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THE JOURNAL
OF DECORATIVE
CONCRETE

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Reactive Stain Jobs** pg. 65

Vol. 12 No. 7 October 2012



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publisher's LETTER

Dear Readers,

This edition of *Concrete Decor* contains our annual Training Guide. The purpose of the Training Guide is to help you identify specialized training opportunities in the rapidly growing industry of decorative concrete.

At ConcreteDecor.net you will find even more information on companies and individuals that offer training in your region or a plane ride away. The training opportunities that are listed online are updated constantly, so we encourage you to call the companies who are participating to learn more about their respective services.

Also in this issue, and on the opposing page, is a call for participants in the first annual Pinkrete Silent Auction. This exhibit and auction will take place the week of the Concrete Decor Show in Charlotte, N.C., on March 11-15, 2013, and I would like to encourage your participation.

The Pinkrete logo was developed by Eco Concrete Concepts owners James and Karen Frazer of Virginia. When I discovered their logo online and inquired about their intentions, a number of ideas surfaced. The one that got us both excited was an exhibit and auction that would showcase the workmanship of industry artisans and the creative ways concrete can be used.

Aside from using this exhibit to build industry awareness, we felt that an auction would channel our industry's energies toward a significant and growing cause, namely the fight for a cure to cancer. The disease has affected so many lives and it's time our industry got on board to help in this quest. To get all the details regarding participation please visit us online at www.ConcreteDecorShow.com/pinkrete.

Attendee registration is now open for the 2013 Concrete Decor Show. We have spent the last six months developing educational programs in all aspects of decorative concrete and for all experience levels. We have partnered with the Charlotte Rescue Mission, and the hands-on workshops that are planned for this facility will provide real-time learning opportunities with industry experts, giving you a chance to be involved in renovation projects that will affect the lives of many people, including your own. Exhibitors are lining up to support these workshops with products, tools and equipment that add significantly to the value of these learning opportunities. We are anticipating the largest turnout ever for the 2013 Concrete Decor Show so please register early. Class sizes are limited and are expected to fill up quickly.

Lastly, we are launching a new magazine in early 2013 called Polishing Inc. The magazine will be published quarterly and will serve as the official voice of the Concrete Polishing Association of America. If you would like to request a trial issue please call us at (877) 935-8906 or complete the request form inside this issue.

Sincerely,



Bent Mikkelsen
Publisher



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CONCRETE

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Let's Make a Difference

In cooperation with Concrete Cares, a newly founded concrete industry organization that is raising awareness in the fight for a cure for cancer, we will be holding the first annual Pinkrete Silent Auction. The event will showcase the work of talented concrete artisans at the 2013 Concrete Decor Show in Charlotte, N.C.

All of us know someone, a friend, a family member or even themselves personally, that has been affected by cancer. Through the Pinkrete Silent Auction your concrete art can help find a cure during the 2013 Concrete Decor Show. Put your best work on display at the Charlotte Convention Center the week of March 11-15, 2013. Then watch as your "concrete art" and that of many others raise needed dollars as we leave a footprint on the path to a cure.

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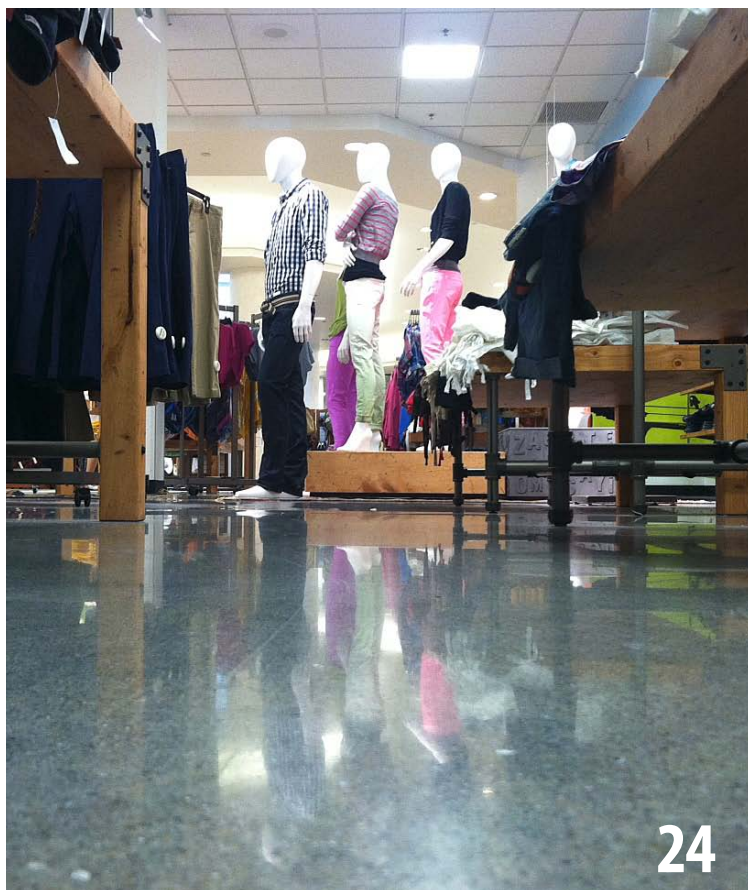


All proceeds of the auction will be donated to the American Cancer Society. Start planning your project today. Go online to www.ConcreteDecorShow.com/Pinkrete for details or call Concrete Decor Show at (877) 935-8906.





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On the cover: JCPenney stores across the country recently underwent major renovations that included the installation of polished and burnished concrete. The Original Arizona Jeans Co. sections, like the one shown here, have polished gray concrete floors. Work by Rite-Way Concrete Seal Systems Inc., Wolcott, Ind. For more, see page 24.

Photo courtesy of Doug Wright/Rite-Way Concrete Seal Systems Inc.



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by Natasha Chilingirian

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Doug Carlton operates Carlton Concrete Inc. in Visalia, Calif. He can be reached at carltondoug@comcast.net. See Doug's column, "Carlton's Corner," on page 72.



Cody Carpenter is an award-winning designer and craftsman and the owner of Architectural Concrete Interiors LLC, based in Phoenix, Ariz. He can be reached at aciconcrete@cox.net. See Cody's article on page 41.



Mark Celebuski is a partner in Trinic LLC, a company that provides protective solutions for concrete, stone and tile. He can be reached at mark@trinic.us. See Mark's article on page 50.



Nick Dancer has been active in the concrete construction business since 2005 and started his own company, CounterCrete, in 2007. That company grew into Dancer Concrete, which is based in Fort Wayne, Ind. Contact him at nick.dancer2@gmail.com. See Nick's article on page 65.



Vance Pool is vice president of sales with Ceratech Inc. The former senior director of national resources for the National Ready Mixed Concrete Association, he has spoken on topics related to sustainability, concrete and the construction industry. Contact him at vance.pool@ceratechinc.com. See Vance's article on page 48.



Chris Sullivan is vice president of sales and marketing with ChemSystems Inc. He has led seminars and product demonstrations throughout North America. Contact him at trowelanderror@protradedpub.com. See Chris' column, "Trowel & Error," on page 68.



Karen Van Heukelem wears many hats at Denver-based Colorado Hardscapes Inc., including business development, marketing and project management, with an emphasis on specialty rock construction. Reach her at karen@coloradohardscapes.com. See Karen's articles on pages 18 and 63.



Virgil Viscuso has 20 years of experience in the concrete surface preparation and polishing industry. He is founder and master trainer of the Global Concrete Polishing Institute and president of Concrete Surface Xperts. He can be contacted at virgil@globalconcretepi.com. See Virgil's article on page 54.



Jacob Webb, MBA, is a small-business strategy consultant and co-founder and vice president of NewLook International Inc., where he is primarily responsible for business development, sales and marketing. Reach him at jacob@getnewlook.com. See Jacob's column, "Fundamentals of Business," on page 16.



Ray Wilkerson is general managing partner of a group of family-operated businesses that includes Mid Atlantic Floor Care LLC and its polished and decorative concrete division DreamKrete, with offices in Richmond, Va., and Groveland, Fla. Contact him at twcsinc219@comcast.net. See Ray's article on page 56.

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Kingdom Products	●	●						
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HP Spartacote, Inc.

Kemiko

Kingdom Products

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Decorative Concrete Supply, Inc.	●	●	●	●		●		
Elite Crete of British Columbia	●	●	●	●		●	●	●
Elite Crete Systems		●	●			●	●	●
Elite Crete Systems Canada	●	●	●	●		●	●	●
HP Spartacote, Inc.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Kemiko	●	●	●			●	●	●
Kingdom Products	●	●	●			●		
Murray Decorative Concrete Supply	●	●	●			●		●
Niagara Machine, Inc.	●	●	●	●				
Pure Texture	●	●	●	●				
Quest Building Products	●	●	●	●		●		
Renew-Crete Systems	●			●		●		●
Seal-Krete		●	●	●				
The Stamp Store	●	●	●	●		●		●
Super-Krete	●	●	●	●		●		●
Trinic LLC	●	●	●		●		●	
TruCrete of Florida	●	●	●	●				
TruCrete of Maryland, Inc.	●	●	●	●		●	●	
TruCrete of Pennsylvania	●	●	●	●		●	●	
TruCrete of Virginia LLC	●	●	●	●		●	●	
TruCrete Surfacing Systems	●	●	●	●		●	●	
Versatile Building Products	●	●	●			●		

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Butterfield Color, Inc.	●	●	●	●		●		
Concrete Decor Show	●	●	●				●	●
Decorative Concrete Supply, Inc.	●	●	●	●		●	●	
Murray Decorative Concrete Supply	●	●	●					●
Quest Building Products	●	●	●	●		●		
The Stamp Store	●	●	●	●		●	●	●
SureCrete Design Products	●		●					
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Diamatic USA	●	●	●	●	●	●		●
EDCO				●	●	●		●
Murray Decorative Concrete Supply	●	●	●			●		●
Niagara Machine, Inc.	●	●	●	●				
Quest Building Products	●	●	●	●		●		
SASE Co., Inc.	●	●						
Trinic LLC	●	●	●	●		●		●
Vexcon Chemicals		●	●	●		●	●	●

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Red type indicates premium advertiser this issue.

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Niagara Machine, Inc.

Renew-Crete Systems

The Stamp Store

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SureCrete Design Products

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Concrete Decor Show	●	●	●				●	●	
Decorative Concrete Supply, Inc.	●	●	●	●		●	●	●	
Elite Crete of British Columbia	●	●	●	●		●	●	●	
Elite Crete Systems		●	●			●		●	●
Elite Crete Systems Canada	●	●	●	●		●	●	●	
Kemiko	●	●				●			
Kingdom Products	●	●				●			
Murray Decorative Concrete Supply	●	●	●			●		●	●
Niagara Machine, Inc.	●	●	●	●					
Renew-Crete Systems	●			●		●		●	
The Stamp Store	●	●	●	●		●			●
Super-Krete	●	●	●	●		●		●	
SureCrete Design Products		●							
TruCrete of Florida	●	●	●	●					
TruCrete of Maryland, Inc.	●	●	●	●		●	●		
TruCrete of Pennsylvania	●	●	●	●		●	●		
TruCrete of Virginia LLC	●	●	●	●		●	●		
TruCrete Surfacing Systems	●	●	●	●		●	●		
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Diamatic USA

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Kemiko

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Niagara Machine, Inc.

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Butterfield Color, Inc.	●	●	●	●		●		●	●
Concrete Decor Show	●	●	●				●	●	
Decorative Concrete Supply, Inc.	●	●	●	●		●			
Diamatic USA	●	●	●		●			●	
Elite Crete of British Columbia	●	●	●	●		●	●	●	
Elite Crete Systems		●	●			●		●	●
Elite Crete Systems Canada	●	●	●	●		●	●	●	
Kemiko	●	●	●			●	●	●	
Kingdom Products	●	●	●			●			
Murray Decorative Concrete Supply	●	●	●			●		●	●
Niagara Machine, Inc.	●	●	●	●					
Quest Building Products	●	●	●	●		●		●	
Renew-Crete Systems	●			●		●		●	
The Stamp Store	●	●	●	●		●		●	●
Super-Krete	●	●	●	●		●		●	
SureCrete Design Products		●							
Trinic LLC	●	●	●	●		●		●	
TruCrete of Florida	●	●	●	●					
TruCrete of Maryland, Inc.	●	●	●	●		●	●		
TruCrete of Pennsylvania	●	●	●	●		●	●		
TruCrete of Virginia LLC	●	●	●	●		●	●		
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	Beginner	Intermediate	Advanced	Job Site Training/Consulting	Webinars	Technical Support	Books	DVD/CD	AIA Credit
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Concrete Decor Show	●	●	●				●	●	
Decorative Concrete Supply, Inc.	●	●	●	●		●		●	
Elite Crete of British Columbia	●	●	●	●		●	●	●	
Elite Crete Systems		●	●			●		●	●
Elite Crete Systems Canada	●	●	●	●		●	●	●	
Kingdom Products	●	●	●			●			
Murray Decorative Concrete Supply	●	●	●			●		●	●
Renew-Crete Systems	●			●		●		●	
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Concrete Decor Show
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(877) 935-8906
www.concretedecorshow.com

The Concrete Decor Show features hands-on workshops and classroom training in all areas of decorative concrete, plus an extensive exhibit hall with live demonstrations from industry leaders. Our fourth annual event will be held March 11–15, 2013 at the Charlotte Convention Center in Charlotte, N.C.

See our ad on page 33 · Reader Service 69



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See our ads on pages 54 & 67 · Reader Service 34, 51

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www.elitecrete.com

Manufacturer of products for decorative concrete overlay systems, epoxy and other industrial floor coatings, and concrete restoration and protection. Elite Crete Systems has over 90 training and technical support offices worldwide providing regional decorative concrete and flooring training, specification writing, technical support and business development assistance to decorative concrete installers and design professionals.



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Valparaiso, IN 46383
(219) 465-7671
www.elitecrete.com

Manufacturers of products focusing on CSI Divisions 3 and 9. Products include: Decorative concrete overlays (exterior & interior), stains & dyes, sealers & protective coatings, REFLECTOR Enhancer Flooring Systems and industrial floor coatings such as epoxies, urethanes, polyaspartics and novolacs. Over 90 technical support and training offices worldwide.

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Manufacturer of products for decorative concrete overlay systems, epoxy and other industrial floor coatings, and concrete restoration and protection. Elite Crete Systems has over 90 training and technical support offices worldwide providing regional decorative concrete and flooring training, specification writing, technical support and business development assistance to decorative concrete installers and design professionals.

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Kemiko
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Premium-quality pigments, hardeners, dye, release agents, stains and sealers for the professional decorative contractor.

See our ad on page 70 · Reader Service 53

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(336) 698-9800
www.puretexture.com

Pure Texture is a leading Decorative Concrete Manufacturing and Training Center serving the U.S. Due to the challenging economy, Pure Texture decided to take a fresh look at existing decorative concrete coating systems. Listening to contractor's needs and concerns, Pure Texture has developed a user-friendly product that, with the applicable techniques, can be applied horizontally, vertically, on existing countertops, overhead and even on wood. The beauty of this product is that their "P T Texture mix" does it all.

Quest Building Products
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(714) 738-6640
www.questbuilding.com/news/training/

Quest provides concrete surface preparation & restoration for traditional flooring systems, in addition to decorative seamless flooring alternatives. We rent, sell and service concrete surface prep equipment, as well as concrete coatings, concrete countertops and concrete polishing products.

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www.renewcrete.com

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SASE Co., Inc.
2475 Stock Creek Blvd.
Rockford, TN 37853
(800) 522-2606
www.sasecompany.com

SASE manufactures and distributes concrete polishing, preparation equipment and tooling directly to our customers. Our product range consists of planetary diamond grinder, dust extraction units, scarifiers, floor scrapers, hand-held tools and an extremely wide variety of high-quality diamond tooling at an everyday low price. SASE is committed to excellence in both the quality of the products we sell as well as in the service and support we provide after the sale.



Seal-Krete
306 Gandy Rd.
Auburndale, FL 33823
(800) 323-7357
www.seal-crete.com

A leading manufacturer of waterproofing and decorative coatings for concrete, SEAL-KRETE has been the professional's choice in weatherproofing protection for concrete and masonry for more than 30 years. Serving both professional contractors and do-it-yourselfers, SEAL-KRETE manufactures a full line of products developed for surface protection and beautification.



The Stamp Store
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Oklahoma City, OK 73105
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www.thestampstore.com/training

The Stamp Store has been training concrete artisans for over 11 years. Our Stamp Store instructors specialize in training classes for countertops, vertical stamping and carving, overlays, fresh-pour stamping, and One Day Floors applications. All classes are hands-on allowing the student to experience the satisfaction of a completed project.

See our ad on page 61 · Reader Service 48



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2705 Via Orange Way, Ste. B
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(619) 401-8282
www.super-crete.com

For over 25 years, Super-Krete products have been enhancing, protecting and restoring concrete installations worldwide. With successful applications under severe temperature cycles such as the icy winters and freeze-thaw conditions of the Czech Republic to the extreme humidity of the Pacific Islands and the blazing heat of the Western deserts, Super-Krete Color Stains, bonding agents and surfacing systems have proven to withstand both time and the elements of nature. The Super-Krete family of quality products are guaranteed to help you meet and exceed your concrete challenges.



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www.surecretedesign.com

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www.trinic.us

Trinic LLC is headed up by Mark Celebuski and Bob Chatterton. With a combined 55 years hands-on experience in the decorative concrete industry, we provide products and training to those of all experience levels.

See our ads on pages 42 & 51 · Reader Service 27, 43

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(407) 324-1000
www.trucrete.com

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1279 Log Canoe Ct.
Annapolis, MD 21403
(410) 268-0537
www.trucrete.com

TruCrete of Pennsylvania
312 S. 4th St.
Emmaus, PA 18049
(610) 737-3110
www.trucrete.com

TruCrete of Virginia LLC
9144 Euclid Ct.
Manassas, VA 20110
(703) 794-7414
www.trucrete.com



TruCrete Surfacing Systems
5203 Poplar Dr.
Cambridge, MD 21613
(443) 205-4547
www.trucrete.com

TruCrete Surfacing Systems is a manufacturer of decorative and industrial coatings for concrete, wood and metal substrates. We produce superior cementitious and resinous systems along with the most advanced training certification program and technical assistance.



Versatile Building Products
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www.garagecoatings.com

Versatile Building Products, Inc. manufactures decorative concrete floor coatings and high-performance clear sealers. Our extensive product line includes Versa-Crete 1/8" Stamped Overlays and Microtoppings available with a lifetime adhesion warranty. Another popular line is our Roll on Rock garage floor coating that can be installed in as little as a few hours.

See our ads on inside front cover and pages 38, 43 & 71 · Reader Service 15, 23, 28, 63



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business & INDUSTRY

INDUSTRY NEWS

Polishing magazine planned by trade group and Concrete Decor publisher

Professional Trade Publications Inc., publisher of *Concrete Decor* magazine, will begin publishing Polishing Inc. magazine, the official publication of the Concrete Polishing Association of America (CPAA), a nonbiased, nonprofit trade organization focused on the concrete polishing market.

PTP will distribute quarterly editions of Polishing Inc. to all CPAA members, plus architects, engineers, designers, distributors, manufacturers and contractors. The new publication will focus on providing the flooring industry with in-depth CPAA-authored articles on issues, trends and

techniques, job-site case studies, and other articles designed to help readers promote and sell polished concrete solutions.

The first issue will make its official debut at World of Concrete 2013.

www.concretepolishingassociation.com

Buddy Rhodes, Delta finalize deal

Buddy Rhodes Concrete Products and Delta Performance Products LLC have finalized a partnership agreement that will bring Buddy Rhodes Concrete Products under the ownership of Delta Performance. Buddy Rhodes products will still be sold under the Buddy Rhodes brand, but the synergy between Buddy Rhodes and Delta

Performance will result in improved efficiency for dealers and an enhanced product offering for end-users.

Under the terms of the agreement Delta Performance Products will assume all logistical aspects of distribution while Buddy and his team will continue to develop the product line and deliver information to product users.

www.buddyrhodes.com

www.delta-performance.com

Concrete Industry Management program seeks donations for auction

The Concrete Industry Management program is seeking donations for its eighth annual auction, to be held at the World of Concrete.

The proceeds from the 2013 auction will benefit the CIM National Steering Committee and support the current CIM programs and the new Executive MBA program, as well as help fund future program expansion.

Those interested in making a donation should contact CIM auction committee chairman Michael Philipps at michaelf.philipps@cemex.com or (713) 722-2969.

www.concretedegree.com

Surface Depot open in Tennessee

Surface Depot LLC, a supplier of equipment and tooling for natural stone countertops and hard-surface flooring, opened for business in March 2012. Located in Knoxville, Tenn., Surface Depot strives to provide customers with superior industry knowledge and cutting-edge products.

The ShaveMaster, a specially designed floor machine that makes coatings removal and concrete corrections simple, is the flagship of the company's hard-surface flooring equipment line. Surface Depot LLC also offers scarifiers, floor grinders and polishers, enhancers and densifiers, tooling

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and accessories.

www.surfacedepotllc.com

New locations for GranQuartz, Pearl Abrasive in Southern California

GranQuartz and Pearl Abrasive Co. recently moved their joint Los Angeles store to a larger location. The two entities will share building space that is located only a quarter mile from their previous store.

GranQuartz also recently moved its Anaheim store to a larger location.

www.pearlabrasive.com

www.grandquartz.com

Dur-A-Flex relocates in California

Dur-A-Flex Inc. announced the relocation of its West Coast operations to Ontario, Calif. The new facility will accommodate expanded staff and product inventory.

Comprised of more than 10,000 square feet, the new facility will offer added space for Dur-A-Flex's product inventory, floor samples and dedicated staff, including sales representatives, technical support and customer service reps. A shipping and receiving department has been added to expedite product shipments to Asia and West Coast customers. Additionally, Dur-A-Flex's contractor partners will have a second venue to choose from when attending the Application Certification Program.

www.dur-a-flex.com

American Ultraviolet, DecoRad Systems form exclusive distribution agreement

American Ultraviolet and DecoRad Systems have reached an exclusive distribution agreement regarding on-site UV curing equipment. American Ultraviolet will be the sole distributor of the DecoRad Floormate and DecoRad Handmate systems in North and South America. Both companies will continue their existing relationships with coating companies in the United States and throughout Europe.

www.auvco.com

www.decorad.com

Brickform names John Anderson director of business development

Brickform, a division of Solomon Colors Inc., has hired John Anderson as director of business development. Anderson brings with him a diverse 20 years of industry experience in decorative concrete and

international business relations.

His new role in business development will be to deliver new systems and strategies to enhance the Solomon/Brickform company profile.

www.solomoncolors.com

Project manager at Precast Specialties

Precast Specialties Corp. has announced that Brandon Duffel has accepted the position of senior project manager. Duffel's responsibilities will include managing and supporting projects for Precast Specialties Corp.'s rapidly growing Architectural Group.

www.precastspecialtiescorp.com

David Allen Co. creates Latricrete Supercap applicator division

Laticrete Supercap LLC, manufacturer of the self-leveling Supercap System, has announced that DAC Supercap LLC, a newly formed division of David Allen Co., will be its newest regional applicator. Harry

Baulch, a construction veteran with a strong general contractor background, will be directing the new organization.

David Allen Co. is based in Raleigh, N.C., with branches in Washington, D.C., Miami, Birmingham, Ala., and Columbia, S.C. A leading tile, stone and terrazzo contractor, it has been in business since 1920.

www.laticretesupercap.com

Westcoat hires national sales manager

Westcoat Specialty Coating Systems has hired Dean Jarmusch as national sales manager. He will manage Westcoat sales representatives and service distributors, as well as work directly with customers to grow sales and knowledge of Westcoat systems. 

www.westcoat.com

DECORATIVE CONCRETE ONLINE

Global Concrete Polishing Institute offers online training information

The Global Concrete Polishing Institute has updated its website to include training information. The GCPI specializes in concrete polishing from beginner to advanced levels. The focus of the training includes installation techniques, estimating, bidding, sales, marketing and operations.

www.globalconcretepi.com

New features at ConcreteIdeas.com

After more than a year of development the new look and features on ConcreteIdeas are live. Visitors can now find a concrete company with one click. Other new features include website visitor tracking, map icons, an image gallery and special features for premium members.

www.concreteideas.com

Vexcon redesigns website

Vexcon Chemicals has launched a new website that has been completely redesigned with improved navigation, content and tools.

New resources include dedicated sections for technical and customer service where


visitors will find a wealth of information about Vexcon products and services, as well as new tools such as a customizable product and LEED certification letter database. There are also sections for design professionals and Vexcon's environmentally friendly products.

www.vexcon.com

Referral service from SSI

SSI (Silicone Specialties Inc.) has launched Bidcrete.com, which provides a free referral service to homeowners, business owners, or anyone who needs a decorative concrete contractor.

Bidcrete.com services do not require a monthly or yearly subscription, nor do they charge contractors referral fees. Currently the service covers contractors in Texas, Louisiana and Oklahoma.

Bidcrete's mission is to refer reputable contractors who use quality products for projects that include epoxy garage floors, stained concrete, pool decks and other decorative options. 

www.bidcrete.com

FUNDAMENTALS OF BUSINESS

Giving Your Business the Flexibility It Needs to Thrive

In the free enterprise system, competition selects out businesses that don't adapt to change or events they can't plan on. To thrive within this system, your decorative concrete business must maintain a high degree of flexibility.



by Jacob Webb

One of the very few certainties of operating a decorative concrete business is that your business plan will NOT describe what actually happens. I know. Bummer. Of course, this doesn't mean you should shirk the task of developing a business plan. Just remember that all the planning, projecting and preparing you do will NOT eliminate those unplannable events that will make your business environment unpredictable.

This is why being flexible is so important. It will enable you to protect yourself against the two types of unplannable events by minimizing uncertainty and reducing ambiguity.

Minimizing uncertainty

Uncertainty is knowing that an event will

occur, but not knowing the timing (when) or the magnitude (how much). For example, you can assume your suppliers will eventually raise their prices, but you don't know when or by how much. And you know imitators and substitutes will try to appropriate your hard-earned business value, but you don't know when or in what specific way.

In 1789, Benjamin Franklin wrote to Jean-Baptiste Le Roy, "In this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes." There are two types of "death" events in a decorative concrete business: the untimely death of a key employee, such as an experienced product installer, and events that obliterate your business, such as embezzlement. As for taxes, many types of those are uncertain only in their amounts, not if or when they are due.

Fortunately, uncertainty can be managed and minimized using risk management strategies. The risk management possibilities for death and taxes are, respectively, insurance and advanced tax planning.

Minimize the damage to your business caused by the death of a critical employee by acquiring **key person insurance**. Imagine how difficult it would be to overcome the loss of a key technical employee in whom you invested so many resources. I'm talking

about that guy on your team who knows more about your decorative products than anyone else. Or perhaps it's the salesperson who drives your revenue. Regardless, it's the employee your business can't survive without. The policy must be large enough to ensure that a viable replacement can be found and the damage can be repaired. This can be a relatively inexpensive solution compared to the cost of not having it in a time of need.

Catastrophic insurance helps when major catastrophes threaten to obliterate your business: product liability, embezzlement, riots, fires, earthquakes. The list goes on. Are these events unlikely? Perhaps, but they happen. And when they do, they will deal such a severe blow to your business that you may not recover. Remember the Los Angeles riots of 1992? Reportedly, none of the affected businesses had catastrophic insurance and only 30 percent reopened after the damage was done.

Advance planning for taxes due may require professional tax counsel. But it will help you avoid cycles of forced compliance, which will distract your attention from more productive uses of your time. Advance tax planning means knowing the likely types of taxes you will owe. It means estimating them on an ongoing basis. It means setting your bid prices so you can hit your profit targets after taxes. And it means setting aside cash so you can match tax liabilities as they build throughout the year.

Reducing ambiguity

Ambiguity is the other category for all other unplannable events. If uncertainty is knowing an event will occur but not knowing for sure, ambiguity is simply not knowing at all. Not only are you unaware of the magnitude or timing of an event, you don't even know the nature of the event itself. The bad news is that ambiguity is virtually infinite and its management is almost impossible.

Tips for Improving Your Company's Flexibility

- Develop a business plan knowing you must ultimately be flexible when your plan does not pan out.
- Acquire key person insurance to minimize the potential damage to your business from the death of an essential employee.
- Consider investing in catastrophic insurance, which can help when major catastrophes threaten to obliterate your business.
- Advance planning for taxes due may require professional tax counsel. But it will help you avoid cycles of forced compliance, which distracts your attention from more productive uses of your time.
- Identify and organize a management team or Board of Advisors with diverse backgrounds, experiences and education so you can benefit from a collective, heterogeneous intelligence.
- Establish policies and procedures within your decision structure to help low-level employees answer less ambiguous questions such as, "How often should I check the pressure washer for gas?"

It's a common belief that if your business is small and agile, you can be more flexible. While there is some truth to this, it isn't always the case. Population ecologists teach that the characteristics of your decorative concrete business at or near the time of its founding will vary little over its life because of "inertia." For example, once you develop a reputation with your customers for a specific service or product, it will require even more effort and investment to retrain your customers to think of you in a different way. For example, if you're known as "the stain guys," how do you think your customers will respond if you start promoting yourself as "the polishing guys"? They probably won't respond at all. At least, not at first. That kind of adjustment takes time. And in this way, inertia can be tyrannical.

Therefore, reducing ambiguity involves both luck and dealing with the "tyranny of inertia" through heterogeneity and appropriate decision-making structure.

Heterogeneity is when you leverage the collective mind of many employees of your business. The challenge is to use their individual strengths collectively to overcome the tyranny of inertia. In times

of calm, the collective mind that works best is homogenous — everyone has similar backgrounds or thinks along the same lines. However, in times of economic turbulence (like the current economy) heterogeneous businesses are better equipped to resist economic pressures that select out weak decorative concrete businesses.

Establish or develop heterogeneity in your business by tolerating and fostering independent thinking and individualism (and the resulting disagreements) so your business can be more responsive to ambiguity.

"But, Jacob," you say, "how do I establish heterogeneity if I'm the only employee of my small decorative concrete business?" Great question. You still need to infuse a collective intelligence in your decision-making by organizing and relying on a board of advisors. These may be (paid or unpaid) industry experts, service providers or other professionals. Regardless, multiple heads will be better than one if you are to respond to ambiguous events that could threaten your business.

Here's what I mean by **decision-making structure**: Decisions involving low ambiguity should be made by employees who can

refer to established procedures and policies for guidance. When should we pick up the mail? How often should we replace the water cooler? You shouldn't have to call your board of advisors to answer these questions.

Likewise, decisions that are increasingly ambiguous will be better made through group processes that decrease in structure as ambiguity increases. How should we position ourselves against the competition? What market should we target? Answering these questions necessitate a higher-level heterogeneous group somewhere in your decision structure. 📁

Jacob Webb, MBA, is a small-business strategy consultant and co-founder and vice president of NewLook International Inc., where he is primarily responsible for business development, sales and marketing. Reach him at jacob@getnewlook.com.

Jacob Webb will teach "Successful Small-Business Marketing Strategies" at the 2013 Concrete Decor Show. For more information, go to ConcreteDecorShow.com.



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Full-Time Marketing with Part-Time Resources

by Karen Van Heukelem

WHEN people compliment Colorado Hardscapes Inc.'s marketing department, I tend to smile just a bit. People often mistakenly think our decorative concrete company operates like a large corporation, with multiple staff just waiting for their next task. In reality, we operate lean, especially in today's economic conditions.

Our marketing department consists of yours truly and a part-time sales and marketing assistant. In addition to being head of marketing, my responsibilities include sales, business development, estimating, concrete consulting and project management with a few odds-and-ends roles thrown into the mix when urgency demands or time permits.

So how do we market without full-time resources? I can't tell you all of our secrets, but simply put, it's a matter of prioritizing and planning.

Set your marketing goals

First, you need to determine the importance of marketing in your company's overall goals. If one of your goals is to make your company more widely known, marketing should be given equal status with quality production, staffing and infrastructure.

Once marketing's importance is established, you will need to develop a workable marketing plan. A marketing plan, like any goal, should give you reasonable guidelines to follow but not hold you hostage. Begin by answering the following questions:

- 1 Who is your audience (landscape architects, architects, engineers, owners, developers, general contractors, homeowners, etc.)?
- 2 What type of work is your current primary source of revenue (government,

residential, commercial, institutional, medical, retail, etc.)? Are there any of these that you would like to add to your customer list?

3 How much are you willing to spend towards marketing? (A general rule of thumb is to spend 5 percent of your gross revenue in today's current conditions, 10 percent if you want to do a big push and break into a market.)

4 What marketing tasks can you realistically do in-house and what areas might you need to outsource (for example, your website maintenance, printing or graphic design)?

5 Establish short-term and long-term goals. Make all of your goals attainable. Focus on achieving some of the short-term goals first to give you a sense of accomplishment.

One of our short-term goals at Colorado Hardscapes involves our website. We do all of our website updates in-house through good old-fashioned HTML coding. I have a set goal to update our website on a quarterly basis. This can be with projects in progress, a new case study, or other relevant news. For us, website updates are relatively simple but show immediate results. When our website is updated, the search engine robots are triggered to crawl our site again to help our website positioning as well as provide fresh content to our customers.

Long-term client development

Colorado Hardscapes tackles both short-term and long-term objectives. For long-term client targets, we focus on developers, designers, and large commercial or mixed-use developments. Because of this focus, we center some of our marketing efforts on business development by giving presentations to the design community and actively participating in local associations

where our target market congregates.

Determine who in the design community would be a good match for what your company offers. Then approach just a few of these with the offer of a presentation. If you keep your goals realistic, you will not be overwhelmed with an impossible task. Presentations take a concentrated commitment both in time and money. Each presentation takes about 8 hours including booking, preparing, presenting and follow-up. At presentations, use visual aids and leave something behind for the designer's library — samples, a design book or your most recent brochure.

Associations to look into

How should you choose which associations to join? Get creative. Remember, most of your clients will congregate where they think their next customer congregates. Go to a general contractors' or architects' association and you will rarely find the decision-makers you seek. Those groups have value, and I encourage you to participate in industry associations, but for drumming up new business, branch out a bit more.

The associations that have the most impact for Colorado Hardscapes and me are generally the ones right on the cusp of our industry.

My favorite is the National Association of Industrial and Office Properties (NAIOP), a commercial real estate development association. Decision-makers always attend and are heavily involved. For Colorado Hardscapes, whose target market is high-end commercial projects, being able to get directly in front of developers and owners is beneficial. Plus, that is where some GCs and architects have decided to plug in as well, since their clients are involved with NAIOP.

Another favorite is the Society for Marketing Professional Services (SMPS).

Their target is marketing professionals in the A/E/C (architecture, engineering and construction) industry. Again, it puts me in the room with other marketers who represent some of our key clients. Since they are fellow marketers, they understand the struggle of getting a foot in a door, so they help out as much as they can once relationships are established.

Once you find an association that aligns with your growth goals, become involved in a committee. That will throw you into the crowd much quicker and help you establish strong key relationships. Association dues and events can add up quickly and deplete any marketing budget, so be committed to those you join to get the most impact. Associations take about 8 hours per month per association between the monthly event and committee involvement. Prices range from \$15 per month to \$150 per month plus annual dues.

Effective follow-up requires a level of time commitment. Set realistic goals when trying to establish long-term relationships. Both presentations and association involvement are worthless without a degree of follow-up.

These examples are just a snapshot of our marketing efforts at Colorado Hardscapes. Remember:

- Have focused efforts,
- Set aside time for marketing and business development, and
- Follow up to establish long-lasting relationships. 🚚

Karen Van Heukelem wears many hats at Denver-based Colorado Hardscapes Inc., including business development, marketing, sales, estimating and project management, with an emphasis on specialty rock construction. She can be reached at karen@coloradohardscapes.com.



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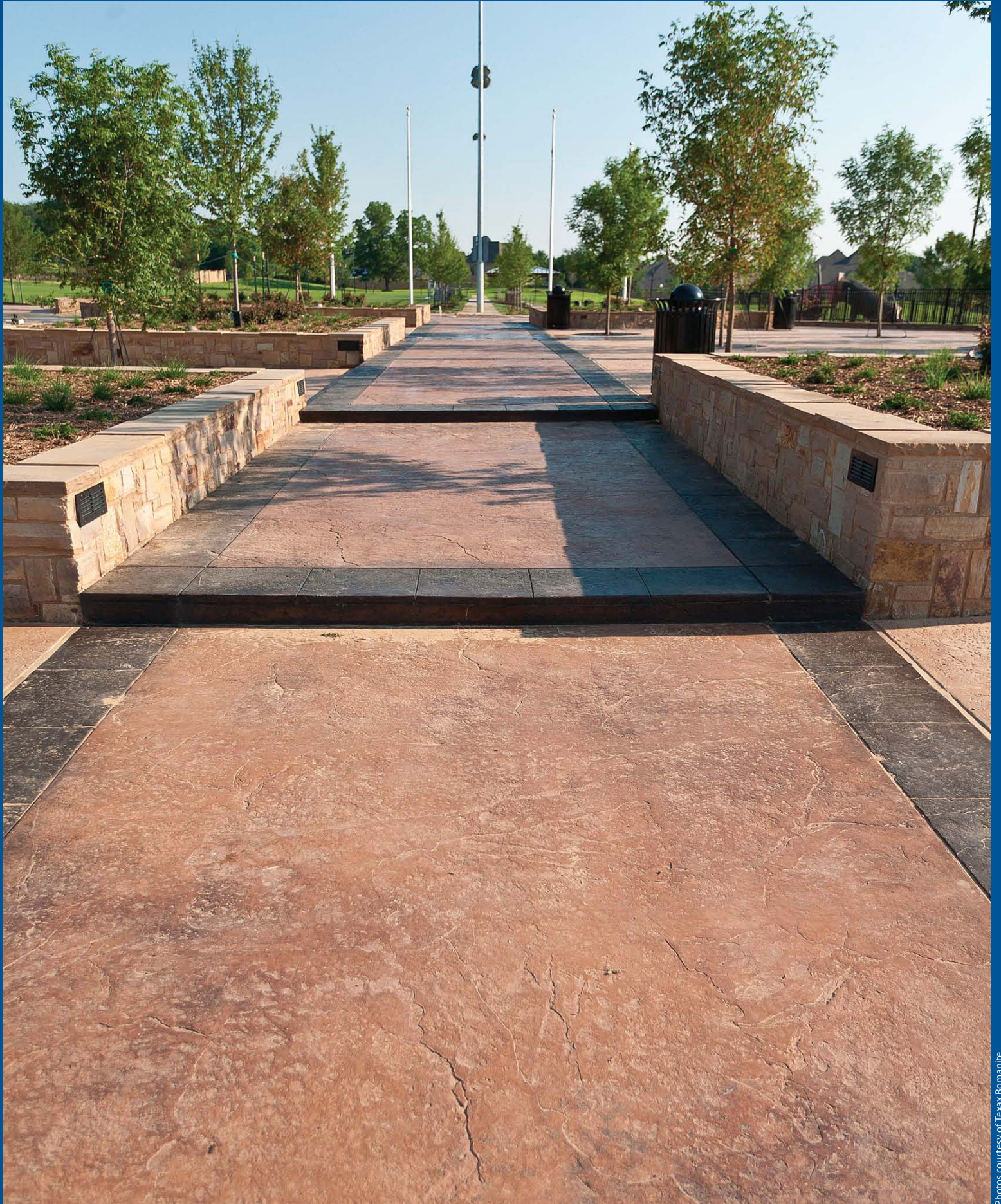
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Photos courtesy of Texax Bomanite



Texas Bomanite

Dallas, Texas

by Chris Mayo

CELEBRATING its silver anniversary this year, Texas Bomanite has been performing high-end decorative concrete work across much of Texas since 1987. With more than 3,000 jobs under its belt, many of them high-profile, the Dallas-based company has built a reputation of delivering top-quality work.

"We have a few core beliefs that we follow religiously," says Scott Balch, president and owner of the company. "Simply put, we believe in ourselves, our abilities, and our ingenuity in finding solutions to challenges."

North Texas Bomanite Inc. was established as a Bomanite franchise in 1987. If you know decorative concrete, you've heard of the Bomanite brand. Brad Bowman, who passed away in 2000 at age 90, is credited with inventing the stamped concrete process. In 1970, he patented his process for imprinting and coloring concrete and formed Bomanite Corp., which quickly began franchising contractors.

Balch and a partner left the civil contractor they were working for and bought the North Texas franchise in 1990. Though his partner moved on fairly quickly, Balch has never looked back.

"When we started out, we concentrated primarily on exterior architectural concrete, with a little interior staining," says Balch. "Over the years we've expanded with the industry, adding thin toppings, seeding and exposing decorative aggregates, exposed aggregates, polishing, Grasscrete (Bomanite's pervious system), and chemical staining and sealing. Now, interior polishing

comprises about 50 percent of our business."

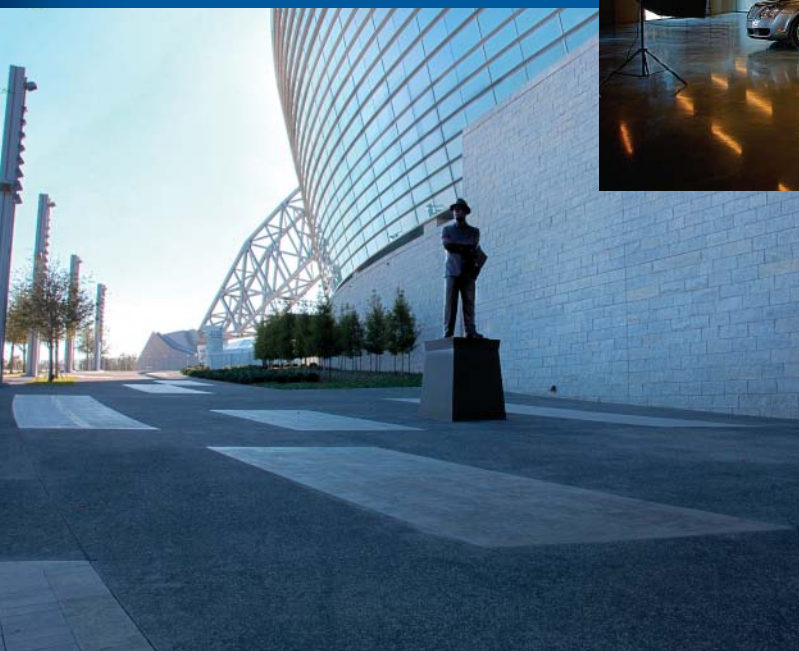
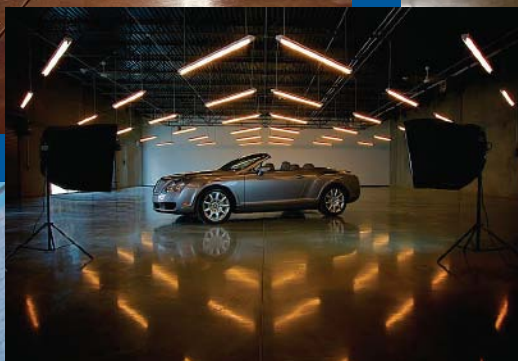
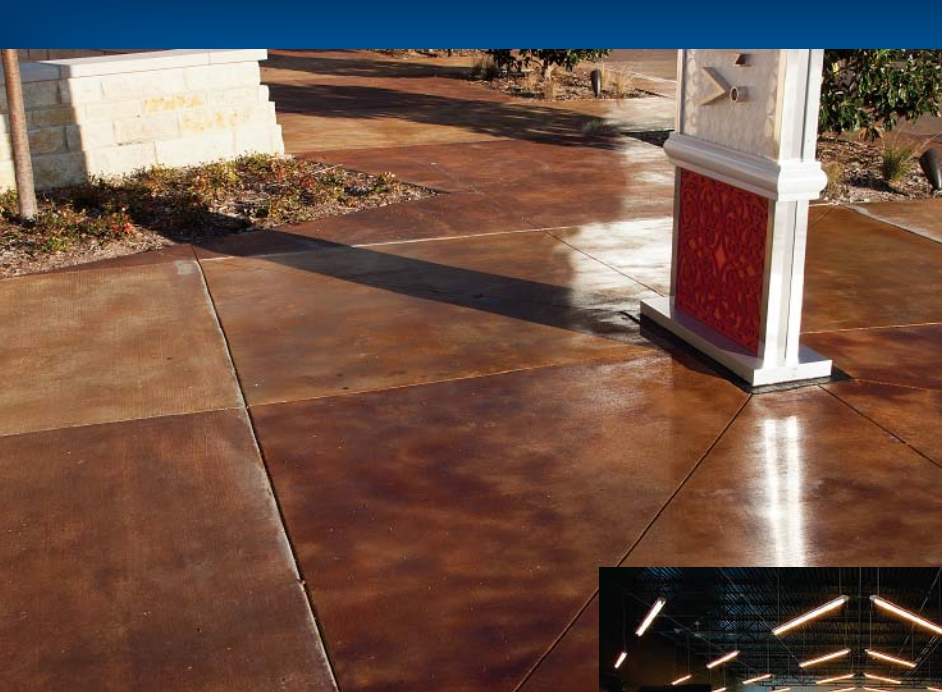
Known as Texas Bomanite today, the company boasts 75 employees spread across residential, commercial and municipal divisions. The company launched its Central Texas Division, Bomanite of Austin Ltd., in 2000.

Over the past several years Texas Bomanite has had the opportunity to work on some pretty noteworthy projects in its home base of greater Dallas — Arlington Stadium (where the Texas Rangers baseball team plays), the AT&T Performing Arts Center, the Museum of Nature & Science and NorthPark Center (one of the largest malls in the Southwest). At the Dallas Cowboys Stadium, they did virtually all of the exterior walkways, over half a million square feet of concrete.

"Outside Cowboys Stadium, we installed a decorative seeded aggregate into a matrix of integrally colored concrete with an exposed aggregate finish," says Balch. "We also constructed some integrally colored broom-finished concrete with decorative cuts. I suppose in terms of high-profile work, that job would be one of our signatures, but in terms of complexity it wasn't particularly difficult."

How they ended up with the Cowboys contract is illustrative of how the company's solution-oriented approach leads to more work.

"Cowboys Stadium started out with just a phone call from the contractor, Manhattan Construction, who was in charge of the entire project," recalls Balch. "They were struggling with coming up with mock-ups of the seeded, colored concrete that was planned for outside



the stadium.”

Balch went out to take a look at the stadium work and recognized an opportunity.

“I made a deal with them,” he says. “We agreed to pour the mock-up for free provided Manhattan would give us the opportunity to bid on the job. The funny thing is, Manhattan was close with their own mock-ups. They had tried about 10 separate pours and they were just missing it. We tweaked their mix design a little and we hit it on the first try.”

The company poured all the concrete between the stadium and the parking areas, more than half a million square feet. The job took about eight months to complete, and the

team has estimated that they poured about 20,000 square feet of concrete per day to stay on schedule.

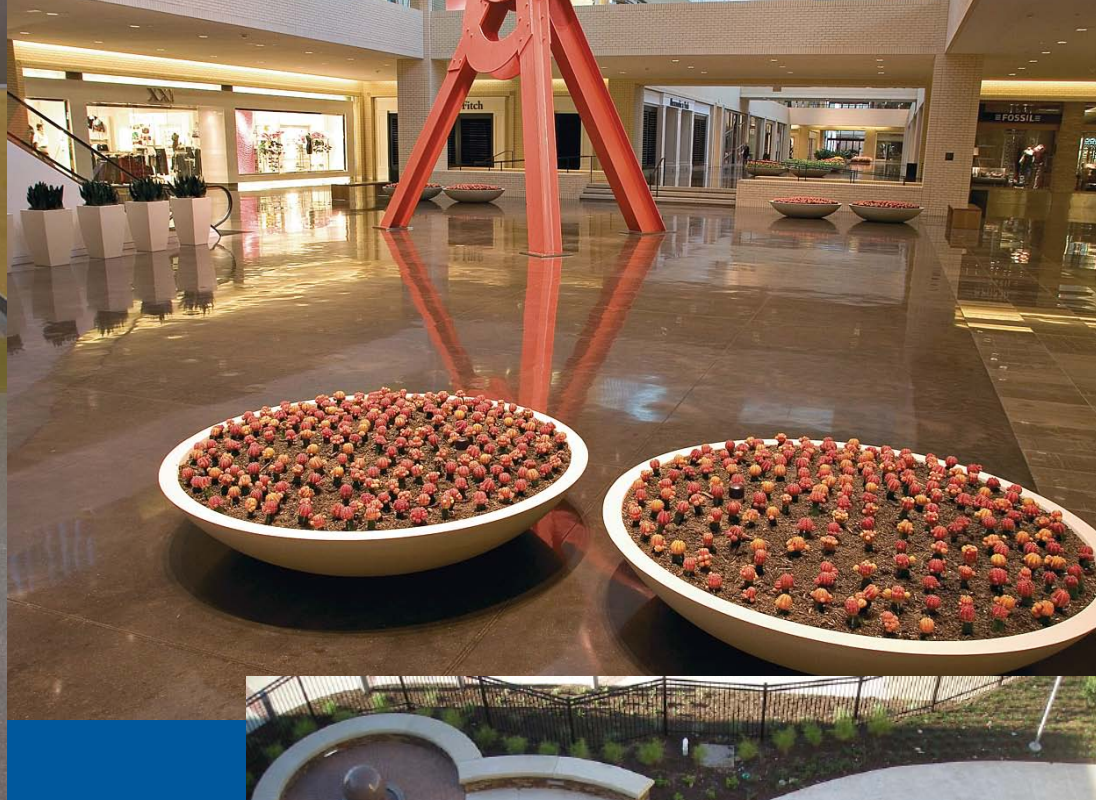
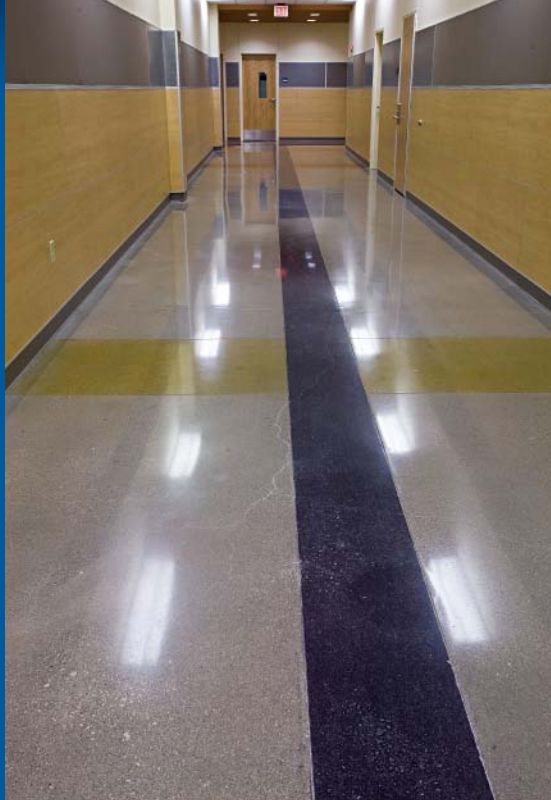
Balch says logo work with microtopping is some of the more complex work Texas Bomanite has done. “We did a map in an elementary school in central Texas in which different ecological regions of the state are shaded in different colors. It also depicts the route of an old trail that was established by European visitors about 300 years ago.”

The Texas map, at Camino Real Elementary School in Niederwald, Texas, is an example of how the company works with owners and architects to help bring their ideas to life, says Central Texas Division vice president Kristy Keith. “The architect

contacted us early in the design stages to provide input on materials and finishes. The map was created using 15 colors of Bomanite Micro-Top. A high level of detail was required. The school dedication was held on top of the map in 2008. In addition to the map at the school, we installed their polished and dyed concrete floors.”

This complex project also serves as an example of how a successful company can grow. “That job has led to a lot of other work for the school district,” says Keith. “Since then we’ve done several polishing and coloring jobs for their schools. That’s pretty typical. One job often leads to more jobs.”

Balch is justifiably proud of the work his company does, but he doesn’t necessarily



see one type of concrete application or technique as the company's signature.

"I think what we're known for more than anything else is that we go the extra mile to understand an entire project, not just our part of a project," says Balch. "Because we tend to be very solutions-oriented, we've developed a strong reputation within the design side of the business. If designers are working in a vacuum, the specs or budget don't align many times. By getting in on a job early and working with the design team from the start, we can suggest solutions to drawings and specifications issues as well as options when it comes to matching desired end results with budget."

"We're a full-service company," adds

Keith. "We do a wide range of work from stamped concrete on Texas Department of Transportation road and bridge projects to special finishes such as the Camino Real Texas map. Our ability to do both has been a plus for our company."

Balch feels fortunate to have grown his company parallel with the meteoric growth of the decorative concrete industry. "Polishing is a great example of how the industry has taken off," he says. "Over the past 10 years, polishing has really taken hold. Now it is embraced by almost every sector: retail, offices, residential. Part of the reason is that it's unique when it comes to flooring. There are a lot of green aspects to polished concrete flooring and, when you

think about it, it is far easier to restore to its original look, after 10 years or so, than any other type of flooring. Other areas of decorative concrete are growing in much the same way."

He doesn't anticipate the growth slowing down. "It seems like new products and techniques are being introduced all the time," he says. "There is still a lot of room for growth. As knowledge of products moves through the design community, and they get more comfortable with new products and techniques, I think we'll see our industry continue to grow." 📱

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Working with Levi Strauss & Co., J.C. Penney recently introduced Levi's Denim Bar "shops" that are enhanced with polished gray concrete floors, as seen here in Penney's prototype store in Dallas, Texas.

Photo by Shannon Faulk/Getty Images, courtesy of J.C. Penney Co.

The JCPenney Juggernaut

A huge national remodeling project for the department store chain has kept concrete polishing contractors busy this year

by Stacey Enesey Klemenc

In a gutsy move by J.C. Penney Co.'s CEO, Ron Johnson, roughly 700 stores were renovated last summer to kick off a four-year plan to reinvent the store. As Johnson told investors at a meeting held in August: "We are here to transform JCPenney, not to improve JCPenney."

Johnson aimed to create what he calls a "specialty department store" that features "streets" instead of aisles. The plan involves reconfiguring the age-old department store into 100 brand-specific "shops," each with their own distinct flooring, fixtures, mannequins and signage.

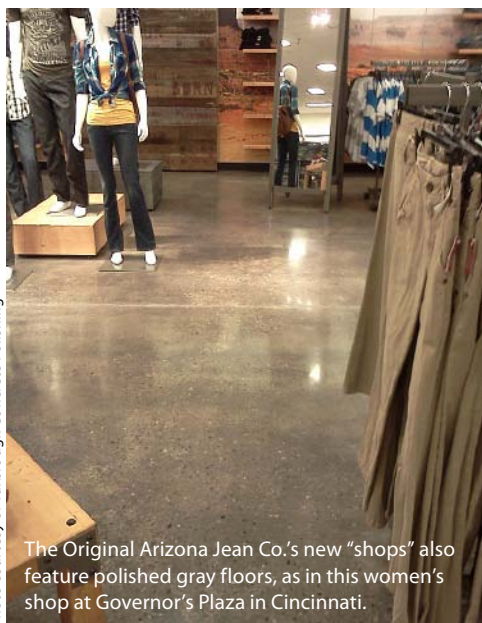
"When you look at our store everything (will be) organized by shops, just like a mall," Johnson said. The "streets" in the specialty department store will be close to 15 feet wide and anywhere from a half to a

third mile long.

To make the shops distinct and give the mall-within-a-mall concept the modern look it deserved, the chain relied on burnished and polished concrete for its first two "waves" of renovations — making this mass remodel arguably the biggest project in the history of the polished concrete industry.

JCPenney turned the concrete polishing community upside down with the amount of work it wanted done nationwide with specific products and methods in a short time period, all with extremely short notice.

The enormous renovation project was challenging for the more experienced polishing contractors and a real learning curve for the not-so-experienced, says Roy Bowman, chairman of the Concrete



The Original Arizona Jean Co.'s new "shops" also feature polished gray floors, as in this women's shop at Governor's Plaza in Cincinnati.

Photo courtesy of Yarbrough Concrete Polishing

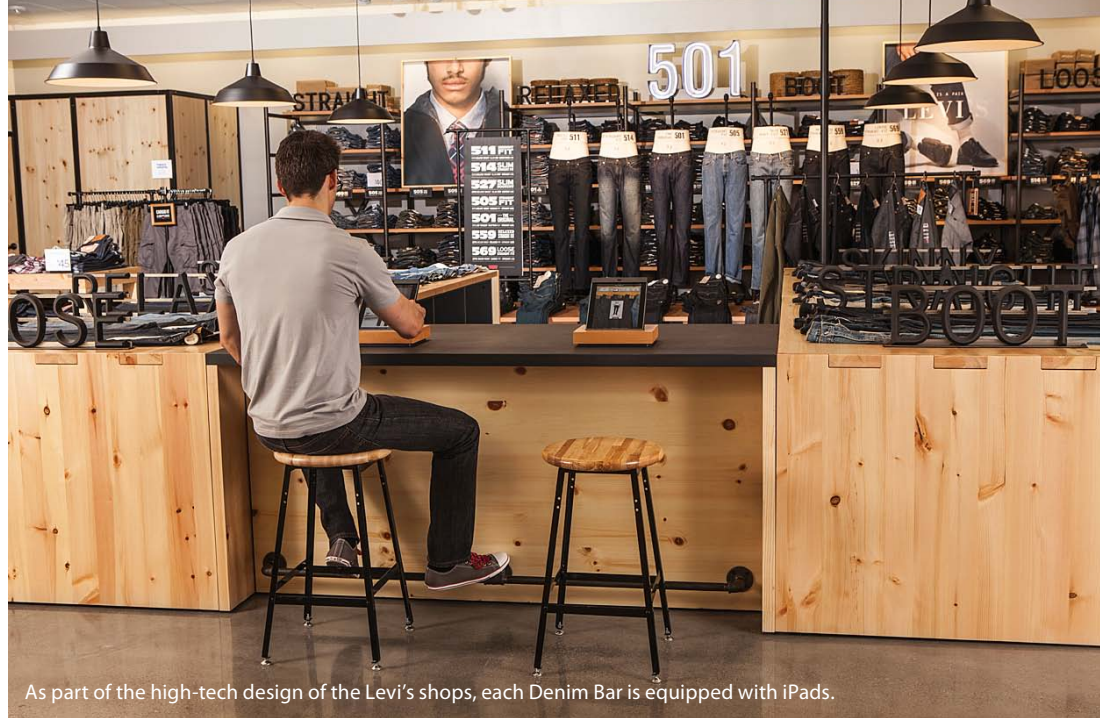
Polishing Association of America and president of Concrete Visions Inc. in Tulsa, Okla.

"Everyone wanted to be part of it," he says of the work, which entailed polishing or burnishing concrete floors for new Levi's, The Original Arizona Jean Co. and Izod shops. All renovations were done at night so the stores could keep their regular business hours.

The polished areas weren't large by any means, ranging from a couple thousand up to 8,300 square feet. It was neither the square footage nor the number of stores involved that rocked the polishing community. "It was the fact that JCPenney wanted them all done at one time," Bowman says. He suspects the reason behind this push was the company wanted no interruptions for its back-to-school annual shopping extravaganza.

Time and material constraints

Initially, JCPenney's precertified installers list only contained about 40 polishing contractors. However, that number jumped to more than 180 contractors once it became apparent that additional manpower would be needed to get the nearly 700 stores done in a couple weeks' time.



As part of the high-tech design of the Levi's shops, each Denim Bar is equipped with iPads.

Photo by Shannon Faulk/Getty Images, courtesy of J.C. Penney Co.

Doug Wright, general manager of Rite-Way Concrete Seal Systems Inc., in Wolcott, Ind., intended to work on six stores but ended up only doing two. "We had so much other work going on and with such a narrow window to complete the Penney's work we couldn't pull it off," he says. "Those were issues for many of us — doing that magnitude of work on short notice in so little time."

That sentiment was echoed by Jeff Lukaszewski, sales manager of 3D Concrete Inc., in Aledo, Ill., who only took on one

store. Aside from previous commitments and limited resources, he says, asking his polishing specialists to handle multiple jobs in different cities would have not been in the best interest of the client. "We have specially trained people to handle site-specific repair methods," he says.

Then there was the matter of specified materials, with no room for substitutions. "They didn't tell us the dye and patch color we needed until a few days before the work started. Everyone was scrambling to get what they needed," Wright says. "I didn't realize how secretive some things are for the retail community."

"I believe the specifier and his team did a good job when it came to repair products," says Lukaszewski. "We had the right products to do the process. Repairs can be a difficult situation but they made that part very fluent."

The fact that many of the stores were decades old and not in architectural shape meant the polishers would need all the support they could get. Tabitha McCarter, vice president of operations of Yarbrough Concrete Polishing, in Knoxville, Tenn., says her workers had the most trouble on the seventh store they did, which was about 30 years old. "Moisture was locked in areas where walls once were or where there was something placed on top of the concrete shortly after it was poured. It seemed no matter how far down we ground, we couldn't get rid of that dark streak. But the third time was the charm. We had to go as low as a 25 (grit) and that got us deep enough."

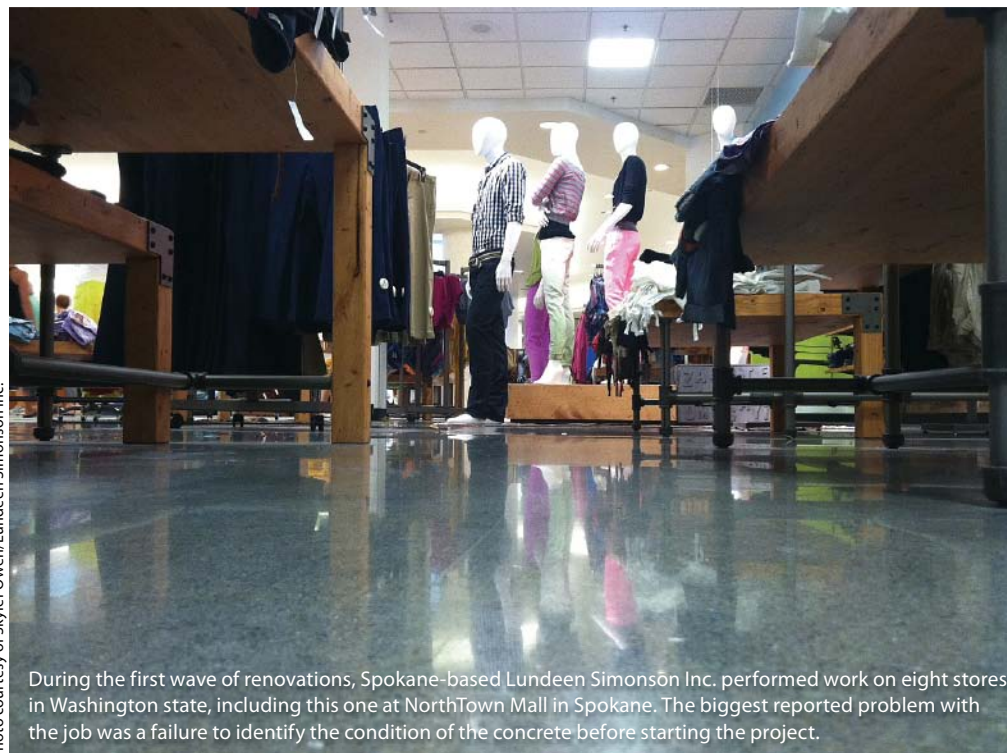


Photo courtesy of Skyler Owen/Lundeen Simonson Inc.

During the first wave of renovations, Spokane-based Lundeen Simonson Inc. performed work on eight stores in Washington state, including this one at NorthTown Mall in Spokane. The biggest reported problem with the job was a failure to identify the condition of the concrete before starting the project.



In hopes of attracting young, hipper clients, J.C. Penney Co. and Izod chose burnished and stained white concrete for smallish “shops” in nearly 700 stores nationwide. Although the areas were typically less than 1,000 square feet, most contractors say they had a harder time achieving the desired finish here than in larger shop floors.

White Concrete Poses Particular Challenges for Installers

The biggest issue contractors confronted during J.C. Penney Co.’s Wave 2 of renovations in August concerned the whiteness of the Izod shops’ burnished floors.

“The JCPenney corporate office was not going for a painted white look and feel, but rather a translucent stained appearance. Stains show the imperfections and character in the concrete, and coatings cover them,” says Les Davis, president of AmeriPolish Inc., one of the manufacturing companies that supplied the colorants used in the first three waves.

Although Wave 2 involved smaller Izod sections of usually about 500 square feet, many contractors say they had a harder time with it than with Wave 1.

The work involved burnishing the concrete to a certain level and then staining it white. “But it’s not a true white color. The look reminds me of leather,” says Tabitha McCarter, vice president of operations of Yarbrough Concrete Polishing in Knoxville, Tenn., which did seven stores in Ohio, Kentucky and Virginia.

Since the colorants used — AmeriPolish’s ColorJuice nanopigment stain and Prosoco’s Consolideck ColorHard pigment — are transparent, “you had to do a good job grinding or the imperfections showed through,” McCarter says.

Confusion arose when some people didn’t understand the translucent look the project aimed to convey, Davis says. Consequently, a number of contractors overapplied ColorJuice when two applications would have achieved the desired white look. “Some of the troops in the field thought the concept was to cover the floor with the product and that’s really not the ColorJuice niche,” he says.

Contractors agree that getting the white right was a struggle for them.

“The biggest challenge we had in Wave 2 was when we were trying to get the Izod floor white enough. We had to apply anywhere from three to eight coats of white stain. At times, we had to grind more than once to try to get the concrete to accept the stain.”

— Dan Hennes, flooring division manager for Mark Beamish Waterproofing, Anaheim, Calif. (His company performed work in 20 stores.)

To achieve a satisfactory finish, crews had to apply anywhere from three to eight coats of the white dye. “Each piece reacted differently.”

— John Jones, owner of Budget Maintenance Concrete Services, Pottstown, Pa. (His company performed work in 14 preexisting stores and one new one.)

“There have been compatibility issues as far as the density of the concrete and application instructions. It was hard to achieve the white color (the general contractors) anticipated. I felt there was some miscommunication and the people in charge weren’t educated as to how the floor was supposed to look. Burnished concrete looks way different from polished concrete.”

— Skyler Owen, project and sales manager for Lundeen Simonson Inc., Spokane, Wash. (His company performed work in eight preexisting stores.)

“Applying the white stain was not a pleasant experience. White is not a forgiving color. It’s transparent and stains pop right through. I think a solid color stain would have been a better choice but then you wouldn’t have gotten that polished look.”

— Jeff Lukaszewski, sales manager of 3D Concrete Inc., Aledo, Ill. (His company performed work in one preexisting store.)




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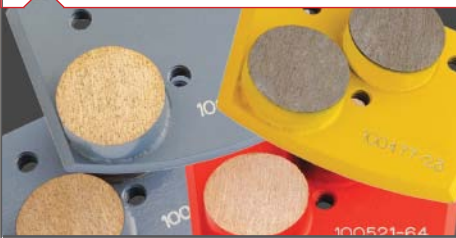
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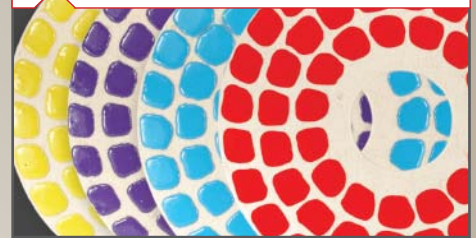
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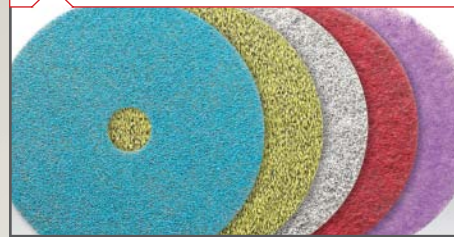
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J.C. Penney, Concrete Product Makers Join Forces to Launch Remodels

by Stacey Enesey Klemenc

When word hit the street that J.C. Penney Co. would ask concrete polishing contractors to help renovate its department stores across the country as part of a master plan to reinvent the chain, the news was well-received by manufacturers and suppliers of architectural and polished concrete materials.

"We were very excited to be part of this project and excited about (J.C. Penney CEO) Ron Johnson's vision of what JCPenney will become. It's very innovative," says Scott Metzger, president of Metzger/McGuire, the company chosen to supply the joint and small-crack repair filler. "They're going to redo their stores one shop at a time in a long-term program that will be going on for years. We're fortunate to be playing a role in it."

But no supplier anticipated that the initial work on roughly 700 stores would need to be done all at once and in less than a month.

Penney's idea of using polished concrete was conceived in early 2012 for a store in West Lebanon, N.H., that was badly damaged by floodwaters brought on by Hurricane Irene. Even though tile had already been delivered, Penney officials decided instead to go with exposed concrete floors throughout the store, says Mike Tuccelli, of S&S Concrete Floors Inc. in New Ipswich, N.H., who headed up the repair and polishing crew.

The 70,000-square-foot store was in deplorable shape, he says, with chunks of floor missing and holes everywhere, as well as layer upon layer of carpet glue that had to be ground off.

The products used on this job served as a model for the material specified for the first "wave" of work, which began June 25, and entailed transforming the Levi's and The Original Arizona Jean Co. departments into "shops."

"Lebanon was the perfect store to start with to see what could be done," says Metzger. "It was a worst-case scenario and it came off really well."

Tuccelli, who also worked on six other stores during Wave 1, says the Lebanon store was by no means a showpiece but it turned out nicely considering its original condition. "There's a sealed-off trench drain that ended up in the intimate apparel section of the store, and (the JCP people) accepted that. They knew they weren't going to get something perfect-looking. I'm guessing they were going for that retro look."

Making the list

Using the West Lebanon store as a springboard, Rick Smith of Structural Services Inc., Dallas, Texas, coordinated most of the ensuing polishing program and helped devise a specified products

list. From there, he asked "vendor partners" — product suppliers and manufacturers — to submit a list of contractors who were trained or certified to install the individual systems. By noting names that were common to more than one list, Smith came up with about 40 contractors, envisioning that they could take on multiple jobs because the floors wouldn't all be done at the same time.

AmeriPolish Inc. and Prosoco, the companies specified to supply the densifier, stain guard, dye and stain, held "summits" in April to go over the program's expectations and goals, review specifications, and discuss and demonstrate procedures with contractors.

Clif Rawlings, product manager and training coordinator for HTC Inc., one of the specified equipment companies, was invited to do demos at the AmeriPolish session. "There were two pipelines approved for each project," he says, so contractors could determine which polishing system would work best for individual projects.

"You'd be amazed at all the behind-the-curtain antics that went on," says Joe Reardon, concrete products group specialist for Prosoco. "If we didn't work together, it would have been detrimental to the whole industry. It was more of a collaboration than people realize."

"It was really good for the industry," says Les Davis, president of AmeriPolish. "It gave us a great bump in sales. Five years ago, I don't think the industry was mature enough to have pulled this off. But today we have a lot of expertise. My hat's off to the equipment and chemical manufacturers and, most importantly, the contractors."

But not everyone is as complimentary as Davis.

Compressed time frame

Once JCP put out the word that all shops needed to be done by the end of July so they could be open Aug. 1 for the back-to-school rush, it became obvious more than 40 contractors would be needed to accomplish the task. Subsequently, vendors supplied additional recommendations and the list grew to more than 180 contractors. General contractors could only accept bids from companies on the list.

With the work opening up to a larger number of concrete contractors, "some were up against new



Unlike the high-tech look at Levi's, The Original Arizona Jeans Co. shop has a more rustic feel, even though both shops feature the same polished gray concrete floors. This shop is in Lafayette, Ind.

Photo courtesy of Doug Wright/Rite-Way Concrete Seal Systems Inc.

challenges they were unfamiliar with," says Marcus Turek, national accounts manager for equipment maker SASE Co., whose main involvement with the project was helping contractors deal with glue removal problems.

As less-experienced contractors tried to finish on time after running into one unforeseen problem after another, some were in over their heads, members of the polishing community maintain.

"The JCP project did have a major impact on the industry due to the massive rollout that was scheduled," says Brad Burns, executive director of the Concrete Polishing Association of America. "Time will tell if the project schedule impacted the quality of the processes that were performed at the job sites. Because a floor is simply shiny and pretty to look at does not mean that it was polished properly and will perform to the intended specifications."

"The work consumed our little industry," says Reardon. "Our phone rang 24 hours a day, 7 days a week," from contractors seeking advice or product. In about two weeks' time, he estimates, between \$10 million and \$12 million of products were ordered from Prosoco for the JCPenney job, everything from machinery and diamonds to chemical components and protective barriers.



As seasoned contractors would expect, some of the polished floors in renovated stores contain irregularities like the patched sections seen here.

A patchy situation

By and large, removing the decades-old sticky carpet glue — an item that wasn't addressed on the bid sheet, Bowman says — created the most headaches. A lot of contractors underestimated how much work would be involved to get rid of it.

Runner-up in the problem department was the extensive patchwork. "JCPenney was very specific about how they wanted the patching handled. To do it correctly took a lot of time," he says, which the accelerated schedule also didn't factor in.

"Removing the glue to get to the canvas below was extreme," says Lukaszewski. It took his crew 2 1/2 days to get it all up, only to reveal excessive random cracking and more holes to fill than he ever imagined.

Other contractors, including Bowman, ran into similar problems. In one of the Levi's areas Bowman polished, where wood flooring may have been installed many years ago, he uncovered 1,500 holes in a 4,500-square-foot area, with many of the holes filled with gypsum floor patch and carpet glue. "Each hole had to have the patch and glue removed and filled by the spec. It was no easy task," he says.

"The concrete we dealt with was in worse shape than we thought," says Skyler Owen, project and sales manager for Lundeen Simonson



Vortex Polishing Goes Global With Mega Retailer

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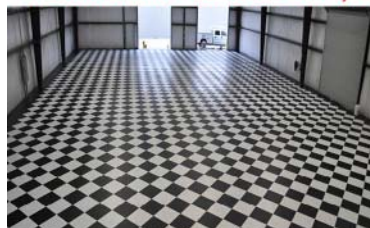
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Inc. in Spokane, Wash. "Some stores had been remodeled four or five times over the years. Everything was covered in carpet and glue." While he anticipated completing a job in five to 10 days, it ended up taking five days just to do the repairs.

"There was extensive cracking, particularly on the second floors, and trenches that were 12-16 inches wide up to 30-40 feet long were filled with underlayment that had to be chipped out and filled in with new material," Owen says.

Then there were the asbestos tiles discovered at some sites. "That really threw a monkey wrench into the mix, when the abatement companies had to come in." Bowman says.

Besides adding more time to the already too-tight work schedule, the abatement process introduced another pollutant to the beleaguered floors. "The abatement contractors were using different solvents and some of the dye didn't want to react," Wright says.

At one store, the solvent-asbestos mixture soaked into the floor and left behind what looked like a giant oil stain. "We did as much grinding as we could but the floor still had a tint to it," he says.

Gift-wrapped work spaces

While challenges were plentiful, the working environments were state-of-the-art. "The conditions were some of the best we've ever worked in," Wright says.

The general contractors built temporary walls and ran plastic up to the ceiling, creating confined areas that let nothing escape. "Often when you work in a retail environment, you spend as much time getting ready to work as work, covering and uncovering merchandise," Wright says. "That was not an issue."

Work-space prep was uniformly great, contractors rave. "Every store we went to, the encapsulated areas were of the same quality," says John Jones, owner of Budget Maintenance Concrete Services, in Pottstown, Penn.

Good thing, because getting organized to go from store to store for two months straight with no breaks made for one tough summer, says Jones, whose company worked on 15 stores, including a Boscov's department store convert. They took the store, which had never opened, back to its bare bones, grinding, polishing and dyeing about 95,000 square feet of the floor over 12 weeks.

Looking ahead

Anticipating the next wave, Bowman says, "For the sake of getting the best polish job, I think JCPenney should make sure the polishing contractors are qualified and give them ample time to perform to a high standard. When you bring in a bunch of people and shotgun the work you're going to have more problems than if you make sure

Specified Materials for J.C. Penney Co.'s Wave 1

Wave 1 consisted of work for the Levi's and The Original Arizona Jean Co. shops. No substitutions were allowed, but multiple options were presented in several categories.

Penetrating hardener/densifier: Consolideck LS from Prosoco Inc., AmeriPolish SureLock Densifier

Protective surface treatment (stain guard): Consolideck LSGuard, AmeriPolish SureLock Stain Protector

Dye in JCPenney gray: Consolideck GemTone Stain, AmeriPolish SureLock Dye

Joint filler: Spal-Pro RS 88 polyurea from Metzger/McGuire

Crack and spall repair: Rapid Refloor polyurea/polyurethane hybrid in "complimentary matching color" from Metzger/McGuire

Wide-area surface repairs: TRU Self Leveling system from CTS Cement Manufacturing Corp. with AmeriPolish OS Dye, Deco-Pour system with Prosoco dye

Grout coat: StarSeal Fusion from Vexcon Chemicals, Match Patch Polish from Deco-Pour, Rapid Refloor pit grout from Metzger/McGuire, HT Spall-TX3 from Hi-Tech Systems

The complete list of specified polishing equipment for Wave 1 can be found online at ConcreteDecor.net.



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the right guys are doing the work.”

Owen, whose company worked on eight stores, says, “We’d be reluctant to take on that many again. We’d raise our price, too, and we’ve heard others say the same thing. The schedule, work and scope of the project were more than what we thought it was going to be.”

Wright, on the other hand, says the money was good. “Everybody (I knew) was able to bid a price that was fair to JCPenney and to us. We were able to make a profit and the floors turned out great. It was just unfortunate the schedule mandated things that made the job more difficult.”

Those involved with the two first waves of work anticipate more polishing business may be coming their way as soon as the beginning of next year, after the dust from the holidays has settled, and no later than next spring. Speculation is that they may be called on to help construct the “streets” as well as more new shops.

According to Ken Hannah, the JCPenney CFO, the company will have at least 40 branded shops in select stores in 2013. (Currently, there are 10 to 12 shops in select



The first JCPenney store to be renovated using the extensive polishing approach was an older store in West Lebanon, N.H. The floors required a lot of patching, which added a worn character to the job’s retro look.

Photos courtesy of S&S Concrete Floors Inc.

stores.) During a presentation at Goldman Sachs 2012 Global Retailing Conference in early September, he said the next wave

is scheduled to hit customers in spring, with one to two shops opening each month across the 700-store base. 🛒

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Waterproofing Concrete Showers and Tubs

by Amy B. Johnson

INSTALLING concrete in wet areas such as baths and showers demands more of a concrete contractor. It requires a different type of preparation and construction than counters and even sinks, so contractors would do well to understand the specifics.

The key is to isolate the tub or shower from wood and other materials that might be damaged by moisture. “Never allow concrete material to sit on wood,” says Roch Fautch, of Magicraftsman Co., Spokane Valley, Wash. “The alkali will eat the wood.”

A waterproof barrier such as a cementitious board painted with a rubber membrane must be installed. Working with a homebuilder who understands the issues is a good way to prevent problems.

The next step is choosing the right mix. Here concrete artisans will find themselves in familiar territory. Most use the same mix they’ve been using for sinks or counters. Given the mass of a tub or shower, a lightweight vertical mix, overlay or GFRC additionally reinforced with scrim are the most common choices. Many choose a denser-than-average mix and add a densifier to the cured concrete to reduce the porosity of the concrete and protect against water infiltration.

Of course, proper sealing is critical for protecting the beauty of any concrete piece, but it is absolutely essential for wet areas like tubs and showers. The most common technique is to apply multiple coats of a penetrating sealer like a water-based polyurethane. Fautch uses epoxies or two-part polyurethanes, sometimes both — epoxy as primer with polyurethane on top.

Slip resistance is crucial for tubs and shower floors, so adding a grit or roughing up the surface is an important last step.

Experience is the best teacher, so here are several examples.

The key feature of a shower by **J&M Lifestyles’ Jeff Kudrick**, Randolph, N.J., is a glass door that slides on a track like a barn door. Kudrick explains that the shower pan is custom-fabricated with a drain trough outside the separating wall to drain drips from the door back into the pan.

The concrete, a Surecrete Design Products GFRC mix, was cast with a 10-by-10 scrim in the shape of corrugated steel and sealed with pearl in the finish to suggest metal. The shower pan and the tub have the J&M signature coralline limestone finish. “The exterior of the tub was stamped with a hammered copper texture to cut the cost of making an exterior mold and to make it more interesting than a smooth trowel finish,” Kudrick explains.

The project was sealed with three coats of XS-327 Hybrid Water Based Polyurethane from Surecrete, the first diluted at a ratio of



Photos courtesy of J&M Lifestyles LLC



about four parts water to one part sealer, the second coat one to one and the third coat full strength.

Kudrick advises fabricators to make it a habit to check drains and faucets for the correct knockout size. When building a shower or tub in the shop, he recommends having the plumbing hardware there, installing the drain to make sure it seats properly. Then fill the tub with water, let it sit all day to make sure it is watertight. Take a picture to prove there is not wetting, in case subsequent damage causes a leak.

Tyler Thomas Blaine, Thomas Design, Salt Lake City, chose his own bathroom as the site for his first concrete tub. “Bathtubs are just large sinks to me,” he says. He constructed the tub of 1-inch GFRC, installed it against a waterproof Durock wall, then bent an L-channel to sit on top of the tub and behind the finished wall panel — also GFRC panels, 1/2 inch thick and more than 5 feet tall — so that any moisture will drip into the channel and back into the tub.

Blaine doesn’t believe that microfissures that appeared after demolding present moisture problems, thanks to a reactive penetrating sealer, ICT First Sealz from Blue Concrete. He also finished the wall by the toilet in board-formed concrete tiles.



Photos courtesy of Thomas Design



Experience with tile showers and drywall was an advantage when **Concrete Mystique**, Nashville, Tenn., was called on to build a steam shower. This application requires the most rigorous moisture protection of any tub or shower. As owner **Rick Lobdell** explains, "You just waterproof everything and instead of laying tile, skimcoat it." The advantage of concrete over tile, he says, is that there are no joints so it's easy to clean. For the steam shower, Lobdell waterproofed HardieBacker board and overlaid it with Patchcrete from Lyons Manufacturing Inc.

One challenge was the ceiling. "You have to make the mud a little dryer and take more time — be patient," Lobdell advises. Since the owner wanted a smooth surface, the design elements had to be delivered through color. Lobdell hand-painted it using dyes from Surface Koatings Inc. He sealed the shower walls and ceiling with two coats of the company's PolyKoat GL polyaspartic, diluting the first coat for deeper penetration. He added silica to the coating to give the shower floor more traction. The floor outside the shower was acid-stained and sealed with Stamp Seal Gloss acrylic from Surface Koatings.



Photos courtesy of Concrete Mystique

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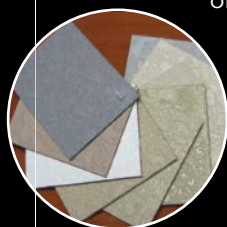


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Art appreciation moved into the bathroom in a unique design by **Dana Boyer, Concretizen**, Apache Junction, Ariz. To create this tub/shower combination, Boyer waterproofed the walls with Blue Coat, a rubberized paint. Then she fiber-reinforced vertical walls and applied a microtopping mix. She used a variety of media — acid stain, paint, pastels, water-based stains — to recreate a painting



by Marc Chagall on the back wall. Boyer applied multiple coats of Polyurethane 501 two-part sealer from Arizona Polymer to finish and protect her work and then sealed between the shower and the wall with a silicone caulk. The floors were sealed with a solvent-borne acrylic sealer and finished with a high-gloss floor finish.

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Photos courtesy of Greyrock Concrete Design

For **Steve Gartner**, co-owner of **Greyrock Concrete Design**, Fort Collins, Colo., a project in Jackson Hole, Wyo., went beyond anything he had ever tried before.

The homeowner wanted a curved, cylindrical shower. Gartner reports they built convex and concave barrel molds “like skateboard ramps” in their shop, using a 2-by-4 framework, Masonite substrate and a melamine casting surface. Each mold was more than 8 feet tall and divided into three panels. “One crazy panel was the top curved panel on the outside of the shower, as it was notched around the door but continued on a curve

above,” Gartner says.

They shop-built the shower with GFRC panels 1 inch thick spiked with UltrasealZ ZFRC admixture, a mix of pozzolans that creates very dense concrete. They also cast a vanity, tub deck and curved tub skirt. Given that their shop in Fort Collins was an eight-hour drive from the job site, advance planning was critical.

Typically, Greyrock finishes projects like this with a penetrating waterborne polyurethane sealer, because Gartner explains, they can really get it to soak in. He says they drench it with polyurethane to the point the concrete is “drinking the sealer.” 🚿

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Foundation Armor sells direct, launches new sealers and repair kits

Foundation Armor is now offering their product lines to individual contractors and homeowners. Now available in 1-gallon and 5-gallon sizes, Foundation Armor sealers are packaged to meet the needs of both small and large jobs.

Foundation Armor has also added three new concrete sealers (Armor S1000, Armor S2000 and Armor L3000), as well as three brick and masonry sealers.

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SelfClean Masonry Sealer is a new product developed by SelfClean that works in three ways to protect exterior masonry surfaces.

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SelfClean Masonry Sealer can be used to keep all exterior masonry surfaces looking clean and beautiful. It can be used on concrete driveways, outdoor concrete countertops, paver patios, stone walls and terra cotta roofs. Moderate stains exposed to sunlight break down in about 30 days. 🛠️

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A Guide to Combining Concrete and Steel

CONCRETE is one of the most revolutionary building materials of modern times. It has given the human race the ability to build sound infrastructures for the masses and has reshaped the world as we know it.



by Cody Carpenter

Steel, another revolutionary building material, has played a key role in aiding the performance of structural concrete in industrial building practices.

It's no wonder these two industrial materials complement each other so well in a more refined sense, too.

Combining concrete and steel aesthetically and architecturally to create furnishings and accents opens up new opportunities. Steel can enhance the natural beauty and characteristics of decorative concrete just as concrete can enhance the natural beauty and characteristics of steel. Even small detailing, such as a stainless steel drainboard and straining shelf in a concrete kitchen top, can change the entire look of a kitchen while at the same time protecting your concrete from wear.

I have always jumped at any opportunity to couple these materials, as it gives me the ability to get more creative with my concrete. This flexibility in design can open up a whole new avenue for getting jobs.

More than likely, potential clients that show interest in concrete are also open to incorporating other materials, such as steel, into a job. At least 50 percent of my jobs include some type of steel fabrication.

Getting familiar with the basics of steel fabrication is far easier than most think. With the pass of a welding tool you have instant permanence, unlike with the multiple-day processes required in concrete fabrication.



Photos courtesy of Architectural Concrete Interiors LLC

An undermount concrete sink and integrated drainboard with a removable perforated steel straining shelf.

Getting to know your arc welder

I can remember the first time I gave welding a shot. I had a home project that involved some steel and required some welding, so I set off to a home improvement store and purchased a Lincoln Electric 3500HD 110-volt flux-cored arc welder (FCAW). As usual, I was anxious to get started. I knew waiting until morning would have been more rational but my curiosity got the best of me. So, stubborn and anxious, I found myself welding for the first time in the dark in spitting rain. This did not make learning any easier, but I did get the job done.

The truth is most people can get professional-looking results after just a few hours sitting behind the trigger. However, I strongly recommend you make your first

attempt in a controlled setting. The welds on my first attempt were sound, but far from beautiful.

I recommend starting with a 110-volt FCAW (flux-cored arc welder) that can handle material thicknesses up to 5/8 inch. Flux-cored arc welding creates an arc between a continuously fed consumable electrode and the work. The heat of the arc fuses the surface of the base metal with the melted end of the electrode.

Good brands to look for include Miller and Lincoln Electric. Replacement parts and equipment will be easy to find locally. The smaller 110-volt FCAWs are a good portable size for field welds when necessary, and they will also work well for small projects and details.

With flux-cored arc welding there is no gas required, unlike with metal inert-gas welding. Some of these FCAWs are convertible into a MIG welder, and some come with a conversion kit.

The wire used in FCAW contains a small core of flux in its center. The wire melts when welding and the flux liquefies and floats to the top of the weld to shield the weld puddle from the oxidative effects of the atmosphere. This is also the purpose of the gases used in MIG welding, which is why it will not work as well in windy field conditions — the gases will be blown away from the weld puddle.

FCAW will require a little scraping and brushing when done to remove excess flux spatter, but that's easy. When you're FCAW welding, an antispatter spray will lubricate the surface of the steel to help block the bond between the excess spatter and the steel. This makes cleaning off the excess spatter much easier. MIG welds tend to be cleaner due to the nonflux cored wire used.

I recommend wearing a long-sleeve shirt



The basics to get started: flux-cored arc welder (with MIG conversion), welding gloves, welding mask (auto-darkening recommended) and magnetic squares.

to cover your arms to limit spatter and UV burns created by the arc during welding. I have burned myself many times, and still do on occasion. I would also highly suggest stepping up to an autodarkening welding helmet, which will make positioning your gun to your weld points a lot easier. Magnetic squares are very important in aiding, positioning and holding your steel in place before welding. Clamps are also needed to hold your steel in position and square.

Here are some other important tips:

The **wire type** you need for general



A typical weld from a flux-cored arc welder. This is residue left behind by the gases and flux. It is easily removed with a wire brush and minor scraping.

decorative use: flux-cored, 0.03-inch diameter.

Welding wire speed is crucial, followed by **arc strength**. I never set my wire speed above 3 and have found my sweet spot to be around 2.5 with my unit, but this may vary by welder.

To set the right **arc setting** for sheet metal, start at the lowest setting and work your way up as the thickness of the weld increases until you get a good weld puddle moving across the material with no burn-through, which is common in very thin steel.



Make sure all four corners are properly tacked after squaring before running a full weld. This will ensure the steel's placement. If not tacked, the material will tend to bend towards the point of the weld, resulting in a very out-of-square bond. Usually, this cannot be fixed without breaking the weld and starting over.

Tack all four corners of the piece to be welded before making full welds. The weld will heat the material and pull it in the direction of the weld, warping it out of proportion. The tacks will prevent this from happening.

When welding for the first time

When you attempt your first significant weld, there are some very essential details you will need to know. One is to make sure

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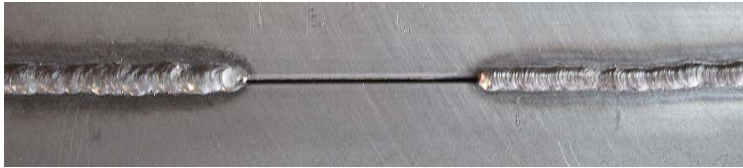
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This photo shows a standard straight pass weld (at right) and a thicker swing weld (at left). The swing weld is achieved with a slow swinging or weaving motion of the molten wire while making the weld pass. This method creates a much more structurally sound weld since it covers more surface area.

you ground the welder to your steel with the welder's ground clamp. Also, you will need to set the wire speed and arc strength. Make sure you are wearing welding gloves and a welding helmet. Never look into the weld without the proper lenses as this can damage your vision. Use your magnetic squares or clamps to set the position of your steel.

The arc strength you want is determined by the thickness of the steel being welded (and not the thickness of the weld). If the setting is too high and the steel is too thin, the arc will just burn through. So start out low with thin metals and try higher settings with thicker metals.

You will want to start off with about 3/8 inch of wire leading out of the tip of your gun. Try to hold your tip to this distance when welding, so you get maximum arc for better weld penetration. Make sure you do not touch your gun tip to the material that you are welding, as that will short out the arc and stop the weld. If you hold the tip too far out you will not get a good arc either, which will lead to a poor weld, so stay steady and tight.

It will feel a bit strange looking through your mask at the weld your first time, so bring your face in close and focus on the weld. Squeeze the trigger, and the wire will arc once it comes in contact with the material. You will be looking for a nice silvery puddle of molten steel lying alongside the bright orange arching point. Take a bit of time to get a feel for these visual references.

When I start my puddle, I like to hold still for the first second.

Wire speed and arc strength play a key role in assuring a successful weld. The dial near the top of this unit is for wire speed. On this particular unit, this setting should not be set higher than three. The arc strength setting will depend on the thickness of the steel being welded — the thicker the steel, the more arc strength is required to penetrate the material. Settings that are too high will result in moltening of the material being welded. This may create large open holes that can be difficult to backfill.



Once my puddle is started, I move it slowly across my weld joint. Remember, this is not a race, and you need to move your gun SLOWLY across the surface.

If you have the wire speed too high, the wire will not be fully molten and will want to lightly kick the gun back and away from the weld. When you're doing it properly, you should be hearing a nice consistent crackling sound from the arc while making the pass.

Your weld should be free of holes. If it has holes and gaps, you need to slow down your movement across the material to ensure proper infill. It may take just a while to find your welding sweet spots, proper passing speed, wire-feed speed and arc strength.

Just keep at it and practice. Before you know it you will be able to hone in on that puddle and open up a whole new door of creative possibilities. 🛠️

Cody Carpenter is an award-winning designer and craftsman and the owner of Architectural Concrete Interiors LLC, based in Phoenix, Ariz. He can be reached at aciconcrete@cox.net.

PRODUCT NEWS

Bronze brackets from Federal Brace

Federal Brace is now offering antique bronze as a new finish in their line of steel and stainless steel countertop support brackets.

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Silo kit for backyard barbecues

Cheng Concrete has introduced a Silo Surround Form Kit. Designed by Fu-Tung Cheng, the Kit allows you to reuse one simple form to create four curved shapes. You assemble the shapes to wrap smoothly around a 22.5-inch standard grill.

Sleek and stylish, Silo is also semipermanent. You can place Silo anywhere in your yard, and if you move, you can take it with you. The finished project is 36 inches high by 30 inches long by 30 inches wide, and each panel weighs approximately 150 pounds. The Kit includes a foam form, polystyrene film, polypropylene liner, bolts and coupling nuts, along with detailed instructions. 🛠️

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PROJECT PROFILE

Geostrata Terraces at Pleasure Point Park Santa Rosa, Calif.

by Chris Mayo

In 2008, the California Coastal Commission approved the beautification of Pleasure Point Park, a surfing and ocean-watching spot near Santa Cruz. The project required collaboration between various government (such as the California Redevelopment Agency, the city of Santa Cruz and the Coastal Commission) and private entities — designers, engineers and consultants.

They hired landscape architect Leslie Stone to design concrete terraces. And to help make her vision a reality, they enlisted local decorative concrete master Tom Ralston.

“They had a general idea of what they wanted,” recalls Ralston. “Decorative concrete terraces to serve a couple purposes — a place where people could sit and watch the surfers and the ocean, and a convenient spot for surfers to prep their boards for the near-perfect break of the waves at Pleasure Point.”

Once Ralston was hired to consult on forming the terraces, he began suggesting how stains, shells, glass, stones and sand could be used to turn Stone’s terraces into artistic concrete. “I had terrace models made of cardboard that she provided,” Ralston says. “I had to tweak all of the details, not only to make it work, but also to make it look, in my humble opinion, like it really belonged to the site and was done in a timeless and tasteful way.”

The project proved to be anything but breezy for Tom Ralston Concrete Inc. “We’ve done some challenging jobs,” says Ralston, “but this project may have been one of the most taxing ever for our company.”

Convincing the client

The job went up for bid in early 2011. Tom Ralston Concrete’s hat ended up being the only one in the ring as two other



Photos by Tom Ralston

concrete contractors pulled out of the bidding process.

Ralston says he had a moment of “uh-oh” when he found out the job was theirs, especially since he had dropped about \$20,000 from his original estimate. “I didn’t think we could compete at the numbers I came up with, and I really wanted the job,” he says. “At the same time there were so many challenges involved. But we’ve faced challenges before and I was confident that through collective brainstorming, we’d figure this job out too.”

What the committee originally envisioned, according to Ralston, was a series of serpentine curved concrete terraces with surfer-type paraphernalia embedded in the concrete. Things like surfboard fins, a surfboard leash and cans of surfboard wax. Not exactly fine art.

“Their hearts were in the right place,” says Ralston, “but seriously the idea of that kind of stuff embedded in concrete seemed cheesy to us.”

Ralston campaigned for something more sophisticated: a series of curved terraces with pockmarks, veins, and random smoothed edges that mirrored the look and feel of the geostrata that’s exposed on the beach at low tide. The committee, hesitant at first, ultimately embraced the idea.

“At first they didn’t want to let go of their surfing motif. But after they saw several samples of vertical and horizontal surfaces mimicking the surrounding geostrata they really bought into it,” says Ralston. “Not only did they like the idea of pockmarks and veins loaded with glass and rock, but they really liked how the fossils were stained and how the mock-ups included embedded



things like sharks' teeth, fossilized scallop shells and sand dollars, beach glass, sand, and — well, why not? — a concrete cast of a 5 million-year-old whalebone."

Project at a Glance

Client: County of Santa Cruz, Parks Division

Decorative Concrete Contractor: Tom Ralston Concrete Inc., Santa Cruz, Calif.

General Contractor: Pavex Construction, Watsonville, Calif.

Landscape Architect: Leslie Stone Associates, Sausalito, Calif.

Project Description: Create free-formed geostrata terraces using indigenous materials from the Monterey Bay

Materials Used: Acid stains from Triple-S Chemical Products Inc., L.M. Scofield Co. and Kemiko; Clear Sealer from Super Stone; 4,000-psi concrete from Graniterock (Watsonville, Calif.) mixed with river rock

Challenges: Using first-time techniques on both vertical and horizontal surfaces, casting a whalebone fossil to create a 350-pound concrete whalebone, working through a committee of 10 representing five entities, pouring in the rainy season.

Embeds in walls

Some of the challenges of the job had to do with the makeup of the committee. Contractors were required to clear everything through them and they wanted to be involved in every aspect. The landscape architect and the Redevelopment Agency wanted to be on-site for every concrete pour, for example, so pours had to be scheduled around their availability.

Other challenges included working during the rainy season, which Ralston had argued against and lost. That required tarping of the job site on several occasions.

"The pours were tricky enough without adding another element to them," says Ralston. "They wouldn't let us push the project past the rainy season even though I tried on many occasions. Having to build a structure and then work under tarps just added another level of difficulty to the job."

However, the complexity of the job mounted the biggest challenge. It called for pouring vertical surfaces incorporated with embedded material, as well as figuring

out how to make molds of the fossils and whalebone.

"Part of the problem was the size and the shape of the terraces," says Ralston. "The tallest wall was just shy of 4 feet high, and they all had really tight curves incorporated into the design that needed to be easily stripped so that we could add embedments and then finish the concrete. The incredible weight of the concrete required that we build very strong forms. The largest terrace was more than 36,000 pounds of concrete."

To achieve the veined look in the vertical surfaces the Ralston team incorporated several different techniques. They would stop pouring intermittently during placement to place layers of the vein material.

When the forms were stripped, they hand-seeded the vertical surfaces with aquarium sand, beach glass, multicolored stones and seashells. They threw sand and glass at the concrete to embed it in a random pattern. Finally they hit the surface with floats to further embed the materials.



Some of the surfaces were sandblasted.

Their embedment plan created a challenge of its own — the forms had to be pulled only 2 1/2 hours after the concrete was poured. Consequently concrete had to be placed at a stiff slump (about 3 1/2 inches). Once the forms were pulled, the crew had about 2 hours to seed the terraces and embed cast fossils before the concrete became too stiff.

A whopper of a whalebone

The committee enlisted a paleontologist to authenticate the various fossils used in the job as well as oversee the molding of them. A bronze caster and sculptor was hired to create the molds.

“Once the molds were made, we had to come up with the right mix design and then acid-stain it with different colors to make the pieces look realistic,” recalls Ralston. “That involved a fair amount of trial and error, but we finally arrived at mixes and stains that worked for each fossil. We ended up with three different mix design formulas.”

The 350-pound whalebone was by far the most challenging, says Ralston. It was cast from an actual fossil unearthed about 300 yards from the site. “First of all, the bone was in disrepair before we

even made the mold. Then it took two mock-ups with different mix designs and reinforcing schedules to get it right. Once that was done we had to figure out the right combination of stains so it really looked like a whalebone.”

Ralston and the Committee viewed the whalebone as the centerpiece of the project, so they wanted it placed for maximum exposure to both park visitors and passersby. The best placement happened to be on one of the most severe curves in the upper terrace.

How do you set a flat 350-pound piece of intricate concrete in a curved surface? Ralston and his team did it by carving out the curved concrete to create a flat surface for the piece to be inserted into. “The first attempt was rather ugly and the bulk of the concrete that was carved out all came down into one miserable heap. One of the project managers from the city park division asked if this was a common occurrence and our foreman, trying to calm her, said, ‘Ahhh sure, happens all the time.’ With a combination of hard work, optimism, and tenacity we were able to put Humpty Dumpty together again.”

The Ralston team had poured the bone with 5/8-inch rebar dowels extending out of

the back of the piece. The dowels were forced into the terrace, and the bone was held in place with bracing while the terrace cured.

Finish staining was as artistic and challenging as the rest of the job.

“We used a lot of brown and green acid stain combinations to mimic the natural colors that were on the beach next to us,” says Ralston. “Like with everything else on the job, we tried a lot of different combinations in samples before we hit the right recipe.”

And that was the key to this job, according to Ralston: samples and more samples, test pours leading to more test pours, and then getting approval from every group involved.

“During each pour we had an inspector from the County of Santa Cruz, a field supervisor from the public works department, the head of the Parks Division (who oversaw the project), the landscape architect, and the field supervisor for Pavex Construction, who was the general on the job, all putting in their suggestions. ‘Can we have a little more aquarium sand here?’ or ‘Don’t you think the whalebone should go here?’ All of this on the frigging day of the pour!” 🚚

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PRODUCT NEWS

CDCLarue patents polyester air filter

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Ardex Americas has announced significant enhancements to Ardex MC Moisture Control Systems products.

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A unique easy-to-remove concrete curing compound has been released by ChemMasters Inc. EZ Strip Cure low-odor curing compound is for indoor use on fresh concrete.

EZ Strip Cure cures concrete surfaces to ASTM C309, Type 1, Class A standards. After curing, it can be easily removed by low-pressure spray or household cleaners containing ammonia, allowing earlier application of penetrating sealers, floor coatings and coverings.

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Make Your Ready-Mix Supplier Part of Your Team

by Vance Pool

DECORATIVE concrete contractors can reap significant benefits by partnering with their local ready-mixed concrete suppliers. This article will discuss how partnering, along with consistent selling messages, can improve a decorative concrete contractor's bottom line.

Let's start by looking at the problems we face.



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A crew places integrally colored concrete at a Panda Express restaurant in Eugene, Ore.

Photo by Wendy Ardolino

Contractors, subcontractors and suppliers can sometimes be put in adversarial roles. Because of the low-bid mentality that still dominates most construction sectors in the United States, trust is not always what it should be.

Building the bridge is worth it, because partnering has many advantages.

First, consistency is key. If your ready-mix partner is already engaged in driving color in your marketplace then everything is easy and can move quickly. Unfortunately, the United States is a big country and decorative concrete markets vary from the mature, like California, to places where little

or none has been done in the past. In those developing markets, it is key to establish clear, open, honest communications with your supplier. Clearly communicate your needs regarding set time, slump and the other performance characteristics you need to succeed. Work together to create a mix that meets your finishing needs. Don't just add water, as it will create issues with color. Do make test panels to ensure that your needs are being met and so that the specifier and owner's representative don't get a surprise when the project's done. Everyone perceives things differently. All the parties in the value chain have expectations. Before

they can be met, they must be agreed upon.

Your competition is other hardscaping materials and interior finishes, as well as products such as brick, pavers, exposed aggregate finishes and asphalt. Working together as a team, you and your local National Ready Mixed Concrete Association member can provide the most consistent, cost-effective and sustainable solutions to hardscape and interior decor applications.

Sharing the marketing

Product quality and meeting deadlines are not the only benefits of a partnership with your ready-mix supplier. Together you can spread the same selling messages in your marketplace and “grow the pie” more rapidly together.

What are some of the messages? Cost is king with GCs and many owners today, so let’s look at our cost-based message first. When comparing with other materials, it is important to make sure to compare based on the same units. Price per square foot is an easy way to compare different materials. Know the competition’s prices in your market and use them to your advantage. Brick, carpet, tiles, stone and various other finishes cost more in most if not all markets in the United States than many decorative concrete finishes. Check your market and you will see that the gaps can be large. Competing on cost is important as many markets are still coming out of the contracted construction economy.

Sustainability has traction in the design community, and we have some great messages. One to consider is the amount of virgin material being used to complete the project. If veneers of brick, stone or other materials are placed on top of a concrete slab, we use more materials than we do with typical decorative concrete applications. What’s more, utilizing low-VOC products in your decorative work means better indoor air quality.

NRMCA’s Green-Star certification of ready-mix plants is another program that ultimately helps you differentiate your product. For information, visit NRMCA.org and look at the certifications section. You will be surprised at the depth of the programs. Leverage your partner’s work if it can help.

Next, partner with homebuilders

Once you’ve built trust with your ready-mix guy, do the same with your local

residential contractor.

The construction industry has many pockets of resistance that hinder innovation, change and new ideas. Litigation, or fear of litigation, can stifle innovation.

What’s more, general contractors are driven by first cost, sometimes to the point that they lose sight of the bigger picture, which is profit. Visit 10 model homes around you and see how many have decorative concrete. In the markets I see, the number is low or zero. Yet they all have high-end Jacuzzis, granite countertops and upgraded carpet.

These barriers can be overcome. Partner with a homebuilder to get decorative concrete in one room in a model. Work to have some decorative hardscaping at the entrance. Show them how to make money with decorative as an upgrade package that they put on their menu of upgrades. Partnering with the general contractor is good for all involved.

Also, get the homebuilder to add decorative concrete as an option in lieu of other finishes.

In order for decorative concrete to gain acceptance with specifiers who have not

used it before, it is important for them to feel comfortable with it. They need to feel like their risk is low. Referencing projects of the same scale as the project they are considering is one way you can help, because most specifiers don’t like to be the first person to do something new.

Homebuilders have a hard time “getting out of their box” sometimes, so assuring them about cost and scheduling issues is important.

Working together with your ready-mixed concrete supplier is a good first step in converting your market. Working together with your local homebuilder is step two. 🚗

Vance Pool is vice president of sales with Ceratech Inc. He previously served as senior director of national resources for the National Ready Mixed Concrete Association. He has spoken on numerous topics related to sustainability, concrete and the construction industry in his three decades of industry experience. Contact him at vance.pool@ceratechinc.com.

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Choosing the Best Densifier for Your Polishing Project

WHILE doing some consulting for a cement company a few years back, I made concrete samples with portland cement and their cement, then strength-tested and polished the samples. In the process, I had the opportunity to correlate concrete strength with polishability and look at the effects of different densifiers on different concretes at different ages.



by Mark Celebuski

My first question was: How strong (in compression or psi) does concrete have to be to take a polish without densifier? Getting an answer for this one was pretty

straightforward — 5,000 psi to 6,000 psi, depending on the aggregate. Concrete that was weaker (density is directly proportional to strength) would not take a polish as well because very small particles of aggregate would pull out of the matrix rather than being held firm and shaved flush with the surface during polishing. The problem was exacerbated in mixes containing glass (as concrete countertop makers would have guessed). The effects can be seen by viewing the surface through a small microscope.

I found that after a time I could actually work backwards and estimate psi based on polishability. My educated estimates reminded me of a story my father told about working as a spark tester for a steel company. He was trained to differentiate different scrap metals by the spark they

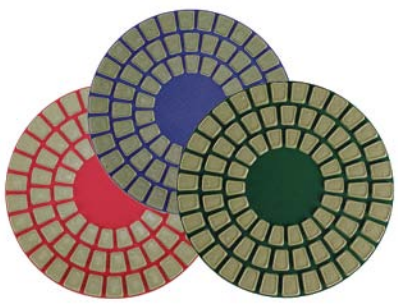


Photos courtesy of Mark Celebuski

These samples show how different combinations of chemistries in densifiers produce different results.

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threw when touched with a grinder. I'm sure that experienced polishers can evaluate a floor very quickly once they start polishing. I think they can do it before estimating the job.

Matching densifier to concrete

The next question was harder to answer: Very few projects are going to specify a minimum compressive strength of 5,500 psi just so the floor can be polished without using a densifier, so densifier will likely be needed, but what type of densifier works better on what concrete?

Some overlay products do not contain portland cement. With the use of pozzolans in concrete, there is less reactive free lime for conventional densifiers to work with. There are also very weak floors (some almost like hard sand in their density) being rescued by floor polishing.

The answer is that all densifiers work, but some work better than others in different situations.

Pozzolans and densifiers do some similar things. The majority of products added to mixes or used as densifiers are silica-based.

Pozzolans have a silica component, slag is about 40 percent silica depending on the source, and silica fume is about 95 percent silica. The smaller the particles are, the faster they react — in many cases they're

small enough to actually act as accelerators rather than retarding the set.

Many polished concrete products are also silica-based. It started with sodium silicates, then came potassium silicates, and now

How to Evaluate a Floor Before the Bid

There are ways to evaluate a floor for polishing before quoting it. You will need to develop benchmarks (on test floors you're currently polishing) before you can accurately predict how a future floor will polish and what densifier to use on the floor.

The first tool I would recommend every polishing contractor obtain is a Schmidt hammer, also known as a Swiss hammer. It's a simple nondestructive testing device that will give you instant data about concrete's elasticity and strength — and thus, its polishability.

After you gain an understanding of the correlation between psi and polishability, you have a sense of how (or if) a floor will polish and to some extent the material costs to polish. A low-psi floor means more densifier is required, while

a high-psi floor means more diamond usage, especially if aggregate exposure is required.

Another simple test you can perform is an acid resistance test. The higher the pozzolan load in the floor, the lower the amount of free lime available and the more acid-resistant the concrete will be.

You'll have to develop benchmarks for acid resistance. This will help guide your choice of densifiers or a blend of densifiers — the denser and more acid-resistant the concrete is, the more I'd be inclined to lean towards colloidal silica instead of a lithium silicate. If the acid foams green on contact, you know you have plenty of free lime for lithium silicates to work with. This test will also reveal any polymer concrete or portland-free concrete you may encounter.

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we're on to lithium silicates and colloidal silica. Sodium and potassium silicates have a metallic salt component, which is why they can cause efflorescence if overapplied either as an admixture or topically as a densifier. (Lithium silicates also have a metallic salt component, obviously, but are less likely to white out.)

Why does one floor white out when another did not, even though I applied the densifier the same way? The answer may have been differing porosity and amounts of free lime in the floors.

If your floor is dense and has enough free lime to work with, lithium silicates or colloidal silicas generally work fine. If your floor contains very little free lime (was cast with a very high pozzolan dosage), is weak psi-wise or very young, you may need to look for alternatives or in many cases a combination of alternatives.

Colloidal silica is pure silica with a particle 100 times finer than silicates and 1,000 times finer than silica fume (which is finer than tobacco smoke). Silica fume is 100 times finer than portland cement — you get the point. This is why colloidal silica reacts quickly when used internally — as an admixture it becomes a pozzolan and an accelerator — or externally, because as a surface densifier it begins to gel almost upon contact. It will also form bonds with silica, which is important on floors with little free lime to work with or overlays with no portland cement.

If your floor or overlay contains no portland cement, if your floor was cast with a high percentage of pozzolans, if your floor is young (calcium hydroxide needs time to develop internally), or if you have a decently hard floor in good shape and you don't want to use diamonds, colloidal silica would be a good choice.

I prefer a colloidal silica engineered to contain a range of particle sizes (from 1 nanometer to 100 nanometers) at a specific pH to prevent molding. Our research has found this to be more effective and efficient than typical colloidal silica densifiers, which contain a narrow range of particle sizes. It's particle packing on a "nano" scale. The range of particles fit the pores in a floor like locks in a key, allowing the contractor to densify a broad range of floor types. The problem is when the key is too small to fit the lock — the colloidal silica can disappear into the concrete without affecting the surface.



Photo by Paul Turner

With a little research, you can get a feel for how a floor will polish before moving the equipment onto the floor.

Many of our customers are using a 50-50 blend of our lithium silicate product and our colloidal silica product. I look at this as covering all bases. You end up with particle sizes with chemistry to cover most situations. We will preblend this for you or you can blend on-site.

Dealing with porous floors

Compared to problem floors, dense, high-strength concrete requires little help from surface densifiers before polishing. However, when concrete is cast with high degrees of excess water, the water leaves channels behind when it evaporates out of the concrete. The more excess water in the mix, the larger and more frequent the channels and the weaker the mix (meaning less ability to hold the aggregate so the polishing machine can shave it rather than pulling it out). This is the main reason most polishing concrete contractors stay away from the residential market — less quality control with the concrete. You don't know what you're walking into or how much it will cost to get it polished if it will polish at all.

You will need to start with the largest particle required to fill the pores and work your way smaller to fill the voids, densify, and provide a uniform plan for polishing.

Sometimes this can be accomplished in one step, sometimes not.

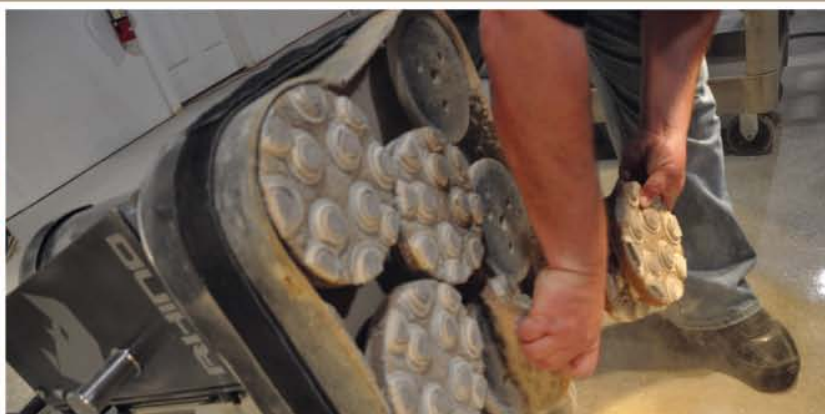
Very weak, porous concrete may require a very large particle in the form of cementitious slurry prior to any attempt at densification. The concrete may be so porous that any densifier will simply absorb into the matrix without benefiting the surface. A "neat" reactive slurry (with no sand or aggregate in the mix) will close the very large voids. This may need to be ground off before going to the next step, which would be larger particles (lithium silicate) mixed with smaller particles (colloidal silica). A final step (if needed) would be colloidal silica — this would bond to any silica particles present and fill any microscopic low spots, readying the concrete for final polishing. Obviously you'll use more products and spend more time on machines than when polishing dense concrete, which often makes this option more expensive than coating the floor with a film-type product. 🛠️

Mark Celebuski is a partner in Trinic LLC, a company that provides protective solutions for concrete, stone and tile. He can be reached at mark@trinic.us.



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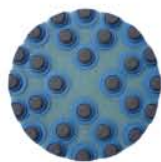
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Can Burnishing Sometimes Be the Better Finish?

It is easy to understand the benefits of polished concrete — they are listed on everyone's brochures. The word about polished concrete is out and we have done a great job of promoting the industry. Polished concrete is growing. Great pictures of very well-done projects are all over the Internet. The marketing has been great and many contractors are jumping on board. And the consumers are seeing a great product.

Along with this growth, something else has happened — polished concrete is evolving.

We have taken what was originally a full mechanically polished concrete system (six-plus steps) and started changing it. The term "polished concrete" has become a term that describes a flooring system family with its own subcategories. I do not see this as a bad thing. We have adapted to the needs of clients and designed different "forms" or "categories" of polished concrete. I have accepted this evolution of our industry and believe it is a good thing. I now view polished concrete as more than a "one



by Virgil Viscuso

system fits all" approach. It is a moving and evolving system that is adapting to different environments.

I can imagine your scowling face as you read this and wonder, "What the heck is this junk?" But just think for a moment about all the projects you bid last year and lost. With some of them, someone simply underbid you to install the specified system. But what about those where the general contractor or architect wanted polished concrete but did not specify any one system? Others bid against you — and their bid specified offered a very different system than yours did. They offered a resin polish, a hybrid polish or even a burnish and called it polished concrete. This is real and it is happening.

I have been a stringent full mechanical polished concrete purist since the late 1990s. I never accepted any other form of polished concrete besides a full six-plus-step polish. Now in today's market I have realized polished concrete has outgrown that idea. Please do not get me wrong — I still 100 percent believe that a full mechanical polish is the best and truest form of polishing. But I find it difficult to force my ideals on every client.

Many clients want polished concrete, but quite frankly cannot afford it every time and in every situation. What do you do?

Do you bend the truth (and man, is there a lot of bending going on) and tell them you can do it for less and then cut out three steps and pile on the guard? Or do you prefer to educate your client about concrete polishing?

I recognize that a full mechanical polish may not fit every client's needs or, more likely, their budget. So let's explore some options. These options are types or subcategories of polished concrete, but they are not the true form of polished concrete and their benefits and aesthetics are different. Burnished concrete and diamond-burnished concrete are two categories I run into a lot.

To start, we need a definition of true mechanically polished concrete. Polished concrete is the altering of a concrete surface by processing it with grinding, honing and polishing techniques. These techniques utilize diamond-bonded abrasives to mechanically reduce the peaks and valleys of the concrete surface. In combination with concrete densifying, coloring and sealing (or the application of a polishing guard), these methods are designed to achieve the following effects: resistance to damage from water and surface abrasion, increased surface hardness, an increase in coefficient of friction, increased light reflectivity, reduction in concrete dusting, and reduction in maintenance. Mechanically polished concrete also produces a very aesthetically appealing flooring system.

Now that we have a working definition of true polished concrete, we can compare it to burnished concrete and diamond-burnished concrete.

Burnished concrete is a system that utilizes a high-speed burnisher that spins at approximately 1,500 rpm to 2,500 rpm. The goal of the burnisher is to heat, melt and buff a chemical product that has been applied to the surface. This action fills the small pores in the concrete with the applied chemical by melting and dispersing

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the product. In the maintenance industry, the chemical of choice is typically a form of a wax-based product. In the polishing industry the chemical is a densifier product. Sometimes the densifier is followed with a guard product for additional shine and stain protection.

While burnishers are mechanical and spin under power, that is the only similarity they have to a concrete grinder/polisher. While burnishers spin at a very high rpm and an aggressive pad may be capable of scratching the surface, there is no true series of pads and not enough down pressure to process the concrete. The typical black, red, white or hogshair pads used to burnish are not designed to process concrete. They are designed to melt and buff a topical coating.

If a densifier is used, the surface will acquire the benefits the densifier provides and will also have a glossy appearance. But burnished concrete will not have the properties of a processed concrete surface that has been grinded, honed and polished — specifically, the mechanical reduction of the concrete surface's microscopic peaks and valleys, clarity, ease of maintenance, additional flatness, and longevity. On top of these factors, burnished concrete does not look nearly as attractive as a mechanically polished concrete surface.

Burnishing with diamond-impregnated pads add yet another dimension to this. The same burnisher is used, but a pad with a sprayed-on diamond and resin mixture is utilized. This diamond-impregnated pad is typically available from 400 grit to 3,000 grit, so you can do multiple steps of diamond burnishing with a powered, rotary machine. When this is done with a concrete densifier you have a system using progressively finer diamond-bonded


abrasives. You also enjoy the benefits that a concrete densifier provides.

Mechanical grinding with diamond tooling, densifier and multiple steps sounds like concrete polishing, but you still have a system with no down pressure and one that spins at too much rpm to do any real grinding.

Diamond pad burnishing affects the very top layer of the cream and has very little impact on reducing the peaks and valleys of the concrete surface. There is not enough weight to create a deep enough scratch pattern to thoroughly abrade the surface, especially if the FF (floor flatness) of the surface is poor. Starting at 400 grit, there is no chance of anything besides a cream type of polish. A basic salt-and-pepper appearance is out of the question with diamond pad burnishing.

While true mechanical concrete polishing can tighten and process the surface to create a shine even without densifier, diamond pad burnishing needs the help of a chemical to create a form of a topical chemical polish. There is some concrete processing happening but

compared to true mechanical polishing, very little.

Different categories or forms of polished concrete may be hard to accept and agree with. They are even more difficult to explain. I think we need to start with understanding that our market is changing. Polished concrete is adapting to fit the needs of clients and, unfortunately, their bank accounts. By being able to understand and explain the different forms of polished concrete we can offer our clients different solutions. These solutions are not equal to the high standards to which we hold true mechanically polished concrete. But they do fall under the category of polished concrete. Most importantly, they are options for a client who does not want her floor to be covered by carpet and epoxy. 

Virgil Viscuso has 20 years of experience in the concrete surface preparation and polishing industry. He is founder and master trainer of the Global Concrete Polishing Institute and president of Concrete Surface Xperts. He can be contacted at virgil@globalconcretepi.com.

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Making Maintenance an Integral Part of Your Business

WE have been selling maintenance since my wife and I started a cleaning services business in Virginia in 1996. Over the years, as my oldest two sons Jeremy and Travis became more involved in the business, we specialized in floor-cleaning services, including the maintenance and restoration of exotic floors such as marble, granite, terrazzo and other natural stones — even cleaning an occasional concrete floor in a warehouse or garage.



by Ray Wilkerson

Polished and decorative concrete floor installations accounted for only about a quarter of our business as of the start of this year. Most of our revenues were coming from cleaning, maintenance and restoration services.

As growing decorative concrete contractors, we have found several benefits to providing contracted maintenance services as part of our business. It has generated a very consistent and profitable revenue stream that has supported our expansion into polished and decorative concrete. When we purchased grinding

and polishing machines, I knew that if the machines never left our warehouse to ever do a job, we would still be financially sound as long as we serviced our maintenance customers.

Funny thing is, our maintenance customers, and the ongoing source of referrals that providing maintenance services offers, have actually promoted polished and decorative concrete work opportunities for us. We now own three complete grinding and polishing systems and can hardly satisfy our scheduling needs.

Getting started in maintenance

When it comes to start-up costs for providing maintenance services, recognize that it really doesn't cost you much out-of-pocket money. You already own autoscrubbers, pressure washers, low-speed power scrubbers, high-speed buffers and burnishers. (We utilize corded electric, propane-powered and battery-powered buffers, depending on the work environment restrictions.) You already have the mop buckets, handles and most of the other supplies required to perform these services.

You may need to purchase some additional chemical cleaners depending on the surface coatings and type of dirt being generated in the facility you're cleaning.



Photo courtesy of Susan Wilkerson

Mid Atlantic Floor Care employee Casey Elswick runs a Clarke Focus II autoscrubber at a Wawa convenience store in Midlothian, Va.

There may be some cross-training necessary to make your staff maintenance technicians, but they should be very receptive to learning new skills that increase their employment hours.

With minimal additional costs, you can apply an effective marketing strategy to offer additional services that, quite frankly, have allowed us to outposition our competition.

We recently picked up a new maintenance service customer that had hired one of our competitors to install decorative concrete floors throughout their office suites. The customer found us through our Concrete Network Web page and hired us for cleaning and maintenance services, which our competitor did not offer. We now have a decorative concrete

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installation job scheduled for this customer.

The best time and place to offer your maintenance services is in your initial proposal to complete the polished or decorative concrete installation. Very importantly, we NEVER sell any concrete installation as being “maintenance-free” — there is no such thing! We promote a polished or decorative floor as being the most effective and, in the long term, least expensive system to install and maintain. For the customer to receive the most benefit from their initial investment, we say, a maintenance contract is critical.

Putting it down on paper

When you have the customer’s attention and trust, it is time to design and write a Maintenance Service Agreement, also known as an Expectations Disclosure Statement. (Note that customers DO NOT like “contracts.” They are much more comfortable signing “agreements” or “disclosure statements.”)

We have learned that identifying the customer’s expectations is absolutely imperative to creating a successful maintenance contract. This should include all of what I call the “who, what, when, where and why” of the maintenance program — who is going to be responsible for certain procedures (the customer’s daily cleaning staff or our staff), what work is covered under the contracted maintenance services (and what work is not covered, but can be provided as additional billed services), when and how often services are needed and will be scheduled, which surfaces are to be maintained (and which surfaces are not to be regularly serviced, but again, can be added as additional billed services) and why the service program must be consistent to achieve the desired expectations.

The maintenance service contract should also include what I call the “dos and don’ts.” In the “dos” column, the customer needs to routinely sweep, dust-mop and damp-mop the floors for dirt removal, mop spills of damaging residues immediately or as soon as possible and tell us about any significant issues, concerns or changes in surface conditions or usage. For the “don’ts,” the customer needs to be sure they or their cleaning staff do not use any harsh or undesirable cleaning chemicals or apply any other unspecified coatings on the floors.

All of our maintenance agreements state that ours is custom work, subject to artistic license and, because of the use of various chemicals, reactions that are often unpredictable or uncontrollable. We also state that we use all environmental and safety management procedures and processes necessary for achieving the highest level of industry and governmental standards for these services.

Setting a price

Last but not least, we clearly disclose the price for our professional cleaning, maintenance and restoration services, being as specific as possible about how the billing is calculated and when we expect to receive payment (and the additional costs if necessary to secure collection).

Obviously, square footage of serviced area figures into our pricing calculations, but we always consider other factors such as surface conditions (cracking, drainage, existing colors or textures, applied sealers), surface usage and environmental conditions, when the services are required (during the day, late at night, only overtime on weekends), and any number of other special considerations.

Then, as a retired numbers guy, I always insist that we have a variance in our calculated pricing — the part that covers Murphy’s Law (whatever can go wrong will go wrong) and the sometimes-present “aggravation factor” if dealing with a difficult customer.

Our business goal is to develop our polished and decorative concrete to become 50 percent of our business revenues. As we move towards accomplishing this, we have seen a steady increase in our maintenance-services revenue dollars too. 🚚

Ray Wilkerson is general managing partner of a group of family-operated businesses that includes Mid Atlantic Floor Care LLC and its polished and decorative concrete division DreamKrete, with offices in Richmond, Va., and Groveland, Fla. A former CPA, he has been in the floor cleaning, maintenance and restoration business since 1996. Contact him at twcsinc219@comcast.net.

Ray Wilkerson will teach “Getting Your Specifications in Architectural Plans” at the 2013 Concrete Decor Show. For more information, go to ConcreteDecorShow.com.



An advertisement for CONTRx Polishing Systems by EDCO. The ad features a QR code in the top left corner. The main text reads "CONTRx Polishing Systems by EDCO EQUIPMENT DEVELOPMENT CO., INC." followed by "CONCRETE POLISHING • REFURBISHING • RECONDITIONING". Below this, there are three rows of images showing different polishing machines. The first row shows the ProPolisher IV, The EDGE ProPolisher/Grinder, and ProPolisher II. The second row shows the Dual Disc Floor Grinder, TileShark Floor Stripper, and Walk Behind Scarifier. The bottom of the ad features the EDCO and CONTRx Systems logos, the text "AMERICAN OWNED AND OPERATED", the phone number "1-800-638-3326", and the websites "contrxsystems.com" and "edcoinc.com". There are also social media icons for Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and LinkedIn.

grinding & polishing :

PRODUCT NEWS

Superabrasive's new line of polishers

Superabrasive Inc. is introducing its newest line of Lavina machines: the Lavina S series, which features forced belt-driven planetary movement. The new Lavina S machines are offered as 20-, 25-, 30- and 32-inch electric models, as well as 25- and 30-inch propane models.



"One advantage of our Lavina S machines compared to some other belt-driven machines on the market is that, if the drum belt on your machine breaks, you don't have to stop and change it, so you don't lose valuable production time. With Lavina S machines, you just take the belt out and keep working," said Mark Elliott, sales manager at Superabrasive Inc., in a press release.

The base of the machines now feature new exclusive U-joint technology. The additional axis provides the machine with added flexibility, allowing the entire base to move and float in any direction over the floor. In addition, new floating heads hold QuickChange tools, allowing tools to be mounted directly to the

heads with no additional plates necessary. New security plate locks also add an extra measure of safety.

Other features include a completely new nozzle-free anticlogging water-spraying system, which allows the operator to choose between internal spraying (beneath the machine) or spraying directly in front of the machine, and a new power cable attachment that connects to the top of the machine.

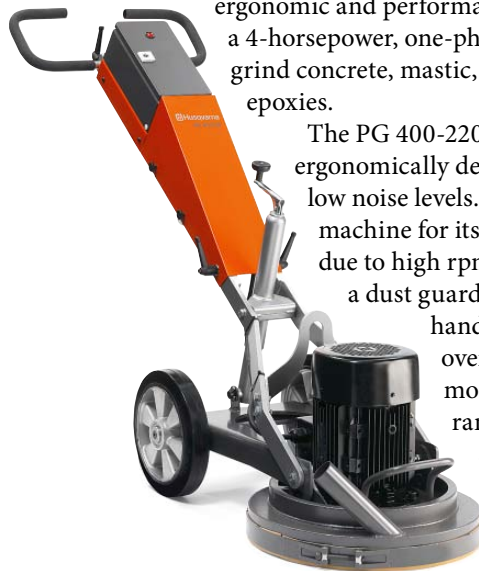
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Husqvarna introduces a small floor grinder

Husqvarna's new PG 400-220V small floor grinder has excellent ergonomic and performance features. It features a 4-horsepower, one-phase motor and can easily grind concrete, mastic, glue, overlays and epoxies.

The PG 400-220V is easy to use, with an ergonomically designed handlebar and low noise levels. An extremely powerful machine for its size, it efficiently grinds due to high rpm levels. Features include a dust guard and vacuum port, a handlebar that can be folded over the machine to make it more compact, and a large range of diamond tooling available for a wide range of applications.



🌐 www.husqvarnacp.com

New hand-held grinder for difficult jobs

CS Unitec's new EBS 180 H 7-inch hand-held concrete grinder removes epoxy, paint and other coatings, and it prepares new concrete surfaces before applying new coatings. A 20-amp, 2,500-watt motor enables a high load capacity running 7-inch diameter diamond wheels at 9,500 rpm. It is especially suited for hard jobs such as the grinding of two-component adhesives or leveling concrete.

This grinder model comes with a built-in vacuum port, an integrated shock-absorbing system and ergonomically designed side handles. An optional walk-behind cart is available.

🌐 www.csunitec.com



PROJECT PROFILE

“Salmon at Your Doorstep” Museum Exhibit Portland, Ore.

by Kelly O'Brien

ALONG the Willamette River's eastern shore, where it cuts through the heart of Portland, Ore., there stretches a long walkway, a favorite spot for locals to run or ride along the riverfront.

The path is also great for sightseers. From it you can take in several of Portland's iconic bridges and a decommissioned 1950s submarine. And now, you can also see, interact with, and learn from a decorative concrete installation that is more complex than it looks.

Alan Smith, owner of local concrete firm Your Concrete Guy, installed the beautiful, two-toned stained overlay for the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry's new “Salmon at Your Doorstep” exhibit. Devised by OMSI's exhibit team, the interactive mural on the Willamette waterfront

educates visitors about the lifecycle and habitat of native salmon, as well as demonstrating human impacts on the salmon's ecosystem.

Smith, who has been doing decorative work in Portland for a decade, says that while the OMSI project was much bigger than his team's average fare, they were very excited to be one of the three firms the museum approached with a request for proposal.

“We took a small piece of HardieBacker board and did a small piece of the artist's rendering,” says Smith. Their mock-up of a mural-like stained overlay won them the contract in the spring of 2011.

The project's development phase was far from over. Smith and his crew spent the summer working with Chad Jacobsen, OMSI's design manager, to complete a full-size prototype of an 8-by-5-foot section of the exhibit so they could work out any kinks in their approach prior to the final application.

One of the central challenges of the project was the fact that the funding

wouldn't cover the removal of the existing concrete sidewalk. So Jacobsen and Smith had to develop a plan not only for the overlaid mural, but also to incorporate nine inlaid granite tiles (each illustrating an important salmon fact), complete with integrated LED lighting and electronic control boxes connecting them to the exhibit's interactive control podium.

Jacobsen, who had never worked with decorative concrete before, says that the experience was somewhat challenging. “We worked closely with Alan and his team,” Jacobsen says, “to figure out a strategy that would let us get away with embedding the electronics we needed without completely destroying the existing concrete.”

Unfortunately, by the time Smith and Jacobsen had settled on the techniques they would use for the final installation, Oregon's long rainy season had begun. The installation of the Salmon Sidewalk (as it is colloquially known) would not get rolling until July of this year — and even then, their weather woes were not over.

What Oregon lacks in sunshine for most



Photos by Alicia Caudle

Project at a Glance

Client: Oregon Museum of Science and Industry, Portland, Ore.

Decorative Concrete Contractor: Alan Smith, Your Concrete Guy, Portland

Exhibit Design Lead: Chad Jacobsen, design manager, OMSI

Exhibit Production Lead: Kim Hall, senior production lead, OMSI

Total Project Timeline: 16 months (April 2011 to August 2012)

Time to Install: Three weeks

Exhibit Opened: August 6, 2012

Project Specs: An interactive, 1,800-square-foot mural depicts the life cycle of Pacific Northwest salmon. An overlay was colored with vibrant water-based stains to resemble the Willamette River and its banks. Nine granite stones — each engraved to depict an aspect of the salmon's life cycle or habitat — were inlaid into the sidewalk. Integrated LED lights connect to the exhibit's interactive control podium.

Materials Used: S-9900 Crack Treatment System and S-1100 Liquid Concentrate copolymer from Super-Krete, Thin-Crete Grout from Increte Systems Inc., ENDURable Concrete Stain in custom colors and ENDURable Sealer from GG Innovative Products Inc.



overlays & toppings :

of the year, it does its best to make up for during the summer months. Smith and his crew, says Jacobsen, “were on the front lines of that war.” For three weeks, the Your Concrete Guy team struggled with sunburn, heatstroke and evaporating stains. “I had never worked on an 1,800-square-foot piece of white cement in the summer sun,” Smith says. “It was brutal.” And the heat was only one challenge among many.

Thanks to their experience on the prototype install, Smith had his plan of action well mapped out. First, they saw-cut hollows and channels to accommodate the electronic components of the exhibit.



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they treated the substrate to ensure that any cracks would not carry through into the finished overlay. The granite tiles, with their integrated LED lights, were next, installed over the electronic housings and connected to the control podium with yards and yards of cable. But all of that seemed almost easy compared to the mural's illustrated shoreline.

In the original design that Jacobsen's team had developed, the river's edge was quite intricate, taking the shape of rolling waves. It was beautiful, curvaceous — and completely impossible to recreate with





an angle grinder. “We were designing an illustration,” says Jacobsen, “and not really knowing what the limitations of the technique were.” The OMSI design team worked with Smith to scale the shoreline back to a more manageable shape.

The process of actually installing the curvilinear border was no less tricky. The OMSI crew drew the pattern on the existing sidewalk, and Smith’s team, armed with an angle grinder and some diamond blades, cut a quarter-inch-deep channel following the illustrated shoreline. Then, lining both sides of the channel with two vertical sheets of thin laminate, they poured a mixture of overlay and grout between the sheets to form the border. They sanded the rest of the substrate and applied three coats of the overlay outside the sheets.

Finally, the team pulled the laminate sheets out — “only to discover,” says Smith, “that they had stuck too much.” The laminate took chunks of the border mix out with it, leaving a ragged edge.

Fortunately, the OMSI production team had a thin aluminum material available, and they worked with Smith’s crew to replace the laminate with the aluminum, top off the borders with another batch of the grout-and-overlay mix, and put down two more coats of overlay on either side. This time, the liners pulled out easily, and although it had cost them a couple of days, they had, as Jacobsen

puts it, “prevailed.”

From there, all that was left was staining and sealing. GG Innovative Products Inc., a manufacturer based in Bend, Ore., had consulted with Smith to choose the right stains and sealers for the mural. Jacobsen and Smith collaborated, tweaking the water-based stain applications over several days until the vibrant greens and blues were just right.

When they had the look they were after, Smith and his crew

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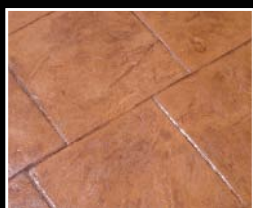
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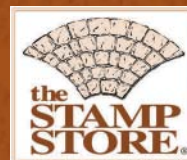
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PRODUCT NEWS

Resurfacing mix from TruCrete

TruCrete Surfacing Systems LLC has released truHybrid concrete resurfacing mix, a polymer-modified cementitious mix. TruHybrid allows the contractor to create a multitude of textures and applications with just one product. The coverage rate for a skimcoat is about 300 square feet per bag, and it can be applied from 1 inch thick down to feathered-edge.

TruHybrid can be skimcoated, troweled, sprayed and stamped. It comes packaged in 50-pound bags.

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finished the mural with several coats of a GG Innovative sealer. The sealer had to meet some fairly rigorous standards, given how much foot and bike traffic (much of it in the rain) the exhibit would receive. But not only did the prototype give Smith a year's worth of evidence that the sealer would hold up in the weather, but GG Innovative had used the same product on a soccer stadium in Scandinavia to great effect.

On August 6, 2012, the "Salmon at Your Doorstep" exhibit was officially unveiled, ready to educate museum visitors and passersby alike about salmon. Smith says he and the Your Concrete Guy crew take enormous pride in the fact that they've contributed something to the Portland riverfront that community can enjoy for years to come.

"(The project) was very similar to what



I think giving birth to a baby must be like," says Smith, "Extremely painful, very hard, very scary, and in the end, it just felt wonderful."

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PROJECT PROFILE

9/11 Memorial Map Schriever Air Force Base, Colorado

by Karen Van Heukelem

On a hot windy May morning near Colorado Springs, Dan Zigterman, production manager at Denver-based Colorado Hardscapes Inc., walked alongside the premium flooring division manager, Chuck Lau. Each carries more than 30 years of construction experience under his belt, so very little catches either one of them off guard.

As the wind blew, the two men walked with their heads down, studying the concrete pavement and saw cuts of newly placed concrete. They discussed layout and schedule as they do with any ordinary job. They each studied the finished slab and planned how to transform it into the image they saw on the plans.

As they walked and Dan talked, Chuck's gaze moved up the horizon until his eye caught it. There, standing lonely in the hot morning wind, leaned a single shard from the World Trade Center of New York City. All other sounds around him grew mute.

Dan continued to talk, not realizing his colleague had paused.

As the wind blew, Chuck heard Dan's voice again and apologized. He had been caught up in the moment and in reverence of the memorial ground upon which they stood.

Schriever Air Force Base had decided to create a memorial in remembrance of the events that occurred on September 11, 2001.

Project at a Glance

Client: Schriever Air Force Base, Colorado

Decorative Concrete Contractor: Colorado Hardscapes Inc., Denver, Colo.

General Contractor: DWG & Associates, Colorado Springs, Colo.

Designers: DHM Design, Denver, and Schriever Air Force Base

Key Materials: Bomanite Micro-Top, Bomanite Sandscape, custom-blended Okon sealer, Colorado Hardscapes' Yellowstone integral color for Sandscape



Photos courtesy of Colorado Hardscapes

With Schriever's engineers and the landscape architecture direction of DHM Design, out of Denver, the plan came to fruition. The base hired Colorado Springs-based DWG & Associates as the general contractor, which in turn hired Colorado Hardscapes for the decorative concrete scope.

The simple yet powerful design of this memorial included the piece of wreckage from the World Trade Center and a map of the Northeast coastline of the United States on concrete pavement that approaches the tattered beam. The map identifies the coastline and the three crash sites of that dreadful date.

On sensitive ground

The rigmarole of working on a government project involves many issues, including prevailing wages, security badging of all site employees and testing of concrete mix designs. Having worked on several military and government projects in the past, Colorado Hardscapes came prepared.

The United States Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs had previously approved a special mix of Colorado Hardscapes' house-made Sandscape Texture, and the finish translated smoothly to this application at Schriever Air Force Base.

Because of the sensitive nature of the memorial, sampling and approval of the finishes and layout was crucial for this

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project. Colorado Hardscapes' research and development department created a sample with the integrally colored Sandstone concrete, Bomanite's Micro-Top cementitious overlay, saw cuts and caulk for review and approval before any work began.

After approval of the sample and site work by DWG, Colorado Hardscapes placed Yellowstone integrally colored Sandstone texture as the base slab for the memorial paving. The 6-inch concrete slab contained No. 4 rebar 18 inches on center along with fiber mesh for

reinforcement. The overall jointing pattern for the slab was a 4-by-4-foot grid.

After the 28-day cure period, they returned to outline the Eastern shoreline, major lakes and state lines. After careful layout with AutoCAD and the printing of full-sized plans, Colorado Hardscapes' men battled the high winds and taped the plans to the cured Sandstone concrete. The crew used tape to outline the state lines and shorelines as identified on the plans. With several maps and references, they adjusted the lines to ensure precision. "For a project like this, it just had to be perfect, so that anyone standing there would be able to identify exactly where they were," says Lau.

From there, the crew cut the state lines with V-cuts and taped down plastic. With the water area and shoreline exposed, they installed a blue Micro-Top finish to simulate the Atlantic Ocean and lakes. They applied the Micro-Top in a Sandstone-type finish, which they dubbed Micro-Top ST. The crews started with a base coat of dark blue, then applied additional layers of light blue and green to reflect the continental shelves of the ocean floor. The layering technique of Micro-Top, along with the texture, gave the finish a more artful appearance — and yet, a more cost-effective installation — than blue integrally colored concrete.

Colorado Hardscapes' crews carefully stripped the tape and plastic to reveal a crisp shoreline. Each of the saw-cut state boundaries received black caulk for emphasis. Three 12-inch-wide circles were precisely placed with yellow Micro-Top, one at the World Trade Center location, one at the Flight 93 crash site in Pennsylvania, and one at the Pentagon. Upon final completion, the entire slab received our in-house blend of Okon sealer to help protect the finished art piece.

Colorado Hardscapes works on many spectacular and artful projects, but installing a 9/11 memorial on an Air Force base in Colorado Springs was a unique and humbling experience. 📱

🌐 www.coloradohardscapes.com

Karen Van Heukelem wears many hats at Colorado Hardscapes Inc., including business development, marketing, sales, estimating, and project management, with an emphasis on specialty rock construction. She can be reached at karen@coloradohardscapes.com.

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staining & coloring CONCRETE :

Controlling Customers' Reactions to Reactive Stains

by Nick Dancer

EXPECTATIONS of what a floor should look like will vary from client to client. A client's views will be shaped by other stained floors seen in person or in photographs. Although all of these things can affect a client's expectations, the greatest influence on their flooring decision should come from the concrete professional.

We find that selling a reactive-stained concrete floor is usually more difficult than completing the work itself! This may be because the same qualities that make reactive-stained concrete floors the most unique and desirable flooring option for some clients can be seen as flawed imperfections to others.

Customers who see the unique characteristics of reactive-stained concrete as flawed imperfections tend to resort to nonpayment or may discredit your company for poor craftsmanship. Neither of these results aid in the success of your business. So I will provide you with tips for setting reasonable expectations for your customers, enhancing your selling experience and delivering a quality product.

Inform your client

First and foremost, when initiating the sale of a concrete floor it is important that you inform your clients of the characteristics and features of reactive-stained concrete before you deliver the final product.

I like to use the term "reactive stain" instead of "acid stain." I've noticed that some clients can get hesitant or worried when I use the word "acid" around them. Other clients already have a slight idea of what acid stain is.

Many who are unfamiliar with the concrete industry get reactive-stained concrete confused with other concrete systems. Clients confuse sealing, staining, and painting concrete. It is our job as concrete professionals to spread the word about the different concrete products that exist in our industry. There are also many different variations of similar products sold by different companies, making all of this very confusing to the layperson. Educating

your client may help them get closer to the goal of their finished space and can save you headaches along the way.

You should also help your client understand which treatment is best for the existing condition of their concrete. Explain that exposure to moisture, sunlight, heat and other external elements can greatly affect the stain and concrete reaction. Nicks, cracks, patches and spots where items have laid on the concrete can also enhance or deter the stain's reaction.

Help your client visualize

Having artistic backgrounds, many concrete stain masters can visualize and predict the end product. Many customers, however, lean on the professionals for assistance with visualization. The visualization process is part of setting

customer's expectations and can keep clients from getting a sour taste in their mouths.

In order to help your customer visualize the end product, you may want to provide them with stain samples during the initial project consultation. These samples can show some of the color shifting and variations that reactive concrete stains are known for. These samples give a client something to touch and feel.

I like to make my samples at least 2 feet by 1 foot so the client can see the color in a large piece. This gives clients a better idea of how reactive stain produces movement and marbling effects. A stain sample that I particularly enjoy showing customers shows a weathered copper patina. This sample's color shifts from a light bronze to a hazy green and shows the client how different colors can be used and transitioned.

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The Colorspreader from Triple Hard Tools

by Emily Dixon

UNTIL now, contractors have thrown shake-on color hardener onto concrete mainly by hand. It's tradition, and contractors love tradition. But by its nature, throwing the color can be inefficient, wasteful, and expose workers to possible health risks associated with inhaling airborne silicates.

Scott Stephens, owner of Triple Hard Tools, developed The Colorspreader to combat this problem. The Colorspreader offers a mechanical alternative to hand-throwing. The contractor simply loads the powder into The Colorspreader tray, hits a remote-control button to start the vibrator, and pulls the tool across the concrete.

As the tool floats, the vibrator distributes the product onto the concrete in an even and consistent manner. The slower you pull, the more material is distributed.

"This tool allows pretty much any contractor, with or without hardener experience, to broadcast and get great coverage rates," Scott says. "By hand, the range is only as far as you can throw, so you are limited by reach. The Colorspreader can broadcast as far as you can float. It can go out to 30 or 40 feet."

Contracting outfit Highland Concrete Designs, in Loveland, Colo., added The Colorspreader to their lineup earlier this year after attending a demonstration of the machine. The company purchased the demo model and within the week were using it on the job site.

"It's everything we hoped for and more," says owner Bob Brown. "We have found we're saving on the amount of hardener we use. The savings just about paid for the spreader over the summer."

Those savings have made the company



Photo courtesy of Triple Hard Tools

more competitive in their bids, but Brown has experienced other benefits as well.

"We don't have stuff flying all over the place, and it's a much more even spread. You don't get a big variance in colors like you can with hand-broadcasting," he says. In fact, he says homeowners have been so happy with the end results of recent projects, the company has gained a lot of new clients through referrals. He believes the quality control offered by The Colorspreader is a big factor.

For contractors who are interested in using The Colorspreader, Brown had some advice.

"Timing is kind of critical," he says. "If you rush it, the float digs into the concrete."

He also recommended cleaning it after use to avoid clogging, and he suggested buying an extra battery to avoid any problems mid-job. "It's basically a cheap insurance policy."

The Colorspreader was brought to market earlier this year. It's primarily constructed of aluminum and is engineered to be light, durable and virtually maintenance-free. The Colorspreader comes in 24-inch and 48-inch models.

www.colorspreader.com

for the client, it is still important to tell him or her that you cannot promise that the exact color on the sample will appear on their newly stained floor. Before proceeding with any job, always do a color test directly on the client's concrete. You can complete this color sample in an inconspicuous spot, such as in a closet, so that it can be easily covered up if the stain reacts differently from the sample.

When performing the sample tests you are still setting up the client's expectation for the final floor. Point out existing flaws in the concrete such as trowel marks, surface changes and patched spots. Make sure your client knows that all of these features as well as spots that have been "covered up" or "fixed" in the past will become even more pronounced once the concrete stain is applied. These features will add to the mottled effect of the stain reacting with the concrete, and they are what make the finished stained concrete a unique piece of art, but not all clients see these features as desirable.

Stained concrete should be as unique to a space as the artist's brush stroke is to his or her canvas. If every stain reacted the same, reactive-stained concrete would lose its sought-after, one-of-a-kind characteristics — but make sure these characteristics are desirable for your client.

Along with providing samples my company also likes to provide clients with photographs of past stain projects. Make sure you visually document your work after each job so that you can help your future clients see a finished reactive stain project. A picture portfolio is the best way to show a client how much stain can vary on one floor.

If the client seems unsure of the product, do not continue with the work. They must feel confident in your abilities if they are to be truly satisfied with the end product. If your client is ultimately looking for an even color on their concrete, acid-stained concrete may not be the best solution.

Always remember too that, although pictures are a great tool for visualization, the client's floor will not look exactly like the photograph. I once had a client who wanted a floor to look just like one of the pictures on my website. The picture was of a job finished with a stained white overlay, but my new client was not interested in doing an overlay and wanted to use the existing concrete surface. The client's surface was dark gray and had curing marks from lumber that had

staining & coloring CONCRETE :

Factors That Affect Reactive Stain Results

Delivering the best results possible is what many of us contractors strive for, but that is very hard if you do not know the many factors that can affect final stain appearance. I have seen many projects where contractors simply applied a stain to a project without

any proper surface preparation or knowledge. This is not only a quick way for a contractor to be put out of business, but can also give stained concrete a bad reputation.

I have listed several factors that can play a role in stain variations. The following factors should be taken into consideration when choosing a stain color and be brought to the customer's attention.

Cement color — Lighter-colored cements, especially white, will produce much brighter colors than dark gray floors. Since stains are translucent, the base color of cement will play a major role in final color.

Cement load and admixtures — The cement load and admixtures will play a part too. Acid stains react to the lime in cement, so more cement means more reaction. On the other hand, some admixtures reduce the free lime available in concrete, thus reducing the effect of the stain. By applying stain in a hidden area you can test its reaction.

Finishing techniques — Concrete can be so tightly troweled that the concrete is almost waterproof. Stains will produce the best effects on concrete with an open and porous surface. Burn marks from troweling is a sign the surface may be troweled too tightly.

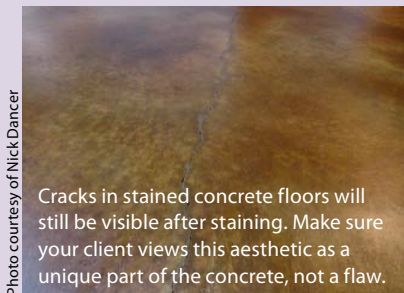


Photo courtesy of Nick Dancer

There are products available to "open" the concrete before staining. They are of a mild acidic nature, so they should be used with caution so as to not completely etch the surface. One such product is DCI Hard Troweled Floor Preparation, from Direct

Colors Inc. Janitorial supply stores also carry products for this purpose.

Porosity — The surface of very porous concrete will take much more of the stain to achieve a mottled look. If you apply too much stain you will get a much darker surface. Try diluting the stain further or wetting the surface prior to stain application to get the desired look.

Temperature — When staining outdoors in direct heat, it is important to dampen the slab prior to reactive stain placement or wait until a cooler part of the day to place stain. If the stain dries on the surface before it can penetrate into the surface it will not produce the desired effect.

Problem areas — Almost every older concrete slab I have worked on has stains, marks or other imperfections that will show up in the finished floor. Instead of trying to hide these from the client, I explain during the job that these are the same marks that we discussed previously and were listed in the contract as areas that could show.

From my experience the customer who walks the floor with you throughout the process is a happier client. When they feel that you take your work seriously and really want to provide the best floor, they understand you are not trying to hide things from them.

laid on the slab right after it was poured. I had to explain the differences between their concrete surface and the one in the photo.

We settled on colors by completing physical samples on-site. By setting exceptional expectations with the client I left the final project with a satisfied customer and a great customer review for my website. 🚗

Nick Dancer has been active in the concrete construction business since 2005 and started his own company, CounterCrete, in 2007. That company grew into Dancer Concrete, which is based in Fort Wayne, Ind., and primarily offers interior stained floors. Contact him at nick.dancer2@gmail.com.

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TROWEL & ERROR

Your Mock-up Materials Matter, So Don't Cut Corners

RECENTLY, Richard Morrison, plant manager at my company's Houston, Texas, manufacturing facility, reminded me of the importance of remaining consistent with all of



by Chris Sullivan

your raw materials for a decorative project.

He explained that he has seen an increase in complaints about the final color not matching the sample or mock-up that had been placed just a week or so earlier. Most of these were integral color jobs. In all cases, a small mock-up was created, finished and cured as specified, and eventually accepted by the client. Fast forward to the actual job

placement, and all of a sudden the color no longer matched the mock-up sample.

After a little bit of investigation, it was discovered that the contractor had used store-bought bagged concrete to create the mock-up, but the actual job was placed using standard ready-mix concrete.

When this was brought to the attention of the contractors, the response was always the same. "I didn't want to pay for a yard or more of concrete for a 4-square-foot sample, and besides, it's all gray concrete, what's the big deal?" Well, not only is it a big deal, it is a huge deal! When you consider that everything going into a concrete mix has an impact on the final color, and Rule No. 1 for integrally colored concrete is batch-to-batch consistency, it only stands to reason that switching base concrete between the sample and the pour is going to have a big impact

on the final color.

I know what you are saying, and I agree that it is expensive to pay for 1 to 3 yards (the typical minimum for colored concrete depending on region) for a mock-up. However, when you consider the cost of labor and materials to correct a color issue, or worse yet, a complete rip-out and replace, a few yards of concrete start to look cheap.

Some contractors I have worked with will add the cost of the ready-mixed concrete for mock-ups and samples right into their invoice as a separate line item. This typically works on large commercial jobs or custom color jobs but may not go over in a residential or small project setting. In those instances I have seen contractors charge for one initial sample produced from the same ready-mix supplier that will be used on the job. If the client approves the sample and hires the

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contractor for the job, the fee is waived. If the contractor is not hired after producing the sample, the client is charged. There is also a charge if additional samples are required.

In general, most savvy contractors will build the cost for the yard or more of concrete used in the mock-up right into the final price to avoid any out-of-pocket cost.

Why is consistency important?

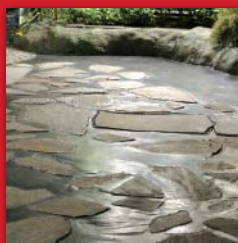
So now that we have addressed how to offset the cost of using the same material for mock-ups and the actual pour, let's look at why it is so important to stay consistent.

First, the rule of batch-to-batch consistency from sampling to actual project extends beyond integrally colored concrete. The same philosophy holds true for any decorative concrete application. When doing samples, you need to use the same base materials or work on the same substrate (especially when working with stains and dyes) that will be used in the actual project.

Second, it is easy to see why most people consider all traditional concrete to be gray. However, when you stop and really look at different slabs of gray concrete, there are large variations. One of the biggest reasons

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Send Me Your Questions!

Trowel & Error is looking for questions about decorative jobs that have not gone as planned. They could involve problems you've witnessed or issues you yourself have experienced. What was the problem and why did it happen? Maybe you never fixed it and are looking for a solution.

The Trowel & Error column is going to dedicate 2013 to answering the most common questions our industry faces, coming directly from you, the contractor in the field. So don't be shy — send me an email at trowelanderror@protradepub.com describing the problem as well as your best fix. Don't forget the pictures!

I will use next year's Trowel & Error column to discuss what occurred, how to avoid it in the future, and how to repair the problem. I promise not to use your name.

We all get better when we learn together. Thanks for reading, and I look forward to working with you in 2013.

for this is the material that makes gray concrete gray — the cement. Studies have shown that gray cement can vary greatly in color, even cement of the same type, from the same supplier, shipped from the same manufacturing plant. Studies have also found that higher percentages of slag and fly ash are also being used, which have a significant effect on the final color. A combination of these factors is most likely the reason why the mock-up we discussed earlier yielded a different color from the larger pour using the same pigment.

There is nothing wrong with bagged concrete, but you just don't know what's in it, and unless you plan on using bagged mix for the entire pour, making your color samples with it is not a good idea. It is a bit disheartening when you consider that two of the biggest factors leading to colored concrete issues are cement color and aggregate color. You and I don't have much control of either when ordering concrete. This means that the contractor in the field must rely on the ready-mix supplier to provide consistent mixes

with excellent quality control measures. Well, I am happy to report that for the most part the ready-mix industry does an excellent job, with some suppliers even going the extra mile to offer additional quality control measures for colored loads.

Lastly, consider batch size and mix efficiency. Think about how those few bags were mixed, and how hand-mixing may impact the color when compared to 8 yards mixing in the back of a ready-mix truck. It's the same as when you mix pancake batter on Saturday morning. When you mix the batter with a fork, you usually end up with some lumps. When you use an electric mixer, the batter is smooth, lump-free and fully mixed. The same theory applies when mixing color — a large aggressive mixer will churn the material faster, beating the pigment into the mix, so you achieve a more developed and consistent color.

Since decorative concrete is as much art as it is science, and color only increases the amount of scrutiny a project will receive, taking the time — and sometimes paying the extra cost — is well worth it when producing samples. 🛠️

Chris Sullivan is vice president of sales and marketing with ChemSystems Inc. He has led seminars and product demonstrations throughout North America. Contact him at trowelanderror@protradepub.com.

Chris Sullivan will teach "Solving the 10 Most Common Decorative Installation Problems" at the 2013 Concrete Decor Show. For more information, go to ConcreteDecorShow.com.



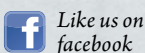
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PRODUCT NEWS

NewLook reduces standard colors

NewLook International Inc. will reduce its line of standard colors for Original Solid Color Stain and Enhancers to 20, effective Jan. 1, 2013.

All original 80 colors will still be available by special order. A request will not be considered a color match since the formula is still available.


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New Hyde tips for pressure washers

The new Hyde Turbo Nozzle from Hyde Tools is a powerful ceramic tip designed for blasting and removing stubborn and encrusted stains. It uses a technique that combines the best of both worlds: high impact and good cleaning coverage. The Turbo Nozzle produces a high-pressure pencil jet stream and rotates it at 3,000 rpm, creating a 4-inch to 8-inch cleaning circle. The nozzle is available in two orifice

sizes, 3.0 and 4.0.

Hyde Tools also has introduced a set of five spray tips that fit the gas and electric versions of the Hyde Pivot Wand as well as many consumer-grade pressure washers. The set contains five rust-resistant stainless steel spray tips with industry-standard color-coding that designates spray angles ranging from zero degrees to 65 degrees. The set is available in orifice sizes of 3.0 and 4.0.

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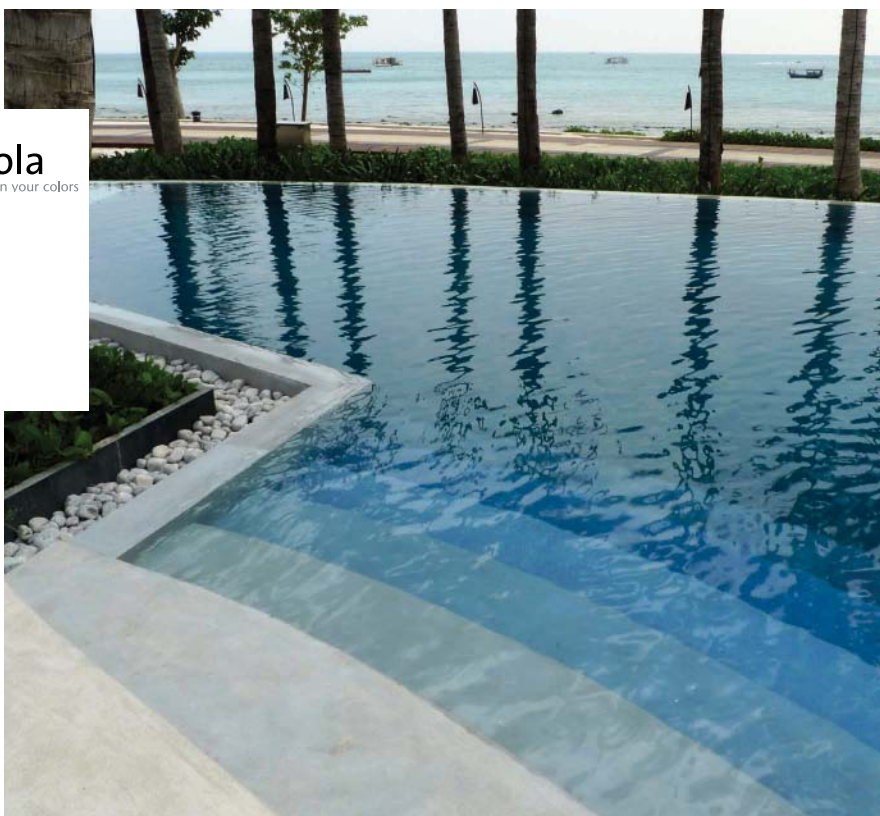
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Placing Quality Stamped Concrete in Six Steps

If you have an internal passion to take stamped concrete to the next level, then this article is for you. I will describe what has taken me more than 20 years to learn about how to improve a stamping project.



by Doug Carlton

My effort continues to this day.

I have identified six steps that all successful hunks of stamped concrete have in common. Bypassing one of the six steps will leave a stamping professional a rung short of a true level of potential. Perfection starts well before any color broadcasts across a wet concrete's surface, and even well before a ready-mix truck arrives.

Step 1: Subgrade prep

I want to admit something — I dislike preparing the subgrade with a passion. I would much rather make something colorful and tangible than shovel dirt and

sand. But the fact is that every successful stamping project begins with a properly prepared moist substrate. A moist subgrade results in a more evenly dried concrete surface, providing the best odds for stamping consistency.

Your mass of freshly placed concrete has two inevitable forces working against you. Most of you realize the concrete's surface is under attack from wind, sun and whatever elements your local climate throws out. But what you may not realize is the same conflict takes place under your slab as well. This is why it is so necessary to first put down a subbase layer of material that can hold moisture that's applied before concrete placement. A 2-inch layer of moistened sand is adequate for most situations.

Step 2: The concrete mix

Transporting concrete from a truck to its final resting place can be expensive and labor-intensive. This is why some resort to pumping 3/8-inch aggregate concrete with a line-style concrete pump. Two problems arise when using this mix and transport

method, and both can lead to a subpar stamping project.

First, 3/8-inch aggregate mixes are not designed for slab-on-grade finishes. They are designed to grout block walls. Second, most line pumps require a wet mix of concrete to pump the material any distance at all.

Water weakens concrete and miniature aggregate doesn't help either.

Use concrete mixes with 3/4-inch aggregate regardless of what it takes to transport them to your area of placement. These mixes will crack less and provide a stronger canvas suitable for coloring and imprinting.

Be sure to properly tamp the surface aggregate soon after concrete is placed and leveled. Don't accept the misnomer that only small-aggregate mixes work for imprinted concrete. And mention your ability to stamp suitable mix designs during your sales presentation.

Step 3: Placement

The number one cause of concrete cracks is too much water at time of placement. I realize concrete placement is easiest when it's overly wet but we must consider what is best for our customers and the longevity of our reputations. Keep the concrete's slump at 5 inches or better, realizing that a good surface retardant will help after concrete placement. (More on surface retardants in a moment.)

Step 4: Coloring

By now most of you know about the two choices to color concrete. I won't waste time with integral coloring since this method requires no extra effort at time of placement. The method we will discuss is coloring by way of dry shake hardeners. Color hardeners offer a more accurate form of coloring while providing a stronger concrete surface compared to

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integrally colored concrete. My advice is to master color hardeners immediately. And, of course, bring up this ability during your sales presentation.

Coloring the concrete's surface is an art of its own because timing is everything. I have found that most who are new to broadcasting hardeners try to overcolor the surface, not realizing this extra effort and time will cost them dearly at the imprinting stage.

Darker colors cover the wet concrete surface easier than lighter ones. However, light earth-toned color hardener choices approximate the natural color of concrete, so 100 percent color coverage with them is not necessary. This simplifies the coloring process and allows finishers to focus on the next step.

Regardless of your color choice, it's important to understand the benefits of a spray-applied surface retardant slowing the surface set time. Surface retardant is the key to remoistening the concrete's surface. This is why our crew applies a layer of surface retardant after each broadcast of color hardener. The color dries the surface (each time it's applied) and the mist of liquid retardant brings the moisture back. Are you

beginning to see how all successful projects hinge on surface moisture and plasticity? The goal is to create as comfortable of a stamping process as possible, in a way that is repeatable job after job.

Step 5: Imprinting or stamping

Again, the goal is consistency and timing is the key. Interlocking patterns require more hands and less mud on the ground. Texture-style patterns are more forgiving and allow more square footage to be stamped with less labor.

Regardless of the pattern, the key to successful imprinting is to split the crew into a stamping team and a second team that continues to work the surface that is soon to be stamped. This is where many projects fail. Most effort diligently focuses on stamping as fast as possible, virtually ignoring the remaining portion, and I've noticed a sense of panic at stamping time. Continue to apply surface retardant ahead of the stamping process to provide a moistened surface ready for your army of stampers to follow you.

Step 6: Sealing

Stack the sealer deck in your favor when

possible. The majority of sealer problems derive from moisture issues. These issues can result from landscape irrigation (sprinklers), roof drains, condensation drains, you name it. But some moisture-related sealer issues come from under the concrete surface too.

Educating your customer is your best line of defense. Explain how the life of their sealer will be determined by the effort to control water intrusion.

I also recommend waiting at least 30 days after concrete placement to seal stamped concrete. I realize it's a pain to come back, clean and then seal a project long after moving on, but this dry period will reduce sealer-related issues.

Always clean the concrete surface the day before sealing — pressure-washing is suggested. Be sure to turn all irrigation systems off the day before, too. Also, don't forget to add a nonskid material to all exterior sealed projects when possible. 🛑

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

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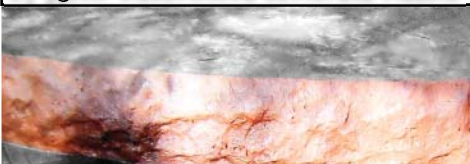
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PROJECT PROFILE

Gontmaher Backyard Bell Canyon, Calif.

by *Natasha Chilingirian*

FOR Scott Cohen, owner of The Green Scene Landscaping and Pools in Northridge, Calif., creating spectacular, outdoor entertainment and leisure spaces is second nature, but many of his jobs require much more than bringing a vision to life.

A case in point is his work in the Gontmahers' backyard in Bell Canyon, Calif., where the services of engineers and geologists were just as, if not more, important than structure design and installation.

Homeowners — and grandparents — Kanie and Lera Gontmaher contacted The Green Scene with a desire to remodel the pool behind their three-story house as well as build a deck area for entertaining. On their must-have list: an outdoor barbecue and kitchen area, plenty of shade from the intense desert sun, and a design that oozed elegance and family fun. "They wanted to be known as the grandparents with the better backyard," Cohen says.

Initially, the Gontmahers' backyard only contained several large rock formations and a plain, sunken pool, both of which had been there for about 25 years. Complicating matters, a very steep and sloping stretch of land filled the space between the back door and the pool.

Faced with a challenging canvas to work on, one option for the Gontmahers was to build a retaining wall into the sloping ground as a base for a deck that could be accessed directly from the back door. But Cohen came up with an alternate idea that would let them work with the surface instead of against it — build an outdoor spa just outside the back door, where the deck would have been, then add additional structures that would lead the Gontmahers and their guests from the spa to other parts of the backyard.

The local setback requirement for "clearance to daylight" (the distance from the back side of the base at its lowest point



Photos courtesy of Greenscenedesign.com

to the exposed face) is half as deep for an outdoor spa structure as it is for a retaining wall, Cohen says, which made the first option more appealing and cost-effective than the second.

Cohen's complex design contains seven levels: a landing area that bridges the back door to a fire-feature patio; the spa and its adjacent patio; an outdoor kitchen and dining area; a walkway and patio nestled in between the outdoor kitchen and pool area; a covered lounge area; and two different pool deck levels. During his process, he envisioned the space in terms of individual outdoor "rooms," a concept he says is not only trendy, but conducive to how people like to socialize. "People tend to not hang out in one space," he says. "It's natural for groups to split up and break into their own conversations."

Cohen says the 3-D modeling software Google SketchUp made a huge difference in the design process because it allowed him to

get into the space visually, get a feel for what the backyard would look like and accurately convey the design to the Gontmahers.

He worked closely with his clients in determining the backyard's layout as well as decorative materials and colors. As a

Project at a Glance

Clients: Kanie and Lera Gontmaher

Landscape Designer and Concrete Installer: Scott Cohen, The Green Scene Landscaping and Pools, Northridge, Calif.

Project Specs: A multilevel outdoor entertaining space that includes a 200-square-foot spa, 900-square-foot pool and various structures containing about 150 cubic yards of shotcrete, plus a stained driveway

Timeline: Two years from initial design to completion

Key Material Suppliers: Stegmeier LLC (styrofoam forms for concrete barbecue countertop and pool), Triple-S Chemical Products Inc. (acid stain for the driveway), American Specialty Glass Inc. (recycled glass for concrete countertops and fire features), Angelus Block Co. Inc., Sun Valley, Calif. (concrete pavers)



signature color for the backyard, they chose a palette of vibrant blues, which appear in tile and glass accents in the spa and pool.

The Green Scene was far from alone in the execution of this large-scale residential project. Cohen enlisted the help of geologists from Oro Engineering Corp., based in Bell Canyon, Calif., and pool engineer Ron Lacher, of Pool Engineering Inc., in Anaheim, Calif., to perform inspections of

the land he was about to work on. He also brought in a number of subcontractors, including contractors specializing in steel, shotcrete, tile and plumbing.

Aside from the backyard's design, Cohen and his crew were responsible for the formation and installation of all concrete structures and the installation of several decorative concrete elements: a recycled glass concrete countertop in the outdoor

kitchen area, a polished concrete swim-up bar on the side of the pool, concrete fire bowls located around the spa and an acid stain on the driveway in the front of the house. All concrete features were cast-in-place.

The construction process entailed many steps. First, Cohen took input from the experts at Oro Engineering, who helped him determine soil types at the site. Next, the subgrading work, which

involved building a road to transport workers from the front of the house to the backyard and putting in friction piles and grade beams for support, was completed. Then steel cages were installed as shells for each structure. Shotcrete, which Cohen says was used plentifully throughout the backyard, was added next, followed by coping, stone elements, cast-in-place concrete pieces, various finishing materials, and finally, plants and flowers.

The concrete countertop in the outdoor kitchen was hand-seeded with American Specialty Glass Inc.'s amber-colored glass pieces taken from recycled beer bottles, then ground and polished. The swim-up bar includes four underwater concrete stools covered in tile, and concrete steps around the pool deck area feature no-slip, scalloped edging detail. The driveway at the front of the house, which had previously been stamped, was treated with a Triple-S Chemical Products acid stain in a blend of tan, coffee and dark brown colors.

The spa, which Cohen says is his

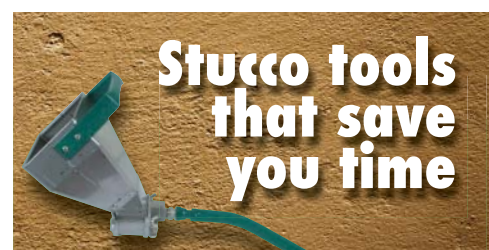


walls & hardscapes :

favorite part of the backyard, is made out of shotcrete, topped with travertine coping and veneered in its entirety with 1-square-inch glass mosaic tiles. In the fire feature elements found all around the spa, Cohen added more recycled glass pieces from American Specialty Glass in the same vibrant blue shades chosen for the tiles.

The Gontmahers' backyard was completed in August 2012 — two years after the initial design process began.

"They love the pool, the spa and the fire features," Cohen says. "They feel like they live in a resort, and after all this time the



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project took to complete, they're anxious to just go and relax in it."

The multilevel backyard provides many options for sitting, standing, lounging and swimming, and its design encourages natural, flowing movement from one space to another, Cohen explains. Upon exiting the house through the back door, guests of the Gontmahers can take a flight of stairs down to the spa, then turn left and take another flight of stairs through a tunnel to the outdoor kitchen and dining area. Or, they can take a staircase straight ahead and go directly to a patio and the pool. From the kitchen, they can follow a staircase to the left down to the pool or continue straight ahead to a walkway and another patio, which also leads to the pool.

Kanie Gontmaher says the backyard not only looks stunning, but is spacious enough to accommodate a large party. "We usually do a lot of entertaining, but when we have too many people in the same area, it becomes a disaster," she says. "Now, we can entertain 75 to 100 people at once and they will never bump into each other."

Cohen adds that the project gave him and his crew the unique opportunity to showcase many of

their talents in one place.

"This project involved multiple layers and levels, and with all the skills my staff has in concrete, steel, tile and other materials, we were able to tap into every resource we had to make it all come together," he says.

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Scott Cohen will teach "Designing and Building Outdoor Fireplaces and Fire Features" at the 2013 Concrete Decor Show. For more information, go to ConcreteDecorShow.com.



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