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CONCRETE

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in Charlotte** pg. 34

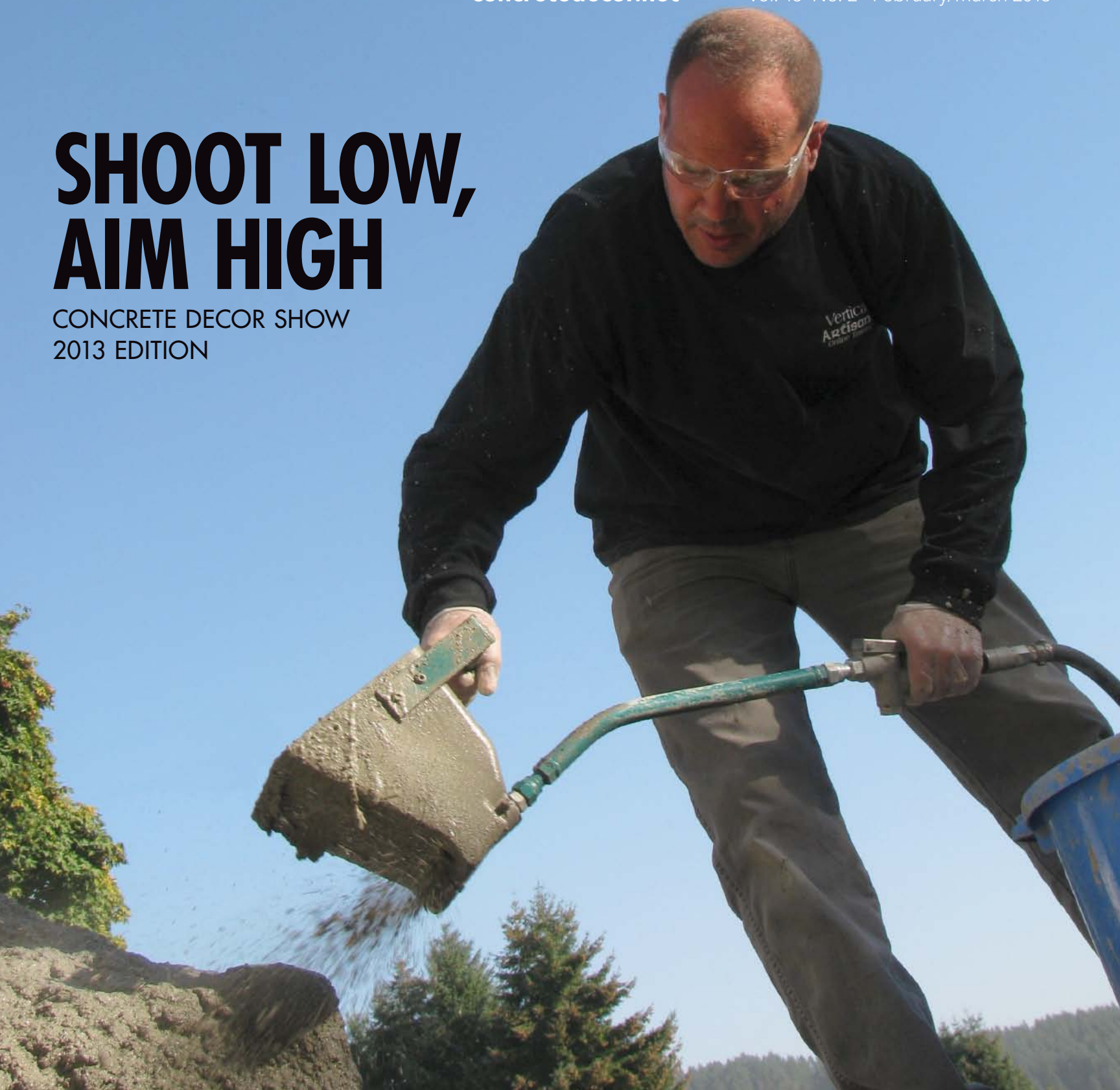
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**Solid-Color Stains and  
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Vol. 13 No. 2 February/March 2013

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# FROM THE editor's DESK

## Dear Readers,

If you've picked up your official Show issue of *Concrete Decor* magazine at the 2013 Concrete Decor Show, welcome to Charlotte!

If you've received this magazine digitally or in the mail but are not attending the show in Charlotte, the concrete's warm, wish you were here!

We've gone out of our way in this issue to highlight some of the quality decorative concrete that has been crafted in the Charlotte area in recent years. Our featured Artisan in Concrete is Reaching Quiet Design, a top-notch designer and creator of architectural countertops and cast concrete work who just happens to be based in Charlotte. That profile, and a tasty montage of some of the company's best work, begins on page 30.

One of Reaching Quiet's signature projects is a new restaurant in central Charlotte called 5church, and we've profiled that space as the centerpiece of our spread on "Concrete Charlotte," which starts on page 34.

There's also a great little story in the Concrete Charlotte section about how decorative concrete was used to discourage people from lingering on light-rail tracks near the Charlotte Convention Center. Show it to anybody who ever tries to tell you that decorative concrete is only used to make stuff pretty.

The last (but not least) article in the magazine profiles a muralist who uses concrete material to shape extraordinary 3-D murals on the walls of businesses, nonprofits and even a home or two. He's a one-of-a-kind artist who calls North Carolina home, and his story is in our Walls & Hardscapes section on page 74.

Several of the products and experts featured in the pages of this issue are at the Show too, including the trainer on our cover, Nathan Giffin, of Vertical Artisans LLC.

Speaking of Nathan, his vertical-concrete training outfit recently founded the West Coast Training Center in Lorane, Ore., just a few miles south of our home office in Eugene. Their first training event was last October, which is where I took the cover photo. I wanted to throw out a quick plug for their SECOND class, which will be held April 8-12. You can find more information at [Verticalartisans.ning.com/groups](http://Verticalartisans.ning.com/groups). As this event is in the Pacific Northwest, it may appeal to some of you who could not make the cross-country flight to North Carolina.

I'll be at both events, so watch out for me. I'm the bald guy with the furrowed brow ... actually, that doesn't really set me apart in this crowd, does it?

In any case, enjoy the magazine.

Sincerely,



John Strieder  
Editor



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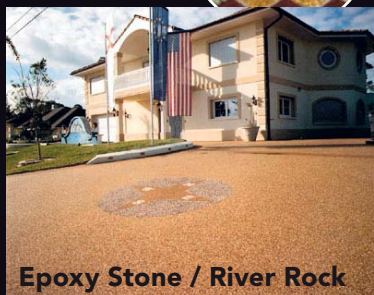




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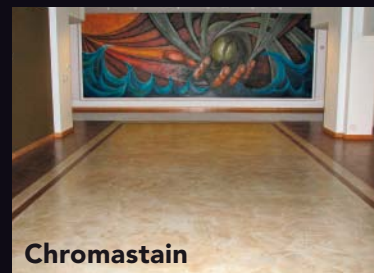


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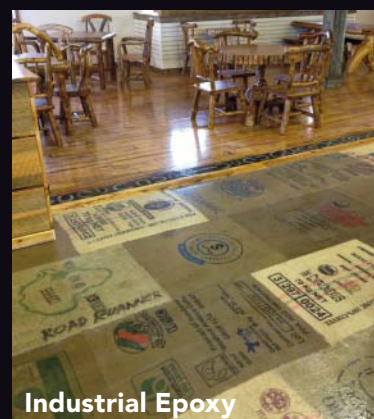


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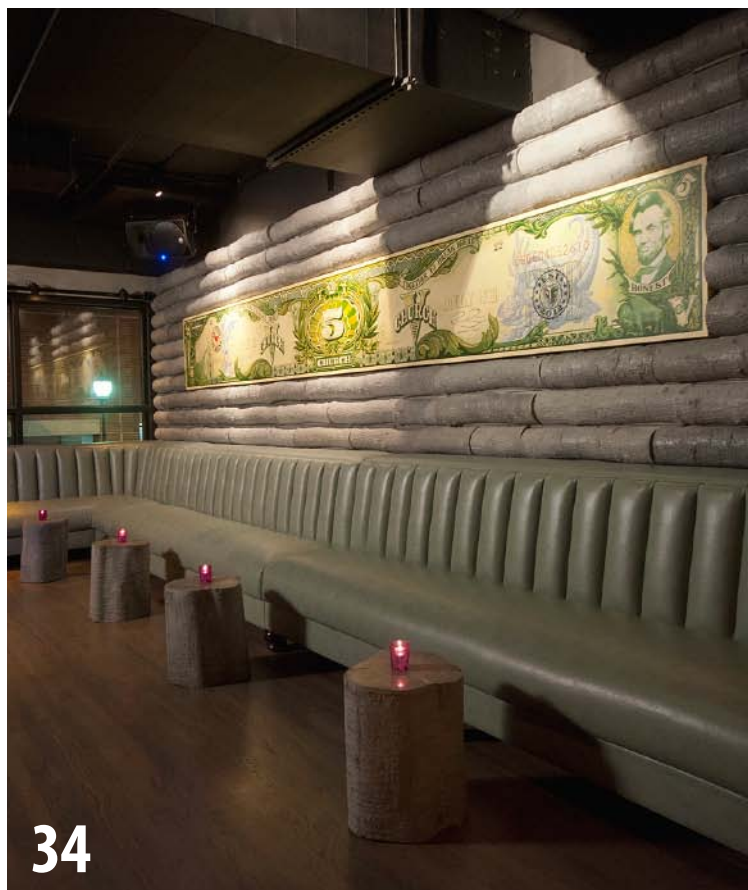
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**On the cover:** Nathan Giffin shoots wet concrete onto a textured wall at a home in Lorane, Ore. Giffin's Vertical Artisans recently founded the West Coast Training Center at the Lorane location, and their next training event is in April.

Photo by John Strieder



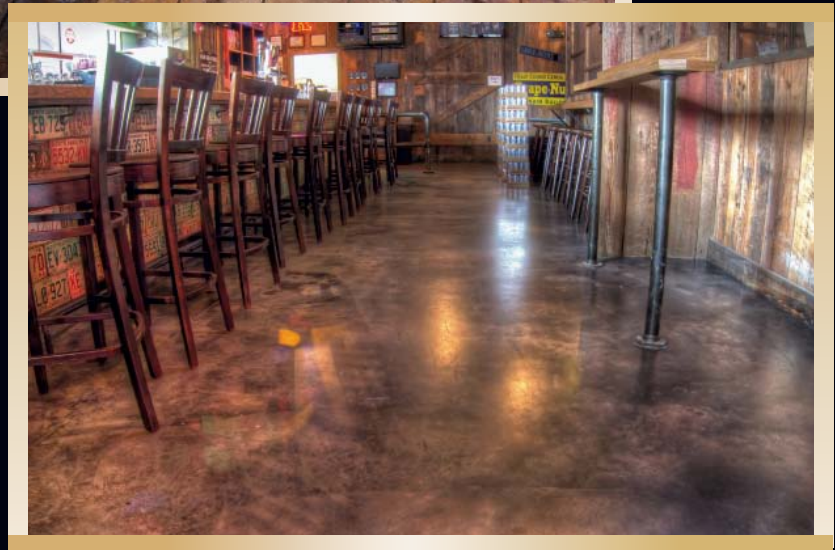


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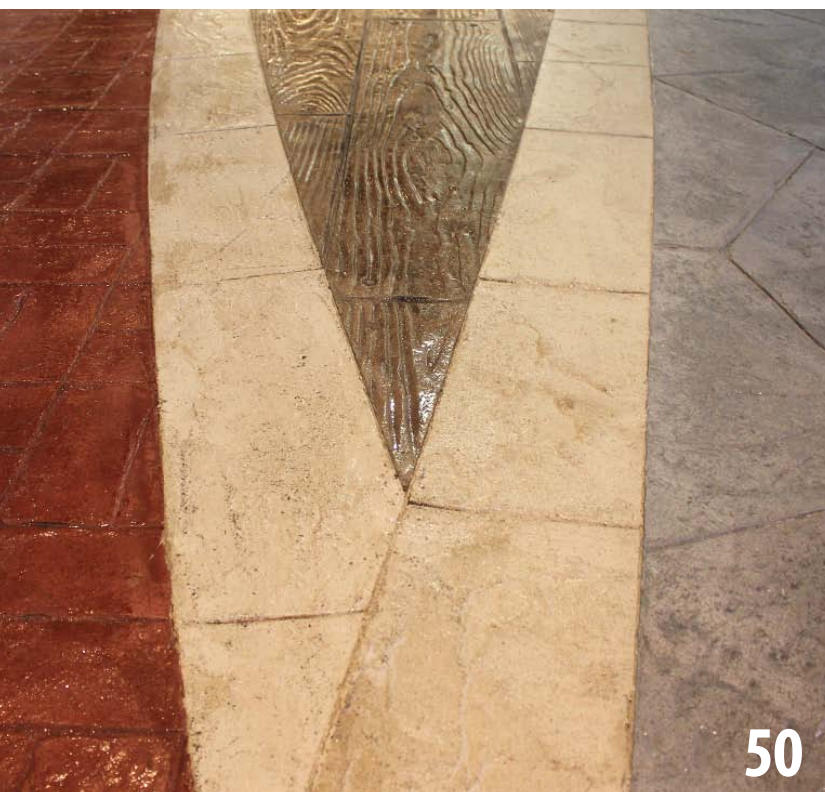
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**Nathan Baggett** is part owner and project manager at DreamKrete, a division of Mid Atlantic Floor Care LLC, based in Richmond, Va. Contact him at [twcsinc219@comcast.net](mailto:twcsinc219@comcast.net). See Nathan's article on page 54.



**Doug Carlton** operates Carlton Concrete Inc. in Visalia, Calif. He can be reached at [carltondoug@comcast.net](mailto:carltondoug@comcast.net). See Doug's column, "Carlton's Corner," on page 40.



**Jeff Kudrick**, product manager for J&M Lifestyles LLC, is well-known for his award-winning work fabricating kitchen and bath fixtures, fireplace surrounds, molded furniture, architectural details, columns and water features. Contact him at [jeff@jmlifestyles.com](mailto:jeff@jmlifestyles.com). See Jeff's article on page 42.



**David Stephenson** owns Polished Concrete Consultants, based in Dallas, Texas. As a consultant, he offers decorative concrete programs for retailers and troubleshooting for a wide range of clients. Contact him at [david@polishedconsultants.com](mailto:david@polishedconsultants.com). See David's article on page 26.



**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@protrade.pub.com](mailto:trowelanderror@protrade.pub.com). See Chris' article on page 64.



**Virgil Viscuso** has 20 years of experience in the concrete surface preparation and polishing industry. He is founder and director of the Global Concrete Polishing Institute and president of Concrete Surface Xperts. He can be contacted at [virgil@globalconcretepi.com](mailto:virgil@globalconcretepi.com). See Virgil's article on page 58.



**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](mailto:jacob@getnewlook.com). See Jacob's column, "Fundamentals of Business," on page 22.



**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](mailto:twcsinc219@comcast.net). See Ray's article on page 54.

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## INDUSTRY NEWS

**Concrete Polishing Association of America defines polishing terminology**

The Concrete Polishing Association of America has developed a set of official definitions related to the polishing and grinding industry.

Through special committees and its board of directors, the CPAA has defined polished concrete, bonded abrasive polished concrete, burnished polished concrete, hybrid polished concrete and surface-coated concrete. The definitions are available on their website.

The CPAA will be hosting several seminars and webinars in 2013 to further explain the definitions and how they may be used to specify the proper processes to meet the demands of building design.

☎ (443) 249-7919

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

**Niagara Machine opens Eastern U.S. training facility in Charlotte, N.C.**

Niagara Machine has a new facility in Charlotte, N.C. Although the company has had a presence in the Charlotte area for years, the new facility offers 22,000 square feet, which will allow the branch to feature an equipment showroom, fully stocked parts warehouse and complete service center. Niagara Charlotte will also conduct regular training seminars taught by factory-certified staff and industry experts.

The Charlotte location will serve as a distribution and training point for the Eastern United States.

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**WerkMaster tops competition, named preferred choice of Line-X**

WerkMaster Ultra Floor Systems has been chosen as the preferred line of polishers and grinders for Line-X Protective Coatings.

Line-X contracted the University of Alabama in Huntsville to do an independent study of more than 20 concrete grinder manufacturers. The criteria included: ease of operation; grinding close to the wall; ease of loading and unloading from a trailer; ease of changing diamonds; ability to flatten a floor or follow floor contour; cost of diamond tooling; production rate; electrical requirements; and overall performance.

WerkMaster scored 4.2 out of a possible 5 points, with its closest competitor scoring a rating of 3.2 points.

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

🌐 [www.line-x.com](http://www.line-x.com)

**Two decorative concrete crews awarded as WOC Crews That Rock**

World of Concrete has selected the winners of the 2013 Crews That Rock competition. Projects were submitted in one of two categories, Community Service/Not-for-Profit and Commercial/For-Profit.

Both winners in the nonprofit category had a decorative focus. StoneMakers' backyard landscape creation for a disabled



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veteran in Epsom, N.H., received the Audience Award in the Community Service/Not-For-Profit category. Veterans, additional contractors and StoneMakers crewmembers participating in a training session for the national StoneMakers brand had the opportunity to give back to a veteran who lost his leg after being wounded in Iraq. After clearing the yard, the crew created a new hardscaped yard complete with wall, patio, water feature, outdoor kitchen, bridge,

fire pit, log effect bench, and all of the supporting landscaping and electrical work.

The Experts' Choice award for the Community Service/Not-For-Profit category was given to Chasco Constructors, Round Rock, Texas, for The Play for All Abilities Park in their hometown. The mission of the park is to provide a safe, fun place to play and develop new skills for children of all abilities. The park will serve more than 100,000 children of Williamson

County, Texas, including an estimated 7,945 children with a disability.

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

### CPAA elects new board

The Concrete Polishing Association of America has elected new members to its board of directors.

They are: Joe Reardon, Prosoco (chemical manufacturer); Clif Rawlings, HTC America (equipment manufacturer); Les Davis, American Decorative Concrete Supply Co. (dye manufacturer); Jeff Tchakarov and Irene Cerrone, Diamond Tool Supply Inc.; Walter Scarborough (architect); and Roy Bowman, Shawn Halverson, John Jones, Chad Gill, Jennifer Faller and Harry Gressette (contractors).

[\(443\) 249-7919](tel:(443)249-7919)

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

### Seasoned consultant hangs shingle

Peter Wagner, industry guru and former *Concrete Decor* columnist, has opened a consulting organization that will serve contractors, manufacturers and end users involved in the polished concrete industry.

Through his two affiliated businesses, Concrete Flooring Solutions and Polished Concrete Imagery, Wagner will provide marketing, training and photography. 📷

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## new faces

**Mark Campo**, executive director,  
American Shotcrete Association

**Cameron Crews**, sales manager,  
Clemons Concrete Coatings

**Dr. Bruce Suprenant, Ph.D.**, technical  
director, American Society of Concrete  
Contractors

**Richard Thomas**, territory manager,  
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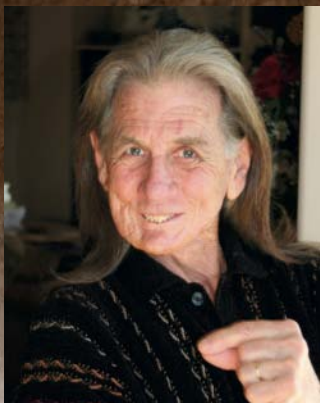
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# DECORATIVE CONCRETE HALL OF FAME

## THE 2013 INDUCTEES



RALPH GASSER



BILL STEGMEIER



BARBARA SARGENT



BYRON KLEMASKE II

**T**HE Decorative Concrete Hall of Fame is pleased to honor its inductees for 2013: Ralph Gasser, Bill Stegmeier, Barbara Sargent and Byron Klemaske II. The Hall of Fame announced the group at the 2013 Concrete Decor Show.

The Decorative Concrete Hall of Fame was established to recognize individuals and companies whose contributions have impacted the future of decorative concrete as an industry and an art form. The new inductees were chosen by Hall of Fame members and *Concrete Decor* parent company Professional Trade Publications Inc., which manages the Hall of Fame.

These four exceptional individuals have gone above and beyond in their careers, helping the decorative concrete industry thrive through their achievements and commitment to excellence and innovation.



## RALPH GASSER

They say you are the company you keep, so it's only natural that **Ralph Gasser** is one of the newest inductees into the Decorative Concrete Hall of Fame. In Ralph's 51 years of concrete work, he's rubbed shoulders with the biggest names in the industry, and he credits many of them with his success.



Ralph got his start in the industry when he was just 16, when he worked as a laborer at a concrete company. At the time it was only a way to make ends meet, but Ralph quickly grew passionate about concrete and its possibilities. "Driving around Hollywood, I would be looking at all of the flat driveways and thinking about how much you could do," he says.

Even when he was stationed in Vietnam after being drafted at age 20, he couldn't shake his newfound passion for concrete. In the midst of the war, Ralph poured small

concrete projects for the military in his spare time.

Upon his return, he felt the need to get out of Los Angeles. He moved to southern Oregon, but the winter temperatures fought with his love of concrete. After five years, he had enough and relocated to Redding, Calif., where he lives today. It was in Redding that he made his mark, literally, on the concrete industry.

The stamped concrete trend was beginning to heat up, but Ralph lacked the funds to start his own franchise under the current manufacturers. His solution was to make his own set of stamping and imprinting tools. His invention, the Shasta Seamless Texture Mat, was one of the first large-scale texture mats in the industry, and it was created alongside another member of the Decorative Concrete Hall of Fame.

"Mike Archambault was with me when we crafted off that rock here in Shasta County," he says.

Despite his innovation, Ralph kept his focus

on the artistic side, and he kept close ties with Archambault. It was through Archambault that Ralph had the opportunity to do all of the hardscaping inside Sleeping Beauty's castle at Euro-Disney. He's also had the opportunity to demonstrate architectural concrete in England, Johannesburg, South Africa, and Beijing, China. Decorative concrete has been a truly global affair for Ralph.

His career stateside has flourished too. He's been involved in some high-end commercial and residential projects, and he has had the honor of winning over half a dozen national awards for his efforts. His most cherished award is for his work at Brenden Theatres in Modesto, Calif., which he worked on with fellow Hall of Fame member Mike Miller.

"I had the opportunity to take the talent that is in me and put it in a different direction that I fell in love with," he says. "It's like painting a wall. It can be confusing to people who don't understand where I'm going until I'm done. I'm very blessed to have the opportunity."

## BILL STEGMEIER

CONCRETE pool decks may seem like a fairly standard job for the layperson, but during the course of his career, **Bill Stegmeier** transformed the pool deck industry through his innovations.



In the early 1950s, Bill owned a south Florida concrete construction firm that poured pool decks, as well as a chemical manufacturing company that supplied concrete additives.

At the time, many patios and pool decks in the region were constructed of coral stone. This material was taken from the ocean and cut into slabs and used much like flagstone is today. The work was beautiful, but because of the high humidity it would turn black with mold.

To solve this problem, Bill developed an alternative to the coral stone. First was a mixture of sand and cement on freshly poured concrete that duplicated the texture of the coral stone, as well as a chemical additive to make this material more workable. Most importantly, the product didn't mold. In addition, it resulted in a nonskid surface, so

it was perfect for pool decks. This solution became Bill's first major contribution to the decorative industry.

Today, this invention is generally known as Cool Deck, as it has properties that cause it to be cooler than gray concrete in warmer climates.

A few years later, Bill left Florida and headed west to Tucson, Ariz. He brought with him the formulas for his concrete additives and founded Mortex Manufacturing. He also continued with his construction interests by installing swimming pool decks using his installation technique and additives.

Shortly thereafter, he taught others to install this system and hung up his trowel to focus on manufacturing.

After nearly a decade, Bill left Mortex Manufacturing and headed even further west, this time to northern California. It was there he founded Stegmeier Corp. in 1968, for which he is best known in the industry.

At about this time, Bill introduced the very first cantilever deck form made of expanded polystyrene (Styrofoam). His industry-changing forming product replaced precast coping stones, and this type of forming method is still used in the majority of

in-ground swimming pool installations today.

"Bill's creative solutions have always been rooted in solving challenges in construction applications. Unlike with many inventors, the profitability or marketability of an idea was always at the end of his process," says Bill's son, Bud.

In fact, many products in the industry today date back to one of Bill's nearly 60 patents, including the removable top and other deck drains, a variety of deck forms, installation tools, and many more.

After nearly half a century in the industry, Bill passed the leadership of Stegmeier Corp. on to the team of partners, including his son Bud, who own and operate the company now known as Stegmeier LLC.

Even though Bill is enjoying retirement, he maintains an office at the company, regularly contributes to the development of new products and remains a valuable member of the Stegmeier team.

"Bill has always been the classic example of the American entrepreneur, but more importantly to me, my father has always shown me through example what true work ethics and integrity should be," Bud says.

## BARBARA SARGENT

FOR most people, retirement means a lifetime of sleeping in, taking vacations, and lunches with friends or family. Not for **Barbara Sargent**.



Sargent had a prestigious career at Lambert Landscape Co. beginning in 1972 until the early 1990s. She rose to the position of vice president, where she was responsible for marketing, customer service and the retail division. It was during her tenure there that she was introduced to Epmar Corp.'s Kemiko stains and coatings and the idea of decorative concrete.

As part of retirement negotiations with Lambert, she agreed to stay three more years, and in turn, would be allowed to take on the company's distributorship of Kemiko products.

Why would someone give up the retired

life to distribute a product that somebody else manufactured?

"I was so intrigued by the trendless concept," she says. "Back then, decorative concrete staining was extremely commercial. The backbone of my business plan was to expand the interest of everyone involved in the residential marketplace."

So for years, Barbara and her husband "Sarge" worked tirelessly to expand Kemiko's presence. Through advertising, trade events and home improvement shows, Kemiko achieved national recognition as a leading decorative concrete supplier in the residential sector.

Thanks in part to their leadership, decorative concrete was no longer used just for commercial applications.

"We worked relentlessly to promote the 'concrete concept.' We were challenging the old idea of traditional floor building materials and convincing people to think decorative

concrete could be in the home," she says.

Although she and Sarge were the only two working on the mission full time, she's quick to note they didn't do it alone. Barbara formed an alliance with Jim Peterson of the Concrete Network website to promote residential decorative concrete in 1999, which she says gave her, and her vision, credibility. In 2002, she teamed up with Bob Harris of the Decorative Concrete Institute, which led him to begin teaching classes focused on using Kemiko products. "The association with Bob was to the betterment of Kemiko and my success in the industry," she says.

After leaving her mark on the industry, Barbara retired for good in 2008. She now spends her days relaxing in her rural Texas home and traveling with Sarge. "When all is said and done, I'm proud of my through-line, meaning my start to finish. I started with and finished with passion," she says.

## BYRON KLEMASKE II

**BYRON Klemaske II** is widely recognized as a leading authority and innovator in the decorative concrete industry, in part because of his position as executive vice president of operations at T.B. Penick & Sons Inc., a San Diego construction company celebrated for its architectural decorative concrete.



When Byron was just 17 years old, in the early 1970s, he took a leap of faith and went to work for John T. Dryden Inc., a San Diego concrete imprinting company. He quickly became intrigued with the possibilities of the Bomanite process used by the company, and went on to develop innovative decorative concrete products, tools, methods and finishes. He expanded uses and markets for decorative concrete and trained many other notable people in the industry.

After working for John T. Dryden, Byron and his two brothers formed Klemaske Brothers Concrete, and they made a name for themselves installing architectural finishes throughout the San Diego area.

Later, while working at Progressive Concrete, in Escondido, Calif., Byron was instrumental in developing Micro-Top, a troweled-on cementitious topping that is now manufactured by Bomanite, and Arte Povera,

a coloration system utilized by Progressive Concrete.

"As I look back on (what achievement I think about the most), I truly believe it was the development of a decorative microtopping and taking it to the marketplace," he says. "It was a good, heartfelt achievement."

In 1999, Byron's reputation for innovation and team-building caught the attention of Tim Penick, who was looking to expand the concrete division of his company. Byron joined T.B. Penick & Sons Inc. as vice president of operations and head of the firm's Innovative Concrete Group. He assembled a top team of decorative concrete artisans, including his wife, Chris, his brothers, and several other family members. Today, T.B. Penick, founded in 1905, is recognized as one of the leading decorative concrete companies in the world.

After four decades in the business, Klemaske remains passionate about the concrete industry. Recently, he helped T.B. Penick secure a federal patent for a pervious concrete system called Pervious Concrete Elements. Always an innovator and visionary, Byron continues to push himself and inspire the industry to evolve in terms of sustainability, functionality, new products, new uses, new finishes and new concepts of architectural and design beauty.

Byron's architectural and innovative

concrete systems include work at Coastal Grand Mall in Myrtle Beach, S.C.; Tai Mall in Taoyuan, Taiwan; CityCenter in Las Vegas; Grapevine Mills Mall in Dallas, Texas; Opry Mills Mall in Nashville, Tenn.; Epcot Center in Orlando, Fla.; Disneyland Hotel in Anaheim, Calif.; Disney Hong Kong; Disney Shanghai and more than 600 Abercrombie & Fitch retail stores internationally, to name a few.

Byron has exhibited an ongoing commitment to excellence and innovation, and he has helped to shape the art and the business of decorative concrete. He is past president of the American Concrete Institute's San Diego chapter.

Through his efforts T.B. Penick has garnered accolades that include recognition in Concrete Construction magazine's annual CC100 list as the No. 1 decorative concrete contractor, mentions in Engineering News-Record magazine's annual lists of the Top 400 Contractors and Top 600 Specialty Contractors, and several awards for safety. The company's projects have won numerous honors, including Cornerstone Excellence Awards and awards from leading industry magazines, the ASCC Decorative Concrete Council, the ACI, the American Institute of Architects and the American Society of Civil Engineers. 🚧



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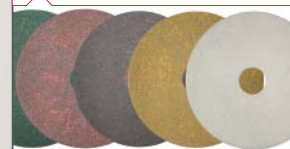
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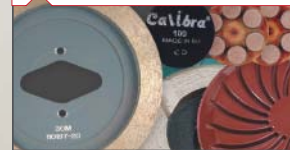
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ChemMasters Inc. has announced a new low-VOC concrete cure-and-seal. Polyseal EZ is slow-evaporating and bubble-resistant. It provides excellent cosmetics for decorative applications such as exposed aggregate and stamped concrete. It also provides high-quality curing, sealing and dustproofing for broom finished concrete driveways, sidewalks and patios.

Polyseal EZ addresses problems that caused bubble formation from rapid solvent evaporation, exposure to solar radiation and windy conditions. Polyseal EZ can be applied all day, even under windy conditions, solving scheduling problems while delivering an attractive and protective finish.

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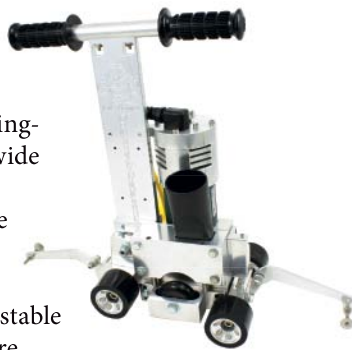


## ENGRAVING

### Engrave-A-Crete adds Lil' Beaver to tool line

Engrave-A-Crete Inc. has announced the Lil' Beaver, the newest addition to their line of decorative concrete engraving tools. The Lil' Beaver offers decorative concrete installers a professional mid-size engraver with full-size power and king-size ability, capable of producing a wide range of cuts.

Features of the Lil' Beaver include a spring-loaded head, a powerful motor that turns at 10,000 rpm, easily adjustable cutting depth, adjustable blade width, a vacuum port and more.



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### New wireless Bluetooth-capable moisture tester

The Rapid RH DataMaster is a smartphone-size wireless handheld device that, when used in conjunction with the Rapid RH BT Reader and the Rapid RH 4.0 EX Smart Sensor, allows the user to acquire the internal relative humidity and temperature of a concrete slab via Bluetooth technology.

Incoming data is stored on standard SD cards. Contractors, inspectors and flooring professionals can store multiple job sites on each card, or they can maintain individual and complete records for each contract by simply swapping out the SD card for each job site.

USB data transfer can be done via an integrated USB port or with the use of any standard SD card reader. This data can be uploaded, if desired, to [F2170reports.com](http://F2170reports.com), ensuring data integrity and proper data documentation to comply with ASTM F2170-11. Along with generating RH reports from the most current readings, Wagner's reporting site compares each sensor serial number with a database to verify that the sensor is within the calibration window documented on the certificate of calibration, which is provided with each sensor purchase. It will also print verification of each report generated.

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### WerkMaster's little Termite polishes floors and countertops

See article on page 63.

## STAINS & COLORANTS

### New Walttools dye concentrate can be mixed with water

New Tru Tint Concrete Dye from Walttools comes as 16 ounces of concentrate that can be diluted with water or any water-miscible solvent to create a gallon of concrete dye.

Tru Tint penetrates and performs like a traditional acetone-based dye but without the headaches and precautions. It can be applied with an airless sprayer, pump sprayer, roller, brush, microfiber applicator, or even a cotton rag.

Because it is mixed with water, not acetone, it is ideal for basements or small areas where ventilation and hazardous fumes could be a concern.

Surfaces can be sealed the same day with any number of decorative sealers. If conditions are right and the contractor is experienced enough, acetone can be used for the carrier in lieu of water to provide a faster turnaround time before sealing.

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Brickform Vertical Mix may be applied to vertical surfaces such as wood, drywall, concrete and CMUs.

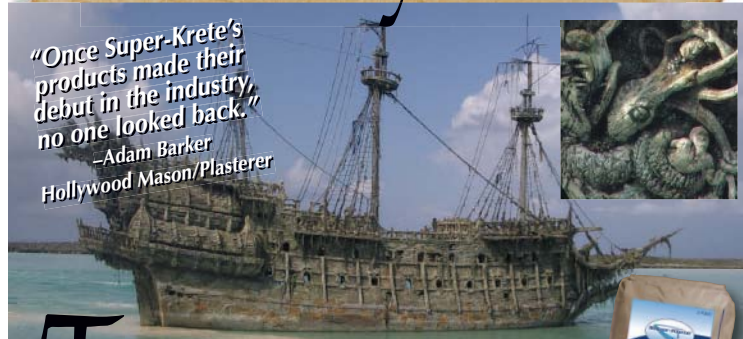
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## FUNDAMENTALS OF BUSINESS

# Using the Four P's of Marketing to Sell Concrete

**A**s a manager of your decorative concrete installation business, it is your responsibility to develop strategic marketing activities and organize fully integrated marketing programs that benefit your customers.



by Jacob Webb

Marketing activities exist in multiple forms. In 1960, marketer E. Jerome McCarthy identified four distinctive types of marketing, often referred to as the “four P’s”: product, price, place and promotion. This marketing mix provides a standard framework for a decorative concrete professional to communicate and deliver lasting value to customers.

## Product

A product is a good or service that satisfies a customers’ need. Sure, you can expand that definition, but it’s sufficient for the purpose of this article.

As a decorative installer you can increase the depth or breadth of your services to continuously satisfy your customers’ needs. A deeper product line might include services beyond decorative concrete, such as landscaping. A broader product line would include a greater number of decorative concrete services beyond your specialty. If you stain concrete, learn to engrave concrete. Then learn concrete stamping. Then polishing — all in an effort to provide a variety of services that enable you to capture more business in your marketplace.

Of course, market demand should always be the driving force behind the need to strategically expand your product offering.

There are many other elements of product strategy that can help you deliver customer value. For example, decorative installers can improve the quality of

their product by participating in product training. Of course, using quality products to begin with would be a smart start. So make intelligent choices about the products you use.

Your company’s brand name is another product element that communicates perceived value. Brands are common when goods are involved, but less common with services. This does not need to be the case. If your decorative service does not currently have a brand name (that you can potentially trademark), then create one. I train my Certified NewLook Installers to use the Ghosting Technique when staining stamped concrete. Essentially, you wipe off wet Translucent Color Enhancer in areas of concrete relief to expose the base color under the surface tint. But Ghosting is much easier to say, isn’t it? Use market research to identify the effectiveness of your service brand name.

Engineering your product mix should also include an evaluation of your warranties and return policies. Both communicate the value of your decorative business’s brand image.

Customers look to warranties and return policies as a sign of product performance, but it’s not easy for a customer to return an installed decorative concrete floor. Rather, consider “replacement policies” that establish confidence in your product. Other elements of the product mix can include design, features, packaging or sizes.

## Price

Your cost per square foot is not the only pricing tool at your disposal. Other elements, such as discounts, allowances, payment period and credit terms, can be used to influence your customers’ decision to sign on the dotted line.

But establishing your price per square foot is a little more complicated than you might think. Setting your pricing policy requires selecting the pricing objective,

determining demand, estimating costs, analyzing competitors’ costs and prices, selecting a pricing method, and selecting the final price.

## Place

Place marketing is concerned with the various methods of distributing a product and making it available to customers through strategic distribution channels. Of course, marketing channels are not limited to the distribution of physical goods only. As a decorative concrete professional, you face the challenge of making your output available and accessible to your targeted customer base. You must figure out the most appropriate agencies, locations and mediums for reaching your target market. Fortunately, there are a variety of distribution channels within the decorative concrete industry.

It’s standard practice for decorative contractors to deliver their services on a direct basis, meaning direct to the property owner. And you can market your service directly to them in a number of ways.

You’re not limited to this channel. Consider establishing a strategic alliance with distribution partners such as property development companies or architecture firms. Being a “preferred subcontractor” can connect you with or even expose you to project opportunities you would not have been aware of otherwise.

The location or locations of your decorative concrete business is another placement strategy you must consider. You can’t be everywhere at once. Most firms, even service-based firms, resolve this challenge by establishing multiple locations. Should you hire and train multiple crews to expand your physical presence within your market? Or should you stake your claim in a smaller geographic niche? The answer to these questions will depend entirely on your market research, the needs of your market, and your business’s existing constraints.



## Promotion

When people think of marketing, their minds usually go to the activities involved in promotion, specifically advertising. But you're more sophisticated than that because you read my articles, right? Yes, we seek to establish fully integrated marketing strategies that create customer value by incorporating the entire marketing mix, not just advertising.

Sales promotions are a type of short-term incentive you can use to encourage customers to hire you. Contests, games, sweepstakes, lotteries, premiums and gifts, product sampling, fairs and trade shows, exhibits, demonstrations, coupons, rebates, low-interest financing, entertainment, trade-in allowances, continuity programs, tie-ins — the list of possible sales promotions goes on and on. "The first 100 square feet are free!" And, "Hire us before a certain date to take advantage of our fall discount!"

Advertising can be done a number of ways: Print and broadcast ads, brochures and fliers, posters and leaflets, reprints of ads, billboards, display signs, window stickers, truck decals, symbols and logo marks, videos.

Businesses in the decorative concrete industry benefit most from traditional advertising, such as print ads. Online advertising using Google AdWords or a similar program can also be effective when you market on a local basis. I can tell you from personal experience that running from house to house with door hangers is NOT the most effective way of advertising your business. Learn from my mistakes.

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You can never go wrong with personal selling, the face-to-face interaction with one or more prospective customers. Make sales presentations to local architecture firms. Answer technical questions, demonstrate product applications, provide product samples and offer incentive programs. Participate in your local fair or trade show. There are a number of ways to sell your service on a personal level.

No matter how you slice it, customer value is driven by the presence of every component of the marketing mix. 📧

*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](mailto:jacob@getnewlook.com).*



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## The Pros and Cons of Taking On Military Projects

**A**s a polishing consultant I get to wear several different hats, but by far the largest amount of my time is spent managing polished concrete programs for retailers. Polished concrete is an aesthetically beautiful and valuable flooring solution, but it is fairly specialized. The industry has not been around for a very long time and standardization is difficult because of the wide range of equipment, chemicals and project conditions that affect the process. The contractors' experience and competency also come into play. I set



by David  
Stephenson

standards that address these issues using the specifications process.

One of my customers is a group called AAFES (Army & Air Force Exchange Service), a very large retailer that you will find only on United States Army and Air Force bases. The Exchange presents polished concrete projects ranging from stores of about 8,000 square feet all the way up to about 150,000 square feet.

This is good work for any contractor who wants to go after it. However, there are some specific things to consider when doing work on military installations. These issues should be considered prior to your bid on any project involving military property.

As you read, keep in mind that government work is always awarded to the lowest qualified bidder in every situation,

no matter how large or small the project is.

The first issue is wage requirements. Since all projects done on military installations are funded in some part by tax dollars, all wages are held to the standard set by the Davis-Bacon Act. In a lot of cases this standard will require a higher wage for employees working on base. There is also a lot of office paperwork that goes into compliance with this standard. Don't assume that you can get around it or try to do the job outside of compliance. My experience is that the general contractor will allow you to complete your work, but they will not pay you until you turn the compliance documentation in to them. The extra wages and hours are an important consideration in your bidding process.

The second thing to consider is access.

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All U.S. military bases have tight controls in place for civilian access to the base. On most bases contractors have a special gate to use, and every time one of your vehicles wants to enter the base, the vehicles will be searched.

All employees wanting to work on the base are subjected to a background check. It is very important that all IDs are reviewed prior to driving to the base to ensure that they are valid (not expired) and legal. Without a valid ID the employee will not be allowed to enter the base. If the military police find a warrant out on any employee attempting to enter the base the military police will detain that person and notify the county or city where the warrant was issued. This means that if the base you are working on is in California and the warrant was issued in Texas your employee will stay in jail until the warrant has been cleared or the Texas police come to pick up the offender.

You need to include wait time for searches and background checks in your bidding costs, because this is time that your employees will be paid for without any contribution to the work on the project.

Also, it is important to understand that when you are on a military base, civilian laws do not apply to you. The laws are different and the consequences for not following the base regulations are much more severe than they are for breaking civilian laws.

When you are working on a military-base project, it is especially important to review your specifications. Every



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job, every time, all of your work will be compared to the specifications. If you do not meet specifications you will not get paid (obviously with the exception of circumstances that are beyond your control). I recommend that the foreman or on-site personnel have a copy of the specifications with them on the project.

Military-base projects are usually reviewed by committee. You generally have between two and four people who are reviewing your work — they need to

agree that you have done a good job and that you meet or exceed your specification requirements. This means that as long as you meet your specs you are in great shape, but if you do not, the odds are that one of the people in this group will notice and call you on the discrepancy.

Knowing all that, you might not want to accept work on military bases, but there are some very good reasons why you should. First, the work is steady. When the military decides to build something or

remodel something, that work is not done immediately. Usually all funding is in place 12 to 18 months before construction starts. This means that the decision to build or not build happens way before the bid date. If a project gets to the bidding phase, you can be sure that it will be completed. This is different from civilian retailers, who have the ability to change their minds or the schedule days before a project starts.

Military bases are not under the jurisdiction of any city or state, so you can work on bases anywhere without worrying about state or city licensing. In some states this is a huge bonus for this work. Also, all of your materials for military projects are nontaxable. This saves quite a bit on cost when you purchase materials or tooling.

Because of all of the regulations and hurdles that you have to clear to work on military projects, the pricing is usually a bit higher than the industry standard. If the project is managed properly, this higher price can lead to a higher profit margin. Overall, if you are thorough with your record-keeping and specification review, military work can be very lucrative.

Last but not least, the military will always pay the bills (which is sometimes hard to guarantee in the public sector) as the projects are fully funded well in advance of construction. 🛠️

*David Stephenson is the owner of Polished Concrete Consultants, located in Dallas, Texas. As a consultant, he specializes in decorative concrete programs for retailers and troubleshooting for a wide range of clients in the United States and internationally. Contact him at david@polishedconsultants.com.*





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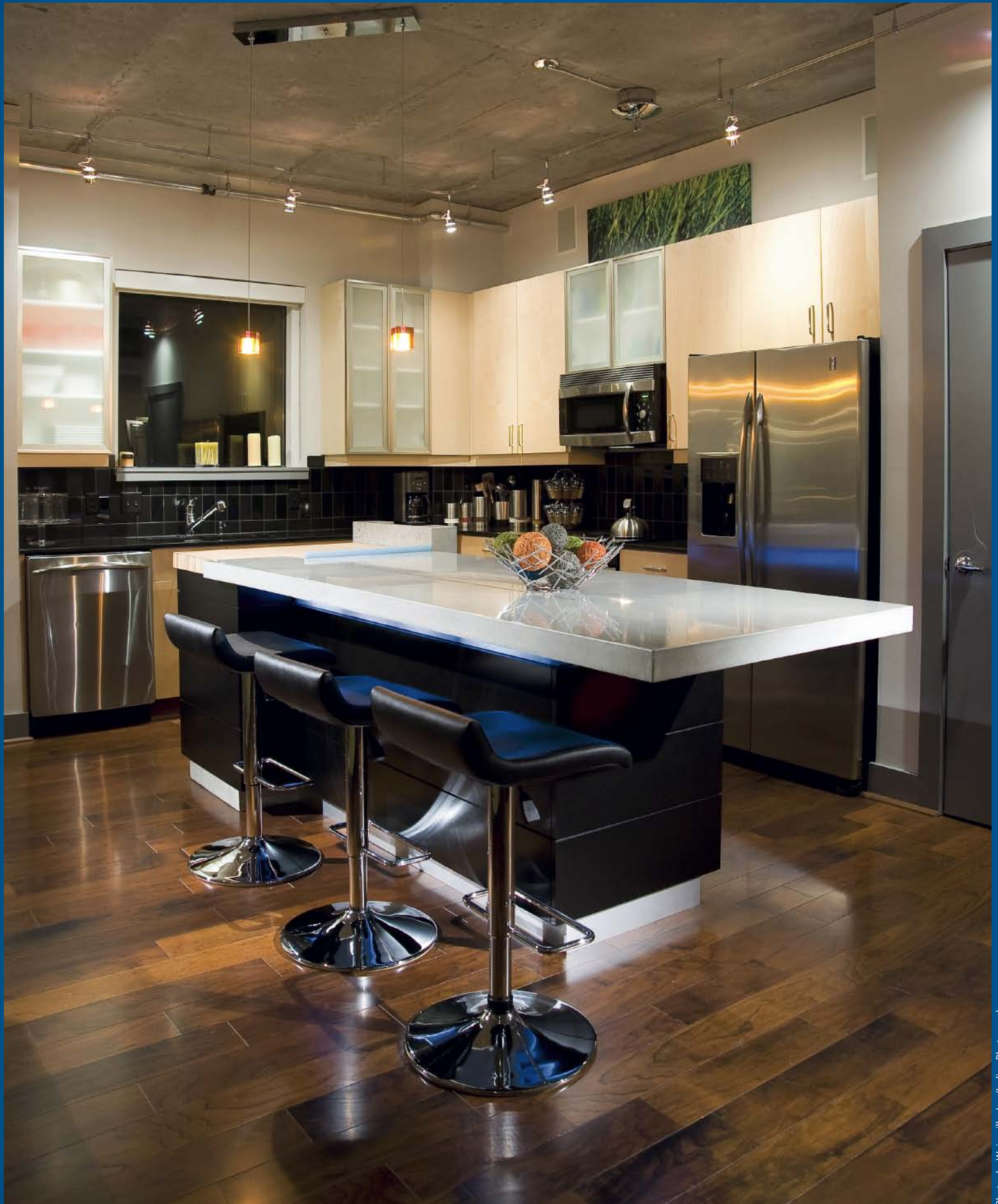
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# Eric Boyd, Reaching Quiet Design Charlotte, N.C.

by Stacey Enesey Klemenc

**A**SERENDIPITOUS event in early 2002 led Eric Boyd down the path to discovering the beauty of decorative concrete.

Two months before graduating from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte with a bachelor's degree in architecture, he and two other students opened their own design-build firm. One of the first jobs they landed was a kitchen remodel where the client asked for concrete countertops, somewhat of a novelty back then.

"The only one I knew making them was Fu-Tung Cheng, who had just come out with a book my buddy had," says Boyd.

After trying to research countertops on the Internet with little success, Boyd ended up calling Cheng, who hooked him up with pigments and other ingredients and talked him through the project.

Before Boyd knew it, someone else who had seen the countertops wanted one, followed by another customer. Soon, he and his partners outgrew their 400-square-foot shop. "No one else in the area was making concrete countertops," he says. "We became our own fabricators and just fell into the concrete thing."

Now, 11 years later, the 37-year-old works with Mills Howell, a brother of one of the founding partners. They oversee five employees at an 11,000-square-foot warehouse shop and a nearby 1,500-square-foot showroom in uptown Charlotte under the moniker of Reaching Quiet Design. The

company name, which was taken from an obscure band they liked, was selected because of its Zen-like overtones.

Boyd, who is co-owner and lead designer in the business, estimates 85 percent to 90 percent of their work today is concrete-related. The rest is in wood and metal.

## Finding a niche

When it comes to decorative concrete, Boyd says he's not interested in applications like floors or faux rocks or acid staining. His company mainly creates countertops, bars and sinks in its studio by hand with the help of nonautomated machinery.

"Our basic countertops are usually wet-cast," he says. "If it involves a lot of 3-D elements like most of the work we produce, we use GFRC (glass-fiber reinforced concrete)."

In fact, he's currently working on getting an online store together where his company will offer GFRC items such as side tables, vanities, sinks and tiles to consumers nationwide.

His niche also involves creating sustainable things that have a positive impact on the environment, Boyd says. He uses materials sourced within a 500-mile radius, with the concrete made from locally quarried sand and rock combined with locally made cement.

More important than the green aspects of his creations,





he says, is the fact that they are individually made to stand the test of time. "We strive to create products that will last for generations," Boyd says. The firm designs and fabricates most of its work by hand and continually blurs the boundaries between architecture, interior design, and product and furniture development.

Boyd says his company is usually involved with projects from conception to completion, an approach practiced by many fabricators today. "We are much more than just a producer of slabs. Nowadays, we offer a more design-oriented package," he says. "Because we're part of the consultation process, we wind up doing things an

interior designer wouldn't think of and we end up with a better project."

### Relationships matter

Boyd is well-connected to other big names in the concrete countertop family. He maintains a friendship with Fu-Tung Cheng, who still mentors him from time to time. He has been pals with Brandon Gore in Arizona for many years and has been influenced by many others in the business, including Blue Concrete's Shawn Hays, Jeremy French and Jon Schuler.

Boyd gets his supplies mainly from Blue Concrete, which carries pigments that can be custom-blended to match any Benjamin

Moore color available. He also likes their ICT First Sealz, a reactive sealer that he claims gives concrete some of the same characteristics as quartz. "After a month or so, you have a product that can withstand substantial abuse," Boyd says. "Bleach is one of the only products we've seen that can change the concrete's appearance."

Thanks to social media sites such as Facebook and individual blogs, Boyd says, so many people in the decorative business know each other and hobnob together at conventions. Rather than keeping what they have learned to themselves, many are reaching out to their peers through social media to save them from making mistakes





they can avoid.

"Up until four or five years ago, everyone (except a few like Cheng) kept their secrets to themselves, but that's really changed. Many of us have realized we're not all competitors. We are really such a small industry, and it's to everyone's benefit in the long run if we all do a good job, share our knowledge and boost the public's perception of decorative concrete," Boyd says.

### Pearls of wisdom

For those artisans just breaking into the business, Boyd offers some friendly advice. "Learn as much as you can about the products and business and make informed

decisions. Test all the products before you use them on a job to determine what's comfortable for you and what looks you like."

And above all, he continues, don't grow too big too quickly. "And I'm saying that from experience. I would love not to have an 11,000-square-foot warehouse in the city. I would rather have a barn out in the country for my workshop and a showroom in the city."

Right before the bottom fell out of the economy a couple of years ago, Reaching Quiet relocated from a 2,000-square-foot shop to its current 11,000-square-foot warehouse and also leased a showroom. The move increased its monthly overhead

by \$5,000.

"We had so much work coming in just from word of mouth that we got cocky," he says. "We put all our profits into the new showroom without much thought. And then the next six months ... nothing. But somehow, we managed to pull through when a lot of other businesses failed."

If you need more help, he suggests, first hire an apprentice. Keep it as small as you can and even turn down jobs. "I'm convinced there's a lot to be said about staying small."

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## **5church**

Corner of West Fifth and North Church streets, Charlotte, N.C.

**Owners:** MAP Management, with principals Mills Howell (of Charlotte-based Reaching Quiet Design); Patrick Whalen and Alejandro Torio.

**Contractors who worked on project:** Maurice Tanzino and Brian Connely (general contractors), Reaching Quiet Design, Mudwerks, Leonard Greenberg (metal tree sculpture), Rodney Raines and Matt Hooker (\$5-bill painting), Nathaniel Lancaster (buffalo painting) and Morgan Chair (upholstery).

**Scope of Work:** Reaching Quiet spearheaded a complete remodel of the existing restaurant that involved interior and exterior design, plus fabrication of interior elements that included wall treatments, columns, concrete log tiles, concrete-log side tables, all dining tables, two bars, a mezzanine balcony wall, pulled-plaster mirror frame, pulled-plaster reception desk and large concrete coffee table.

**Materials used:** Concrete additives and pigments from Blue Concrete/Delta Performance Products LLC; ICT First Sealz from Blue Concrete; Cheng Concrete Sealer; cypress tree slabs, steel and oak for tables; Mineheart wallpaper; and lighting by Moooi, Flos and Artecnic.

Photos courtesy of Weinmiller Inc./Indigo

## **5church**

**A sumptuous concrete spread at a high-end  
central Charlotte restaurant**

by Stacey Enesey Klemenc

**D**ESCRIBED by Reaching Quiet lead designer Eric Boyd as a “fun, quirky and surreal bar, restaurant and nightclub” all rolled into one, 5church in uptown Charlotte has offered visitors an escape from the mundane ever since it opened its doors in May 2012.

“Even people without an eye for design take note of all the handmade things in

5church and the time involved putting it all together,” Boyd says about the 5,000-square-foot multilevel space. Its industrial-chic interior sports a stark grayscale style.

“Everything but the lighting and the wallpaper was handmade — the columns, the balconies, the bars, the tables, the artwork,” he says about the furnishings. Even the ceiling has been hand-painted by







a local artist. If you look up, you can read Sun Tzu's 2,000-year-old epic "The Art of War" — not just a few phrases but the entire book.

One of the reasons "The Art of War" is featured so prominently was because the book heavily influenced 5church's overall design. "A lot of design choices were based off that book's chapter on deception," Boyd explains. "A lot of stuff — the log walls, the concrete tablecloths — aren't made from what you'd expect. The interior reflects the whole fantasy element."

Inside, decorative concrete that resembles Venetian plaster is troweled on some walls while molded log tiles made out of glass-fiber reinforced concrete (GFRC) cover others. Huge columns shaped to look like intricately crafted wooden chair legs were designed with a CAD program, fashioned out of foam and chicken wire, and covered with troweled-on white concrete. A balustrade in the mezzanine was made the same way. It looks like gigantic molding, Boyd says, adding that the upstairs concrete bar sports the same oversized molding.

While some tables in 5church are custom-made out of metal and locally grown cypress or oak, many feature GFRC fashioned to resemble tree stumps or draped tablecloths. The upstairs bar also features the fabric-formed tablecloth look.

As for the food served at 5church, Boyd says the restaurant is all about promoting quality local goods rather than those mass-produced somewhere else. Its farm-to-table menu features traditional American fare with unexpected twists, such as its four gigantic fries and lamb-burger platter.

Mills Howell, Boyd's partner at Charlotte-based Reaching Quiet, is one of three people who own MAP Management, the company that owns and operates 5church. "This is the first project where we (the management and design companies) worked together as a team. We designed the whole thing from concept to completion," Boyd says.





## Discovery Place

A “cracked-earth” mezzanine overlooks the Rainforest Habitat

by Emily Dixon

**S**URELY you’ve heard the phrase “concrete jungle,” but what about concrete *in* the jungle? In this case, the jungle is the Rainforest Habitat at Discovery Place, in uptown Charlotte. The exhibit boasts wildlife ranging from birds and reptiles to vegetation such as palms and epiphytes.

It’s all viewable from a concrete mezzanine, which was renovated in 2010 to look like cracked earth.

After the surface was properly prepped and ground down, Jason Wartinger of MDJ Construction Co. Inc., out of Fort Mill, S.C., applied L. M. Scofield’s stampable topping, Scofield Texturetop, which was integrally colored with Chromix Admixtures in Barcelona Brown. He then applied the texture using a Lithotex Pavecrafters embossing skin in a Fractured Earch pattern, and he added Scofield’s Lithochrome Chemstain Classic in Black, Dark Walnut and Padre Brown for depth. He then sealed it with a water-based sealer, using Scofield’s Cureseal-W.

While the work was relatively straightforward for Wartinger, there were major considerations to keep in mind when selecting products. All the wildlife had to remain in exhibit during construction, so everything had to be as clean and ecofriendly as possible.

“We had to keep the dust down and everything had to be low-VOC so it wouldn’t affect any of the animals,” Wartinger says.



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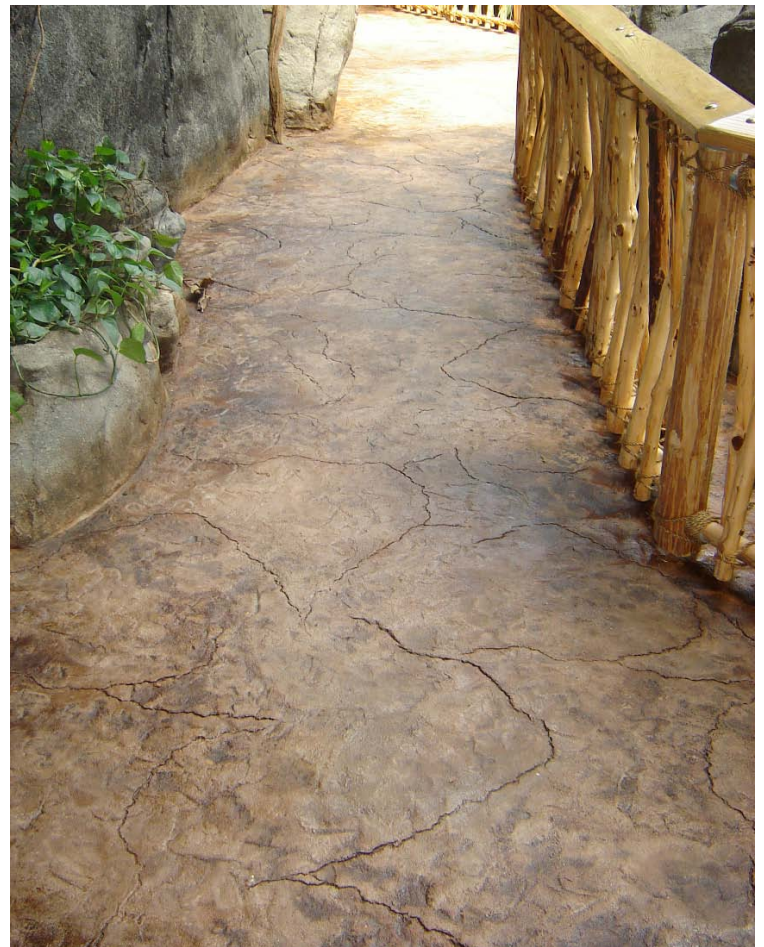
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## Charlotte Convention Center Light-Rail Tracks

*Attractive concrete that subtly discourages pedestrians*

by Emily Dixon

**L**IKE any commercial building, the Charlotte Convention Center has a set of emergency exits that lead to the outside. However, the Convention Center had a unique problem in that its doors led towards the tracks for the Charlotte Light Rail.

A decade ago, the Convention Center wanted to give the concrete between the tracks a treatment that would discourage pedestrians from thinking the area was a sidewalk and lingering in the danger zone. So the project's Charlotte-based architect, The FWA Group, got in touch with John Fletcher, president of Charlotte-based Carolina Bomanite Corp.

His solution was to stamp the 1,400-square-foot area with a cookie-cutter style Bomanite stamp in a River Stone design. The grooves between the stones are quite large (more than 1 1/2 inches deep by 3/4 inch wide), making them a challenge to walk on for the casual. The rock pattern also helps keep the concrete from looking like a sidewalk.

The project was finished in November 2003. "It looks good where it's at," Fletcher says. "It was one of those cases where you install it for a utilitarian purpose, yet it fits very well."



Photos courtesy of Carolina Bomanite Corp.



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## Levine Museum of the New South

*The historical museum is enhanced by three unique floor treatments*

by Emily Dixon

**P**UTTING down a beautiful concrete museum floor that doesn't distract from the artwork is, well, creating a work of art in its own right. Jeroen Kaijser Bots, owner of Huntersville, N.C.-based Eurofloors, was able to do so at the Levine Museum of the New South with not just one style of flooring, but three.

The Levine Museum of the New South approached Kaijser Bots because of his reputation for creating stunning, high-end projects. The museum was looking to revamp their old floor. Over its 80-year lifetime, it had endured a number of stains, layers of glue, and vinyl tile. Overall, Kaijser Bots says, "It was a mess."

In the Museum's 2,000 square-foot entryway, the Museum director and project architect were looking to replicate the look of dried mud. Kaijser Bots applied an overlayment from SureCrete, giving it a rough hand trowel to create the look the client was going for. "It's quite hard to make a floor look like mud when you actually want it to look like mud," Kaijser Bots joked. He then colored it accordingly using EcoStain from SureCrete, and sealed with a high-build epoxy.

Next, Kaijser Bots was asked to create a floor that would look reminiscent of the 19th century, as all the artifacts in that room



are from that era. Because of the floor's poor condition, Kaijser Bots first shotblasted, then ground the concrete. After the grinding, a custom color of reactive stain was applied, followed by a dye.

"I like staining because it gives so much more depth than when you use just a dye," Kaijser Bots says.

The area was then sealed with a high-build, 100 percent solids epoxy from American Industrial.

The third floor he transformed was designed to look like the streets of Charlotte. The museum wanted to use a product that looked like asphalt, and Kaijser Bots went with a vinyl chip system, using a base from American Industrial and a custom blend of chips from Torginol. He chose a polyaspartic sealer for durability and applied a top layer of Dura-Kote by SureCrete to give a satin finish.

As if having to create three distinct yet harmonious floors wasn't enough of a challenge, the museum remained open during the entire process. That meant odors were a big concern. The artifacts also remained in the building, so keeping dust at a minimum was crucial. Finally, because sections of the museum had to be closed to allow the work to be finished, time was of the essence.

"We worked on it day and night to make sure we had a quick enough turnaround," Kaijser Bots says. 🚚



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## CARLTON'S CORNER

## Using Sealers to Fight Freeze-Thaw

**W**ATCH out for water, especially in climates where you get cold winters. Water is by far the biggest challenge you will face as a decorative concrete professional.



Words like “spalling,” “flaking,” “pitting” or “chipping” are not what people making a living in concrete want to hear. Rarely do these words accompany a satisfied customer, and rarely do they lead to a profitable month.

Too much surface water will break down a film-type sealer, turning colored concrete white and unappealing. And water emission trapped beneath some sealer types will lead to an unattractive project.

So to fight water and freeze-thaw, you have to have a battle plan that involves proper sealers.

## No battle plan

The picture with the dollar bill shows a commercial project without a plan to battle freezing water. For the record, this project did not live up to the owner's expectations. The concrete pictured is only a few years old, and not long ago the integrally red-colored flatwork looked nearly flawless. It's obvious the contractor took great pains to consistently place several truckloads of colored concrete and equal pains to consistently finish the surface too. Let's break down what went wrong and then

chalk it up as a learning experience.

First, let me disclose that the only concrete failing on this commercial project is along areas with high foot traffic. The concrete is spalling, or flaking, along these areas because this is the only area exposed to heavy wintertime usage of de-icers. I visited this project and quickly noticed no concrete disruption in the outdoor seating area. No one uses this area in winter so there is no need to seed salt or de-icers here.



Photo courtesy of Doug Carlton

The wrong sealer led to freeze-thaw issues here.

A simple penetrating sealer would have eliminated, or greatly reduced, the problems pictured. A penetrating sealer would not affect the color, not affect the slip-resistance, and barely affect the project's budget.

A penetrating sealer would also simplify the snow removal process, making it less necessary to use a de-icer.

No one made a plan to control freeze-thaw or the ill effects of de-icing and the results are catastrophic and expensive to remedy. This flatwork will only deteriorate

further, eventually leaving the owner liable and at risk.

## Your exterior plan

Relying on the ready-mix company is not enough. Most suppliers will provide air-entrained concrete, which resists freeze-thaw damage, but this alone will not always be enough protection. Your exterior decorative concrete plan must include a short-term and long-term protective plan.

Let's take the short-term plan first. Concrete sealers work best when applied in temperatures 50 degrees and rising. So it's very possible that late-season flatwork will be left unsealed through the winter. If so, we must formulate a protection plan which includes not using de-icers until the concrete is properly protected. **DO NOT** let your customer use de-icers the first winter if concrete is left unsealed.

Your long-term plan hinges on a few steps taken during concrete placement. Keep the ready-mix just wet enough to provide a workable material for placement. Maintain a slope of 1/4 inch per foot, especially if the surface is imprinted. Water will puddle in low-lying areas, even with adequate slope, which creates even more justification for sealing. Let the concrete cure for at least 30 days before sealing. Thoroughly clean the surface with pressurized water and then let the surface dry overnight before applying the sealer.

Make sure all irrigation sprinklers spray away from the sealed surface. Make sure all roof drains discharge unwanted water into a drain and not across the flatwork surface.

One last thing to remember — topical sealers require a nonskid additive but penetrating sealers don't.

## Differences between sealer types

Few will argue that decorative flatwork looks best with a film-type topical sealer, but I personally will do everything possible to talk my customers out of this type of sealing. You can do everything textbook, topically speaking, and still find yourself with a customer call-back.

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topical sealer, learn how to sell your customer on the natural beauty of penetratingly sealed concrete. The paver industry has done this for years with great success.

Below are differences between the two sealer types, to help you out.

- Topical sealers cost more than penetrating sealers.
- Penetrating sealers generally last longer and provide protection longer.
- Topical sealers can be slippery, while penetrating sealers don't affect slip resistance.
- Penetrating sealers don't enhance color but topical sealers do.
- Topical sealers protect against the sun's UV rays but a penetrating sealer won't.
- Penetrating sealers will not protect against wear patterns from foot traffic, but topical sealers do.
- Topical sealers are notorious for "adverse reactions" while penetrating sealers aren't.
- Topical sealers can potentially provide a profitable maintenance side for your company, while penetrating sealers rarely offer resealing opportunities.
- Penetrating sealers are more user-friendly, while film-style sealers are

the most dangerous ingredient of decorative concrete. Most are made of solvent and very combustible. Solvent sealer is extremely dangerous when under pressure and warm, especially in 55-gallon metal drums. Also, skin and

eye burns are very common with topical sealers and very rare with penetrating sealers. 🛠️

Doug Carlton operates Carlton Concrete Inc., in Visalia, Calif. Reach him at [carltondoug@sbcglobal.net](mailto:carltondoug@sbcglobal.net).

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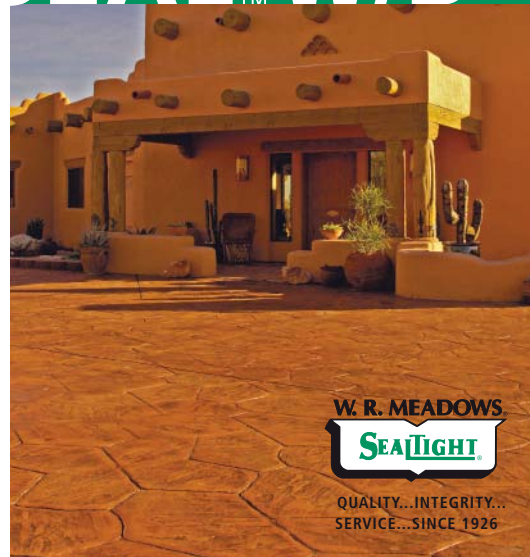
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# Predicting the Performance of a Countertop Sealer

EVERYTHING chips, stains and scratches to some degree. Anyone who tells you otherwise is lying to you. It is the degree to which a given material will survive damage that concerns us.



by Jeff Kudrick

Also, when something does chip, scratch or stain, ease of repair is of the upmost concern to our fabricating company, J&M Lifestyles.

Concrete has many faces, and there are many preconceived and misconceived ideas about it. You should not navigate what people think concrete is — instead, explain to them what it actually is. This includes your concrete, its finish and all of its attributes.

Setting expectations is the most important job we all have, so that people in general understand what it is to own a custom-fabricated product, not an assembled product. These expectations are based on your personal experience, not mine or anybody else's. Your knowledge and experience with concrete, as a contractor or as a homeowner with concrete work, and your persistence in improving your skills

are your most valuable assets. When it comes to sealers, I cannot place into your head all my unique experiences of what sealers have worked or what it is like to strip a top and reseal and hope the client will accept it. But I can describe the sealers we have come to use over the years, and I can try to describe their role in what we do at J&M Lifestyles.

Let's start with some general observations. If you use a silicate or penetrating sealer on a ground finish you can cut on, scratch or scrape on, the surface will end up having a visual aesthetic akin to that of engineered ground stone. It also may not be as stain-resistant, easy to fix or reliable as other finishes.

If you have a surface that has a delicate texture or that is acid-stained, you will want to use a finish that builds to protect it. You may not be able to cut or scrape on it, but it will be very stain-resistant in some cases and may even be easily repairable.

## Interior jobs

Indoors, there are fewer variables and elements to consider. There is no rain, very little direct sun, and usually a controlled temperature. There is little expansion and contraction and no hydrostatic pressure.



Photos courtesy of Jeff Kudrick

A useful tool tip from the author: This homemade mixer stand will hold down the trigger on a drill, allowing you to take notes on your working conditions while your sealer is mixing.

To make interior tops, we use modified composite concrete from SureCrete Design Products. It is a reliable, consistent material, and like a polymer-modified GFRC, it is

## How different sealer treatments compare, according to Jeff Kudrick

Sealer Type or Material	Scratch Resistance	Impact Resistance	Heat Resistance	Stain Resistance	Wet Sink Durability	Maintenance Ease	Ease of Spot Repair	Resealable Finish
Penetrating Reactive	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Great	Good	Excellent	Good	Good
Densifier Plus Penetrating Sealer	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Good	Good	Great	Good	Great
Densifier Plus Sacrificial Sealer	Fair	Excellent	Excellent	Good	Good	Great	Great	Great
Acrylic	Fair	Great	Good	Good	Poor	Fair	Great	Great
Polycarbonate	Fair	Great	Great	Great	Poor	Good	Great	Great
Epoxy	Good	Good	Fair	Great	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Great
Urethane	Great	Great	Good	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent

This chart of educated opinions gives some insight as to how these sealers compare to each other and how to manage customer expectations.



very dense and has a low vapor absorption rate that will not transfer moisture or wet through.

Your choice of a sealer depends on the finish you are applying to your concrete, whether it be cream, slightly ground, cast texture, hand-trowelled or stained.

## Reactive sealers

Most reactive sealers are classified as “densifiers,” silicates that react with the concrete, creating a chemical change. These finishes will harden the concrete surface and make it tighter, but they may still allow etching and often will need a sealing component.

Reactive sealers create a harder crystalline structure suitable for a ground surface or cream finish. However, if the surface is then blemished or stained, there is no topcoat to contain a repair. If the surface is ground, you will not be able to bring back the cream finish.

(Blue Concrete recommends that its ICT reactive sealer be used alone, without another sealer. However, the sealer’s reaction process needs heat and is time-consuming — it may take a couple of days. It’s best for you to keep the piece in your shop to properly QC its reaction.)

Penetrating sealers such as silanes and fluoropolymers repel liquids and pair nicely with some reactive sealers. Penetrating sealers also offer heat resistance — however, they still may allow oils to penetrate the surface. Some penetrating and reactive sealers can also be used in conjunction with a topical sealer, a sacrificial surface that can easily be applied by the homeowner.

## Types of topicals

Topical sealers are vast and prolific in the concrete field. The most common is an acrylic sealer, used in tandem with a sacrificial wax component. This is a single-part, easy-to-use and easy-to-repair sealer. However, it incurs a good amount of maintenance or repair due to its poor scratch resistance and limited stain resistance in countertop applications.

This isn’t all bad. The wear over time creates a patina effect that changes and varies the surface of the concrete, much like the patina on metal. If properly presented to the customers, this is a purist type of artisan finish, very often the choice of leading artisans like Tommy T. Cook.

Topicals typically offer UV resistance and can be used outside, but be sure to test the product you are using for yourself.

Polycarbonates, which act like acrylics, offer the same ease of application and limited scratch resistance but also high heat resistance. One from Pro-Seal Products Inc. couples this with fair acid and stain resistance and excellent UV stability. It is nontoxic and can be given to clients to reapply as necessary.

Epoxies are two-part and also easy to apply. They have a good bond but tend to scratch easily — still, they offer much better scratch resistance than an acrylic or polycarbonate. They are not UV-stable. Epoxies tend to be easy to repair, although good finishes almost always require a “seam-to-seam” reseal of the whole piece. The stain resistance is fair to good.

Urethanes are superior with scratch resistance to any we’ve covered in the coating category thus far. Urethanes were once hard to use, but that is not the case anymore. Water-based urethanes such as one offered by Richard James Specialty Coatings Corp. have been used for many years with a great degree of success. These coatings can be used in conjunction with other systems as well. Urethanes offer great scratch resistance, UV stability and excellent stain resistance.

Until recently, repairs with urethanes that were not solvent-based were very difficult and time-consuming, especially in areas that needed to be waterproof. Surecrete’s XS-327 is a high-solids hybrid urethane that can be colored, thinned and applied with varying solids content to achieve different degrees of finish, but it is also waterproof in spot sealing. We favor water-based sealers like these for their environmental attributes

and their application ease during a reseal in a home. Remember, when (not if) you have to repair a top someday, typically five to 10 years after installation, that if you did your job correctly, it still should be in relatively good shape. Note also that the multiple-step, multicomponent system and its time frame is limiting for production shops.

A topical sealer has advantages — the stain resistance is reliable and consistent and the application method and final outcome is easily tested or observed.



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Delamination is the greatest concern with topical sealers. Experience helps a lot, but you are at the mercy of the products that are being supplied to you.

## Fear the unknown

Other coatings are available but J&M Lifestyles has had limited experience and use with them. Polyaspartics are very scratch-resistant and typically very stain-resistant. However, as with any sealer, be aware of the MSDS, as certain sealers classified as polyaspartic can be hazardous.

Also, in some cases polyaspartics may be difficult to work with — and not conducive to spot repairs — due to their fast set times and difficulty in finishing. Remember that

you will get debris on a surface at any time and sanding and polishing a surface to an acceptable finish is necessary.

The newer technologies that blend different chemistries are not always categorized or marketed as what they actually are. Many companies for the sake of privacy and intellectual property protection will market a new technology as something other than what it is. Rely upon the experience of others, the reputation of the company producing it, and your experience and observations.

The following story outlines one of the other concerns that need to be looked at when choosing a sealer — a change in an existing product.

I had personal experience with a few variations of a nano-type sealer, a topical silane. After years of excellent performance and consistent success with it, we started having severe failure rates of 10 percent, totaling more than \$100,000 in damages with no recourse. This was coupled with poor and relatively nonexistent troubleshooting of its application, storage, QC or factory defects. It has been brought to my attention by numerous fabricators that we were not alone in seeing the failure of the product. What was once touted as an outdoor UV-stable, resealable, waterproof and reliable sealer turned out to fail on all accounts 10 to 20 percent of the time, beyond applicator error.

I implore you to seek out products from companies with long track records in concrete. Look for companies that offer reliable consistent service, that offer products and materials in a system, and that manufacture their own sealers.

Use whatever products you choose consistently and record all of the information available when you seal a piece. We use a finish order to list the sealer, secondary and tertiary color applications, weather, steps taken, time frames, date after



An example of the drill and mixing blade Jeff Kudrick uses to mix sealers.

cast, moisture content, and whatever other info is available. This sheet gets filled out when we are mixing and inducing sealers or cleaning up.

It is also good to think about the self-maintenance schedule introduced by Cheng Concrete that includes wax application by the clients. This is a great responsibility to give to a client. We use a sacrificial liquid wax that wipes on and dries in minutes to create a hard film that is clear, UV-stable, and gets rid of the superficial scratches in the surface.

A sealer such as the Pro-Seal polycarbonate allows a patina over time that is alluring, especially in a commercial setting that gets a lot of use. The employees get paid to maintain the area and can easily apply a wear coating. 🛠️

*Jeff Kudrick, product manager for J&M Lifestyles LLC, is well-known for his award-winning work fabricating kitchen and bath fixtures, fireplace surrounds, molded furniture, architectural details, columns and water features. Contact him at [jeff@jmlifestyles.com](mailto:jeff@jmlifestyles.com).*



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—Kevin from PA

## PROJECT PROFILE

# Bidding, Pouring and Finishing at a Northwest University

## Saint Martin's University Courtyard, Lacey, Wash.

by Chris Mayo

**M**OST decorative jobs involving new concrete come with some challenges; keeping a mix design consistent throughout multiple pours, maintaining color uniformity, achieving slump and PSI consistency. Not to mention weather, which can wreak havoc.

The 34,000-square-foot colored and stamped concrete courtyard that Allied Concrete Applicators poured at Saint Martin's University in Lacey, Wash., presented all those challenges and more.

Saint Martin's was founded in 1895 under Catholic Benedictine principles. There is still an active Benedictine Monastery on campus.

"Not surprisingly, they treat their grounds with great reverence," says Justin Farley, owner of Olympia, Wash.-based Allied. "Partly because of that reverence, they were very clear about what they wanted. The specifications on this job were extremely challenging."

Allied lead finisher Kevin Winkler was pleased that the specs were so challenging. The way Winkler saw it, the stern qualifications for the job limited the



Photos by Hezekiah Pugh/Goodlight Creative

number of lesser-trained companies in the bidding, giving his company an early advantage.

"The engineering specs required by the planning firm (SCJ Alliance, an Olympia engineering consulting firm) stated all the decorative concrete could not exceed a 4-inch slump and must achieve 4,000 PSI by the time of a 28-day compressive test," explains Winkler. "We achieved 5,000 PSI in compression tests in seven days using plasticizers and retarders in a mix design provided by Miles Sand and Gravel."

"In addition, all integrally colored stamped concrete had to match in color, as required by the architect, in all adjoining sections. An antislip profile also had to be provided to improve safety in wet conditions. The Saint Martin's people consistently reminded us that the project was about the people that will use it, look at it and enjoy it."

Another big challenge posed by the

design was the drainage slopes, Winkler says — as little as 0.8 percent in most areas and no more than 2 percent by design. The courtyard abuts buildings on campus, and tighter-than-normal slopes were required to match properly to the bottom stairs of the buildings.

SCJ Alliance civil project engineer Ross Jarvis says the drainage slopes were the most challenging aspect of the job. "We designed trench drain systems around the edge of the slab which will route storm water to an underground collection system. That part was fairly straightforward, but the specs on the slopes were incredibly tight."

### How the bid was won

During the competitive bid process, the university narrowed the field to Allied and a competitor. Both were then asked to provide details of previous jobs and conduct a presentation on how they would approach the challenges of the courtyard. "We met

### Project at a Glance

**Client:** Saint Martin's University, Lacey, Wash.

**Contractor:** Allied Concrete Applicators, Olympia, Wash.

**Architect:** Jeffrey B. Glander & Associates, Olympia, Wash.

**Project Description:** Place a 34,000-square-foot stamped courtyard with integrally colored field and borders

**Mix Design:** Miles Sand and Gravel Co., western Washington

**Products Used:** Brickform surface retarder; Brickform color hardener in Sun Buff, Buff Tan and Nutmeg; Brickform release agent in Sun Buff, Buff Tan, Nutmeg and Medium Gray; White Mountain solvent-based acrylic sealer; Brickform European Fan, Yucatan Stone and Herringbone Brick stamps

**Challenges:** High PSI requirements, low slump, achieving consistency in colors, tight specifications regarding slope, multiple pours in variable weather conditions





with the architect, engineers, and Saint Martin's representatives," recalls Winkler. "We showed them a job we had done at a Olympia restaurant in which we'd done concrete overlays, concrete countertops and extensive Fossilcrete.

"We focused the presentation on raising expectations and answering intelligent

questions with real answers. After a great lunch, being surrounded by our own work, and the influence of our presentation, we got the job."

Winkler believes they won the bid partly because they were able to explain how they would maintain the low water-to-cement ratio yet still achieve workability with

plasticizers and surface retarders. They also went into detail about maintaining color consistency by using integral color, then the same tint of color hardener on the surface.

Winkler believes the training and overseas consulting experience his foremen, Todd McMaster and Sean O'Neil, possess contributed greatly to the presentation. "We were more trained than our competitors," he says.

### Working in their socks

Kevin Winkler and his crew made sure each pour was dead-on with the slope design, Jarvis says. "One thing that still sticks out for me is that while they were manicuring the concrete they took off their work boots, and whenever they were on a slab they worked in their stocking feet. I'd never seen concrete crews do that before."

Winkler has his crew remove their shoes during the prep work for sealing. "It keeps debris off the slab," he says, "but it also instills a little extra sense of attention to detail in the crew."

The reason for the high PSI in the specs is that the concrete has to be able to support a fire-department ladder truck, as one of the buildings adjacent to the courtyard is four







stories tall. A ladder truck weighs 25,000 pounds per axle.

Given those specifications, it's no surprise that the rebar schedule was extensive: No. 4 rebar, 12 inches on center with 20-inch overlap, set 2 inches from the bottom in the 6-inch thick concrete. Stealth fiber mesh, a

fine fiberglass hair-like material, was added to the mix for additional strength. Winkler says the fiber helps reduce crazing or stretch cracks that occur during stamping.

"I think the biggest challenges on this job were the high PSI and the reinforcing and mix design that were required, as well as

the overall square footage," says Alan Tyler, director of facilities and capital project management for the university. "We tested each load of concrete for slump as well as taking core samples after seven days."

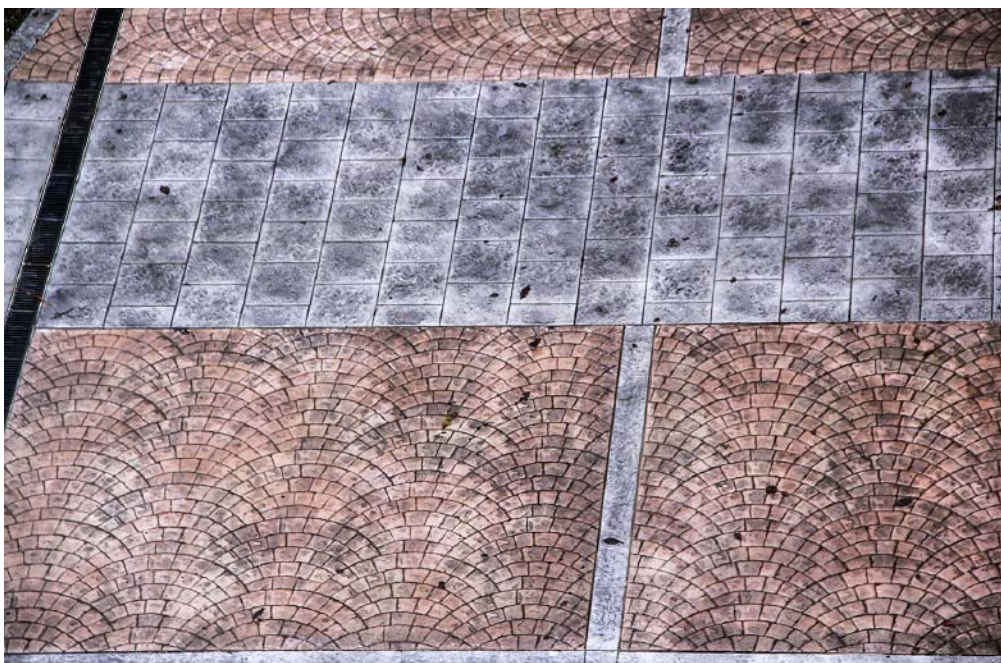
Slump tests on each load and core samples after seven days ensured the PSI requirements were being met.

### Details on top of details

Believing you can achieve tight specifications is one thing, pulling them off is another. Yet Winkler does not seem to have viewed the specs as challenges, but rather as equations that had to be worked out.

"The university was clear that they wanted consistency of color," recalls Winkler. "And the thing is, you can't really prove that colors will be consistent until the concrete cures. I explained to them in detail how I control color response with color hardeners. This is probably the touchiest aspect of maintaining consistency, when mix designs have to be slightly altered over the course of a few months in a place like Washington state."

The weather in Washington can change fairly drastically from day to day. The







courtyard job started in June and continued into November, so the crew dealt with heat, rain, cold and wind.

Winkler's approach was a combination of consistency and instinct.

"The key to color consistency is controlling the elements that you can control," Winkler says. "You can control the mix ratio and the amount of integral color. You can also control the timing of each step. The other aspects are a matter of feel and experience. The weather can't be controlled, but you can maintain some control over how you deal with it. If we had to alter our approach because it was hotter or colder, or wetter or dryer, we only did that with a clear idea of how any alterations might affect the consistency of our mix."

The team used more surface retarder on hotter days and in sunny areas and less retarder on cold days, Winkler says, but never altered the mix coming out of the truck. "For the most part, if you start with a baseline of a consistent mix from one pour to the next, the rest can be accomplished through an experienced touch."

Scott Woodard, sales and quality control representative for Miles Sand and Gravel, the concrete supplier, left this courtyard

job impressed. "Kevin definitely knew what he wanted to achieve in a mix design and let his supplier submit a mix that met those requirements," says Woodard. "We used a design mix with fly ash and water reducers to achieve the desired strength and workability of the concrete, keeping the water-cement ratio low, and added set retarders at Kevin's requested dosage."

DLB Earthwork Co. was the general contractor for the project. DLB superintendent Bob Randich says: "Though the scope of the work wasn't really out of the ordinary for us, the amount of detail the university expected was kind of what defined the job. There were days that Kevin and I would go up on the roof of adjacent buildings just to check straightness from a different perspective."

In the end, they ended up with a stunning courtyard with multiple sections of varying colors, a few gentle curves and arcs, and subtle borders which nicely accentuate the transitions between colors. It's a courtyard the university can be proud of. 📱

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## PROJECT PROFILE

# A Makeover in a Mall Covers Outdated Tile

## Valley Fair Mall, West Valley City, Utah

by Stacey Enesey Klemenc

**L**AST fall, Architectural Concrete and Design Inc., a family-owned company in Draper, Utah, was tasked with retrofitting the concourse of nearby Valley Fair Mall with a stampable overlay system. The specifications dictated that the selected concrete system was to be installed over existing ceramic tile without any demolition.

Why over the tile? Because tearing it out would have cost more and the job would have been messier. The mall was to be open as usual throughout the renovation and the owners didn't want the hassle of ripping up anything.

The clincher was that the work performed on the expansive 70,000-to-80,000-square-foot concourse could not be done during normal working hours or block daily access to any store in the mall.

As one of the first 10 Bomanite franchises in the nation — it began representing Bomanite in Utah in 1978 — Architectural Concrete and Design had over the years installed a wide variety of hardscapes for commercial, residential and municipal



Photos by Tallan Johnson

projects, but it had never tackled the interior of a mall. So Devin Johnson, the company's vice president of technical sales and marketing, turned to Bomanite's expertise for guidance.

Terry Grimal, director of technical services for Bomanite, was key to the project's success, as was technical input from Chris Sullivan with ChemSystems Inc., says Johnson. "Grimal traveled to Utah and spent about a week with us, helping us develop the Thin-Set II system and get it down pat."

Although Johnson says he's used the Thin-Set II system multiple times over various substrates, he had never before used it over existing tile.

The Bomanite product, a specially formulated polymer-modified topping mix that can be imprinted, will bond to any stable, structurally sound substrate. It typically is installed 3/8-inch thick and can be feathered to a zero edge. Billed as an extremely effective alternative to demolishing an existing substrate, Thin-Set

also can be exposed to traffic quickly — which was a priority for this job.

### A patterned upgrade

Valley Fair Mall first opened for business in 1970. Like many of its '70s counterparts, the mall featured a concourse outfitted with now-outdated colored tiles. The new design called for a variety of concrete stamp patterns, colors and streetlights that would transform the mundane walkway into an interesting, winding streetscape.

Throughout the concourse, a basket-weave brick pattern integrally colored with Bomanite Brick Red and a random slate pattern in Shale Gray covers much of the way. For visual breaks, an 8-inch slate border in Sand is straight in places and free-flowing in others. For even more variety, a 12-inch wood-plank boardwalk pattern in Sonora Tan graces the mall's roundabout and accents selected areas.

The work was scheduled to be completed in two phases, with the first phase beginning in September 2012, continuing

### Project at a Glance

**Client:** Valley Fair Mall, West Valley City, Utah

**Decorative Concrete Installer:** Architectural Concrete and Design Inc., Draper, Utah: Nick Johnson, president; Devin Johnson, vice president of technical sales and marketing; and Sean Johnson, vice president of operations

**General Contractor:** R&O Construction, Ogden, Utah

**Architect:** Glen Bailey, LawKingdon Architecture, Wichita, Kan.

**Technical Consultants:** Terry Grimal, director of technical services, Bomanite; Chris Sullivan, vice president of sales and marketing, ChemSystems Inc.

**Scope of Project:** Without involving demolition, cover the existing tile in the mall's 70,000-to-80,000-square-foot concourse with a stampable overlay.

**Materials Used:** Bomanite Thin-Set II stampable overlay system, Bomanite XP Primer 100 FC epoxy resin, Bomanite Florthane WB Gloss urethane, zinc terrazzo strips, Bomanite integral concrete dye in Brick Red, Shale Gray, Sand and Sonora Tan





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until the first part of November and then breaking for the holidays, and the whole job wrapping in February.

Working each evening in increments of between 1,000 and 3,000 square feet, the Architectural Concrete and Design crew bead-blasted sections of the floor to profile it, using a machine equipped with a vacuum to contain the dust and residual mess. They then laid down a Bomanite epoxy primer and silica sand to create a mechanical bond for the overlay. The next day, after that coat dried, the crew applied a "scratch coat" of Thin-Set II (with lines scratched on its surface to improve bonding), then a 3/8-inch-thick layer of Thin-Set II, stamping it with one of four Bomanite patterns. Johnson estimates they stamped roughly



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1,000 to 2,000 square feet per night.

Because the mall remained open for business during this whole process, the team had to work at night, from 9 p.m. to 7 a.m., Johnson explains. Then, from 7 a.m. until 8:30 a.m. each day, they laid down a 10-foot swath of breathable landscape fabric at affected stores' entrances and roped off everything else they had stamped that night. In addition to the possibility of wet concrete, the terrazzo strips the crew used for their

formwork were potential trip hazards.

"We had to control traffic by channeling shoppers into each store over a covered pathway that was dry enough to walk on. And that was quite a challenge," he says. "We had to time it so what we stamped the night before (at the stores' entrances) had time to dry and could withstand foot traffic. Some mornings we were right on the bubble, as the product was almost too wet to walk on."

Overall, Johnson says, the Bomanite

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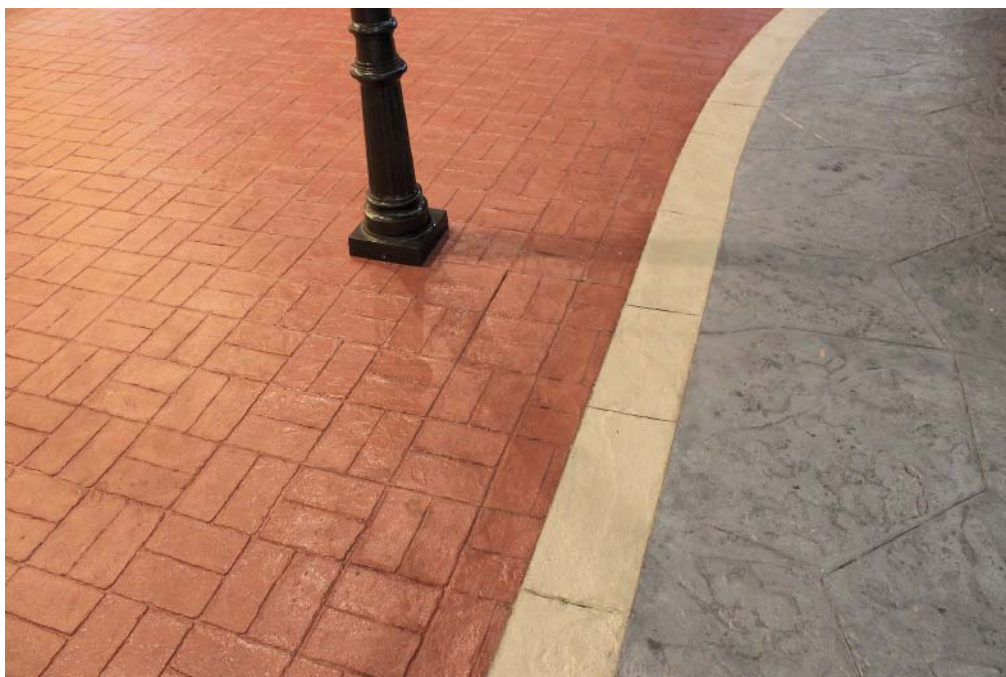
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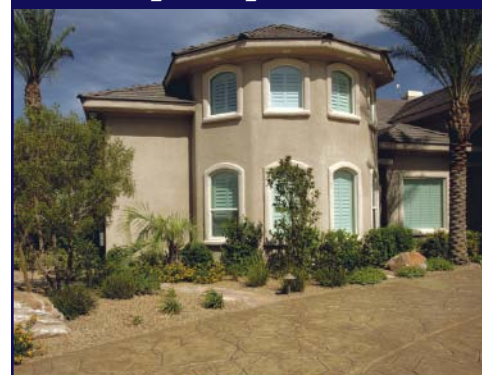


overlay system went down as planned, allowing mall owners to avoid a messy and more costly demolition route. "All the patterns, colors and designs came together within the time frame allowed. The (almost-

finished) product is well above the mall's expectations." 

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## PROJECT PROFILE

# Taking a Floor From VCT to Polished, Dyed Concrete

## Colonial Harley Davidson, Prince George, Va.

by Nathan Baggett, with Ray Wilkerson

**C**OLONIAL Harley Davidson, Prince George, Va., has been a longtime customer of DreamKrete's parent Mid Atlantic Floor Care LLC. (DreamKrete is our company, based in Richmond, Va.)

The Harley dealership is a leader in sales and rider satisfaction for the entire Mid-Atlantic region, and its headquarters reflects its ethics. The 31,000-square-foot facility boasts a modern industrial theme, with cathedral 25-foot ceilings and marblesque floors. "Just like Harley motorcycles, the Colonial Harley-Davidson facility is the best of American design and culture, seasoned with freedom and rebellion, showcased in a landmark building," declares the dealership's website.

CHD wanted a new and refreshing look for its service department to bring in the New Year. The floor had worn-out black and white vinyl composition tile that was becoming too difficult to maintain. CHD wanted a floor that looked amazing to customers and was easy to care for.

Tire marks were a key issue, too. The polymers in VCT and the polymers in the tires are so similar that the tires were actually bleeding onto the VCT. Also, the kickstands on the motorcycles were scratching the wax and marring the tiles.

CHD had explored other options for



Photos by Nathan Baggett

Travis Wilkerson hand-grinds the floor next to a counter at Colonial Harley Davidson, in Prince George, Va.

the 765 square feet of flooring, looking at putting epoxy or a Line-X spray-on coating onto the floor. What sold this job for us was the cost comparison of polished concrete to other options, the longevity of our company relationship with CHD, the easy maintenance of our floor, and our strong

marketing and sales department.

The job needed to be completed over the first three days of the New Year when CHD was shut down for inventory. It was through the dedication of our employees, who know that customer service is everything in our business, that we were able to convince

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### Project at a Glance

**Client:** Colonial Harley Davidson, Prince George, Va.

**Contractor:** DreamKrete, Richmond, Va.

**Project Specs:** Remove vinyl composition tile and replace it with polished, dyed concrete that would be easy to care for and amazing to look at.

**Timeline:** Three days, including New Year's Day.

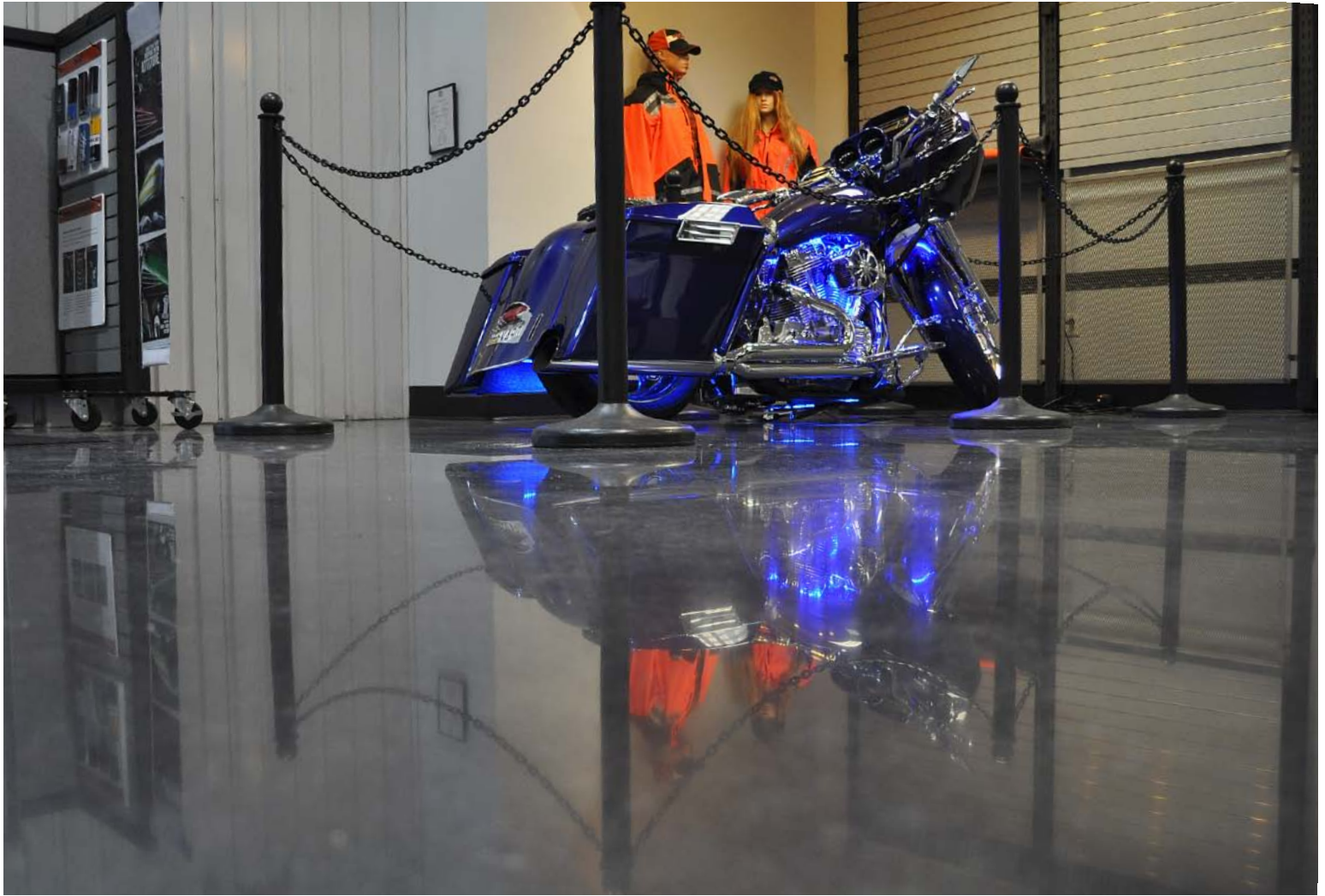
**Materials Used:** National Flooring Equipment Inc. Panther tile remover, HTC 800 Classic three-headed grinder, HTC 5 iAD vacuum system and separator, Makita 5-inch variable-speed hand grinder, H&C Acetone Dye Stain in Spanish Dagger, HTC 27-inch Twister Pad system, Decorative Concrete Institute Polish Guard.





To help mask any ghosting left by the removal of the VCT, DreamKrete recommended dying the newly polished floor in Spanish Dagger, a color from the H&C Acetone Dye Stain product line.





them to work on New Year's Day.

We removed the VCT with a Panther tile remover from National Flooring Equipment Inc. It took about 2 1/2 hours to remove the tile.

After the tile was removed, we began the grinding and glue removal process, starting with 80-grit double-segment tooling, along with sand cast onto the floor.

All of the tooling and equipment that were used on this job came from HTC America Inc. We utilized our HTC 800 Classic three-headed grinder, along with our HTC 5 iAD vacuum system and separator. We used our second HTC 5 iAD vacuum to help us complete the edge work by hand, for which we used a Makita 5-inch variable-speed hand grinder.

Within a couple of hours we were done with the metal-bond grinding and moving into the polishing stages. We polished the floor to 400 grit, and after taking extreme care to protect the wall murals and counters



with plastic, we applied a H&C Acetone Dye Stain in Spanish Dagger. We recommended the color based on our inquiry about what the customer was looking for in appearance, and we felt like it would best mask any ghosting left from the VCT removal.

Once the floor was dry we dry-mopped the floor with microfiber to remove excess dye residue, and we continued polishing to 1,500 grit.

After the polishing was complete, we gave the floor a good cleaning with an autoscrubber and buffed using the HTC 27-inch Twister pad system. Finally, two coats of Decorative Concrete Institute Polish Guard were applied to the floor. We then installed vinyl cove base to the walls.

CHD staff are blown away with the results we were able to achieve. Colonial's perspective is that Harley people are considered tough and rugged and their bikes usually reflect their distinct persona — the polished concrete floor, with its distinct look and character, fits this philosophy. The consistency of the polished floor maintains the desired upscale, high-profile appearance, as opposed to the inconsistent appearance of the VCT during

the cycle of stripping and waxing.

Nathaniel Miller, CHD service manager, says that maintenance to retain a clean and shiny appearance (just dust-mopping and damp mopping daily) has been easier than they expected. In general, he says that the floor results were above and beyond their expectations.

We are meeting with them to spec and price their engine "Dyno Room" — they want the same process and color for this area. Also, many of CHD's customers have asked about the floors and have started contacting DreamKrete about doing their personal garages. 🛠️

*Nathan Baggett is part owner and project manager at DreamKrete, a division of Mid Atlantic Floor Care LLC, based in Richmond, Va.*

*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.*

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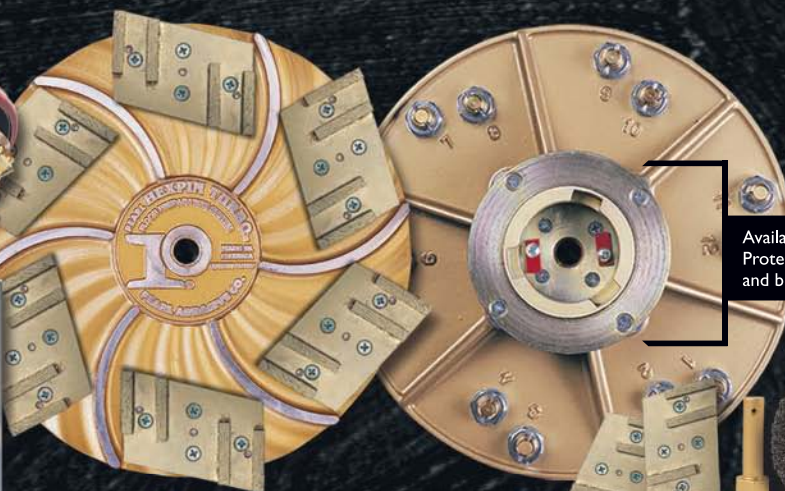


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# Carefully Removing Glues and Epoxies Before Polishing

**P**REPPING a concrete floor for polishing is one of the most difficult tasks we face in this industry. We cannot be aggressive like we can when prepping for a coating system, because there will be no coating to cover up the deep scratch patterns. We must take care to remove the surface materials while causing as little damage as possible to the concrete. We must be aggressive while being cautious.



by Virgil Viscuso

There are so many removal and prepping scenarios a never-ending book could be written about them. For the sake of this article we will focus on the most common materials we typically need to remove, mastics (glues) and epoxy.

When it comes to prepping for polished concrete the first and most important



This Innovatech grinder was used to remove carpet mastic at the Mercedes-Benz Superdome, in New Orleans, La.

Photos courtesy of Virgil Viscuso

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question is: What is the desired outcome? Is it a cream polish or a heavy aggregate exposure? Is it a full mechanical polish or a chemical polish? Knowing the answer to these questions will determine how to proceed.

### First, set expectations

Many clients ask me where to start when it comes to removing a surface material for polished concrete. I tell them the most important place to start is the sales meeting. The salesperson plays a major role in the successful completion of a polished surface that needed additional prepping.

This probably sounds strange, but let me elaborate. The salesperson's job is more than just selling the project. They must set up the project to be successful by educating and controlling the client's expectations. If the client has a blasted surface with epoxy on it and wants a cream polish you need to explain to him why that will not happen. (It will not happen because you will have to blast the surface aggressive enough to remove the existing epoxy, removing most or all of the surface cream.)

By controlling the client's expectations through education, you set the project up to

be successful.

The salesperson must explain that in order to remove the epoxy you will need to take a relatively aggressive approach. The tooling will leave an aggressive scratch

pattern, and when you use it, you will create a heavy salt-and-pepper type of aggregate exposure.

Imagine using a PCD (polycrystalline diamond) tool on a surface where a client



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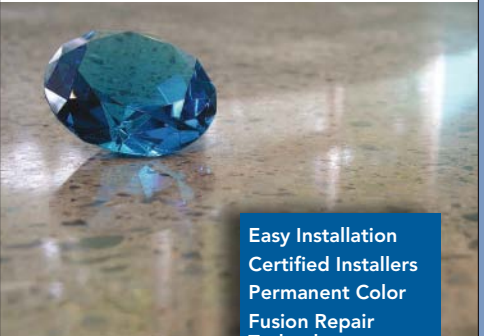
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would like a cream or light salt-and-pepper exposure. A PCD is a synthetic diamond that is many times harder than a carbide and has high fracture strength and excellent wear resistance. We all know that when that PCD rips through the material, it will leave nice, aggressive scratches in the concrete. That will be a problem.

The salesperson must identify what is on the surface, what it will take to remove



Removing epoxy with a grinder.

it, what condition the surface is in, and the most likely scenario for removal. If it is VCT (vinyl tile) mastic, the salesperson must prepare the client for the possibility of tile lines or "ghosting."

If you cannot see the surface because it still has tile or carpet on it, the salesperson must explain to the client that all anyone can do is make an educated guess about the concrete's condition. Everyone must reevaluate after the floor covering is removed. Setting proper expectations is the key.

Lest assume our salesperson set us up to deliver a mottled salt-and-pepper full mechanical polish. We know our parameters and expectations, so we can decide how to approach the surface. Should we use PCD tools, 60-grit metal, a carbide scraper, hybrid tools or what?

### Removing carpet and carpet mastic

In the case of carpet I prefer to utilize a ride-on removal machine like the Innovatech Terminator. This is a heavy machine with a flat blade attached to the front to rip off the carpet. It will serve two functions — it can remove the carpet and, after you change to a thin flexible blade, it can scrape away the bulk of the carpet mastic. The key here is to remove as much of the mastic as possible. This is always the challenge. It likes to gum up diamond tooling and spread around instead of coming off.

The removal of the carpet mastic can be a two-stage removal process. Stage one is to remove the bulk of the mastic without damaging the surface, and stage two is to remove the thin residual glue and introduce your first scratch pattern.

To remove the bulk without damaging



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the surface I do not recommend using PCD tooling. It is too easy to create a very deep scratch pattern that must be removed by a 16-grit tool — this is not the road to a salt-and-pepper finish. If you have no choice I highly recommend using a lightweight machine and running a set of nine PCD tools along with a set of nine metal-bonds, reducing the total down pressure on the PCD tool and hopefully not creating a very deep scratch.

Another option can be to utilize a carbide scraper attachment to cut the mastic. It will leave a thin layer that can be cut with a 60-grit metal-bond.

A little sand or kitty litter scattered in front of the machine can help. It gives the sticky material something to get mixed into so it does not keep melting back on.

Some companies are introducing new segments for removal of this bulky material. This coming year, we should see the introduction of some new tooling for this purpose. These segments are promising but new to the market.

### Attacking VCT mastic

When it comes to vinyl composite tile (VCT) mastic, the removal process can also be your first step in setting the EL (exposure level) of the surface. A 30/40 grit metal-bond diamond (sometimes wet) is a great option. The addition of some wet sand can be a great help.

You could drop to a 25-grit metal bond and the mastic will cut off pretty good, but you must consider what the final finish needs to be. Don't cut so aggressively that you cannot deliver the desired outcome. If the black mastic is too bulky, I recommend using the same methodology I described with carpet mastic — scrape the bulk first. PCDs are typically not an option to consider for black mastic, as they are normally too aggressive.

When removing VCT or black mastic always be on the lookout for asbestos. An 8-by-8 or 9-by-9 tile pattern is a good indicator of asbestos — those sizes were typically manufactured before the 1980s when asbestos was used in tiles and mastics. Ask if the mastic has been tested, especially on a surface in an older building. If the tile was installed in the early 1980s or earlier, chances are the mastics and tile contain asbestos.

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## Removing epoxy

The removal of epoxy is a completely different animal. If the epoxy surface was installed properly, the concrete underneath was more than likely shotblasted or ground aggressively. A cream polish or light salt-and-pepper may be out of the question.

Thin epoxy under 10 mils can be effectively ground with a 30-grit metal bond. Depending on variables, this could be a great start. Epoxies that are more than 10 mils thick can still be ground but time

and effort come into play. You also must remember epoxy can be an aggressive material and cause tooling to wear excessively fast, so be sure to utilize the proper bond.

Removing thicker epoxies is where PCD tooling can really help. You typically have already explained to the client that he or she will end up with a heavy salt-and-pepper or mottled aggregate appearance. So getting at the material aggressively is OK. There are so many types of PCD tools available — you

will just need to find which ones work in various situations. The full round heavy-duty PCD tooling works well for thicker epoxies of about 20 mils. For a thinner epoxy some of the smaller double-PCD or spilt-PCD tools work well. Note that each distributor or manufacture uses different terminology to describe the PCD tools they sell.

As with all materials, the better the mastic install was prepped, the harder it will be to remove, so plan accordingly.

The scratch pattern of a PCD tool can be difficult to get off. The goal should be to remove that pattern with the use of a 30/40 grit tool, but you could have to go as low as a 16-grit tool. Make sure to include enough time into your bid for this. Selling your time short creates a lot of pressure to skip steps and use guards to cover up your mistakes in the beginning.

As with every project a mock-up is the best plan of action. Not only will this give your customer a real look at what the end result will be, it gives you a chance to try a few techniques. I highly recommend doing your mock-up the same way you plan to complete the project, with the same equipment and tool. Going into a mock for a 10,000-square-foot project with a hand grinder is not going to give anybody good information. 🛠️

*Virgil Viscuso has 20 years of experience in the concrete surface preparation and polishing industry. He is founder and director of the Global Concrete Polishing Institute and president of Concrete Surface Xperts, which sells polishing equipment. He can be contacted at [virgil@globalconcretepi.com](mailto:virgil@globalconcretepi.com).*



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## PRODUCT NEWS

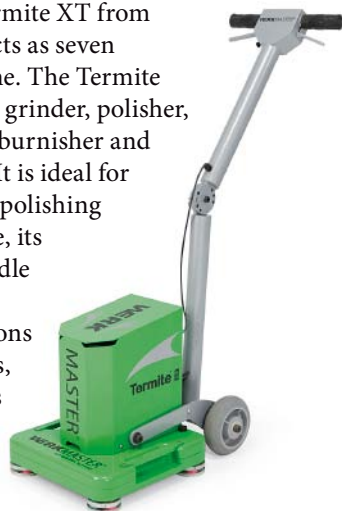
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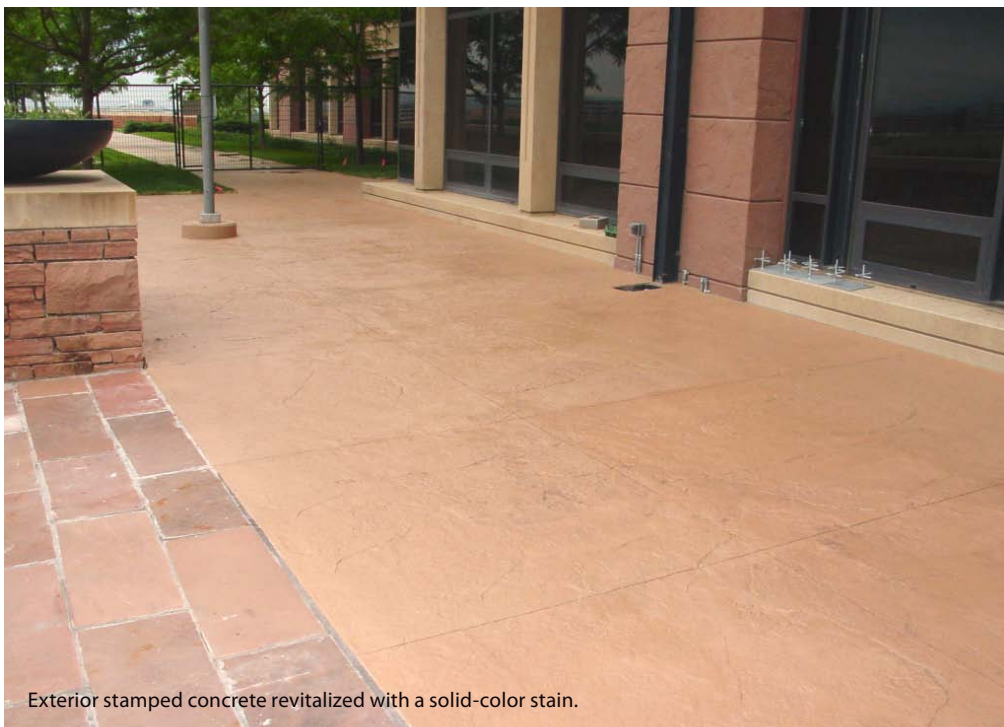
# Solid-Color Stains: The Ideal Way to Recolor Aging Flatwork

**T**HERE are millions of square feet of colored and stamped concrete around the country that will be celebrating their 10-year birthday in 2012. Much of it is showing the wear and tear of a decade of use and desperately needs some touch-up. A decade of little to no maintenance, weather, and daily wear has not affected the core strength of the concrete but has taken the shine off the penny. This scenario is quite common, and it fosters a lot of questions regarding what can be done to bring the colored or stamped concrete back to life. So for those who want to rejuvenate, revive, restore, restain or recolor, solid-color stains are just the ticket.



by Chris Sullivan

Most types of stains for concrete are translucent. The color produces a marbled



Exterior stamped concrete revitalized with a solid-color stain.

Photo by Chris Sullivan

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Photo courtesy of NewLook International

Wayne Morse of AM Resurfacing colored this pool deck with NewLook International's Original Solid Color Stain in Caramel and Translucent Color Enhancer in Oak. The bands are Original Solid Color Stain in Oak.

finish, with the base color of the concrete playing a role in the final shade. That works great when you are coloring gray concrete and want to have all that variegation and marbling, but not so good when you want

to refresh the monotone color of integrally colored concrete or stamped concrete.

The market to revitalize and refresh old concrete is where solid-color stains have found their niche. They work like traditional

stains and penetrate into the concrete, but unlike traditional stains, they produce an opaque finish.

The first solid-color stains hit the market in the 1990s. Not readily available at first, they were regional niche products used by only a handful of installers.

When decorative concrete went mainstream in the early 2000s, so did solid-color stains. Marketed hard by a few companies, the products went from regional awareness to national acceptance very quickly. Over the last 10 to 15 years, the market has grown and so have the number of manufacturers.

Advancements in technology and formulation have created newer solid-color stain systems that have fewer components,

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are easier to mix and apply, and have better long-term durability. But almost all solid-color stains are applied similarly and perform very well.

A solid-color stain might be described as a cross between a coating and a stain, with the opaque solid color reminding one of a coating and the penetrating properties being more like a stain. But don't be fooled. Solid-color stains are all stain. Their ability to penetrate into the surface and provide a clean solid color without forming a film is what makes them so powerful.



Photos by Chris Sullivan

**Above:** Pritchard Concrete, Golden, Colo., colored concrete at this Lakewood, Colo., shopping center using epoxy-based ReStore Solid Color Stain from Helix Color Systems in Stone Gray and Latte. **Top left:** Before the work.



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Most solid-color stain systems come as multipart kits that are mixed on-site. They contain a resin backbone that acts as a binder, encapsulating the color and gluing the system together in the concrete substrate. Application with a sprayer or soft brush is most common, allowing for high coverage rates and consistent color.

As with any stain, surface preparation is critical to long-term performance. Typical surface preparation prior to application ranges from power washing to chemical stripping. Once again, the most critical element is the ability of the stain to penetrate into the surface of the concrete. Any type of contamination, such as paints, sealers, cures, grease, oil or foreign material,

will prohibit penetration and lead to premature failure of the stain.

In my opinion the final look of solid-color stains is what makes them such good candidates to recolor old or worn colored or stamped concrete. Most of the solid-color systems on the market will very quickly (in a matter of days or weeks) take on a flat or matte appearance that very closely resembles natural concrete.

This natural look makes it hard to differentiate between integrally colored concrete and concrete that has been treated with properly applied solid-color stain.

While nothing is as good as the real thing, a solid-color stain is the next best thing when it comes to restoring the color of old

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or worn concrete. It doesn't even have to be a bright or exotic color, as gray is one of the most popular colors of solid-color stain sold today. I encourage you to do some research and learn more about how solid-color stains can recolor the concrete in your life. 🛠️

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 [trowelandererror@protradepub.com](mailto:trowelandererror@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](http://ConcreteDecorShow.com).





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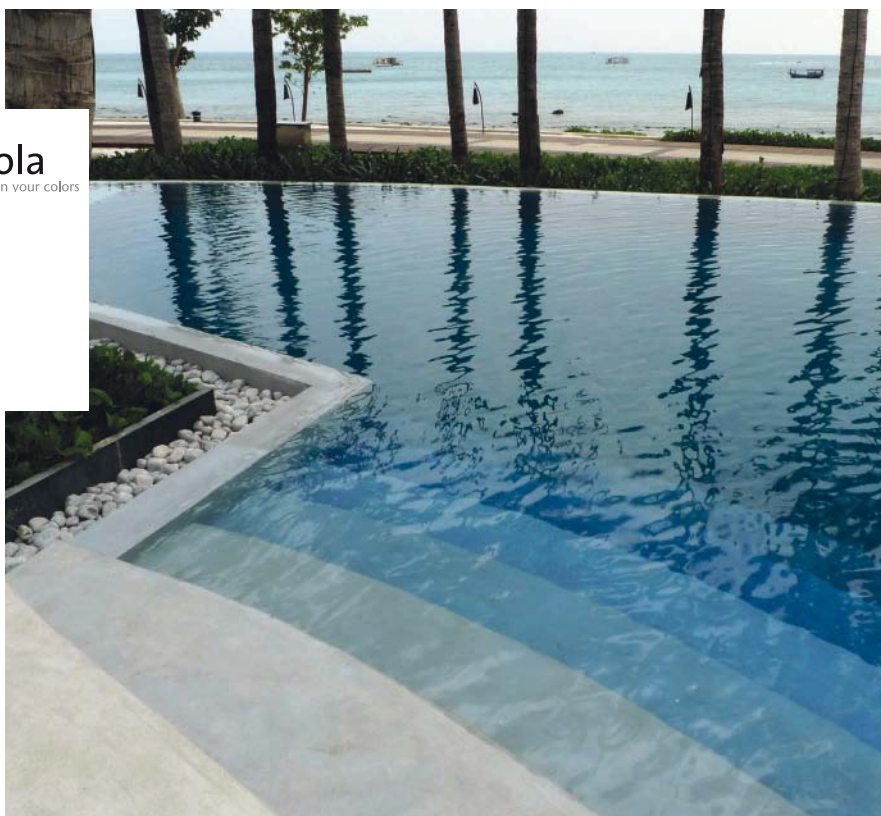


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## PROJECT PROFILE

# A Florida Cow Town Recreated in Concrete

## Brownwood Town Center, The Villages, Fla.

by Joe Maty

THE “Florida cracker” cowboy rode off into the sunset long ago. But thanks to a design team’s partnership with decorative concrete company Edwards Concrete, residents of a central Florida community can immerse themselves in the region’s frontier days.

The builders of Brownwood, the latest addition to the Florida boomtown known as The Villages, called on Edwards to help give the new Brownwood town center the look and feel of a Florida cracker settlement of the 1800s.

Thus, you’ll encounter Paddock Square, an open area in the middle of Brownwood where the packed, sun-baked mud and dirt are an illusion created with decorative-concrete methods and materials, and the footprints of horses, cattle, turkeys, dogs and “cowboys,” along with the tracks of wagon wheels, are the result of stamping techniques.

And right over there is the Barnstorm Theater. Edwards stained the cinema’s concrete floor a rusty brown and gave it a matte finish with a polishing treatment that employed a twist on typical diamond-grinding methods.

As you enter the town center’s shops, you’ll be walking on wood-plank porches



made, again, not out of wood but of concrete.

And the sidewalks appear to have taken a beating from Florida’s brutal sun. They’ve been given a distressed treatment and colored to give the impression of age and

exposure to the elements.

It’s all the work of Edwards Concrete, a diversified decorative-concrete business based in Winter Garden, Fla.



Photos courtesy of Jim Jones Photography

### Project at a Glance

**Client:** The Villages, Florida Inc., Sumter County, Florida

**Decorative Concrete Contractor:** Edwards Concrete, Winter Garden, Fla.

**Designer:** Michael Pape & Associates PA, Ocala, Fla.

**Brownwood Architect:** Larry Krietemeyer, KP Studio Architect PA, Ocala, Fla.

**Overall Design Direction:** The Villages Design Division, Tracy Mathews and Gary Mark

**Construction General Contractor:** McDonough Development Services, Tommy McDonough, The Villages

**Tools and Materials Used:** Bomanite Imprint tools, L. M. Scofield integral color, Bomanite color hardeners and release agent, Advanced Floor Products’ RetroPlate 99 and RetroGuard



## The past and the future

At Paddock Square, one can almost hear the crack of the cowboy's whip as he drives the cows to town.

That's actually one theory of where the term "cracker" comes from, in case you city slickers didn't know.

"There was a whole culture in Florida, probably little known to the rest of the country, involving the cracker cowboy. It's a whole lot different than what we think of with the cowboys of the West," says Michael Pape, a landscape architect and planner who has provided thematic design concepts for The Villages — a sprawling residential and mixed-use community that has been growing for a quarter century in central Florida.

Earlier parts of The Villages were built around town-center themes — "Spanish Springs" and "Lake Sumter Landing" — that also reflect chapters of Florida's past.

Pape says Brownwood will fuel the continuing growth of The Villages. The retirement-oriented residential community currently boasts some 86,000 homes, plus golf courses, shops, entertainment, recreational activities, shopping and dining,



and other attractions. At build-out in 2017, it will include 2.7 million square feet of commercial space and a population of more than 109,000 (up from roughly 8,000 in 2000). A 2008 Census Bureau report

ranked The Villages as the fastest-growing metropolitan area in the United States.

"It's the nation's largest and most successful mixed-use community. It's really a phenomenon," Pape says.

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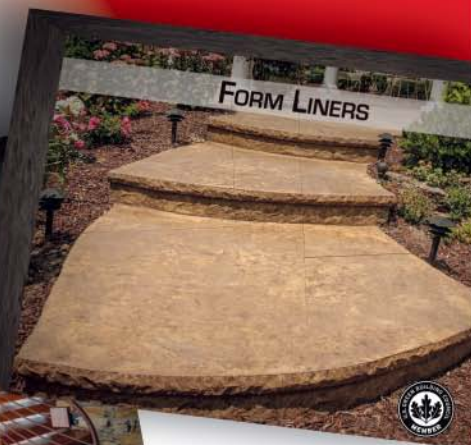
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Photo courtesy of Jim Jones Photography

## Making tracks

In designing and building Brownwood, the owners — family-owned The Villages, Florida Inc. — set out to re-create a “cow town.” Edwards Concrete did its part and then some.

At Paddock Square, Edwards placed integrally colored concrete, mixed at the cement plant using L. M. Scofield’s Chromix Admixtures in a Westwood Brown color to

get an earthy brown shade. Two Bomanite dry-shake color hardeners supplied by ChemSystems Inc. were applied to the newly placed concrete — a color called Moss Rock and a charcoal release agent.

Then the Edwards Concrete artisans went to work with creative stamping techniques, using horseshoes, “cowboy” footprints and all kinds of stamps. Edwards artisans molded their own stamping tools

for some of the animal tracks on Paddock Square. Bomanite offers its own tools for making turkey and raccoon tracks.

The team hired a white dog to strut across the wet concrete after coating its paws with Body Double Release Cream from Smooth-On Inc. Installers strapped horse stamps onto their own feet. A Cracked Earth imprinting tool from Bomanite was employed to weather the faux dirt.

The work at Paddock Square showcases the creative ingenuity of Edwards Concrete’s George Hultin, a superintendent with the company for 20 years. Hultin custom-fashioned the wagon-track imprints using two wheels and an axle, and he fashioned the cow hoof-prints with structural foam.

Pape gets worked up with the superlatives when he surveys Edwards Concrete’s work in Paddock Square. “It’s just the coolest, most fun thing,” he says. “We directed them on how we wanted them to finish it, with impressions of leaves, pine needles, gravel, footprints, wagon tracks, and dog, horse, cow and wild-animal tracks. It’s a really

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fun thing, as people discover these details. It's amazing how people are entertained by something done with concrete."

On top of all this, the job wasn't just about the looks, he adds. Performance issues such as slip resistance were especially important in light of the development's

retirement-oriented population. "The challenge was creating this dried-mud appearance while still ensuring it's a walk-safe and well-drained surface," he adds.

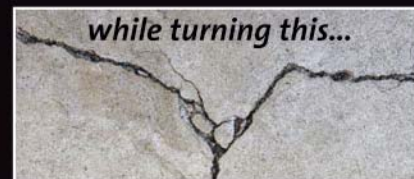
### Barnstorm Theater's polishing twist

Getting marquee billing at a major attraction in Brownwood — the eight-screen Barnstorm movie theater — is another star in the Edwards Concrete cast of decorative specialties: polished concrete. Here, to get the color and finish sought by the owners, Edwards Concrete



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## STAMPING & TEXTURING

used a combination of acid stain and diamond grinding, with a twist.

"They wanted a matte look, so what we did was polish to a 1,500 diamond, then went back down to 400," Edwards said.

Specifically, Edwards Concrete proceeded with a conventional methodology, progressively using 40-, 80-, 100-, 150- and 200-grit diamonds, then applying the stain — Bomanite colors of Rust Red and Auburn — and then moving on to the 400 and 800 diamond polishing steps, followed by application of RetroPlate 99, a sodium silicate densifier from Advanced Floor Products LLC.

Then came the matte twist: polishing with 1,500 grit, but then reversing course with tooling at the 800 and 400 grit levels, respectively. RetroGuard silicate-copolymer sealer was applied as a final step.

### Distressed sidewalks and faux wood

Other techniques from the Edwards Concrete repertoire are on display in the Brownwood town center, including sidewalks and the 1800s-style wood-plank porches of business establishments.

Well, they look like old planks at least. Use of dry-shake color hardener in Moss Stain and release in Charcoal, both from



Photo courtesy of Jim Jones Photography

Bomanite, followed by stamping with a wood-plank impression from Bomanite delivered the appropriate aesthetic.

Pape, the designer for the project, notes that using real wood for the plank porches

would present durability and longevity issues in Florida's subtropical climate.

For sidewalks, Edwards Concrete employed a gray surface retarder to render the worn, weather-beaten look.

## PRODUCT SHOWCASE

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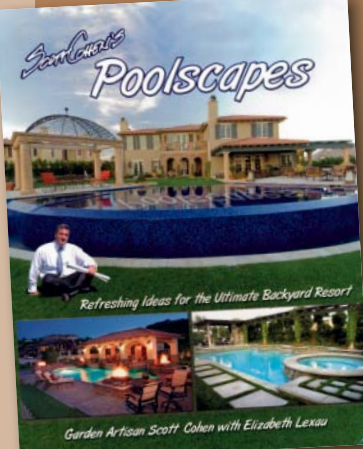


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"We wanted the downtown to look like a small town that had been there for more than 100 years," Pape says, "and most of the sidewalks are done in a finish we refer to as aged or distressed concrete. From my perspective as a designer, this was very important in that we wanted this to look like it had been there awhile."

### Edwards' veteran all-star team

Edwards Concrete owner David Edwards gives credit to his highly experienced, veteran crew, including concrete superintendents Hultin (20 years with the company, as mentioned earlier), Alex "Roho" Waters (30 years), Jesus Rivera (about 20 years) and polishing division chief Shawn Ciccarello (five years). All are overseen by operations manager Ronald Hart (20 years).

"Decorative concrete is all we do. That surprises a lot of people," Edwards says.

The company has survived, and thrived, with an exclusive focus on decorative thanks to its commitment to its highly skilled personnel even in times of economic challenges, Edwards says.

Its location also helps, he says. "I've been around colored concrete since the 1970s, we're located in the center of the theme-park

area, and we built a reputation here in the state of Florida."

The seasoned crew will be spending more time in The Villages in the future. The entire project described here, large as it is, is only Edwards' part of Phase I. The

development is planning Phase II, which will bring more retail to Brownwood, and Edwards will once again be taking on sidewalks and porches, if not more. 📱

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Photos courtesy of David Seils

This mural on the pottery studio at the Black Mountain Center for the Arts, Black Mountain, N.C., was designed to reflect the surrounding plant life.

## North Carolina Muralist Carves Art out of Concrete

by *Natasha Chilingirian*

**D**AVID Seils' master craft, wall relief sculpture, is an art form that dates back to ancient times, when civilizations carved designs into stone walls, buildings and columns. But instead of chiseling away material, the Asheville, N.C.-based Seils builds up his wall sculptures in layers using mortar, a mason's hawk and a trowel.

Seils, who began his career making his own plaster and stucco mixes from scratch and now sticks to a bagged mortar mix manufactured by North Carolina-based Sakrete, has left his mark at numerous homes, businesses and public spaces across the country.

A native of West Salem, Wis., Seils began drawing in third grade and quickly took the path of an aspiring artist. He received

formal art training at schools in Wisconsin and elsewhere, including Viterbo University, The Clearing folk school, The University of Kansas, and the Ringling School of Art in Sarasota, Fla.

A skilled sculptor, he took a steady position as a graphic designer for the Miami Herald while maintaining a side career as a freelance architectural renderer.

The after-hours work paid off for Seils in the late 1980s, when one of his freelance clients approached him about taking on a 5,000-square-foot plaster wall sculpture project inside a Fort Lauderdale, Fla., auditorium. While he says he approached that project — an intricate, tree-filled outdoor scene — with some fear and uncertainty, it would turn out to be the first

of more than three decades worth of job invitations.

As word spread about Seils' wall-relief sculpture work, he began landing assignments for a variety of clients, including universities, banks, hotels and car dealerships. One of his more notable jobs took place about 10 years ago at Appalachian State University's Summit Trail Solarium in Boone, N.C. Using his own mix of plaster with pearlite and lime, he sculpted a scene that highlights two natural North Carolina landmarks — Grandfather Mountain and Linville Falls — on the 25-foot-high walls of the solarium, which functions as a study area and special events venue at the university.

His own plaster and stucco mixes served





A mural David Seils created in the foyer of a house he owned in Osprey, Fla., a suburb of Sarasota.

him well for a while, but about six years ago, Seils fell upon his current go-to product, Sakrete's Type S High-Strength Mortar/Stucco Mix, while reviewing product descriptions at a Home Depot store.

"It seemed ideal to use their product instead of mixing my own," Seils says. "It's premixed, I can dampen it and add layers, and it won't crack. I use it exclusively now."

One of Seils' Sakrete projects lies on an

exterior wall of a pottery studio at the Black Mountain Center for the Arts in Black Mountain, N.C. Seeking a finished product that would hold up in harsh weather and an alternative to a painted mural, the arts center asked Seils to create a relief sculpture depicting a stream, trees, rocks and rhododendrons to reflect the natural environment that surrounds the buildings, says Gale Jackson, executive director for the

Black Mountain Center for the Arts.

Jackson says Seils brought the creative vision of an artist along with the technical expertise of an artisan to the job and produced a work of art that continues to amaze the public.

"We were excited to see the art become a part of our building," Jackson says. "It's a piece that changes a lot at night because of its lighting features. The lights create a



## WALLS & HARDSCAPES

3-D experience and allow the shadows to really pop. And the garden beside it blends right into the scene — the wall is like a background to its surroundings.”

Seils’ discovery of Sakrete also led him to form a business relationship with the company. About two and a half years ago, Seils contacted Sakrete, noting his exclusive use of their product in his work, and invited them to view his sculpture at the Black Mountain Center for the Arts, says Eric Peterson, director of marketing and technical services for Sakrete.

Impressed, the company invited Seils to lead a live demonstration and discussion of their product at Sakrete’s booth at the 2012 World of Concrete event. The company also sponsors the material costs for some of Seils’

projects, including the second half of his Black Mountain Center for the Arts project — another relief sculpture on the opposite wall of the pottery studio — which is scheduled for completion this year.

### The relief process

With 35 years of wall relief sculpture experience under his belt, the job process is second nature for Seils. After visiting a new client’s space and learning the theme or concept for the sculpture’s design, Seils sketches it out on paper, then draws the same design on the wall in charcoal, using a grid as a guide to bring the image up to scale. Working on a 2- or 3-square-foot area at a time and using a mason’s hawk and trowel, he applies and sculpts layers of material in a “quick and spontaneous” manner, he says. As they prefer a neutral, timeless look, not one of his clients has requested a topcoat or pigment for his sculptures, he adds.

“It’s very challenging, but it’s really rewarding once everything falls into place,” he says of the work. “It’s like giving a public talk. The first part is scary, and then I’ll start to loosen up.”

For inspiration, Seils says he likes to flip through magazines and peruse pictures online, but usually, the design is dictated

by the client and the environment. (Think palm trees for a job in Florida and fir trees for a job in the mountains.)

In 2013, Seils will demonstrate the Type S High-Strength Mortar/Stucco Mix at Sakrete’s booth at the Concrete Decor Show in Charlotte as well as sculpt his second piece for an Asheville, N.C. Mercedes dealership — a scene that will depict an accelerating vehicle plunging through flying rocks.

“His ability to work with shadowing and layering of material to create a beautiful work of art is something I have watched and still can’t seem to put it into words well enough to describe,” Peterson says of Seils. “But from a pure art perspective, he can pretty much do any type of picture he wants with these materials, almost as if he were painting these sculptures on a canvas.”

 [www.wallsculpture.net](http://www.wallsculpture.net)



A mural for Skyland Automotive, in Asheville, N.C.

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Another view of the pottery studio mural at the Black Mountain Center for the Arts.





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