

Counter Culture: Fall 2009

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Concrete

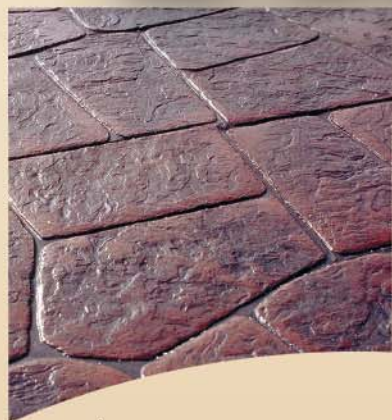
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Publisher's Letter



Dear Readers,

I hope this edition of *Concrete Decor* can provide tools that will help you uncover new business in the wake of this down economy. Talking with contractors, supply stores and manufacturers throughout the country these past several weeks, one thing has become clear to me: We're starting to move in a favorable direction once again.

Like every business in the construction market, we've all felt the pinch — yes, *Concrete Decor* included! In spite of these circumstances, it's important to note that decorative concrete as an industry is not a cause for the problems we've experienced. Instead, it's my contention that decorative concrete, showing steady growth for the past 15 years, is proving itself to be an answer to many of the current woes in construction. Therein lay opportunities we can now utilize to grow our businesses both today and for many years to come.

One opportunity that the current recession offers is an opportunity for increasing market share. As an industry that continues to diversify with new products and applications, we have to address the fact that we compete with established products in most areas (e.g., brick, a product of the masonry trade). In challenging times like these, architects, designers, building owners and even consumers often continue with a mindset that new options just don't exist.

An industry that makes a concerted effort to expose decision-makers to solutions that are more cost effective, more durable, friendlier to the environment, faster to install, and capable of mimicking other products, or better yet, deliver a one-of-a-kind solution, must demonstrate that its products deliver these advantages at a time when they are needed most. Such is the opportunity for decorative concrete. While the pool of business opportunities may currently be smaller, the opportunities still remain.

As in any other time, gaining market share requires planning and careful preparation. Key decision-makers are influenced best by information that presents the facts in a compelling way. Information is also effective when it comes from individuals who are confident in their capabilities and the products they use. Being genuinely interested in helping others succeed is the ingredient that will sustain new relationships for years to come.

Believe it or not, product manufacturers and even some supply stores are as interested in your success as you are. That's part of why they advertise in *Concrete Decor*. When you have needs that arise, they want to be the first in line to help. That's the sign of an industry that wants to gain a lion's share of the market.

Sincerely,

Bent Mikkelsen, Publisher

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Concrete Decor offers the industry's ultimate online search tool for finding just about anything related to decorative concrete. Start by going to www.concretedecor.net. At the top of the page simply enter a keyword, such as "stencil," "stain" or "admixture." We'll search our entire archive of stories and information from the pages of *Concrete Decor* and provide you with an extensive list of relevant articles.



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Photo courtesy of River City Coatings

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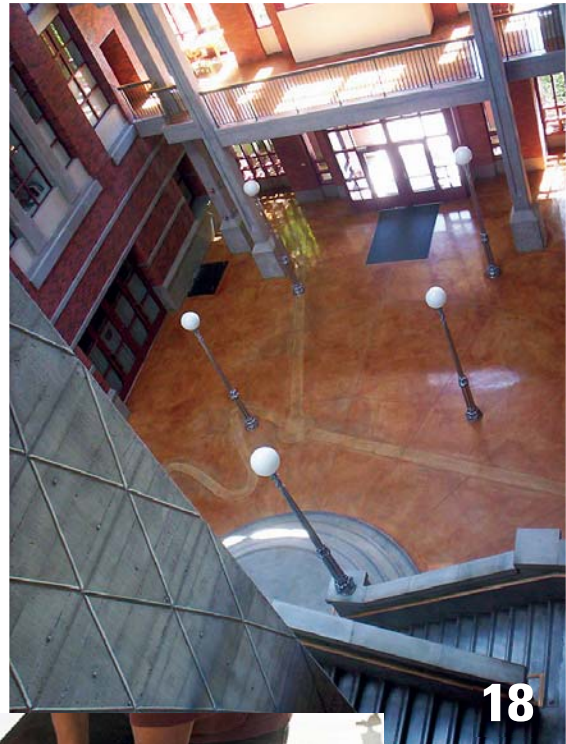
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MK Diamond Products acquires Sawtec from Blastrac

MK Diamond Products Inc. has acquired the Sawtec brand from Blastrac, NA. Sawtec will be marketed as a sub-brand of MK Diamond.

The Sawtec brand provides contractors with a range of dust-free tools and grinding accessories for surface preparation and concrete repair. The Sawtec product line will include surface preparation equipment, dust-free tools for cutting and widening joints, grinding accessories, and shrouds. These products are designed for contractors, public works departments, rental companies and other cutting or demolition professionals.

www.mkdiamond.com

New loaner program for Hilti Tool Fleet Management customers

Hilti Tool Fleet Management customers can now receive loaner tools at no cost when their corresponding Tool Fleet Management tool is being repaired. The loaner service is an exclusive Hilti feature for qualifying Premium Tool Fleet Management customers.

Whenever a covered tool goes in for calibration or repair, the Tool Fleet Management customer can request a free loaner tool via express delivery to maintain job site productivity. When the repaired tool is sent back to the customer, a pre-addressed and prepaid shipping label will be included for returning the loaner tool.

A wide range of tools are eligible for the loaner service, including most hammer drills, demolition hammers, diamond core rigs and drills, rotating and pipe lasers, and select powder- and gas-actuated tools.

[\(800\) 879-8000](tel:8008798000)

www.us.hilti.com



Bonsal expands Cincinnati plant

Bonsal American recently expanded its Cincinnati manufacturing facility.

The Cincinnati plant was the original production facility for the Sakrete brand, which was introduced in 1936. This expansion, including a renovation, has added a substantial amount of capacity and efficiency to the plant, replacing 1940s-era equipment with state-of-the-art technology. This new, larger facility will also create several new jobs.

[\(800\) 738-1621](tel:8007381621)

www.sakrete.com



New location for NLB branch

NLB Corp. has relocated its Houston-area branch to larger quarters to better serve customers who need high-pressure water jet units, accessories and service. The new 10,800-square-foot facility is more than twice the size of the one NLB occupied for the previous 20 years and is located just minutes away from its previous location.

The new branch has NLB high-pressure and ultra-high-pressure water jet pump units for sale, rent or lease, along with a wide range of water jet accessories. These are displayed with a



convertible NLB pump unit in an 800-square-foot showroom, thought to be the largest in the industry. There is also a large service area, a parts department with a substantial inventory, and a training room.

☎ (281) 471-7761

🌐 www.nlbcorp.com

Progressive Concrete Works awarded for work

Progressive Concrete Works Inc. received three 2009 Excellence in Concrete Awards from the Arizona Chapter of the American Concrete Institute.

ACI's annual Excellence in Concrete Awards presented Progressive Concrete Works Inc. with the following awards: 2009 Award for Sustainable Concrete Construction, 2009 Award for Commercial Architectural Hardscape, and 2009 Award for Residential Architectural Hardscape.

Progressive Concrete Works Inc. has been serving the greater Phoenix area for more than 55 years and is one of the oldest concrete contractors in Arizona. Progressive Concrete Works Inc. provides structural concrete, foundations and flatwork for residential and commercial use.

🌐 www.progressiveconcrete.com

🌐 www.azaci.org

Lafarge gift will enhance greening

Lafarge Canada Inc. is helping to make the Bow Valley region in Alberta more beautiful with a gift to The Banff Centre that will partially go toward new greening initiatives on the Centre's grounds. The \$336,000 donation will support campus greening as well as create three new scholarships for not-for-profit leaders.

As part of The Banff Centre's current revitalization project, plans are underway to create LEED-certified greening in public spaces — replanting, creating natural outdoor meeting spaces, building new pathway systems, and eliminating vehicular traffic for the center of the campus. The project aligns with Lafarge's interest in environmental protection, natural resource conservation and community investment.

The second part of the Lafarge program will create new training scholarships for not-for-profit leaders in The Banff Centre's Leadership Development programs. Three scholarships of \$4,000 each will be available every year for three years, beginning in 2009. The scholarships will be called the Lafarge Concrete Community Leaders Scholarship, the Lafarge Aggregate Community Leaders Scholarship, and the Lafarge Construction Community Leaders Scholarship.

🌐 www.lafarge.com

🌐 www.banffcentre.ca

Concretech expands in U.S.


Concrete Chemical Technologies, based in Richmond, B.C., has spread its Concretech Decorative Product line further into the United States via Concrete Chemicals of California.

The Concretech brand has been a dominant decorative concrete line in Canada for years since the line came into existence 12 years ago in 1997. Greg Fuchs, president of CCT,

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Manchester & Associates to carry Sikafloor product line

Sika Corp. has announced that the manufacturer's representative firm, Manchester & Associates Inc., has joined the Industrial Flooring Business Unit as exclusive representatives of the Sikafloor product line in Texas and Oklahoma.

Manchester & Associates Inc. has a combined 55 years of experience in specifying and marketing resinous flooring products. The firm has supplied products for many large projects, such as at the Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport and the Dallas Convention Center, in addition to working with various schools and corporate clients.

Sika Industrial Flooring is a division of Sika Corp., a worldwide supplier of roofing, wall and floor coatings for

industrial and institutional construction projects.

🌐 www.sikafloorusa.com

Pioneering contractor dies

Doug Demmert, founder of Demmert & Associates, a decorative concrete contractor based in Glendale, Calif., died Sunday, August 9, 2009, at his home in Glendale.

A pioneer of polished concrete in the southern California region, Doug and his son Greg made Demmert & Associates a "go-to" company for high-end decorative work, says Jim Glessner, owner of GST International LLC. "Doug supported and promoted our industry for all the many years I knew him, and it was my privilege to be able to call him my friend. We have lost another industry leader."



Greg Demmert operated the business for the past few years while his father struggled with cancer. Greg will continue to run Demmert & Associates in the greater Los Angeles basin. Business associates will see almost no change in the company's day-to-day operations.

☎ (818) 843-5844

🌐 www.demmertandassociates.com

ChemSystems hires new VP of sales and marketing

Chris Sullivan has joined ChemSystems Inc. as vice president of sales and marketing. ChemSystems Inc. is a specialty manufacturer of decorative concrete products based in Houston.

Sullivan's responsibilities include managing all sales and marketing activities for the company and involvement in new product development, with an emphasis on troubleshooting application and technical issues. Prior to working for ChemSystems, Sullivan was the national sales manager for QC Construction Products, a global leader in the manufacture of decorative concrete products.

☎ (800) 545-9827

🌐 www.chemsystemsinc.net



Concrete Reinforcing Steel Institute appoints manager

The Concrete Reinforcing Steel Institute has announced the appointment of John Turner, P.E., as its new greater Southwestern region manager.

In this position, Turner will be responsible for managing all CRSI technical, educational, promotional and membership

activities in the states of Arkansas, Colorado, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas.

Turner is a registered engineer in Texas and a certified safety professional,



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as well as a member of the American Association for Wind Engineering, the Structural Engineers Association of Texas, and the American Concrete Institute, where he sits on Committee 314 (Simplified Design of Concrete Buildings).

www.crsi.org

Senbetta to spearhead LEED group for Mapei

Dr. Ephraim Senbetta, LEED AP, will spearhead a group of LEED-accredited professionals assembled by Mapei Corp. to assist architects, contractors and specifiers with questions concerning the role of Mapei's products in LEED certification.



Dr. Senbetta manages Mapei's Quality Management System for the Americas, and he is currently Mapei's representative to the U.S. Green Building Council.

www.mapei.com

Nawkaw territory expands to include new sales rep

Nawkaw Corp. has added a second sales representative to its Nawkaw Pacific Southwest Inc. territory with the hiring of Collyer Cronk, based out of San Diego. Nawkaw Pacific Southwest Inc. encompasses a three-state area that includes California, Nevada and Arizona.

Cronk will be responsible for sales and customer accounts for Nawkaw Architectural Stain and Reckli Formliner and accessories product lines for all of California.

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Sealers On The Brain

I had a dream the other night that I was driving down Highway 101 on the coast of California in a red Corvette convertible. This is no doubt a car I could have purchased new with all the money I have invested in sealer callbacks.

It was as if I was looking down on myself from Google Earth. But as I zoomed in I could see that, although it seemed to be a pleasant experience of a scenic drive, this wasn't the case. Taking a closer look, I noticed a red pump-up sprayer in the back storage area of the car with its hose and wand dangling in the air behind. I obviously was in a hurry to fix a sealer problem. Weird.

We have been hitting this sealer problem head on in this column because this is what your feedback has asked for. I recently had the chance to visit with Bert Adams of Glaze 'N Seal to get his input on what is happening with this industry. Having an opportunity to see the sealing part of our business from a manufacturer's point of view is priceless. This guy has years of experience and no doubt has red, white, and VOC blood cells coursing through his veins. Thanks, Bert.



by Doug Carlton

Troubleshooting

I asked Bert what the heck is going on with these concrete sealers most of our industry is using today. Bert broke it down to me something like this: A certain percent of the jobs sealed will fail. The idea is to stack the deck in your favor, but the fact is that some jobs will need more work than others. Bert reminded me that the reason for sealer failure is not always obvious. A film-forming sealer that "turns white" could be the result of moisture trapped underneath or hard-water deposits on top of the sealer. The remedy for each cause is completely different, but Bert recommends starting with the lesser of the two evils first.

The easiest, in most cases, is mineral or hard-water deposits sitting on the sealer surface. This will usually be around the perimeter or edges of decorative work as it transitions into landscaped areas. Bert recommends using a product like Lime-A-Way or a mild acid solution to break down the white buildup. This may take several applications but will not hurt the sealer. The next step will be to neutralize the surface, let it dry, and then resealed your job. Recommend to your customer that the sprinklers be adjusted or a water softener installed.

If your sealer problem is from moisture trapped underneath, then you will need to take one or more of



Photo by Carlton Concrete Inc.

A job for a new home in Visalia, Calif. The pattern is ashlar slate with texture stamp bands. The color is QC Construction Products' Cortez Red, topped with QC Basalt Gray release. It was sealed with two coats of Glaze 'N Seal 2000 sealer.

the following steps to remove the dead sealer. I say dead because that is exactly what it is, and if you try to reseal over the damaged sealer, you will find yourself dealing with the same problem again, but with a much harder fix. The old sealer must go, and the most effective ways for this to happen are chemically, with hot pressurized water, or with sandblasting. Not fun. Be sure to test an area to see what works best for your project. Check out *Concrete Decor's* last couple of issues for more on removing old sealer. Once the old sealer is removed, you are good to go with a couple of light coats of new sealer.

Application advice

I have to admit that I like to cut my sealer. When I told Bert from Glaze 'N Seal this, the silence was long and calculated. His response was nothing short of polite, but confident, supported by the fact that most sealers come ready to use. He warned that many states are closely watching VOCs and diluting

may be illegal if it increases the VOCs. Now this may or may not be a big deal to you or your client, but the fact that dilution can compromise the film formation, affecting the life of the sealer, might be a big deal too.

You may be asking yourself if the compromise is worth the trade-off of how well the sealers lay down with a shot or two of xylene or acetone. This is your call, but the fact is, most manufacturers will be hard-pressed to help troubleshoot a product that has been compromised. Nevertheless, apply the sealer with thin coats and be sure to add "nonskid" to your sealer on exterior work.

One of the most common questions my office receives is how long will the sealer last before resealing is necessary. Bert recommends resealing every two to three years to maintain a fresh look. If a glossy look is not important, know that the concrete will be stain-resistant for five to eight years with most film-forming sealers. Bert had some

recommendations for preventative steps when applying sealer. One, make sure to use a quality sealer and know what it is capable of doing (or not doing). Two, follow the product guidelines, especially with respect to condition of the substrate, surface temperature, and method of application. Three, make sure the concrete surface and edges are completely dry before, during and after application. Remember, stack the deck in your favor.

Personal note: I have used most of Glaze 'N Seal's sealers over the years and have found Bert's company nothing but top-notch to deal with. You can reach Glaze 'N Seal at www.glaze-n-seal.com for more information. Thanks again, Bert. 📞

Doug Carlton operates Carlton Concrete Inc. in Visalia, Calif. He can be reached at carltondoug@comcast.net.

My Perspective

My wife said it best: “You wish you didn’t have to lose your job to find out how many friends you have.” On June 30, I received a call that came out of left field, without any warning — “Your job has been eliminated.” Now what does that say about the economy, the polished concrete industry, or one’s employer when a key management position is eliminated? I wish I had an



by Peter Wagner, CSI

answer, but unfortunately I don’t, as I was blindsided and not given any explanation. What I do have is the attitude that both myself and the industry will survive these economic times and will come out stronger and better than I/we stand today.

Over the last three weeks, in talking with those in the industry whom I’ve known and worked with for 10 years, I continually hear questions about the future — not only my own, but of our industry. Concerns range from “Where am I going to find work?” to “The industry is growing too fast with little control or consistency” to “Can’t the manufacturers ever agree on something?” During the coming months, it is important for the industry to band together, lest it tear itself apart through shortsightedness. What I’d like to do, in

what may possibly be my last Polished Perspectives column, is to make some observations and ask some questions that I hope will be supported by other individuals’ efforts to provide guidance to the industry.

The polished concrete industry has seen growth, especially during the past three years, that is both encouraging and depressing. Whenever one has been part of an industry since its birth, he tends to be a little territorial. I know I have been. So, when change occurs, especially if it’s not in one’s own best interest, one often gets protective and possibly a little jaded. This doesn’t have to happen.

From my own perspective, I’ve identified three main areas of change in our industry, and I’m not talking about equipment or diamonds, but about chemicals. In chronological order, we’ve seen the advent of dyes both replacing and complementing acid stains, we’ve seen the introduction of “guard” products, originally to protect from food acids, and more recently, we’ve seen the introduction of lithium silicates. How has each of these introductions affected our industry?

Dyes have opened up a whole palette of colors to our customers, greatly multiplying the options for design in conjunction with polished concrete. Where once there were eight colors with acid stain, the rainbow



is now your palette, unless you want a color that requires white as a component. White is still our holy grail, only able to be added by specifying a white cement.

But where dyes have offered this range of colors, the manufacturers have never really addressed their limitations adequately, even if that would be just strongly emphasizing dyes' susceptibility to high moisture or potential fading due to ultraviolet (UV) light exposure. Too often they hide behind "It's in the data sheet" as their answer. This is not an encouraging answer to a longtime customer or even a new customer. "We're not sure why it happens, it just does" is lame.

And issues such as moisture problems or UV exposure need to be addressed more definitively. For example, UV is not just outdoor sunlight. UV can enter through open doors, windows without adequate, or any, UV filtering, and certain indoor lighting. Address the shortcomings so that your customers are able to take advantage of all your strengths. From the installer's standpoint, it is much more effective and comforting to have a complete knowledge base during decision-making time than to make the frantic phone call from the job site.

Remember ... the first 10 to 15 feet of dyed, polished concrete located next to overhead doors with a southern exposure cannot be considered interior, despite the roof overhead and doors that close at night. As to moisture problems ... figure it out and address it. You'll have a stronger product when you know how to address "Why did my brown turn purple?"

According to Answers.com, one definition of "guard" is, "Something that gives protection; a safeguard." When the guard products were first introduced, they were intended to protect polished concrete from acids, specifically those found in grocery stores. Concrete, by nature, is susceptible to acids such as mustard and vinegar. As long as there is exposed concrete on the floor, these acids will attack it. With a polished floor, you not only have a 100 percent exposed concrete surface, but you are

also adding attributes of color and a highly reflective surface that will magnify any acid etch that occurs. The guard products can be formulations of silanes, siloxanes, fluoropolymers, densifiers and acrylics. Each manufacturer has its own magic potion. Unfortunately, these products are not only being oversold, they are also being oversimplified and overspecified. Instead of being an application-specific product for grocery stores, they are being specified by some manufacturers for every installation.

One of the main contentions about these products is that they go against polished concrete's claim of being low maintenance. Guards have their place, but it's time to reevaluate what exactly our industry is delivering to our customers, and to ask if we're taking the easy way out and hiding being the "guard" because it's easy and hides our other sins, such as poor performance or poor polishing and coloring.

Last, but not least, I'd like to talk about those (expletive deleted) lithiums. At least those were probably my chosen words a year ago. Today I'm going to say it — lithium isn't the enemy. But neither is it the holy grail of densifying. It's probably closer to the truth when I say, "A silicate is a silicate is a silicate." First of all, let's remember what a silicate is meant to do, and that is to chemically interact with the calcium hydroxide, mimic the original hydration process, and produce calcium silicate hydrate, which provides the strength in the cementing process. The argument shouldn't be about how the silicate is delivered to the floor, but about whether it is delivered in a large enough quantity for a long enough reaction time. The goal is to not only harden the concrete, but also create the chemical densification that eliminates the natural dusting of concrete, along with increasing the repellency. I daresay that one could make an argument for or against every densifier on the market, but that's not the point, nor will it make you successful. Given a choice, it is natural to work with the individual or company that you are most comfortable with, that provides

you the best opportunity for success. That might be "A" in one region and "B" in another. Just as John Abrahamson discussed in his polishing column last issue, it is important to know what your options are and use them accordingly. A successful polished concrete installer is one who is continually open-minded as he or she moves forward, and who continually learns from their, and other's, experiences.

Good luck down the road. Thank you for sharing the past five years with me. 🚗

Peter Wagner, CSI, has been involved in the flooring industry for more than 25 years, with the past nine years being focused on polished concrete. He has had the opportunity to fill management roles in training, product development and marketing for several manufacturers, in addition to having been one of the first polishing contractors in the Pacific Northwest. He has written Polished Perspectives for Concrete Decor since 2005, in addition to serving on industry panels and being a speaker at World of Concrete. He can be reached at pbwagner@comcast.net.



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Hot-Temperature Effects on Sealing

About six months ago, I wrote a piece for Trowel and Error entitled “When Cold Temperatures Affect Sealers.” Now that we are in the heat of summer, I think it is a good time to discuss how warm temperatures affect sealers. Before we go any further, I want to point out that the term “concrete sealer” is a catch-all term for a family of products that range from low-end cure-and-seals to high-end multipart systems. Each and every sealer has a recommended application method best suited for that particular product based on solids content, viscosity, resin type and type of carrier solvent. To assure full disclosure, I will be dealing in generalities based on product family, and I always recommend that you follow the application guidelines outlined by the specific product manufacturer.



by Chris Sullivan

Heat is the universal catalyst. Apply heat and things tend to happen faster. Consider what happened the last time you accidentally grabbed a hot plate. I am sure your speed increased dramatically as you looked for a place to put the plate down. The same thing happens with sealers at the molecular level when the temperatures go up. Things just happen faster! This is not necessarily a bad thing — until you reach a temperature at which the product’s

application or performance is affected. The universally accepted temperature range for sealer application is 50 F to 90 F. There are exceptions, so make sure to consult the product data for the particular sealer you are using.

Three common sealing issues in hot temperatures are resin strings, blisters and diffusion.

Resin Strings, also known as “cotton candy” or “spiderwebbing,” occur when the solvent (liquid) portion of the sealer evaporates before the sealer has a chance to lay down on the concrete surface. The resin (plastic) gets stretched into thin strings because the liquid carrier is no longer present. When the temperature is high, the solvent carrier evaporates faster, and the window of opportunity to apply the sealer properly gets smaller. Use a fast-evaporating solvent like acetone and the window becomes even smaller. The string phenomenon usually occurs when applying solvent-based sealers with a roller or fine-tipped sprayer in hot or windy conditions. To avoid this issue, seal when temperatures are low and there is little wind. If spraying, use a larger tip, and if rolling, don’t overwork the sealer.

Blisters or bubbles occur when the surface of the sealer “skins over,” trapping the evaporating solvent gas in or on the surface of the sealer membrane. Just like with boiling

water, gas needs to escape as a sealer transitions from a liquid to a solid. If the temperatures are too hot and the surface of the sealer forms a "skin" before the rest of the sealer has a chance to cure, the gas gets trapped. Some of the gas bubbles get trapped in the sealer membrane, while some will make it to the surface and form a blister. To avoid this, stay away from direct sunlight, the heat of the day and high winds when sealing. Also, consider the type of solvent (liquid) and how it reacts to heat and wind. Most of the blister and bubble issues occur with solvent-based sealers and very rarely occur with water-based sealers. This has to do with the slower evaporation rate of water versus xylene or acetone.

Diffusion appears as a gray or white haze in the sealer after it has cured. It can occur days or months after application, and it is caused when the sealer starts to lift away from the concrete. Even the smallest microscopic air gap between sealer and concrete

causes light to diffuse and "bounce around," creating a grayish white haze instead of the nice clean and clear reflectance that you see when the sealer is properly adhered to the concrete. If the surface temperature is high (from cooking in the sun), the sealer may cure before it has a chance to penetrate and adhere to the concrete substrate. Avoiding hot surfaces, as well as applying sealers as thinly as possible, will help avoid diffusion.

As I think you can see, avoiding heat-related sealer issues is less about what is happening and more about avoiding sealer application when the sun is shining bright, the wind is blowing or temperatures are above 90 F for both air and surface. If you have never read the tech data sheet or MSDS for the sealer you use, I recommend you take a few minutes and do so. Pay special attention to the type of solvents contained in the sealer, the temperature application range and the recommended application methods. Too many times I

see contractors apply sealers based on what they saw someone else do or they learned 15 years ago. The more you can learn about the products you are using, the better off you will be. Even in the hot climates of California, Arizona, Texas and Florida, there are times and ways to apply sealers successfully during the summer months. It may take getting up early or using a different application method, but it can be done. As the dog days of summer heat up, it does not have to lead to sealer problems. Consider how temperature will affect your sealing jobs, stay cool, and enjoy the success you deserve. 🚚

Chris Sullivan is vice president of sales and marketing with ChemSystems Inc. He has presented seminars and product demonstrations throughout North America, including at the World of Concrete convention. Contact him with technical questions at trowelanderror@concretedecor.net.

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What could be better than simple gray?

There's something about its weight. There's something about its economy of purpose, its honesty, and sometimes, its beauty. There's just something about natural gray concrete. And the longer I've been in the decorative concrete field, with options for coloring systems ever increasing, the more I've come to appreciate it.

For me, this is especially true in cast-in-place vertical concrete. Gray is a bit of a staple, like bread and milk (or, better, bread and wine). However, it's a memorable, indelible staple. It's a constant, always the same and yet ever changing.

I remember construction of the Luxor in Las Vegas and my first exploratory trip to the job site. This was before the glass facade (or any facade or finishes) had been applied. Luxor was to be a giant pyramid, rising from the floor of the desert. This was fantastic concrete! The angled elevator cores. The deep horizontal beams. The audacity and gravity of the structure. And from the central atrium outward, the sheer volume of space that the concrete defined was stunning.

Coming after a first paragraph praising natural gray concrete, this next paragraph may seem a bit off-track. However, please bear with me. My first similar, and really memorable, experience with stained concrete was while staying at The



by Mike Miller

Ahwahnee Hotel in Yosemite National Park. In addition to being a super-cool deluxe resort hotel, in what's possibly the world's most super-cool valley, this place is kind of like a lodestone for stained concrete guys. One visit and you'll be magnetically drawn back, again and again. Rough-sawn vertical formwork, with wood grain extra-emphasized and, horizontally, a ground-in pomo Indian motif. All this over tens of thousands of square feet, with both walls and floors, even roof beams, cast in gray concrete that was subsequently stained. Stunning. Could anything possibly beat it? Well, maybe.

You see, The Ahwahnee was designed as a fireproof alternative to the original rustic, all-wood hotel, which had burned down. In light of this, design and construction of The Ahwahnee as patina-stained concrete was probably most appropriate. It was contextually rich, with graphically stained floors celebrating indigenous basket-weaving designs and walls and beams simulating massive forest timbers.

However, might I be so bold to suggest that leaving the walls and beams unstained, and equally well coordinated with their backdrop of granite masses, might have been even better? Read on, McDuff. It's coming.

I was later engaged to do stained concrete floor mock-ups for the Haas School of Business at University of California, Berkeley. UC Berkeley has quite a history of producing gray concrete buildings. Some are wonderful and some are, well,

some are there. Clearly, this architect had intended to design something memorable, and had obviously taken a strong cue in style from The Ahwahnee. Here were these phenomenal board-formed walls in natural gray concrete. Slight, interesting lift lines, bug holes, and one giant fossil of the wooden formwork's butt joints and grain. Indelible. As in The Ahwahnee, the floors were to be stained concrete — however, unlike at Yosemite, these walls were to be painted. Painted ... I was aghast!

The pairing of a transparent, saturated stained concrete floor with these chalky natural gray concrete walls would be a natural. Like that staple of bread and red wine. And here was something even better than The Ahwahnee (if you can imagine that). Somehow, the pairing of things that are similar and yet opposites — stained/unstained, sealed/unsealed, horizontal/vertical — creates a symbiosis that can't be beat! At least in my eyes.

I argued with both the owner and architect vociferously. I implored them to seriously reconsider painting the gray concrete. I don't know whether they reconsidered or not, but, in any case, it was painted. The floors were stained by Joe Sanchez of J & R Floor Services, Clayton, Calif., and it's a great-looking building. But not quite as great, in my opinion, as it would have been had the walls been left naked.

Just like I'm continually drawn back to The Ahwahnee, a more modern building (circa the late 1980s) that I find myself continually revisiting is Deschutes Hall at the University of Oregon in Eugene. This is one I was involved with to a very minor extent. The architect was Moore Ruble Yudell (the same architect that would later produce the Haas School of Business). I was a sales representative for L.M. Scofield Co. and was servicing a local painting contractor who was to be staining the floors of the interior of the building. He had no previous experience in stain, nor had the general and concrete contractors. In spite of this, they did a great job. Here was a brick and gray vertical concrete building enclosing an impressive, vast atrium space, featuring boldly

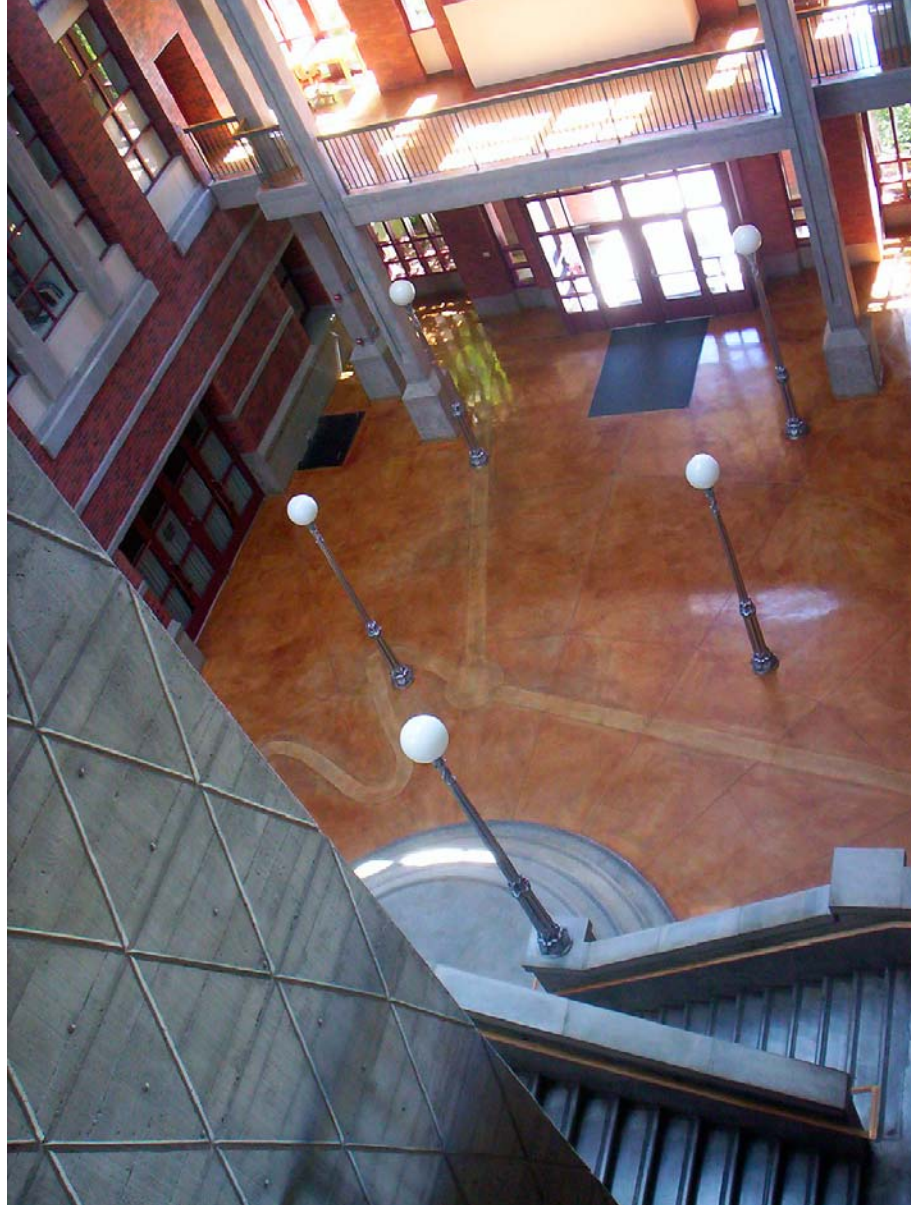


Photo courtesy of the concretist

Deschutes Hall at the University of Oregon in Eugene. Note layers of detail in the natural-gray concrete elements — tie holes, board-formed butt joints, rustication strips — all supported by the warm, iron-salt-stained concrete slab. The variegated patina of the slab also includes layers of detail.

designed sculptural gray vertical (and some horizontal) concrete paired with polished (in the traditional waxed, well-maintained sense), iron-salt-stained concrete floors, rich and shiny as a freshly polished shoe, with a combination of traditional, graphic-and-avant-garde, tone-on-tone, schematic scientific motifs. Spectacular! Like flying in a loaf of bread from France and pairing it with a bottle of Opus One from Napa Valley (I am from California, after all). To me, this building and its combination of what I would truly term sensory concretes is a creative pinnacle.

What it comes down to is ... Rich flamboyant color is fantastic, as is something more understated and grounded. But just the right combination of the

two is stunning. Stunning ... like looking into the deep brown eyes of my wife, Jeannine. An artfully crafted, patina-stained concrete floor visually supporting a sculptural, spare gray wall. Or on a smaller scale and in the same plane, bits of color-saturated crushed glass aggregate as highlights in a traditional ground slab. Or a dye-wash graphic, as in a watercolor with pencil line-work, against a similar field of natural gray concrete floor. Stunning and magnetic. Sure to be revisited. 📱

Mike Miller is vice president in charge of marketing for Colormaker Surfaces, of Richmond, B.C. He is also managing principal of The Concretist, based in Benicia, Calif. He can be reached at concretist@aol.com.

Does green increase liability?

If you haven't worked on a green building yet, you will very soon. Turner Construction Co.'s 2008 "Green Building Market Barometer" reported that 83 percent of commercial real estate executives (including developers, owners, architects and engineers) are "extremely" or "very" likely to seek LEED certification for buildings planned for construction within the next three years. The U.S. Green Building Council, which developed the LEED green-building rating system, says that there are currently more than 24,769 commercial buildings and 17,081 homes registered for LEED certification. In addition, 3,111 commercial buildings and 2,566 homes have already received certification.



by William D. Palmer Jr.

That's all good for concrete construction in general and for decorative concrete in particular, but have you considered the liability implications of building green? All construction projects have risks associated with meeting specifications and staying on schedule, but green construction throws in some twists that you should be aware of going in.

At a recent USGBC panel discussion on the legal risks of building green, attorney Keith McGlamery, of Ballard

Spahr Andrews & Ingersoll LLP, stated that he thought the real estate community might face new potential liabilities by building green. "The framework of legal liability is not new. However, some of the claims within that framework are new or, at least, less familiar."

To start, consider the very definition of what's green. You may define it one way, and the project architect and owner may define it differently. Review the contracts and specifications very carefully to make sure you understand the specifier's intent. Does the owner expect to achieve a certain level of green? And if so, how does that impact your portion of the job? Something as simple as using a higher-VOC sealer could affect the rating the building achieves and lead to reduced rents and loss of tax credits. Get the general contractor or owner to tell you in writing what level of sustainability they anticipate and the rating system they will use.

The entire issue of green liability is evolving, and contractors know only too well where the risk gets pushed. In a recent blog post on the National Apartment Association's Web site, NAA state and local policy manager Scot Haislip flatly states, "In light of these new risks, owners would be wise to shift as much liability as possible to the contractor and/or consultant in their contracts. Additionally, you should double-check that their insurance policies cover losses due to

failure to comply with green building requirements.”

Review for greenness

As I've mentioned in previous columns, manufacturers across the concrete industry are marketing their products as green. What if an architect specifies one of these products that turns out to not be as environmentally friendly as they thought? Sure, it's the architect's responsibility, but if it goes to court, guess who gets dragged in?

When you review the products in a specification, make sure to check the following:

Is this product as green as advertised? There are a couple of ways to check that out. One approach that is developing is GreenFormat, available from the Construction Specifications Institute — more on this later.

Is the product readily available in the quantities needed? A typical source of litigation is construction delays. If you agree to use a product, or recommend a product, that turns out to not be available, resulting in a delay, that could easily come back to bite you.

Does the product perform as well as what you are using currently? You could get stuck on either end here — you could use a durable and proven product that doesn't meet the green

standards or use something new that breaks down sooner than expected.

Make sure any specified products meet the building code requirements. The best thing would be testing by the ICC Evaluation Service that states the product does meet certain requirements. At least, check that the product states that it meets the applicable ASTM specification.

How difficult is installation? It may be the greenest product in the world, but if you can't get it installed properly, you'll end up with the responsibility. Also note that some green installation techniques could actually void the manufacturer's warranty.

Are there delays inherent in the installation? For example, is curing time longer? Do the other trades need to stay off the floor longer? Either of these could lead to delays that you will get blamed for — get these waiting periods into the schedule upfront.

Checking up on a product isn't always easy, but CSI is moving towards improving that. Set up within the

framework of the CSI MasterFormat document standard (Division 3 is concrete), manufacturers list their products on GreenFormat and provide justification for their green claims including, in some cases, third-party certification. The products listed under Division 3 are limited at this time, but more are being added every day.

The federal government also has a sample specification that could help you when reviewing project specifications. The Federal Green Construction Guide for Specifiers is intended to be a comprehensive guide for obtaining green building products and construction services within the federal government. The EPA partnered with the Federal Environmental Executive and the Whole Building Design Guide to develop this model specification, also organized according to MasterFormat.

Other contract issues

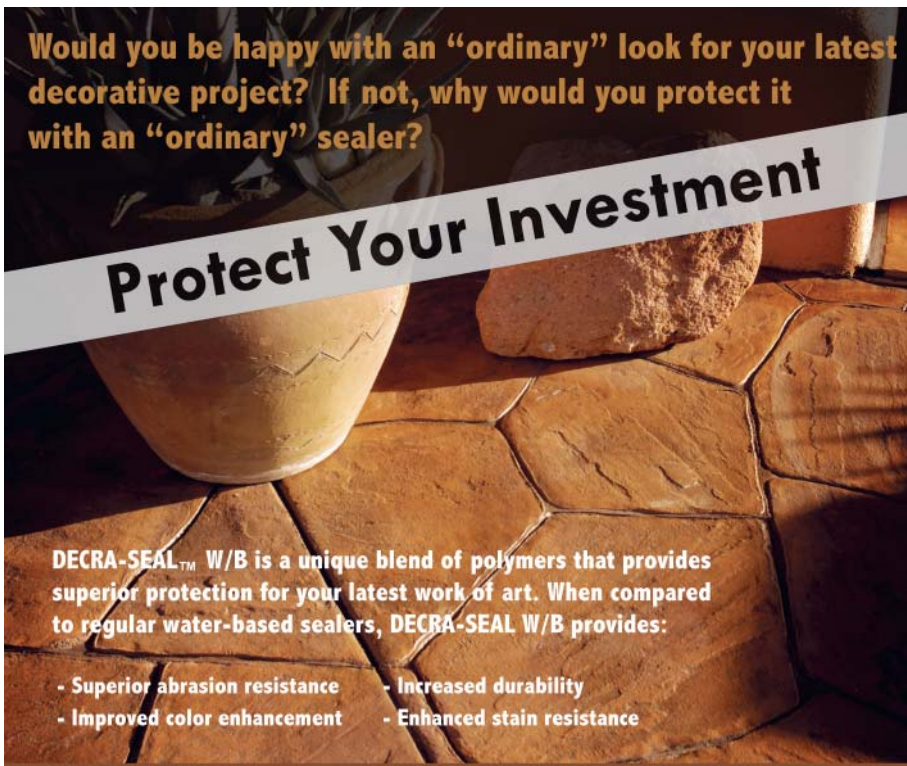
The best way to avoid getting into trouble on a green project is to work with owners, developers, architects and

On Avoiding Litigation

For a good overview of the legal issues involved with building green, contact the National Association of Home Builders to get a copy of "Before You Build Green: A Primer on Avoiding Liability Pitfalls." This brochure covers marketing, contracts, warranties, compliance with laws, training and installation. It recommends that contractors take steps to reduce the risk that a green building project could result in litigation.

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general contractors who have experience with the process. And you too will need the experience and education to at least be able to understand what is being discussed. Don't get stuck by underestimating your commitment. LEED projects invariably demand additional paperwork to justify green practices. In some cases, you could be required to adopt new internal quality assurance procedures.

Look for, or ask for, a statement in your contracts that excludes third-party beneficiaries. This could, for example, prevent a tenant from suing you when the building doesn't meet their expectations — say for reduced energy usage or the amount of sunlight.

If your work is going to lead to green points, make sure you understand which points you are responsible for and very specifically how the points are achieved. Are you expected to recycle everything on the job site? Use products with recycled content? Eliminate all products with any VOCs? Also, beware of clauses that could result in loss of incentive bonuses if certain green levels aren't reached.

Insurance coverage is another potential problem. Some insurance companies exclude certain green practices or charge more. Others are working to reduce their customers' risks. For example, ACE USA's environmental risk group complements a contractor's insurance policy with the ACE Green CPL program, a green-specific insurance program that helps clients assess and proactively manage environmental impacts and liabilities.

Green projects can be a growing source of business for decorative concrete. The risks aren't really greater than for any other construction project, but you should understand where the potential hooks are and how to avoid them. 🛠️

William D. Palmer Jr., P.E., is with Complete Construction Consultants, where he develops technical and educational resources for the construction industry. He can be reached at wpalmer@cee3.com.

Links:

Federal Green Construction Guide for Specifiers

🌐 www.wbdg.org/design/greenspec.php

Turner Construction Co.'s 2008 "Green Building Market Barometer"

🌐 www.turnerconstruction.com/corporate/content.asp?d=6504

Federal Green Construction Guide for Specifiers

🌐 www.wbdg.org/design/greenspec.php

USGBC panel discussion on the legal risks of building green

🌐 www.usgbcny.org/assets/documents/white-paper_legal-risk-in-building-green.pdf

GreenFormat, from the Construction Specifications Institute

🌐 www.greenformat.com

"Green Legal Liability," by NAA state and local policy manager Scot Haislip

🌐 www.naahq.org/blog/Lists/Posts/Post.aspx?ID=37



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Hiday Concrete Sequim, Wash.



Photos courtesy of Hiday Concrete

by David Thompson

Nobody should have ugly concrete. That's Colin Hiday's motto, and he lives by it no matter what kind of concrete he's working on — decorative or otherwise.

"I won't pour a 4-by-4 pad unless it's pretty," he says.

The 30-year-old concrete artisan learned his pride in craftsmanship from his father, long-time concrete contractor Dave Hiday, 57. The two have been working together since before Colin was as tall as the shovel his father had him digging foundations with. By the time Colin was in his teens, he was setting forms and pouring concrete like a pro.

"The only reason I'm any good at anything is because of my dad — he instilled in me the basics of doing it right," Colin says. "My dad can build anything out of a form, and he'll do it perfectly. I grew up learning from that."

The father and son work as business partners today in Hiday Concrete, which does a full range of high-end commercial and residential work, from the fundamentals to the fancy. Based in Sequim, Wash., a small town in a rapidly growing part of the Olympic Peninsula, the company keeps three workers employed full time, in addition to the Hidays.

Colin and Dave's respective interests and



talents complement each other nicely. While Dave continues to focus on foundations and structural matters, Colin has gone deep into decorative concrete.

"I'm more of a carpenter," says Dave. "Colin's the creative one."

Colin's interest in decorative started with exposed pea gravel, curved joints and other classic decorative elements, then grew to include new-school tricks like stamping and staining. To stay on top of the latest developments, Colin and Dave began attending the annual World of Concrete trade show in Las Vegas. There, Colin discovered vertical applications and the

world of possibilities Flex-C-Ment offers for carving faux vertical surfaces. After taking a workshop by the late Wayne Sellon, an innovator in vertical decorative concrete, Colin came away with both the skills he needed to start taking concrete up the wall and an even deeper interest in doing so.

He's so enthusiastic about verticals that he sometimes throws up a small wall to carve in his garage simply for his own amusement.

"Vertical is so much fun I can't believe I get paid to do it," he says. "Carving concrete is almost therapeutic for me. I think it's relaxing."

The company has a Web site, but its marketing is almost entirely done through word of mouth. Lately, Hiday Concrete has been taking Colin's vertical mania to the bank, as more and more clients see what he can do and decide they want to get in on it.

And the buzz around Hiday Concrete's verticals is growing in other ways, too. Early this year, Flex-C-Ment named the company "Installer of the Month" for a job it did at the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribal Center on the tip of the Olympic Peninsula. A pedestrian tunnel runs beneath the highway that cuts through the tribal center campus, and the tribe worried about cars going over the



edge there. So it hired Hiday Concrete to create a traffic barrier — but not just any traffic barrier. This one holds a planter and is covered with faux rock that imitates a nearby basalt retaining wall. Hiday also covered the face of the pedestrian tunnel with faux basalt, poured stairs, and bases for new totem poles, and made other improvements.

To create the faux basalt, Colin covered the traffic barrier and the face of the tunnel with diamond lath, which he hand-molded into rock shapes. Using a rubber mallet to pound the lath into shape, he employed a five-gallon bucket to mold the curves

and a plastic tub for the angles. He then covered the lath with a homemade base mix, followed by a Flex-C-Ment texture coat tinted with Lamp Black integral color. He applied three dark shades of water-based stain using sprayers, sponges and brushes, then went over the whole thing with a scuff pad to bring out layers of color in spots.

“I had a blast doing that job,”

Colin says.

Hiday Concrete also won kudos at Hardware Wholesale’s most recent Decorative Concrete Event and Contest, held in April at the Silver Spur Riding Club in Bremerton, Wash. Competing against 13

other artisans, Hiday Concrete came away with the Most Artistic and Best Vertical awards.

For that project, Hiday Concrete transformed a humdrum old announcer’s booth beside a horse ring into what Hardware Wholesale described in its newsletter as “an art piece straight out of the Old West.”

Hiday tore the cedar shingles off the front of the booth and replaced them with faux dry-stacked ashlar slate. Faux log columns appear to hold up the overhanging roof, and a faux quarter log set outside the booth’s window provides a surface for people



interacting with the occupants inside.

Colin built frames for the logs using plywood, 2-by-4s and diamond lath, which he covered in Flex-C-Ment. He used stamps for the bark texture, knots and bare spots on the logs, carving some of the details by hand to put some pop into it. He used pancake stamps to give texture to the faux slate and carved out all the joints by hand. While the mud on the wall was still wet, he sunk a horseshoe above the window and an actual silver spur alongside the door. He used several layers of water-based stain for coloring.

That job was a blast too, Colin says. "It

was both challenging and fun."

Hiday Concrete's future plans involve moving its base of operations from the family home to a larger location visible from Sequim's main highway. It will also expand its small concrete statuary business. The company currently has about 40 molds for gargoyles, Virgin Marys and whatnot, and is working on buying several hundred more.

Demand for decorative concrete is growing on the Olympic Peninsula, which has expanded the field of competition. Hiday Concrete's combination of creativity and pride in craftsmanship ensures that it will always be at the top of the heap.

"I get calls to fix other people's concrete all the time," Colin says with a perfectionist's note of disgust in his voice. "It doesn't take that much more time to do a good job. You just have to care about what you're doing."

www.hidayconcrete.com

Project Profile



Photos courtesy of River City Coatings

This gleaming showroom floor may be the most complimented element of the Jordan Ford dealership's new building.

Jordan Ford Auto Dealership, San Antonio, Texas

Contractor: River City Coatings

by Elizabeth Gillette

Before Rick Vasquez of San Antonio-based River City Coatings began work on the showroom floor and outdoor service area of the Jordan Ford auto dealership in San Antonio, most of his jobs had involved quick-turnaround resurfacing projects. A typical job was refinishing kitchen floors in fast-food restaurants, where speed and organized execution were paramount so as to not disturb workers and interrupt service.

The car dealership's large, freshly poured surfaces, with stained decorative accents outside and a metallic showroom-quality finish inside, would be a unique addition to the contractor's portfolio of work.

When Mike Trompeter, CFO of Jordan Ford, proposed these unique features to the

Client: Jordan Ford, San Antonio, Texas

Contractor: River City Coatings, San Antonio, Texas

Project timeline: 5 weeks

Project specs: 12,000 square feet of traditional stained concrete outdoors, 6,000 square feet of metallic epoxy showroom floor indoors

Products used —

Outdoors: Kemiko acid stain, Arizona Polymers UV-resistant urethane topcoat

Showroom floor: Miracote Chameleon Epoxy (Midnight Black), Miracote Chameleon Dispersion Agent, Miracote Chameleon Symphony Pigments and Effects (Metallic)



Technique, practice and timing ensured the client received the desired effect from the dispersion agent used on this floor. Recreating and maintaining the exact same effect throughout the floor can be a challenge, says Jim Rowe of Miracote. Taking notes so the “recipe” can be recreated is helpful.

contractor, Vasquez said, “I can do that.”

In 2007 the Jordan Ford car dealership began building a new showroom and service area at the site of its existing dealership. Founded in 1919, the venerable company intended to remain open during construction, and the old structure was torn down once the new building was up and running. The dealership’s new home includes a porch and service area that features a total of 12,000 square feet of traditional stained concrete outdoors and 6,000 square feet of metallic showroom floor indoors.

Brick outside

Included in the 12,000 square feet outdoors is 5,000 square feet of stained concrete scored into a brick pattern leading up to the service area of the dealership. Strips of a contrasting color outlined by scoring separate the brick pattern into lanes, which direct customers in their vehicles to service stalls. Once the concrete for this area was laid, Vasquez used a Mongoose engraver from Engrave-A-Crete to score the area. The Mongoose is a crack-chaser saw on wheels with a guide that goes down in front of the tool to keep it going in a straight line. “It is an expensive but really neat tool,” says Vasquez. After the scoring, he used Kemiko Cola acid stain to color and a urethane topcoat to seal.

Just outside the front entrance to the dealership is





Project Profile

the “porch” where customers step into and drive away in new vehicles. In the concrete of this outdoor entry area is a 18-foot decorative detail that features a compass and a sun design. Vasquez drew up the design based on the client’s request — the sun appears throughout the dealership’s marketing, and the compass accurately indicates true north as a happy customer first pulls away. Vasquez scored and stained the design into the concrete, finishing it with an Arizona Polymers UV-resistant urethane

topcoat. The detail is big enough that when customers park on it, the sun and compass direction can be seen beneath the vehicle.

Metallics indoors

The interior showroom of the new dealership features 6,000 square feet of metallic-finished concrete with a unique mottled pattern. “This finish was completely new to us at the time,” says Vasquez, “but the owner was looking for something really different to stand out.”

Vasquez stepped up to the challenge.

The bronze and black metallic colors were chosen because the color scheme appears in the dealership’s marketing materials. At the time, Miracote was the only company manufacturing metallic finishes for decorative concrete purposes.

The metallic-looking surface has a speckled, “fish-eyed” appearance that was achieved in several steps. First, Vasquez scored a diamond grid pattern into the concrete. Then he applied a black primer (Miracote Chameleon Epoxy, in Midnight Black) to the concrete as the background color and allowed this layer to dry overnight. The following day, another black layer was applied, and 10 to 15 minutes later, the bronze metallic pigment (Miracote Chameleon Symphony Pigments and Effects, in Metallic) was mixed with Miracote’s Chameleon Dispersing Agent. This mixture was sprayed over the black base layers. When the mixture hit the black layer, the dispersion agent and the bronze and black interacted like oil and water, creating the fish-eyed effect. “It takes technique for sure,” says Vasquez.

Only after the first couple hundred feet could they know if enough spray mixture was getting onto the floor, Vasquez says. Timing is one of the most important parts of this technique, he notes. There is a small window before the dispersion effects “heal” where the mixture is still malleable, marks from spike shoes will dissipate, and adjustments to the effects can still be made. If you wait too long, spike marks will remain in the floor.

Jim Rowe, western regional sales manager for Miracote, compares seeing the dispersion work to watching an amoeba swimming around a petri dish. He agrees that timing is everything. Letting the black epoxy layer do just the right amount of “setting up” first is the key to making the effect work, he says. If you wait too long, you won’t get the effect, because the epoxy is too set up — but applying the dispersion layer too soon allows less control over the effects. “Unless you keep a lot of control on that, it’s hard to keep track. It’s something you really have to keep a handle on to keep it uniform. And if your sprayer



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starts acting up and you're on spike shoes, you're in trouble. So you have to have a backup sprayer ready."

A urethane topcoat is applied within a 24-hour window after epoxy application.

The popularity of metallic finishes like this has grown since Miracote released the product three years ago, says Rowe, and it is the dispersion that provides the unique effects. "It's kind of a niche thing," says Rowe, "but we call it the wow factor because people see it and their mouth goes wide open, either during the installation or when seeing the effect." Rowe also says that because there are so many unique effects possible with this technique and because it can be so hard to control, notes should be taken on exactly how the process was done so that it can be replicated if necessary. There are practically infinite possibilities, depending on the formula and timing, he says. The difficulty in repeating an effect is what made this project a particular challenge for the contractor.

"This choice of surface was actually kind of a mistake," says Trompeter of Jordan Ford. "We were going to tile the place, and the tile we chose ended up being four times more than our budget because of a miscommunication with the tile company. So at the last minute we decided we couldn't go with tile and so were looking for alternatives." Their search brought them to a flooring company with a 10-by-10 foot area of its showroom that featured the metallic concrete finish. Vasquez spoke with the owner of the company, found out who prepared the floor and obtained information from Miracote on how to create the effect.

After a test section on an upstairs hallway of the car dealership, Trompeter told Vasquez which effects he liked best, and Vasquez tried to replicate those as closely as possible on the showroom floor. "Of course it's impossible to completely duplicate," concedes Trompeter, "but it's because it's like art. It makes (random) designs just however, but that's what is so cool about it."

According to a report from the client, the showroom floor is possibly the most complimented element of the new dealership.

River City Coatings has worked on more dealership jobs since this project, including doing coatings and decorative work. "We are qualified for this work now mostly because of our experience with sealers — knowing what works and what doesn't for decorative concrete," says Vasquez.

As River City Coatings continues to tackle projects with new surfaces and effects, it has begun to create its own innovative combinations of dispersion agents and epoxies. "There are an infinite amount of possibilities, and so many different looks that can be done," Rowe says. "So it's only limited by your mad scientist mentality. How many different concoctions you want to brew up is completely up to you." 📱

🌐 www.rivercitycoatings.net



Photo courtesy of Brandon Gore

Brandon Gore of Gore Design Co. in Tempe, Ariz., says he's been successfully producing GFRC sinks for the past five years. Seen here is a white GFRC sink he created using a fabric form, which, subsequently, Gore Design started to produce. The company also sells a video showing the process.

Glass-fiber Reinforced Concrete

Once you master preparation and application of GFRC, its potential for decorative concrete will have you hooked

by Stacey Enesey Klemenc

At first, glass-fiber reinforced concrete sounded over the top to Tommy Cook of Absolute ConcreteWorks LLC in Poulsbo, Wash. He hated the idea when he first heard about it. "I had no desire to mess with it," says the self-proclaimed "traditional, hardcore concrete guy."

"He wasn't being hardheaded — he was being true to his roots," chimes in his partner, Steve Silberman. He had to coerce Cook into trying GFRC.

That was more than three years ago. Today, the pair estimates that GFRC encompasses about 80 percent to 90

percent of their work.

"Once I got my arms around it and understood its capabilities, I was hooked," Cook says. There was a learning curve involved and hurdles to be cleared, he concedes, but now, "I think it's the coolest concrete out there. It's really the only way to go when it comes to precast."

A short primer

For the past 30 years, GFRC has primarily been used to architectural precast cladding panels. But it's also used in myriad ornamental treatments,



Absolute ConcreteWorks LLC, of Poulsbo, Wash., garnered an Excellence in Concrete Construction Award in the residential decorative concrete category from the Washington Aggregates & Concrete Association for this custom-made GFR bar. The bar, which is the focal point in what the homeowner has referred to as his "man cave," features parts and pieces of a Harley motorcycle.

such as domes, statues, columns, crowns and fireplace surrounds. Contractors also have been using the super-strong mix for many years to create artificial rocks, water features and cliffs.

Within the last two years, GFR use has also become a hot trend with concrete countertops, says Tom Fischer, owner of Fishstone, Concrete Countertop Supply, in Huntley, Ill. "Anything you can make out of concrete, you can make out of GFR. Its main advantages are that it's lighter, faster and stronger (than traditional precast). Where wet-cast concrete needs a seven-day wet cure, with GFR you can demold it after only 24 hours of casting."

GFR is mostly a precasting material — it's rare for someone to do GFR cast-in-place work. Also, GFR is not a new material. It's been available in this country since the mid- to late 1970s, notes Mike Driver, Nippon Electric Glass America's division manager for its alkali-resistant (AR) glass department.

GFR can be mixed and spray-applied using a rotor/stator pump and concentric chopper gun. It can also be hand-laminated or sprayed as a premix using a peristaltic pump and premix spray gun.

The AR fiber content in premixed GFR is around 3 percent, incorporating 1/2-inch, 3/4-inch or 1-inch fibers in a slurry mixture. The GFR applied with two pieces of equipment, one chopping the fiber, has more AR fiber content

— 4 percent to 6 percent, with lengths of 1 1/4 to 1 1/2 inches.

Most decorative contractors in precast production hand-pack premixed GFR. The equipment required to spray GFR is much more expensive than just packing by hand.

Sometimes scrim, a glued-together fiber fabric, is used for additional flexural strength on or near areas where tensile forces are the greatest (i.e., the areas most likely to crack),



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The Clearfield City Center in Utah, built by Salt Lake City-based Eagle Precast Co. (now Hanson Eagle Precast) in 1998, features sprayed-GFRC cladding panels. The thin architectural panels get their strength from the alkali-resistant glass fiber in the mix.



Tommy Cook of Absolute ConcreteWorks in Poulsbo, Wash., demonstrates that even though GFRC tabletops are thin, they are incredibly strong.

Driver says.

GFRC-cast products are thin compared to traditional wet-cast concrete pieces, anywhere from 1/4 inch to 1 inch thick for GFRC compared to 3 to 6 inches for regular concrete. Although GFRC is considerably lighter than precast concrete (8.3 pounds per square foot at 3/4 inch thick compared to 75 pounds per square foot of concrete at 6 inches thick) the flexural strength is about five times greater, Driver says. This is due to the addition of glass fibers.

GFRC use in the decorative concrete industry has recently surged among small business owners, agrees Hiram Ball, owner of Ball Consulting Ltd., a long-time GFRC material, technology and training supplier based in Ambridge, Pa. However, he says, GFRC has been used in the countertop industry for the past 15 to 20 years.

Thanks to advances in technology and materials, Ball predicts GFRC will continue to gain ground in the solid-surface market. "We've come up with fast-setting, all-in-the-bag mixes that can incorporate natural or synthetic aggregates and will demold in two hours or less," he says about his company's Fast Stone line. "And we have developed the equipment to process the mixes continuously at throughputs in the 100 to 120 pounds-a-minute range. By removing the batch-mixing scenario with

a fast-setting matrix, we can broaden the possibilities of the market.”

There are also more aesthetic options for GFRC users today, Ball says. “We can incorporate pigments, aggregates and fillers in the mix and spray complex shapes while still maintaining a thin overall cross-section of the part being molded. People are starting to pick up on GFRC’s design flexibility.” And with more sophisticated sealers coming to market, he continues, “the real or imagined problem with concrete countertops staining and scratching has been taken off the argument list. New sealers are opening new doors for GFRC applications.”

The basics and beyond

Purchasing equipment for high-volume GFRC production can be expensive, but you can start simply. “An air compressor, a drywall hopper, a handheld mixer and a 5-gallon bucket are really all you need to get started,” says Brandon Gore, owner of Gore Design Co. in Tempe, Ariz., a company known for its exquisitely crafted sinks. “We’ve run a successful company for five years using some very simple tools that we’ve adapted for our (GFRC) work.”

For most decorative applications, a thin mist-coat of a cement mixture without fiber is sprayed first, using some kind of hopper gun. This thin first layer, which some call a face coat, is followed with a “backer layer” that contains AR glass fiber and may or may not contain aggregate. Most decorative GFRC products consist of these two layers, with most contractors hand-packing the second layer. Some contractors, such as Jim Ralston, owner of Urban Concrete Design in Phoenix, Ariz., use a three-mix design process, with two layers of back coat typically applied by hand.

On the other end of the spectrum are Silberman and Cook, who have invested about \$40,000 in top-of-the-line GFRC equipment from the British company Power-Sprays. They bought a peristaltic pump, which operates with a squeeze motion, and an overhead boom that delivers the GFRC premixed (with the chopped fibers already in the mix) to a mold. The peristaltic spray

station came with a mist-coat gun and a premix spray gun. It also included a concentric chopper gun fed by a spool of glass fiber that’s chopped into short fibers and blended at the nozzle, but Silberman and Cook have yet to use it, sticking with fiber-fortified premix. “We haven’t had a chance to use the chopper gun,” Cook says. “There’s a big learning curve with that piece of equipment and so far we haven’t had any projects that

have required the strength you get from using it.”

They also acquired a computerized high-shear mixer that enables them to mix 25 gallons at a time. “It sits upright, like an old-fashioned kitchen mixer,” Silberman says.

The benefit of this pricey equipment, he continues, is that the mechanized process greatly increases the strength of the GFRC because it



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Photo courtesy of Fishstone, Concrete Countertop Supply

Above: In rare instances, customers request that the fibers in GFRC applications show in the finish. The result can be seen here.

Below: These benches in a park in Frankfurt, Germany, were fashioned with premixed GFRC, a mix that can also be used to make countertops.



Photo courtesy of NEG America

doesn't break up the fibers when it's mixing. It also allows Cook to pour even thinner panels with higher flexural strength and cast in less than half the time it would take to cast out of a bucket.

Pump options

There are less expensive peristaltic pumps out there than the Power-Sprays model, Cook says, that will still give you better results than you would get by hand. Gulfstream Manufacturing Group Inc., for example, sells a small unit made to spray gunite that can be adapted for GFRC, he says.

Benron Equipment and Supply in Van Nuys, Calif., just introduced Vortex, a portable and versatile peristaltic pump that's made in the United States. "Compared to the competition, we're very aggressive with our price," says Benron owner Ron Zagorsky. His machines retail for \$7,500, he notes, while others can cost upward of \$12,000 or more.

There's a gas-powered Vortex for exterior finishes and an electric model for interior finishes. Both feature hydraulic systems and built-in air compressors. The Vortex's hydraulic system has so much torque that it allows contractors to finish jobs much faster than with a comparable machine equipped with an electric motor with worm drive, Zagorsky says.

"What's unique about my system is that the gas kit and motor can be interchanged with the electric motor," he says, adding that he believes he has the only gas-powered peristaltic pump on the market today.

Zagorsky says the Vortex machines, just like their British counterparts, have no internal moving parts that can come in contact with the product being pumped. "A rotor will cut the strength of GFRC by shredding the fiber," he says. "The pushing motion of my machines makes sure the fibers stay in their original condition. When they hit the surface, they stay where they are supposed to."

Mixer before pump?

Driver, with NEG America, says smaller contractors should consider buying an upright mixer before they purchase any pump. "Most low-volume manufacturers use a hand-held drill to mix, which takes approximately 40 minutes to mix 250 pounds of material. A high-shear mixer can do this in less than five minutes." A good mixer runs about \$13,500, he says. "It's a good investment for anybody doing more than 200 square feet per day."

Another big seller, and a good addition to a small architectural producer's toolbox, is the Power-Sprays MK3 hopper gun, which retails for about \$420. "The gun portion articulates, so the hopper remains level while spraying at different angles," Driver says.

Ball, with Ball Consulting, also recommends the same gun, which he concedes is much more expensive than the typical products sold in the big box stores. "Yikes — that was my first reaction to the cost, until I used one during a training session," Ball admits. "Its size and maneuverability, the control of the spray pattern and the ease on your back made me a convert. It is used to spray the face mix, which can contain aggregate up to 1/8 inch."

Fishstone has a variety of bundles for the GFRC user,



Lakeland Co., of Rathdrum, Idaho, created this water feature for a private residence in Incline Village, Calif., using sprayed GFRC.

including a replenishment kit and a full starter kit. For \$1,125, a wet-caster who wants to try his hand at GFRC can buy a starter bundle that includes a mixer, hopper gun, glass fiber, glass scrim, acrylic curing polymer, and full compaction rollers that resemble paint rollers with nodules. The rollers are used between coats to remove air pockets.

“The main thing a contractor should keep in mind when dealing with GFRC is that there’s not one correct way to handle the material,” Fischer says. “There are multiple ways you can manipulate it and still get the right results.” 🛠️

🌐 www.ball-consulting-ltd.com

🌐 www.benron.com

🌐 www.concretecountertopsupply.com

🌐 www.power-sprays.co.uk



Photo courtesy of Urban Concrete Design

Jim Ralston of Urban Concrete Design uses GFRC exclusively when making countertops and fireplaces. His application methods involve a peristaltic pump and a spray gun, as well as hand-packing.

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All five pieces of this Flattoo system for a Navajo rug were placed with 1/2-inch overlaps. The rug was designed to connect a farmhouse to an addition.

Superior Stenciling

by Kelly O'Brien

While stenciling is certainly a go-to technique for many decorative contractors, there's a lot you can do with the technique that may not leap immediately to mind. Yes, stenciling is a great way to put down a pattern over a large surface area, but it can also be used — very effectively, as you can see here — to create intricate projects that incorporate lots of colors, fine edging and detail work, and even a little bit of depth.

Magic Carpet

Cave Creek, Ariz.

Contractor: Surface Gel Tek

Homeowner Joseph Lewis is a man “who knew what he wanted and what he didn’t,” says Tamryn Doolan, owner of Arizona-based Surface Gel Tek. When he added 2,500 square feet to his 1,200-square-foot farmhouse in Cave Creek, Ariz., Lewis wanted a design element to tie together the old space and the new. “[Lewis] is an old hunter,” says Doolan, “a big cowboy — he wears a size 15 shoe. He didn’t want anything frou-frou.” So the team came up with a detailed Southwestern rug design, to be put down with Surface Gel Tek’s Flattoo stenciling system.

Working with W.R. Meadows Inc. rep Greg Neundorfer, Doolan put a base



Photos courtesy of Greg Neundorfer



coat of Cohills Pro Series Chemical Stain in Rustic Brown on top of a W.R. Meadows Floor-Top STG surface. Once that coat was cleaned, neutralized and dried, it was time to Flattoo.

Surface Gel Tek’s gelled acid stenciling system differs from more conventional methods in that you seal each color as you go along. Doolan says this makes the process a little more forgiving. You never have to lay a vinyl stencil piece over an unsealed finished section, and if you get some of the gelled acid outside the lines, you needn’t worry about it ruining a finished area, since each finished area is already sealed and the acid won’t etch through the sealer. That’s especially useful when doing fine detail work like this rug design.

Doolan used her Surface Gel Tek gelled acids with four different colors from Color Crown Corp. (Black, Godiva, Moss Slate and El Dorado) for the 4-by-8 rug pattern. After a final coat of W.R. Meadows Decra Seal, Doolan’s rug project was complete. It provided Lewis with a personalized design element that brought the two halves of his new home together.

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An Eye-catching Combination

Bull Shoals, Ark.

Contractor: Strain Construction

One of the biggest advantages of stenciled concrete is the ability to seamlessly integrate different patterns and design elements into a single surface. Joey Strain, of Strain Construction (now known as Decorative Concrete Design), based in Gainesville, Mo., used this idea to great effect in setting off a stenciled logo on a driveway in Bull Shoals, Ark. The property is a vacation home for the owner of L&T Construction, of Hernando, Miss.

Done in a single pour, this job features a custom stencil set into a standard flagstone pattern stencil from Decorative Concrete Impressions. Not only does the combination of the two stencils serve to highlight the graphic, but the combination of color hardeners and acid stain gives the piece depth and texture that really make it stand out.

The hardeners — broadcast onto



Below: The finished L&T logo on the driveway, shown upside down, as seen from the house.

the surface before pulling the stencil — are DCI's Golden Wheat and Brick Red. After the stencils were pulled, says DCI's Jason Ahles, a large (and somewhat unattractive) grout line was revealed. But after a hand-applied coat of acid stain (Ebony, from Concrete Coatings Inc.), the logo has a crisp, clean look that really catches the eye. "By combining acid stain and cast-in-place techniques,

a dynamic and detailed logo emerges, fully integrated into the slab — no extra forming required," Ahles says.

After the detail work, the surface received a coat of CCI's SuperSeal 2000, finishing off the project — a great example of how stencils can add dimension to custom flatwork.

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Photos courtesy of Decorative Concrete Impressions

Stencils for the Art-conscious Phoenix, Ariz.

Contractors: Graphetto and Xcel Surfaces

If you're a decorative coatings manufacturer, the concrete floors of your office really ought to stand out. That's why Phoenix, Ariz.-based Xcel Surfaces teamed up with Graphetto's Anthony Banayat when the company resurfaced its floors.

Graphetto offers hundreds of different design options from more than a dozen artistic traditions. All are suited to the medium and very easy to use. Half of the stencils they sell are custom designs — unique logos or patterns brought in by the customer or original designs by Graphetto. The masking material is self-adhesive, so once you lay the stencil down on your prepped surface, you're ready to go.

The Xcel Surfaces floor shows off how well Graphetto's stencils pair up with Xcel's stains and overlays. Xcel opted for a classic art nouveau panel, ordered to a custom size for the space they had in mind. Once the stencil was down, they used four batches of Xcel



Photos courtesy of Graphetto



Texture Mix, integrally colored with custom tints, and troweled them on with various sizes of painter's spatulas. After that had set, the stencil came up, leaving softly beveled edges. To tie the piece together with a uniform patina, the entire panel was stained with Xcel's Aqua Stain Penetrating Formula (in Sonoran Stone). The job was finished with a urethane sealer.

In general, what sets Banayat's stenciling apart from the crowd is not only the exhaustive variety of patterns he has available (not to mention his ability and willingness to do custom designs), but also the emphasis Graphetto

places on historical accuracy.

Historical context may not seem like it would be a big make-or-break attribute for most clients, but Banayat points out that if you're dealing with customers who've just spent millions of dollars building themselves an authentic Tuscan-inspired villa, being able to promise them an authentic Tuscan pattern can be a great selling point. 📱

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Photos courtesy of ADCSC

Jason Campbell (with sprayer) and Gary Vidal (with mop) of American Decorative Concrete Supply Co. show observers the correct way to apply ColorJuice to floors. They are spreading ADCSC's Proguard Stain Shield after a ColorJuice application. ADCSC conducts training at its facility every three months.

ColorJuice Concrete Silicate Colorant from American Decorative Concrete Supply Co.

by Natasha Chilingirian

ColorJuice Concrete Silicate Colorant, the newest product from Arkansas-based American Decorative Concrete Supply Co., is not only inspired by Mother Nature — it's designed to withstand Mother Nature. Available in sheer hues that evoke the color palette of the outdoors, the pigment promises to resist fading from the sun's UV rays and other elements when it's mixed with a compatible densifier and applied to outdoor concrete surfaces.

A microengineered formula allows

the particles of the colorant to submerge deeply into the concrete, resulting in a longer life for the original shade, says American Decorative Concrete marketing manager Alex Darmstaedter. A small amount of ColorJuice is mixed with a silicate densifier that fills the pores of the concrete for a hardening effect. The pigmented densifier is then applied to a concrete surface with a sprayer. The densifier hardens, seals and dustproofs the surface without changing its texture, while the ColorJuice adds color. The end result looks similar to the

result of an acid stain, and the process can be completed in less than a day.

"We developed ColorJuice to answer the needs of contractors who found various problems with acid stains and integral-colored concrete products, especially when used outdoors," Darmstaedter says. "It's especially formulated to withstand wear and UV rays from the sun, which cause a degenerating effect when traditional staining and dyeing methods are used."

While the weather-resistant virtues of a ColorJuice-pigmented densifier are best demonstrated on outdoor surfaces (driveways, sidewalks, patios and pool decks), the mixture can also be used to transform indoor concrete floors. Any concrete surface, whether it has been mechanically or broom finished, can be enhanced by a densifier tinted with ColorJuice.

The speed that this method offers over the typical three-day process involved with acid staining is a significant benefit. "It looks like an acid stain job without it being an acid stain job," Darmstaedter says, adding that a garage floor can be used in less than a day after the application process has begun. "People often have a lot of junk to remove from their garages, and with acid staining, they have to wait at least three days, maybe even up to a week, before using the garage again. With this method, they can have everything back in their garage in the same day."

Water-based ColorJuice is currently available in 12 colors — Gold, Caramel, Sand, Chocolate, Walnut, Black, Mahogany, Saddle Brown, Terra Cotta, Burnt Sienna, Olive Green and Slate Blue — and more hues are on the way. Colors can be mixed to achieve a unique shade, and Darmstaedter says the translucency of the hues allows visibility of the concrete's matrix and aggregate. "Each color takes on the characteristics of the floor it's applied to," he says.

The application process is not only quick, but easy. After the concrete surface has been cleaned, the ColorJuice-tinted densifier is applied by one person using a mechanical or pump

sprayer while a second person brooms in the product. As the colored densifier sinks into the concrete, the silica in the densifier reacts with the calcium hydroxide in the concrete, hardening the concrete's molecules and crystallizing the floor. The result is a surface that's durable, dust- and stain-resistant and enhanced by the sheer, lasting hue of ColorJuice. American Decorative Concrete recommends applying its Proguard Stain Shield to finish and protect the floor.

Variations in a contractor's application method and color choices can produce an array of unique looks. For example, a densifier mixed with ColorJuice in Gold can be applied all over a floor in the traditional manner. Then, a densifier tinted with ColorJuice in Terra Cotta can be sprayed or sponged on various spots of the floor, resulting in a worn, antique look, Darmstaedter says. A ColorJuice-tinted densifier can also be sprayed onto a color-free surface through a stencil for an artistic "airbrushed" look.

Darmstaedter stresses that compatible densifiers must be used with ColorJuice to avoid problems. (Visit American Decorative Concrete's Web site for a list of recommended densifiers.) Contractors must adhere to ColorJuice's floor preparation and cleaning instructions and refrain from overapplication of the densifier/ColorJuice mixture (which can cause flaking). The company also states that the finished surface will be simple to clean and maintain, but warns that certain chemical spills could cause shadowing if they are not cleaned quickly enough.

After its debut at the World



of Concrete expo in Las Vegas last February, ColorJuice quickly became popular among contractors, Darmstaedter says. "Since its introduction, we have been awash with orders for ColorJuice," he says. "Contractors and designers have been discovering its benefits and ease of application over traditional methods."

The product is currently distributed worldwide. ColorJuice application training is offered by American Decorative Concrete as part of the company's Applicator Training Workshop, which is held regularly at its headquarters in Lowell, Ark. 🚚

🌐 www.adcsc.com

Concrete Saws

Diamond Products – Core Cut CC150-EE

Diamond Products now offers a new Core Cut CC150-EE early-entry walk-behind saw. It features a 4.8-horsepower Honda GX-160 engine and 1 3/16-inch maximum cutting depth.

Other highlights include a long-lasting skid-plate adjustment mechanism, mechanical blade depth control, and two polyurethane, nonmarking front wheels for stability.

☎ (800) 321-5336

🌐 www.diamondproducts.com



Hilti – DCH 230 and DCH 300 Electric Diamond Cutters

The new Hilti DCH 230 and DCH 300 Electric Diamond Cutters are powered by a 2.6-kilowatt motor. They boast cutting depths of 3.4 inches and 4.7 inches, respectively.

One of the key features of the DCH cutters is optional direct attachment of the Hilti VC20U or VC40U vacuum cleaners. Also, both models guide away from the operator's body for protection from debris. Low vibration helps increase operator comfort even when the tools are used for long periods of time. The DCH 230 and DCH 300 also feature ergonomic design, with the grip and cutting blades in exactly the same axis, allowing more precise guidance with less pressure.

An intelligent electronic control system that constantly regulates motor power to suit the material being cut and the pressure applied to the tool, Hilti Smart Power makes these electric cutters ideal for materials such as reinforced concrete, granite curbstone, slabs, bricks, metal beams and steel pipes.

☎ (800) 879-8000


🌐 www.us.hilti.com

Husqvarna Construction Products – Soff-Cut 150 D

The Husqvarna Soff-Cut 150 D is an ultra-early-entry concrete cutting system used to reduce random cracking. It was designed especially for the contractor who wants a no-hassle way to make decorative cuts.

An economical and durable saw, the 150 D has a low-noise, low-vibration 4 1/2-horsepower Robin engine and is ideal for light- to medium-duty usage on decorative cuts, driveways and parking lots.

Additional benefits include mechanical blade depth control, nonmarking and nonstick polyurethane wheels, self-aligning guide wheels that guarantee proper blade alignment with the saw joint, and an integrated weight block that maintains proper weight balance for a consistent cut.


 www.husqvarna.com



Makita USA Inc. – DPC7321

Makita USA Inc. has released its new 14-inch Power Cutter, the DPC7321. The new 14-inch power cutter is EPA Phase II compliant while maintaining power and performance for professional concrete applications.

The DPC7321 has a 73 cc engine. An improved ignition system with larger flywheel and rare earth magnets is designed for more power. In addition, the reinforced aluminum blade guard has a 70-degree range of limitless positioning with a marked knob handle, while the cutting arm position changes from center position to flush position, allowing cuts directly adjacent to curb edges and walls or directly above the ground.

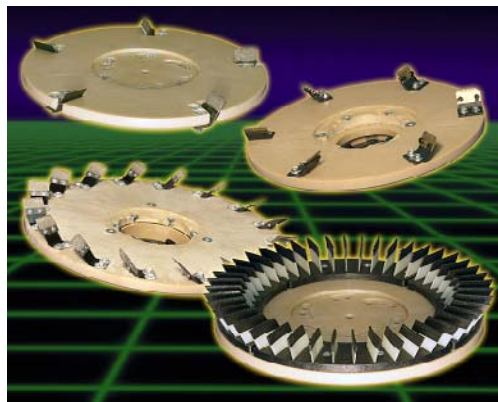
Other features include cushioned grips for operators' hands, aluminum guard and wheel pressure plates to reduce weight, a starter grip and a decompression valve located on the same side for faster starting, and an on-off-choke operating switch on a single lever for operator convenience. 

 (800) 462-5482

 www.makitatools.com

An advertisement for Butterfield Color featuring a photograph of a decorative concrete patio and steps. The concrete has a textured, stone-like appearance. The background shows a house with a covered porch and some landscaping. The text "Engineered Concrete Performance" is at the top, followed by the "BUTTERFIELD COLOR" logo. Below the logo, it says "For all of your Decorative Concrete needs!". At the bottom, there is a list of services: "integral colors • color hardeners • stains • cures & seals • form & step liners • stamping tools • overlays". The website "www.butterfieldcolor.com" and the phone number "800-282-3388" are also included.

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Malish introduces diamond abrasive tools

The Malish Corp. has introduced Diamabrush, a unique diamond abrasive floor-preparation system for concrete floor polishing, mastic removal and hardwood prep.

The Diamabrush System is comprised of different tools, each designed to be used on standard low-pressure commercial cleaning machines. They include single discs, walk-behind autoscrubbers and ride-on autoscrubbers.

For preparing a concrete floor for epoxy recoating, the Diamabrush System offers a 25-grit spring metal tool. This brush flexes to hit the highs and lows of the epoxy floor to scarify and prep the epoxy for a recoat.

For concrete polishing, the Diamabrush System offers a six-tool system to grind and hone trowled concrete floors: 100-grit metal, 100-grit polymer, 200-grit polymer, 400-grit polymer, 1,000-grit polymer and 2,000-grit polymer.

www.malish.com

Proline to introduce integral colors

Proline Concrete Tools has announced plans to manufacture a line of integral color products from its Dura Corp. division.

Proline, entering its 20th year in business, is currently working on color charts, and it plans on the line being ready to ship by fall 2009. The company has been making color hardeners, antique releases and stains and chemicals since 2006.

www.prolinestamps.com

Rhino debuts Rhino EcoStain

Rhino Linings Corp. now offers Rhino EcoStain. Used with Rhino's polyaspartic flooring and epoxy flooring products, Rhino EcoStain offers a decorative concrete solution that will provide surface protection and enhance the look and feel of an ordinary floor. Rhino EcoStain infuses concrete with rich, deep, translucent tones.

The Rhino EcoStain product line consists of two innovative products. Rhino EcoStain Base Coat is bio-based, nontoxic and environmentally safe for interior and exterior applications. Rhino EcoStain ClearCoats are two-component waterborne polyurethane topcoat systems that magnify the look of stained concrete while providing superior UV, chemical, abrasion and impact resistance. Rhino EcoStain is part of Rhino Home Pro Division, which offers a family of flooring, coating and lining, and stain solutions for the home.

[\(858\) 450-0441](tel:8584500441)

www.rhino linings.com

MS polymer sealant in four colors

Polymeric Systems Inc. recently introduced Sili-Thane 803, an MS polymer-based sealant that combines the benefits of silicone with the benefits of polyurethane.

Sili-Thane 803 was specifically designed for use in a wide range of interior and exterior uses, such as sealing joints with varying coefficients of expansion. It cures to a medium-modulus rubber with excellent adhesion and weathering abilities, and it is less likely to cause staining or corrosion than urethane or silicone sealants. Sili-Thane 803 adheres to a wide range of substrates, exhibits exceptional adhesion to damp or dry surfaces and has good underwater adhesion to nonporous surfaces. It will not foam or bubble when exposed to moist substrates or high humidity conditions during cure. The material is gunnable at low temperatures, has virtually no odor, and can be painted.

Sili-Thane 803 skins over in less than 30 minutes. It is solvent- and isocyanate-free with a very low VOC content. Its standard colors are White, Gray, Limestone and Black.

☎ (800) 228-5548

🌐 www.polymericsystems.com

Color packets for resurfacer texture systems

H&C Concrete Coatings now provides a full complement of easy-to-use color packets for its resurfacer texture system products. Users can choose from more than 30 colors that can end up on almost any type of vertical or horizontal concrete surface — whether the project is old or new.

The vibrant colors complement H&C Concrete's Resurfacer Instant and Resurfacer Heavy Traffic Texture Systems, which add texture to concrete flatwork and leave a durable, decorative finish that enhances interior or exterior hardscapes.

☎ (800) 867-8246

🌐 www.hcconcrete.com

UV light used to finish new concrete coatings

DSM has introduced an innovative solution for concrete floor finishing: UVolve Instant Floor Coatings, which cure immediately via a dose of UV light.

UVolve Instant Floor Coatings are applied in a four-step process and cured with a specially designed, UV-light curing machine.

Once cured, UVolve floors demonstrate improved hardness, improved wear and scratch resistance, less slip, and better chemical resistance than those treated with traditional



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www.uvolvecoatings.com

UV lamp from Spectronics Corp. improved

Spectronics Corp. has recently unveiled its improved Spectroline BIB-150P UV lamp — a high-intensity self-ballasted unit. It's ideal for nondestructive testing, quality control, leak detection, UV curing and countless other industrial applications. The hand-held BIB-150P lamp has been improved by replacing the previous metal housing with a super-strong engineering polymer that is dent-proof, impact-resistant and withstands rugged use. In addition, a 150-watt Built-In-Ballast bulb eliminates the need for a heavy, bulky external transformer. The total weight of the BIB-150P lamp is only 3 1/4 pounds.

A contoured handle stays cool and is ergonomically designed for better balance. An improved, crack-resistant filter reduces visible light while maximizing long-wave UV irradiance. A heat guard and stand protect the user against burns.

[\(800\) 274-8888](tel:8002748888)

www.spectroline.com

Reward introduces sFrame

Reward Wall Systems has designed and created the sFrame integrated framing assembly (IFA) for doors and windows. The assemblies further enhance the building envelope required by commercial insulating concrete form (ICF) construction.

The sFrame is a preformed steel, two-in-one IFA that combines the buck and frame in one system, which eliminates waste, speeds door and window installation time, and is customized to fit any specification. It will incorporate drywall returns and an integrated continuous concrete anchor. The sFrame for doors also includes press-in-place weather stripping and will be fully prepped for door hardware. The sFrame for Windows can be fabricated with mullions and integral glazing stops as well.

The sFrame reduces construction time by eliminating the buck assembly, squaring and stripping and reducing bracing and support. It is made to fit snugly with the EPS foam thickness of any ICF.

www.rewardwalls.com

PosiGrip dipped gloves introduced

West Chester Holdings expanded its PosiGrip line with dipped gloves for industrial and commercial applications.

Combining the comfort of a nylon or poly/cotton base material with the functionality of a dipped glove, these new gloves provide extra grip on wet or oily materials and better surface adhesion on dry applications.

Application-specific variations in designs include varying dipped coverage areas of palm. Differing dip materials allow users to choose from different levels of chemical and solvent resistance, abrasion resistance, durability and more.

www.west-chester.net



New lasers from Leica Geosystems

Leica Geosystems has extended its range of rugged lasers with the new Leica Rugby 260SG, 270SG and 280DG series of midrange general construction lasers.

The Leica Rugby 260SG, 270SG and 280DG lasers offer contractors a choice of features and functionalities for virtually any application, from simple flatwork to complex dual grades and vertical control. Each laser is equipped with a large LCD display, an easy-to-use keypad and a two-year knockdown warranty.

The Leica Rugby 260SG is a self-leveling horizontal laser with semiautomatic single grade. It combines all of the features of the Rugby flat plane lasers, plus up to 10 percent semiautomatic single grade with digital readout. It features a visible red-beam laser with a working range of up to 2,000 feet in diameter.

The Leica Rugby 270SG is a fully automatic single-grade laser that features fully automatic leveling even at grade, head-speed control, beam masking and an extended working range of up to 2,350 feet in diameter.

Finally, the Leica Rugby 280DG is a horizontal-vertical dual-grade laser for both exterior and interior applications. Features include a bright red beam, plumb beam, scan mode, horizontal and vertical self-leveling, and dual-grade capability of up to 15 percent along both axes.

www.leica-geosystems.com

New rewards program from Eagle Solutions

Eagle Solutions has launched a new a rewards program to encourage grinding and polishing contractors to try the company's diamond tooling.

Some of the rewards include an Eagle gift pack, an estimating worksheet that closely figures expenses when concrete polishing, year-end rebates based on purchase volume, free aluminum Frankfort-style adaptor plates for attachment to Eagle grinders, and equipment discounts.

www.eaglefloorsolutions.com



New concrete coatings how-to book from Veron

Arizona-based coatings manufacturer Veron Coating Systems has released "The Book of Decorative Concrete Coatings."

Several years in the making, the book includes about 300 color photos, many of which accompany step-by-step application descriptions for epoxy and urethane floors, broadcast chips, polymer overlays, acid stains, pattern systems, color quartz and more. In addition to the step-by-step processes documented, the book also contains a gold mine of vital information on everything from surface prep to how to inspect concrete for flaws. Numerous charts and detailed diagrams aid in the presentation of information, which was written with ease of understanding in mind.

☎ (888) 485-7300

🌐 www.thecoatingsbook.com



ISFA revamps Web site

The International Surface Fabricators Association has completed "phase one" of its new Web site at www.isfanow.org.

Targeted to consumers, architects, interior designers and other specification professionals, Isfanow.org is positioned as the ultimate resource for all things countertop. Visitors to the new Web site are able to access information on all major types of decorative surfaces, interact with fabricators and find an ISFA countertop professional to do their work.

The next construction phase of the Web site is currently underway and will feature an enriched Web environment directed at countertop professionals and, more specifically, ISFA members. Utilizing Web 2.0 technology, the fabricator section of the site will allow members to update their business information online, upload and access media-rich content to a searchable and site-wide integrated resource library, participate in discussions with other industry professionals on the ISFA bulletin board and create and/or participate in topic-specific blogs.

🌐 www.isfanow.org

Quikrete upgrades site

The Quikrete Cos. has completely redesigned and upgraded its Web site, www.quikrete.com.

With new features relevant to its contractor and homeowner customers, the site offers an optimized navigational design for faster and easier informational access. The home page showcases a new-product introduction area, a feature case-study summary and a seasonal home-project tutorial. These feature sections are updated on a biweekly basis to provide timely and compelling information.

The home page also includes quarterly e-newsletter and resource links defined through the "On the Job" and "At Home" portals. Within these subsections, professionals can reference technical data and case-study examples specific to their building segments, while homeowners can gain project inspiration through an interactive "virtual home" and a diverse project library.

For distributors, Quikrete plans to introduce a "dealers-only" login section. The portal will include such exclusive

content as a Universal Product Codes (UPC) guide, an advertising tool kit, and online training and continuing education modules.

🌐 www.quikrete.com

How-to videos from Fritz-Pak

On its Web site, Fritz-Pak has posted two instructional videos on the use of its Slick-Pak pumping products and Super Air Plus air-entraining admixture. A video on Fill Flow, which increases the volume and improves the flow of flowable fill, also known as controlled low-strength material (CLSM), will be added shortly. This will complete the initial trio of films in this series.

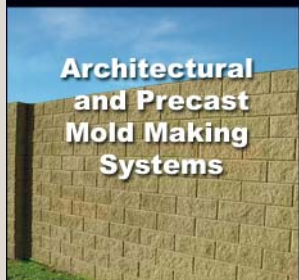
Each video is a snapshot of the product in practical use accompanied by a testimonial from an actual customer at the job site and backed by instructional commentary. Fritz-Pak's intent in this video series is to help the viewer understand and assess the advantages of using Fritz-Pak premeasured powdered admixtures. 🚚

🌐 www.fritzpak.com



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Association News

American Concrete Institute U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs recognizes ACI certification exam

The American Concrete Institute's Concrete Field Testing Technician – Grade I certification exam is now recognized by the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs.

By way of the G.I. Bill, veterans may now attend an ACI Concrete Field Testing Technician – Grade I exam session and submit a copy of their invoice to the VA for reimbursement of up to \$500.

Currently, the Concrete Field Testing Technician – Grade I certification exam is the only ACI exam recognized by the VA. However, ACI plans to apply for additional approvals for other exams by the VA in the next year.

ACI currently offers 17 certification programs designed to form a minimum qualification for personnel employed within the concrete construction industry. Certification examinations and optional training courses are conducted through an international network of more than 100 local sponsoring groups.

📞 (248) 848-3790

🌐 www.ACIncertainment.com

Old symposium papers accessible

The American Concrete Institute has a new resource that allows access to all ACI symposium papers through a new online Symposium Papers Subscription.

The new online Symposium Papers

Subscription includes 12 months of unlimited access to more than 6,000 new and archived symposium papers dating back to 1962.

ACI publishes symposium publications in conjunction with many ACI-sponsored symposia and convention sessions on various industry hot topics. These publications often include more than a dozen symposium papers authored and compiled by leading industry designers, practitioners, researchers and academicians.

🌐 www.concrete.org

New publications available

The American Concrete Institute has announced the availability of two new publications.

The "Guide for Design and Construction with Autoclaved Aerated Concrete Panels" is available in print form, and "Fabrication Technology for Thin Cementitious Products" is available on CD-ROM.

🌐 www.concrete.org

American Shotcrete Association Committee meetings announced

The American Shotcrete Association has announced its Fall 2009 Committee Meetings, held in conjunction with the ACI Fall 2009 Convention, scheduled for Nov. 7-9, 2009, in New Orleans.

The following committees have scheduled working meetings at this event: ASA Executive Committee, Publications Committee, Pool & Recreational Committee, Education

Committee, Safety Committee, Marketing & Membership Committee, and ASA Board of Direction.

This event offers participants the opportunity to network with colleagues, provide input on shotcrete materials and publications, and become a part of ASA's overall mission.

These meetings do not require preregistration and are open to the general public and anyone who has an interest in the shotcrete process.

www.shotcrete.org

American Society of Concrete Contractors Decorative Concrete Council publishes paper

The Decorative Concrete Council, a specialty council of the American Society of Concrete Contractors, has published the eighth in a series of Problems & Practice papers. The papers cover issues facing decorative concrete contractors.

Problems & Practice No. 8 is entitled "What's in Your Concrete?" It discusses the use of supplementary cementitious materials and admixtures in decorative mixes and how these may affect the appearance and performance of the finished product.

[\(866\) 788-2722](tel:8667882722)

www.asconline.org

Portland Cement Association New construction packet developed

The Portland Cement Association has developed "U.S. Construction Pulse," a packet that provides information and insight into the construction industry.

The packet is distributed monthly. It includes general economic trends, construction activity indicators, and real and nominal construction spending information for 35 categories. Ready-to-use slides and spreadsheets are offered.

www.cement.org/econ

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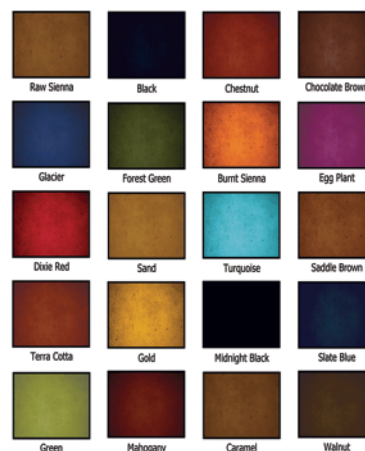


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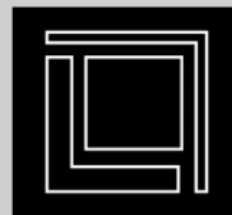
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Headz Up

Inevitably, after shotcrete professionals have finished, there's a bit of mud left over. Usually, it's discarded.

But Benjamin Bobinac, a Phoenix, Ariz., foreman who has worked at Fisher Shotcrete Inc. for a dozen years, is one of those guys who messes around at the end of a job, shaping little statues — mostly heads, in his case — out of the leftover concrete. At first, he'd just leave them for the customer. "We always called it shotcrete graffiti," he says. "We had to leave the mud on the job. The builder has to take it away. You might as well make something out of it."

One day, a client called Bobinac's boss to complain that a statue he left behind had cursed her new pool. She even threatened to not pay for the job.

Bobinac stopped leaving the heads — but builders started asking for them. Then, another customer complained. He had expected Bobinac to give him one of the heads. He even brought Bobinac back on-site to make more.

It seemed like the more heads Bobinac made, the more heads he turned. So in the past few months, he has started calling it a business: Headz Decorative Concrete Sculptures. He sells them from yard sales at his home and at

art events such as Phoenix's First Friday. Friends have put them on Craigslist.

Bobinac, 34 and with the self-described demeanor of a "little skateboard kid," makes heads of all sizes and in a growing number of styles. He started with big-lipped ones and has moved on to Easter Island styles, Jack Skellington heads, oblong faces for hanging, little skulls and so on. Sizes range from "one-bucket" heads that start at \$25 to a behemoth that weighs 1,000 pounds and was priced at \$300. His standard big heads go for \$150 to \$200. They can replace fake rocks in pools, landscaping, behind waterfalls and in waterslides, he says.

Bobinac essentially charges only for his craftsmanship, because he still gets all of his raw material from the leftovers at shotcreting jobs.

These days, he collects the extra mud in a children's swimming pool, then transfers it to buckets in the back of his truck. He places one bucket of mud, he says, then a "railroad track of

rebar," then more mud on top. He pats it down to shape and settle it, then uses a slick trowel with rounded edges and a margin trowel to sculpt. Finally, he dips a paintbrush in water and smooths any rough edges.

If he can snag leftover integral color on the job, he'll throw some of that into the mix. A bit of brown inspired a small tiki head. He even scored a half-bucket of green concrete from a free Cheng Concrete workshop at a local Home Depot.

Some heads Bobinac keeps. For example, there are about 30 big heads in his backyard, some with chalked-on lipstick and eye shadow applied by his oldest daughter.

Bobinac colors and seals some of his work himself, but his customers have been known to do their own painting too. He's hoping they will send him photos of how they've displayed and decorated their heads. 📱

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Photos courtesy of Benjamin Bobinac

Special
Section!

counter *Culture*

A Guide to Concrete Countertops and Architectural Elements

Fall 2009

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Competition** page 61

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Photo courtesy of J&M Lifestyles LLC

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Winner, Residential

Adam Decker

Barbecue island and fire table, Northridge, Calif.

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include Colormaker Sgraffino in Gray, Alcantar White Color Coat, and Surecrete Eco-Stains in Safari Tan and Domino.



Winner, Commercial

Prehistoric Tops & Custom Hardscapes

Pro-Build Store 836 reception area, Grand Junction, Colo.

Features: Stainless steel inlays; recycled glass used for color in the logos; acid stain.



For more information on the winners, plus a look at other noteworthy entries, read the Online Exclusives at ConcreteDecor.net's Decorative Concrete Blogs.

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Wondrous Wall Panels

by Dave Searls

Imagine homeowners having the choice of covering their walls with paint, wallpaper, tile — or concrete panels 1/4 inch thin. Or new homes built with precast modular exterior walls up to 20 feet high that can be manufactured off-site and snapped in place in a few hours.

Concrete wall panels can be thin enough to be applied to an inside wall with epoxy or durable enough to clad a building's exterior and withstand hurricane-strength Florida winds. The common denominator is their lightweight, modular design and ease of installation, finishing and maintenance.

"They're a lot like traditional concrete, but (made from) a much stronger mix," says Raymond Iacobacci

In this "shower niche," J&M Lifestyles LLC carried a "wave" theme in the sink and tub over to the seams in the shower panels to make the seams look purposeful, rather than necessary.



Concrete panels are great for backsplashes as they offer seamless, easy-to-clean areas. Here, a plasma-cut steel fish skeleton is set in translucent concrete. The backsplash panel has a split-face limestone texture that is suggestive of the rock that would host the skeleton naturally.

of Form Function Concrete, a contracting company located in Rowley, Mass. “You need more tensile strength with concrete wall panels because they’re only an inch thick.”

Or even thinner.

Ryan Brayak of the fabrication and design studio Rock Elements, in Escanaba, Mich., uses wall panels for walk-in showers and other stylish interior flourishes. “Two people can handle them,” he says of the 3/4-inch thick concrete panels formed and installed by his company.

Brayak’s product offerings include an attractive and easily installed alternative to tile. “All I have to do is make four panels (for a shower enclosure). A couple of people can take them into a home and I can install them in an hour,” says Brayak. “There’s no time spent setting individual tiles in grout.”

That absence of grout also means less opportunity for water penetration, points out Iacobacci, who values both the style and pragmatic advantages of concrete’s “monolithic surface.” His concrete panels are mostly featured in sinks, shower enclosures, fireplaces, floors and other decorative elements for customers he characterizes as “homeowners who are tired of granite and want something different in the mid-range prices.”

While he observes that most of his clients prefer the natural appearance of gray concrete, he can offer the same range of finishes that are available through traditional decorative concrete — including sealing, painting, acid staining and polishing. He can also add exposed aggregate, though he says that’s a less popular option these days.

For maintenance, Iacobacci recommends simple waxing.

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Bold molds

Cindy Russell, marketing director for Nawkaw Corp., promotes the durability of the rubber forms manufactured by her company for producing wall panels. Some of them are sold for reuse up to a hundred times. "They're very pliable, so you get multiple pours out of a single mold," she says.

Nawkaw primarily works with precast plants and concrete contractors to produce vertical surfaces with decorative textures. "Everything we do is custom," Russell says. "We can offer a full range of textures, including rock, brick and geometric patterns."

Photoengraving is another dramatic aesthetic possibility. "Give us any photo and we'll scan it and make a mold from it," Russell promises. Nawkaw is currently seeing interest from a museum of flight history and from several counties in Florida. For each, the company would create concrete design elements modeled after thematic photos in the client's collection.

J&M Lifestyles LLC, of Randolph, N.J., purposes concrete panels for residential countertops, vanities, fireplace, tub surrounds and exterior architectural features, according to partner Michelle Radley. For commercial customers, their product offerings include bar walls, as well as backlit signs that have been used for hair salons, a gym and a kitchen showroom.

By using glass-fiber reinforced concrete (GFRC), Radley says that her company has been able to get the panels down to 3/8-inch thicknesses while still offering more flex strength than poured concrete in comparable or greater thicknesses. "You can screw into them without any concerns about cracking," she says.



A residential steam shower that utilizes GFRC wall and ceiling panels and molded seating to keep moisture from escaping.

"The GFRC also makes them good for outdoor use. They won't crack with temperature extremes. We can do overlays, textures, whatever you want. Your largest cost is the first mold."

Ruggedly attractive

For Art Porcella, a designer for Everlast Wall Systems LLC, concrete wall panels are less a fashion statement and more a factor of time, cost and rugged durability in new home and light commercial construction. The Florida-based company specializes in the manufacture and installation of precast concrete bearing and nonbearing walls, columns and beams. The company's tilt-up structural concrete construction work features 5-inch-thick, solid lightweight concrete with 1/2-inch rebar, patented reinforcement and a connection system and scree surface.


"Ninety percent of our projects in Florida have stucco applied to it," he says. "Or you can paint it."

The technology has certainly withstood the test of time.


"We've built 1,200 units like this in north-central Florida since '97. In 2006, we were limited only by our transportation," says Porcella, who admits that the economy has slowed their pace significantly.

Porcella illustrates the time savings of wall panels this way: "We've assembled many 3,000-square-foot structures in three hours or less. There's no way conventional block masons can lay the blocks to buildings of that size in less than several days. During 2006, our best year, we assembled eight houses a week, sometimes three a day."

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Above: Concrete facade panels enclose the front of this residential bar. When drinkers sit at bar stools, the fronts of bars are often kicked and abused. Concrete panels are very durable.

Below: Concrete panels can be subtle and practical. This shower niche box finishes the space between the glass shower wall, the adjoining shower walls and the wall behind the vanity.


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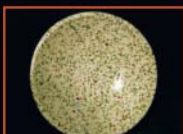
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The process has advantages over traditional concrete construction, too.

"Some concrete manufacturers install wall forms and pour the walls on site," he says. "This is very labor-intensive and time-consuming. We schedule our manufacturing to coincide with site preparations so that when the slab is ready, we can assemble immediately, allowing the site work to proceed rapidly."

With a panel thickness that's 3 inches less than traditional concrete block construction, the wall panels allow additional living space to be built into a residence.

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savings. The Everlast system exceeds 180 mph wind load, a prime advantage in hurricane season.

It's a snap

Nolan Mayrhofer, owner and president of Szolyd Development Corp., a Canadian company that designs hard-surface architectural features from advanced concrete-fiber pastes, also prefers panels over traditional concrete construction. "Water infiltration is lessened, and with the embedded fasteners and threads, the speed of construction is amazing," says Mayrhofer. "The modular panels just click together like Legos."

When it comes to panels, he is just

getting started. He incorporated concrete panels when provided consulting services and a full-scale mock-up for The Atrium, a major new commercial building project in Victoria, B.C. He predicts similar jobs are on the horizon for him. ☺

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Photo courtesy of Counterpart LLC

Decorative kitchen countertops made by Counterpart LLC, located in Raleigh, N.C. Counterpart uses CSA cement exclusively.

The Case For CSA Cements

by Chris Mayo

According to Jeffrey Girard, P.E., founder of The Concrete Countertop Institute, concrete with calcium sulphoaluminate (CSA) is the way to go for countertops.

“When I first used CSA instead of portland cement, I recognized that it offers a technological advantage,” he says.

Girard should know. A civil engineer by training, he built his first countertop for his own house. Before long, building countertops was his main source of income. He changed his focus to the teaching side of the business about 5 years ago, establishing the Institute in Raleigh, N.C.

“Whether I was manufacturing countertops for my own use, fabricating them as a business, or teaching others about

concrete countertops, I’ve always focused more on the technical side rather than the artistic,” he says. “From the time I fabricated my first countertop, I’ve noticed a propensity in the decorative concrete field to focus more on the artistic to the detriment of the technical aspects. In my opinion, the perfect countertop is one that is the result of an equal focus on both.”

The need for speed

When Girard touts CSA, he begins by praising it as a fast-setting, high-early-strength binder option. “Concrete made with CSA often achieves compressive strengths in excess of 5,000 psi in 24 hours,” he says. “With CSA it’s possible to achieve 28-day strength in 24 hours. Using CSA, the concrete countertop

artisan can increase form turnaround significantly. You can have your product out the door almost as fast as you can make it.”

Girard says there are more advantages to using CSA than just speed. “From an environmental standpoint, CSA is far greener than portland cements. Also, unlike portland cements, CSA cements do not produce calcium hydroxide, and that reduces problems like cracking, curling and efflorescence.”

Dave Banko, owner of Counterpart LLC, based in CCI’s Raleigh training facility, started using CSA two years ago. He switched completely about 10 months ago. “Even for a relatively low-volume shop like mine (seven to 10 pieces per month), the time savings offset the higher cost of CSA versus portland. I recently did a countertop with CSA using glass fiber. I poured the concrete around 7 p.m. and the next morning I processed, grouted and was ready to seal by that afternoon. With portland, it probably would have taken about four days to do that.”

On the other hand, Jim Ralston, of Urban Concrete Design in Phoenix, Ariz., has been in the decorative concrete business since 1986. He’s tried CSA and decided to stick with glass-fiber reinforced concrete (GFRC). “You might get twice as much out of your forms and molds if you really work at using CSA, but I don’t really have the need to do that. Using an acrylic curing compound with glass GFRC I can pop the forms in about 17 hours. CSA requires a complicated mix design — definitely not for the novice. I understand the drive behind it, the fast set time and early high strength, but I’m comfortable with the way I’m doing things.”

Sacrificing quality?

Girard believes the quality of CSA concrete is better than that of portland-based mixes. “CSA has a higher flexural and tensile strength, and it’s harder. Because of those factors, countertops made



A kitchen bar-surround countertop by Innovative Concrete Technologies. It was made with 25 percent CSA cement.

Photo courtesy of Innovative Concrete Technologies/Blueconcrete.com



An ornate sink-surround countertop made by Counterpart LLC.

Photo courtesy of Counterpart LLC

with CSA-based concrete aren't prone to cracking or curling, which can be an issue with countertops made with portland. And because CSA results in a harder concrete, it's less porous," he says.

Mike Heidebrink, president of Cheng Concrete, says there is a place for CSA in the high-end decorative concrete industry, but that it also has its negatives. "We've been using CSA as a component in some of our projects, but when it's used as a stand-alone ingredient, we've found that it lacks the tone and richness of depth that we try to infuse in all our projects. That being said, I expect CSA will somewhat

mirror our experience with GFRC — at first it didn't quite meet our aesthetic requirements, but we saw the potential. We experimented with it and ultimately came up with good results. We're currently developing CSA techniques and blends much like we did with GFRC."

Jon Schuler, owner of Innovative Concrete Technologies in Murphys, Calif., started out building countertops and other high-end ornamental concrete products. He discovered that he had more success with his own cement blends, stains and sealers, and he eventually added manufacturing of supplies to

his company's profile. "I'm pro-CSA," he says, "I like the increased reactivity, higher density, early strength, and stain resistance — speed is really a side benefit. But I can't use a straight CSA blend for what I do. With my own blends I can achieve the quality I want, yet manipulate the set time to anywhere between 30 to 120 minutes.

"Everyone should have knowledge of CSA cements and CSA-cement blends. They will become the cornerstone of our industry. As concrete continues to grow in popularity, quicker, more efficient turnaround will become necessary to supply demand, but product quality has to be maintained. CSA cements and CSA blends will satisfy both."

Predicting the future

"Overall there are a number of benefits with CSA cements," says Murray Clarke, owner of Delta Performance Products LLC, a Georgia-based specialty admixture and color component company, and its Web site Blueconcrete.com. "CSA is close to 50 percent greener than portland cements (as it's fired at a much lower temperature than portland). Color additives are constantly being developed and available options will continue to grow. CSA cures more completely than portland mixes. The surface is superior and long-term color fading is dramatically improved.

"As a percentage of the total cement market, CSA is still a relatively small, but growing, segment with no end in sight."

"Your customers want to feel like they're getting their money's worth," Girard says. "They want to be happy with your product tomorrow, next week, next year and in five years. The challenge in the concrete countertop business has always been to make something visually pleasing that stands the test of time. CSA is the obvious next step."

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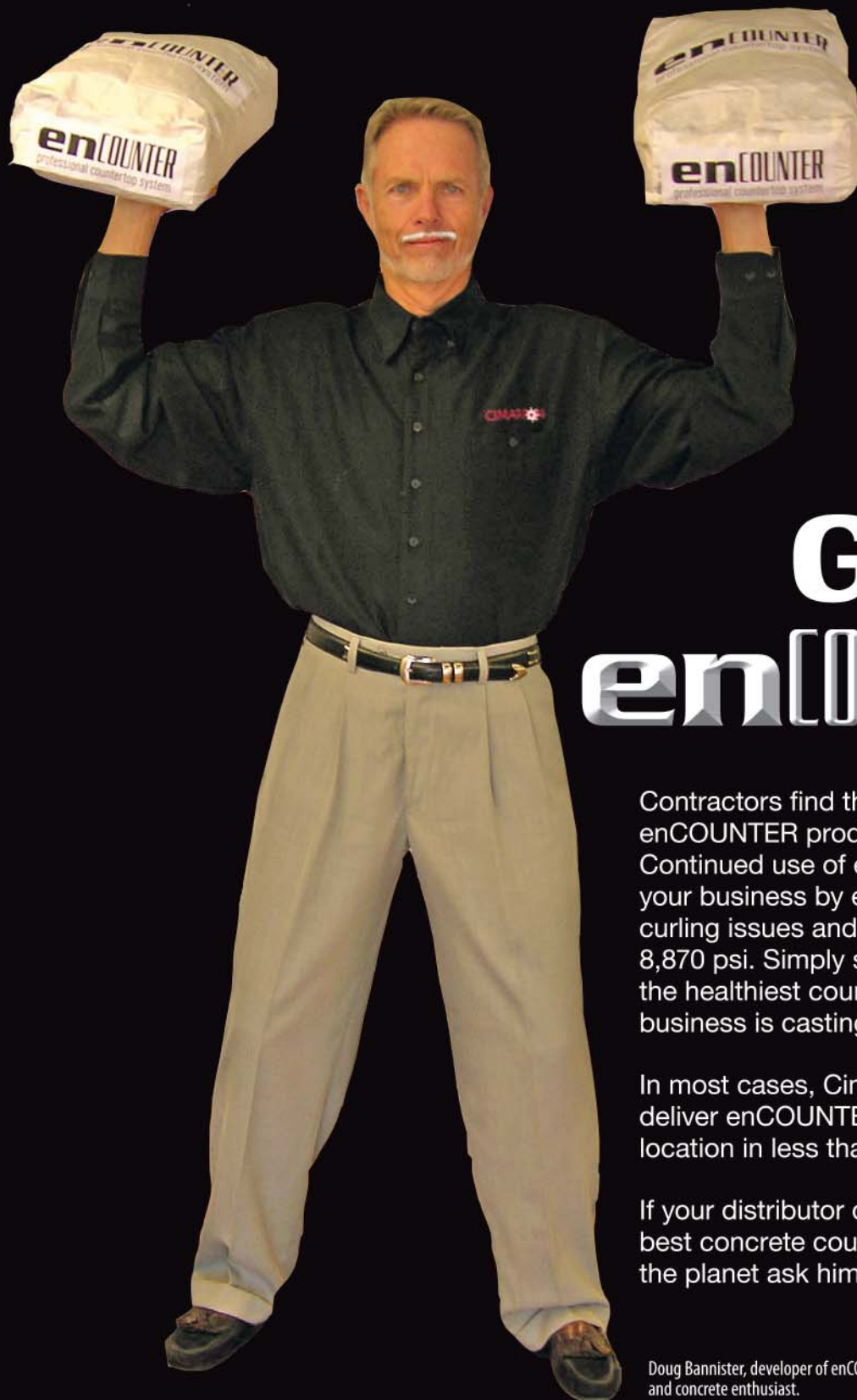
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Photo courtesy of Concrete Countertop Solutions

Z-Counterform from Concrete Countertop Solutions

by Emily Dixon

Ed Baldoni, founder and owner of Concrete Countertop Solutions, came up with the idea for Z-Counterform about five years ago. "I thought there had to be a better way to form concrete countertops," he said.

He's thinks he's found one. Concrete Countertop Solutions has developed an alternative countertop form that will help create cast-in-place countertops with a variety of edge styles. Z-Counterform reduces labor time and doesn't require any double-sided tape or drilling into kitchen cabinets.

What's more, the form is made out of a proprietary blend of PVC, which results in a concrete edge that looks and feels polished when the form is removed. "If you use a polystyrene form, it will leave an unwanted impression on the concrete edge. With Z-Counterform you are left with an edge that appears perfectly smooth," Baldoni says. "Plus, it will save you a ton of labor."

To use Z-Counterforms, simply place them on 1/2-inch cement backer board, fit the forms to the edges and back walls, and

screw down the tabs. Caulk can be used to ensure a leakproof form.

Then the system is ready for pouring. Once the concrete has cured, simply snap off the forms, leaving the tabs under the concrete. "The way Z-Counterform is designed, it just breaks off and you're done," Baldoni says.

Because the PVC is 3 mm thick, the form won't warp or twist when under pressure from the concrete.

Five different form options are available: Square Edge, Double Fancy, Fancy Edge, Full Bullnose and Half Bullnose. In addition, there is a back-wall angle form to prevent concrete from adhering to a wall, plus a reusable rubber faucet knockout. Sink kits with 1-inch or 2-inch radius corner pieces will be available soon.

Each form option is packaged with 64 lineal feet (8 pieces) of edge form and 48 lineal feet (6 pieces) of back-wall angle form. ☺

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