SikaFix HH Hydrophilic. Hydrophilic urethane grouts are designed for applications to seal cracks in continually moist or wet concrete.

SikaFix HH Hydrophilic is UL listed for drinking water system components and offers the performance of a typical Sika product.

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

## That's a wrap

Valspar Flooring, a division of Valspar Corp., is helping facilities and contractors achieve smooth, seamless environments with its new Descoglas RF reinforced wall and ceiling coating system.

Field-proven for connecting dissimilar substrates without the use of joints or sealants, this high-build surfacing system wraps walls and ceilings into the floor, eliminating corners, cracks and crevices that harbor dirt and bacteria. Descoglas RF combines low-VOC,

high-performance polymer technology with reinforcement fibers that are built directly into the coating. The fiber reinforcement provides outstanding dimensional stability and long-term resistance to impact and abrasions, thermal shock resulting from high-pressure steam cleaning, and exposure to aggressive chemicals. And because Descoglas RF creates a static-resistant surface, it inhibits the buildup of dust and other airborne particles.

The durability and cleanliness of Descoglas RF make it ideal for phar-

maceutical and cosmetic manufacturing plants, "clean room" environments, commercial kitchens, food and beverage processing facilities, and healthcare operations.

Valspar offers the complete Descoglas RF system in a variety of standard and custom colors.

☎ (800) 637-7793, ext. 5050

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



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*Dan Bishop*  
*Modern Impressions Concrete Design*



### Bits and batteries

Hitachi Power Tools has expanded its line of diamond-grit drill bits with four new sizes: 1/2-inch, 5/8-inch, 3/4-inch and 1-inch. They are designed to power through class 5 tile, marble, porcelain, granite, slate and glass quickly, outperforming standard carbide glass and tile bits in speed and volume.

Hitachi diamond-grit drill bit bodies are constructed of hardened and tempered thin-wall alloy steel. Required water lubrication can be applied with a spray bottle, producing a small puddle of water that is spiral-fed down the reverse flute threads onto the bit to continuously supply water to the cutting edge, cooling the bit tip and extending its life.

Hitachi Power Tools has also announced a new series of cordless drills powered by 1.5Ah lithium ion batteries that can be recharged 1,500 times before replacement.

The DFL series includes an 18-volt (DS18DFL) and a 14.4-volt (DS14DFL) drill. They feature two-piece magnet motors and deliver 374 inch/pounds (DS18DFL) and 274 inch/pounds (DS14DFL) of torque to push through the toughest jobs with ease. Both come with two 1.5Ah batteries. They maintain a steady charge from the moment the trigger is pulled until they need to be recharged. The battery technology reduces the weight by approximately a pound per tool.

A unique charger from Hitachi will charge 7.2-volt up to 18-volt lithium ion batteries. The proprietary technology in the universal charger provides Hitachi lithium ion batteries with overload and discharge protection so they won't overheat or lose power. Batteries charge in 30 minutes.

**(800) 829-4752**

**www.hitachipowertools.com**





### Light, cool and compressive

The CA Series of cold-water direct-drive pressure washers from Mi-T-M Corp. are for applications requiring a durable unit that is also lightweight and easy to handle.

Eight CA Series models feature performance-proven Honda or Subaru engines with low-oil protection, direct-drive triplex piston pumps that put out from 2,400 psi to 4,000 psi, and a thermal relief valve. Other features include a

patent-pending vibration isolation plate with four rubber isolators, pneumatic tires with tubes for longer life, dual rubber isolators, and a nozzle-holder for quick-connect nozzles. With 1-inch aluminum tube handles and a 3/16-inch aluminum base plate, these units are corrosion-resistant.

Mi-T-M also manufactures two portable 8-gallon, two-stage gasoline air compressors, designed for tasks requiring higher CFM and air capacity. These models are ideal for remote locations.

Features include a 9.0-horsepower, 265 cc or 270 cc displacement Honda OHV or Subaru OHC engine, a cast-iron two-stage compressor, a 16.5-inch flywheel, powder-coated 8-gallon twin-tank receivers, a 7-gauge base plate to reduce vibration, pneumatic idle control to conserve fuel, manual drain valves, and a belt-tightening system that ensures constant alignment.

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### Not the same old drill

CS Unitec's three-speed wet/dry core drill with vacuum dust extraction brings versatility to many concrete drilling

applications.

The ETN 152/3P Diamond Core Drill can be used wet or dry, hand-held or stand-mounted. The 17-amp motor drills holes of up to 6 inches in diameter

in concrete, reinforced concrete, brick, block and stone. An integrated GFCI prevents electric shock. An integrated water swivel is built directly into the spindle for wet drilling, and the machine can be connected to a vacuum with a standard hose connection while dry drilling. The vacuum port is built directly into the drill spindle, allowing the operator to capture the dust from inside the core bit and maintain a clean work area. The hand-held core drill weighs 15 pounds. It is also available with a combination anchor/vacuum stand and a vacuum pump. A quick-change mount on this unit allows the user to switch from hand-held to stand-mounted operation quickly and easily. The drill stand is fully adjustable up to 45 degrees. The ETN 152/3P also comes with standard drill bit connecting threads and adapters.

☎ (800) 700-5919

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

### New from Pure

For more than two years Pure Texture Acid Stains has been an answer for basic concrete staining. Now, Pure Texture has come up with a non-acid chemical stain.

Unlike an acid-based stain, Pure Texture Chem-Stain requires no neutralizing, rinsing or cleanup. Simply spray it on, let it dry and seal it.

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## High on the Hog

EZ Grout Corp., the maker of the Grout Hog, has announced the arrival of the Mud Hog MH12, which replaces the MH10, also known as "Little Piggy."

The 12-cubic-foot Mud Hog was developed with 4 bags of mortar capacity that will mix up to 3/4-inch aggregate. The ergonomic design of the Mud Hog lessens labor fatigue and backaches. The MH12 was built with a hydraulic drive and dump with an adjustable height that can be adapted to load below the waist. Rubber blades provide longer wear and decrease batch time. Reversible mixing paddles prevent clogging, while vertical mixing paddles prevent splashing when cutting through the material.

The MH12 Mud Hog comes with a 13-horsepower Honda motor and is compact enough to haul in any standard pickup. An optional axle kit is available for towing. Fork pockets are accessible on all sides for easier portability.

☎ (800) 417-9272

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

## A sight for sore backs

Created to assist in the installation of countertop products, the Xtreme-Hauler from Advanced Systems Inc. makes moving granite slabs, granite countertops, logs, carpet, steel, and timbers a breeze.

This cart is remarkably stable even with a 600-pound countertop on it. And it's easy to use. All the user does is line up a slab of material in the middle of the pivoting arms. The arms lock the material in place upright, and because of the wide wheel base the Hauler will not tip over. Weighing in at only 45 pounds, the tool is easy for one person to control. Made with solid steel construction, it can be used for granite, Corian, glass,

plywood and steel. Slide a cradle strap over the handle grips and the Hauler becomes a cart for moving carpet, vinyl, and logs. Countertops can be stored on the cart prior to loading.

An "Extreme Gripper" can be used to steer the materials on the Hauler. Product can easily be lifted, steered and maneuvered with the tight-threaded clamping system. 🛠️

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

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# Association News

## Association of Equipment Manufacturers

### CONEXPO Asia registration opens

Advance registration for CONEXPO Asia 2007 are being taken in Chinese and English, with information in other languages, including Arabic, German, Japanese, Korean, Russian and Spanish, available on the Web site.

The event will be held December 4-7, 2007, at the Chinese Import and Export Fair Pazhou Complex in Guangzhou, China. The show is owned and organized by the Association of Equipment Manufacturers, with the China Chamber of Commerce for Import and Export of Machinery and Electronic Products as co-organizer. It will feature more than 25 world-class education seminars presented by industry experts from around the world. Each seminar will be offered in English and Chinese via simultaneous interpretation. Sessions will cover topics as diverse as equipment maintenance, construction informatics, construction projects marketing and development, rental practices, workplace safety, workforce development, and advances in environmentally friendly construction practices. CONEXPO Asia 2007 will also offer a pre-show educational program for show exhibitors, plus more classroom sessions and an expanded demonstration program featuring hands-on equipment operation.

Exhibit space sales continue to be strong, with the 2007 show already 80 percent larger than the inaugural event, CONEXPO Asia 2006. As of mid-May, more than 140 exhibitors had reserved 58,000 square meters of indoor and outdoor space. Visit the show Web site for an up-to-date exhibitor list.

 (800) 867-6060


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

## American Concrete Institute

### Structural concrete code changes planned

The American Concrete Institute announces that ACI Committee 318 plans to publish ACI 318-08: "Building Code Requirements for Structural Concrete," in January 2008.

As an important part of finalizing revisions to ACI 318-05, ACI invites the public to review and comment on the proposed revisions during a public discussion period. The changes will be online at the ACI Web site beginning July 1. Committee 318 will consider all comments received by Aug. 15.

 (248) 848-3700

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


### ACI elects executives

The American Concrete Institute has elected David Darwin as president, Florian G. Barth as vice president, and Ramón L. Carrasquillo, Charles S. Hanskat, Michael J. Schneider, Kari L. Yuers as directors to the Board of Direction. These six officers began their terms at ACI's 2007 spring meeting.

Darwin is the Deane E. Ackers Distinguished Professor of Civil, Environmental, and Architectural Engineering and

Director of the Structural Engineering and Materials Laboratory at the University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kan., where he has served on the faculty since 1974.

Barth is founder, past president, and principal consultant of FBA Inc., Structural Engineers, with offices in the San Francisco Bay area, Sacramento, and Orange County, Calif. Carrasquillo is president of Carrasquillo Associates Ltd., Austin, Texas. Hanskat is a principal engineer with the CTLGroup, Skokie, Ill. Schneider spent the last 29 years with Baker Concrete Construction Inc., Monroe, Ohio, where he currently holds the position of vice president of operations and chief people officer. Yuers is president and chief executive officer of the Kryton Group of Companies, Vancouver, B.C.

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

## American Society of Concrete Contractors

### New ASCC catalog

The American Society of Concrete Contractors has published its 2007 Product Catalog.

The catalog includes numerous publications and other tools covering safety, decorative concrete, and cast-in-place installation. One new entry in this edition of the catalog is the "Guide for Concrete Slabs that Receive Moisture-Sensitive Flooring Materials." This book contains materials, design and construction recommendations for concrete slabs-on-ground and suspended slabs.

All publications are available to ASCC members and non-members, but members receive a substantial discount.

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



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## ASCC conference puts safety first

World-renowned safety speaker Charlie T. Morecraft will be the General Session speaker at the American Society of Concrete Contractors Annual Conference, to be held September 13-16, 2007, in Charlotte, N.C.

In 1980, Morecraft survived a near-fatal job site accident at the Exxon refinery where he was employed. His presentation is particularly well suited for owners, managers, superintendents, foremen, safety directors and laborers of concrete and general contracting companies.

The ASCC Annual Conference is a three-day event that includes business and technical speakers, demonstrations and round-table discussions. The ACI flatwork finisher certification class and exam will be held Saturday, Sept. 15.

(866) 788-2722

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

## Decorative Concrete Council



Jay Fangman

The Decorative Concrete Council elected Jay Fangman of Colorado Hardscapes Inc. the 2007-2008 council director at the council's April board meeting in Las Vegas.

The DCC is a specialty council of the American Society of Concrete Contractors, a nonprofit organization. The DCC advances the quality and use of decorative concrete systems, including stamped and stained concrete as well as concrete floor systems. There are approximately 530

member companies in the ASCC.

Jay Fangman has been a member of ASCC and DCC for six years and has been with Colorado Hardscapes as a concrete consultant and director of business development for 18 years.

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

## Portland Cement Association

### Marketing services via PCA

The Portland Cement Association announced the launch of the "DIY Promotion Zone," an online one-stop resource for planning and creating marketing communications materials.

This innovative Web site gives concrete promoters, home-builders and contractors access to a library of materials and templates that can be customized for specific events and companies. Templates include print ads, brochures, event postcards, and e-mail "blasts" for use in promoting residential concrete products to both consumer and nonconsumer audiences. The site vendors, Redleaf Digital and Johnson Press, act as fulfillment sources and offer mailing or e-mailing services to a provided mailing list. There is no sign-up fee. Rather, the site utilizes a "pay-as-you-go" system, where users only pay for a PDF file they download or for printing services they request.

[www.cement.org/homes/DIY](http://www.cement.org/homes/DIY)

## Hard facts

The Portland Cement Association announced the launch of the "Concrete Thinking" e-newsletter, a new resource for architects, engineers, and members of the building industry interested in sustainable development.

"Concrete Thinking" is distributed six times a year. The free e-newsletter provides the latest news and information about the environmental benefits of building with cement-based products, as well as real-world examples of putting the products to use. Each edition of the "Concrete Thinking" e-Newsletter includes up-to-date news and trends on issues related to concrete and sustainable development, case studies about upcoming or existing projects that use cement-based materials in innovative ways, facts and tutorials about implementing cutting-edge, sustainable applications, upcoming green building community events from across the country, and links to news stories about cement-based projects that are unique in the way they contribute to sustainability.

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

## Residential technology promotion manager hired

The Portland Cement Association named Donn C. Thompson, AIA, LEED AP, as residential technology promotion manager.

Thompson will oversee the residential technical program and work to enhance cement-based products as a sustainable development solution for home building. He will work closely with government agencies such as the Department of Energy and the Department of Housing and Urban Development to develop research initiatives. His responsibilities also include developing PCA's mid-size production builder program and supporting the National Association of Home Builders' green building standards initiative.

Thompson previously was commercial projects manager for Reward Wall Systems.

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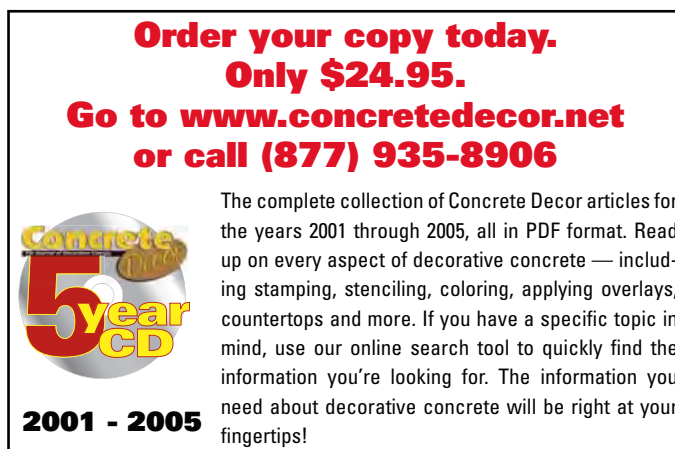


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**G**erald Parker graduated from the Boston Museum School of Fine Arts 35 years ago, well before the decorative concrete movement hit its stride. So when he went looking for work in the small town where he lived, the only job he found was as a laborer for a local mason.

But his schooling didn't stop there. "As my skills in the trade and my understanding of the medium increased, it became apparent that I could become more creative with concrete," he says. "Using a sand mold, concrete could be formed into any shape. With dry masonry pigments, mixing the primary colors any hue could be created. Concrete finishing products could brighten the dry colored concrete."

What to do with this newfound knowledge? Parker decided to make pottery.

"At first I created a sand mold within a box-shaped wooden form," he says. "With a wooden template attached to a metal pole a perfect outer shape could be made. Other times, I would simply remove sand to create something free-hand-mold."

"After the mold is created, I dilute a mixture of concrete colors and apply them directly on the sand mold using squirt bottles. When my design is complete, I build up a two-inch-thick wall, filling the center with sand to keep the wall from slumping. I continue this way until I reach the top of the box form. After a period of curing time, I remove the box form, pull back the sand mold, both inside and out, and lightly scrape the pottery with a flat brick jointer to reveal the design."

"Another method I prefer which allows more flexibility is the upside-down technique. I dome a mound of damp sand on a workbench to the shape I desire. Using a hand trowel, I plaster four coats of cement consisting of a concrete-sand mix around the pottery, using wire between the second and third coat. After this is complete, I mix small portions of colored cement and apply this with a flat brick jointer directly on to the piece. This wet-on-wet technique allows infinite creative possibilities to achieve any design."

"Other techniques allow me to hand carve designs before the curing time has elapsed."

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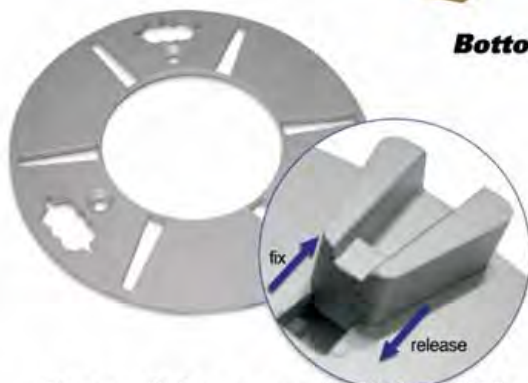
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