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From the Editor's Desk

Dear Readers,

This issue contains the first of three stories written by Jason Geiser, Ohio-based owner of Deco-Crete Supply Inc. and Cornerstone Concrete Designs, about backyard pool installation. He knows quite a bit about this subject from his years of work in the Midwest. We are excited for him to share his time and expertise.

Pool decks are extremely popular and much-discussed these days. I asked Jason about current trends in backyard decorative concrete pool installs. What's hot, he says, is fire. "Everybody wants a fire pit. It seems like the combination of water and fire is a big thing — a fire bowl or fire pit, something like that." People also love the look of customized, formed concrete coping around the lip of their pool, he says.

Of course, homeowners also have one common concern about installing decorative concrete pool decks — will they be too slippery? They certainly can be. And that's just one of several subjects Jason will address in his articles.

- Jason knows that pool deck slip resistance is a number one priority, and he will reveal his own proven process for making it happen. Here's a hint: It involves spraying on slip-resistant material with a hopper gun. Broadcasting by hand leads to uneven coverage, he says. And he isn't comfortable simply mixing additives into sealers.
- He'll talk about coping installs — forming, slurring the face, working with the pool builders, and bracing the pool walls so they don't collapse from the fill dirt on the outside. "The pool builders want to have water in the pool so they have even pressure on both sides. I don't allow them to do that."
- Pool builders often prefer to slope draining water away from the pool, and that often ends up directing the water toward the home. So the decorative concrete installer needs to think about drains. Jason will reveal some techniques and types of drains he says many decorative concrete guys don't know about.
- Diving boards, ladder and handrail supports and basketball hoop jigs have to be plumb and level. He'll tell you how to easily install them.

Last but not least, throughout the series, Jason will emphasize planning. For just one example of why that's important, consider the cold joint where you start and finish your pool deck stamping. What's the chance of your patterns matching there? None, unless you plan. And Jason has teamed up with *Concrete Decor* to show you how to do just that.

Sincerely,



John Strieder
Editor



On the cover: Precast-concrete company Quick Crete, of Norco, California, cast these twisting concrete benches as part of a "ribbon" concept for a courtyard renovation at 50 United Nations Plaza, San Francisco. For more, see page 32.

Photo by Jeremy Green

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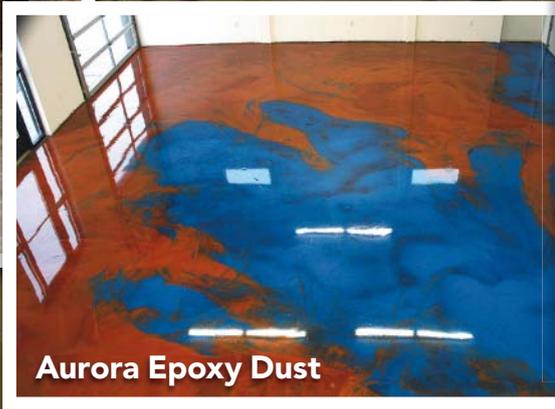
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Bryon "Bru" Bruington is technical sales director for KutRite, a producer of products for the concrete grinding, polishing and scarifying industry. Email him at b_bruington@kutritemfg.com. See Bryon's column, "Hands-on Grinding & Polishing Tips," on page 56.



Doug Carlton is working on his third decade in the decorative concrete industry. He's the owner of Carlton Construction, located at the base of the Big Horn Mountains in northeastern Wyoming. Doug can be reached at carltondoug@sbcglobal.net. See Doug's column, "Carlton's Corner," on page 40.



Mark Celebuski is a partner at Trinic LLC, a company that offers protective solutions for concrete, stone and tile. He can be reached at mark@trinic.us. See Mark's article on page 52.



Nick Dancer has been active in the concrete construction business since 2005 and started his own company, CounterCrete, in 2007. That company grew into Dancer Concrete, based in Fort Wayne, Indiana. Contact him at nick.dancer2@gmail.com. See Nick's article on page 46.



Jason Geiser owns Deco-Crete Supply and Cornerstone Concrete Designs, both based in Orrville, Ohio. He can be contacted at jason@deco-cretesupply.com. See Jason's article on page 42.



Lane Mangum is vice president, business services, of The Concrete Countertop Institute. She teaches concrete countertop companies how to grow their businesses. Contact her at lanem@concretecountertopinstitute.com. See Lane's article on page 48.



Chris Sullivan is vice president of sales and marketing with ChemSystems Inc. He has led seminars and product demonstrations throughout North America. Reach him at questions@concretedecor.net. See Chris' column, "Concrete Questions," on page 38.



Karen Van Heukelem wears many hats at Denver-based Colorado Hardscapes Inc., including business development, marketing, sales, estimating and project management, with an emphasis on specialty rock construction. She can be reached at karen@coloradohardscapes.com. See Karen's article on page 19.

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LIGHTNING

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CYCLONE

2,800 lbs Battery Powered



VOLT HD

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VOLT

1,580 lbs Battery Powered

ASCC announces seventh annual Decorative Concrete Awards

The Decorative Concrete Council, a specialty council of the American Society of Concrete Contractors, in partnership with *Concrete Construction* and *Architect* magazines, announces its seventh annual Decorative Concrete Awards. The competition is open to DCC members and nonmembers.

Entries are invited in the following categories: overlays, cast-in-place — stamped and special finishes, stained, polished, countertops, vertical application, concrete artistry, multiple applications and architectural concrete. With the exception of countertops, two awards may be given in each category, for projects 5,000 square feet and under, and projects over 5,000 square feet.

Submittals are judged on craftsmanship, aesthetics, functionality and creativity. The deadline for submittal is Sept. 30, 2014. The awards will be presented at World of Concrete 2015.

(866) 788-2722
www.asconline.org



Concrete Texturing Tool & Supply, a supply store in Throop, Pa., recognized head of customer service Colleen Washington and warehouse manager Anthony Fontini for 10 years of employment by promising to buy them and their spouses an all-expense-paid vacation to Cabo San Lucas, Mexico.

EVENT CALENDAR

International Surface Fabricators Association Countertop Symposium

Aug. 19, Atlanta, Georgia
www.isfanow.org

American Society of Concrete Contractors Annual Conference

Sept. 18-21, Denver, Colorado
www.asconline.org

Concrete Decor Show

Workshops: Sept. 29-30
 Exhibits & Education: Oct. 1-3
 Fort Worth, Texas
www.concretedecorshow.com



American Concrete Institute Fall Convention

Oct. 26-30, Washington D.C.
www.concrete.org

Ardex Academy Training Center dedicated to founder of Ardex Americas



Ardex global CEO Mark Eslamlooy led ceremonies to dedicate the Ardex Academy Training Center at the Americas Headquarters in honor of the founder of Ardex Americas, the late Herbert “Gr” Goller.

The training academy will ensure that craftsmen are competent and confident when installing Ardex products.

Dozens of Ardex employees who worked with “Gr” during the company’s early growth in North America attended private ceremonies to honor their founder, mentor and friend.

Ardex’s global headquarters is in Germany. Goller began as the company’s export manager in 1973. He relocated his young family to the United States to create a fledgling business in 1978.

(724) 203-5000
www.ardexamericas.com

Chem Link forms new board of directors

Chem Link has announced the formation of a new six-person board of directors to help fuel the environmentally conscious company’s strategic growth opportunities. The board of directors, seated May 2, consists of business professionals as well as experts from the construction, OEM and sealants/adhesives/coatings industries.

Chem Link was founded in 1990 as an idea company, producing proprietary sealants, adhesives and other products that combine exceptional field performance with environmental compatibility. Chem Link operates from two locations within Schoolcraft, Michigan, and employs 85 associates.

(800) 826-1681
www.chemlink.com

Patterned Concrete Industries Ltd. re-enters U.S. market

Patterned Concrete Industries Ltd. is under new leadership and is dedicated to building consumer confidence in stamped concrete. The company is expanding American operations by offering licensing opportunities to qualified contractors.

The Canadian-based company provides trademarked tools, comprehensive training, a business and technical support network, and brand recognition. Licensed contractors work with a proven system of products, tools and equipment to deliver a consistent end result.

☎ (800) 252-4619

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PCA: U.S. cement consumption increasing

Although recent economic indicators point to a tempering of the U.S. economy, the Portland Cement Association is maintaining its forecast for steady growth in construction and cement consumption during the next five years.

A recent PCA forecast indicates a 7.9 percent increase in cement consumption for 2014, almost double from the 4.5 percent increase in 2013. The industry expects to see double-digit growth in 2015 and 2016 with 10 percent growth both years. "There is considerable evidence that the economy's growth path has softened during the past several months," PCA chief economist and group vice president Edward Sullivan said in a news release. "But we believe that the underlying economic fundamentals are stronger than the data suggest."

Real GDP weakened considerably during the fourth quarter to 2.6 percent from 4.1 percent in the third quarter of 2013. Preliminary first quarter estimates put growth at a meager 0.1 percent. Furthermore, consumer confidence has recorded setbacks, mortgage applications have recorded sustained weekly declines, the housing market has stalled, and real put-in-place construction activity has slowed. The principal cause for the recent economic weakness, according to Sullivan, is the unusually adverse weather conditions across the United States during the fourth quarter of 2013 and first quarter of 2014. 🚧

🌐 www.cement.org/think-harder-concrete-blog

TRANSITIONS



Vexcon Chemicals has appointed **John Breska** as regional sales manager for the New England, New York and select Canadian markets. Vexcon

Chemicals is a subsidiary of Polysat Inc., a global specialty chemical company that produces products that help build, restore, improve and maintain concrete and masonry structures.

Super-Krete International Inc. named **Brett Cline** general manager of the company's team in Texas. Brett has seven years of experience in the decorative concrete industry and was formerly with Concrete Solutions in San Diego.

Mike Dowdall joined Husqvarna as a district sales manager for heavy user sales for Minnesota and North and South Dakota. Dowdall previously owned his own concrete and masonry business for 10 years.



The International Surface Fabricators Association (ISFA) announced the appointment of **Keith Haight** as their new executive director. Haight, a decorative surfacing professional, is owner of Maximus Operandi Consulting LLC and former fabrication manager with DuPont. Contact: (484) 354-5905; keith@isfanow.org

Husqvarna's new district sales manager for distribution sales covering the New England region is **BJ Jager**.



Big Bamboo Studios, based in Fairbury, Nebraska, has hired **Chris Karlik** as an artisan and fabricator. Karlik joins artisan and fabricator Josh Huntoon and shares his knowledge of mold-making, GFRC and sculpting.

Thomas McClure has been promoted by Quest Building Product to the position of service manager. He will be responsible for managing Quest's expanding West Coast service department and growing fleet of concrete prep rental equipment. Contact: thomas@questbuilding.com



Jim McReynolds has joined McNeilus Companies Inc., a leading manufacturer of refuse truck bodies and concrete mixers, as vice president of sales, marketing and customer support services.

Husqvarna's new district manager for distribution sales covering New York City is **Brian Piccinich**, who has an extensive background as account manager in various industries. He has worked with distributors as well as end users.



Justo Romero was recently named by ITW Commercial Construction, North America, as the new regional sales manager for its Southeast region. Based in Miami, Romero joined ITW after spending 13 years leading domestic and international commercial sales strategy for a multinational company in the healthcare field. In his new role, he will manage a team of sales representatives covering the Southeast U.S. Contact: jromero@itwccna.com

Mark Schweers has joined the Husqvarna team as a district sales manager for heavy user sales for Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas and Missouri. Schweers has more than 17 years of experience as a sales representative in the concrete cutting industry and was most recently a sales representative with Diamond Products.



A complete air, vapor and water barrier system

Pecora has introduced the XL-Perm Air, Vapor, and Water Barrier System, consisting of fully engineered and compatible products that work in tandem to provide complete protection for your building envelope.

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Next, Pecora XL-Perm Ultra VP Fluid Applied STPU is applied in a single coat via airless sprayer or roller.

This durable elastomeric weatherproofing membrane provides two to three times the coverage of other fluid-applied products.

XL-Perm Ultra VP has excellent elasticity and crack-bridging capabilities contributing to a seamless, durable and airtight building envelope. It can also be used on damp substrates and green concrete.

Then, the Pecora AVB Silicone Sealant/Adhesive is applied. This is designed as an integral component for transition seals between dissimilar materials in air and vapor barrier systems, offering superior green strength.

Finally, the Pecora XL-Span 100 percent silicone extruded transition membrane provides an air- and water-tight barrier at transitions between building facade components.

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www.pecora.com

Tommy Cook signature leaf molds available exclusively through Fishstone Studios

Tommy Cook's rubber leaf mold set makes three beautiful concrete leaves which can be used as water fountains, garden art, planters, bird feeders or as bases for furniture. Now, the signature leaf molds are offered exclusively through Fishstone Studio. These molds create stunning, realistic leaves. With color or stain to match the environment, they look convincingly real.



The small leaf is 28 inches in diameter, the medium leaf is 36 inches diameter and the large leaf is 48 inches in diameter. These rubber molds are made from highly durable latex and will last for years when used and stored properly.

(815) 276-0299

www.concretecountertopsupply.com

Marshalltown Co. launches new Octagon Handles

The new Octagon Handle from Marshalltown is a bull float handle with increased grip performance. With an octagonal profile, these 1 3/4-inch diameter handles increase gripping power by an average of 20 percent when compared to round handles of the same diameter. Even when your hands are sweaty, the Octagon Handle holds firm with no more slipping.



Many finishers experience hand, wrist and arm fatigue using wide tools such as bull floats and bump cutters, or while connecting several handles together. The extra grip provided by the Octagon Handles allows the finisher to keep the blade pitched with less effort.

Octagon Handles connect to all brackets, adapters and handles that accept a round 1 3/4-inch handle. The design includes internal ribs, making the handles lighter and providing less sag than a round insert-style handle.

(800) 888-0127

www.marshalltown.com

Introducing the new vertical design of the Sammys Pole Tool

The new vertical design of the Sammys Pole Tool from ITW Buildex now comes fully assembled. Designed for working in tight spaces, through the ceiling grid, or with work involving high vaulted ceilings, it's available in two telescoping sizes — one extends from 4 to 12 feet and the other from 6 to 18 feet — and eliminates the need for scaffolding, ladders or lifts.

The newly redesigned Sammys Pole Tool makes it much easier and less time-consuming for crews to install and hang threaded rod anchors into wood, steel and concrete. Time studies have shown using Sammys can result in labor savings of more than 25 percent, according to the company's marketing director.



In addition to installing into a wide range of substrates, the models are also able to accommodate installation vertically, horizontally, or at an angle up to 90 degrees. Installation takes about half the time compared to three-step drop-in wedge or multipiece hardware methods.

Sammys for concrete requires drilling and offer Advanced Threadform Technology from Tapcon screws, which provide teeth at intervals on alternating threads and allow it to grip into concrete with outstanding holding power that traditional threads can't duplicate. Sammys for wood and steel will install directly into the substrate.

(630) 825-7900

www.itwbuildex.com

New version of BuildingBlok cloud-based construction management system

The developers of BuildingBlok have announced the latest release of the affordable, cloud-based construction management platform that has experienced rapid adoption by small- to mid-sized contractors.

The BuildingBlok system revolutionizes the control of construction projects from start to close-out with a comprehensive suite of features that include invitations-to-bid, file manager, daily reports, financial management and numerous other capabilities. Users manage their budgets online, and the system tracks and automatically administers the approval process for change orders, pay applications and invoices.

The latest release, which provides an affordable optional archival storage for a project's electronic records, is also available for completed projects. Digital record-keeping can dramatically reduce the reams of files, scattered notes and other papers compiled during a project's duration.

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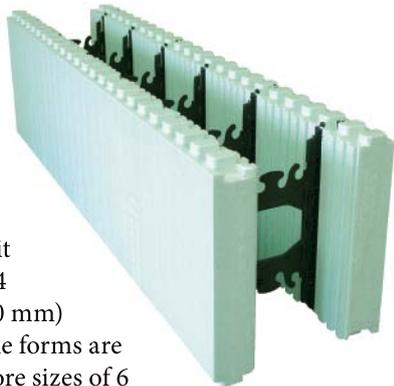
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Nudura introduces The Optimizer to its ICF line

The Optimizer is the newest addition to the Nudura ICF Series of insulated concrete forms. The Optimizer offers installers a variety of benefits to save time and money during installation. With the Optimizer, the need to rip forms is greatly reduced.

Designed to be used as a height adjuster at the top of the wall, the Optimizer allows installers the ability to hit 17 different stack heights from 4 feet (1,200 mm) to 12 feet (3,600 mm) without having to rip forms. The forms are available in Nudura standard core sizes of 6 inches (150 mm) to 12 inches (300 mm), giving users the freedom to use the Optimizer on any size job, from commercial to residential.



☎ (866) 468-6299

🌐 www.nudura.com

TST releases new Top Finish Adhesives

Total Solution Technology announces the release of Top Finish vertical and overhead adhesives that are 100 percent concentrate. Application thickness is 1/4 inch by trowel, and they can be used for exterior or interior finishing systems in preparing walls for the final coat.

This product can be mixed mechanically or by hand. Since hand-mixing generates little shear force, TST recommends allowing the fresh mortar to slake for 5 minutes and then stirring again.

☎ (586) 604-5828

🌐 www.totalsolutiontechnology.com

New Multiquip app identifies the ideal mixer to fit any project

Multiquip Inc., the industry's premier manufacturer of concrete and plaster/mortar mixers, introduces a mobile app enabling contractors, equipment professionals and homeowners to choose the exact mixer to meet their project requirements. Once installed, the user inputs their basic project requirements: such as the number of blocks to be placed for mortar mixers, or slab dimensions for concrete mixers.

The Mixer Sizing App analyzes the data and provides an estimated amount of material needed (in cubic feet and standard bag sizes) for the job. It also shows available mixer sizes and power options within the MQ/Whiteman and MQ/Essick model ranges.

The Multiquip Mixer Sizing App works on both Apple and Android platforms and is available as a free download in both the App Store and Google Play Store, or from the Multiquip website.

☎ (800) 426-1244

🌐 www.multiquip.com



New pump for the artificial rock and waterscape industry

Quikspray's new Carrousel Pump model 15010FP-3 is designed for the artificial rock and waterscape industry. This Carrousel Pump is manufactured for high-production rock work or for small complete high-production applications when a large compressor is not available.

The peristaltic action allows for low or no maintenance, and the pump is extremely easy to operate with unskilled labor. The time-proven easy-flow Q & Q couplings are a standard on this pumping system, so high material flow can be expected with less power. The unit is electrically powered with a variable-speed 220 vac motor and controls.

☎ (419) 732-2611

🌐 www.quikspray.com



Wyco introduces ErgoPack backpack vibrator

The new Wyco ErgoPack is the only backpack vibrator on the market to offer an ergonomic design where the engine weight is properly supported by the operator's hips. The ErgoPack improves overall job site productivity by delaying operator fatigue, discouraging injury-prone postures, and ultimately making a hard day's work just a little more comfortable.

The Wyco backpack design provides for easy mobility around the job site and can allow one user to easily vibrate low- to high-slump concrete with up to a 2-inch head. A built-in tachometer allows for quick reference of vibration speeds and allows users to take full advantage of variable speed control to harness the most effective vibration for any mix. The Wyco Backpack is gear-driven, rather than belt-driven. Hardened steel gears further increase the durability of the unit.

The comfortable ErgoPack also features a Honda four-cycle engine with a heavy-duty clutch and a lock-in and controlled speed feature. Redesigned gears and bearings extend service life.

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🌐 www.wycotool.com



New solvent-based sealers from Clemons

Clemons Concrete Coating is proud to release its new and slowest-drying solvent-based sealers. Super Seal-22 VZ Cure & Seal is a 22 percent solids oil-based wet-look sealer that aids in the proper cure of freshly placed concrete and leaves a durable film on the surface. The VZ Cure & Seal offers in excess of 100 percent longer dry times than other similar products. This new product provides increased working time and easier application, especially in hot weather.

CCC has also released Supreme Seal-22 VZ Cure & Seal, a 22 percent solids nonyellowing pure acrylic sealer. Supreme Seal-22 VZ protects cured concrete with a durable film on the surface as it enhances appearance with a clear glossy finish. The use of slower-evaporating solvents allows for the resin to penetrate the concrete surface and form a protective film.

Each of these products decreases likelihood of spiderwebbing and bubbles. The slower solvent evaporation meets or exceeds OTC and LADCO VOC Standards. The products can be rolled on or sprayed and provide a durable protective film.

☎ (615) 872-9099

🌐 www.ccc-usa.com

E & A develops a darker shade of black pigment

E & A Supply Corp., a distributor of Bayferrox Pigments by Lanxess, has developed a new darker shade of black pigment.

EA375GP Black is a complex matrix of Bayferrox inorganic metal oxide pigments. The EA375GP pigment is a free-flowing, low-dusting iron oxide black blend, supplied as granules. This premium pigment was specifically developed due to the strong demand from architects and owners for a deeper and more intense black pigment for use in various in-situ concrete applications. This product can also be used in all construction material coloration applications.

The tint strength of the EA375GP is 30 percent stronger than other available blacks. The common black pigments on the market today typically achieve an L value of 28 to 29. In laboratory testing, the EA375GP Black pigment has attained an L value of 24.63, which is significantly darker than currently available blacks.

Standard packaging is in 1CY disintegrating bags. Custom packaging is also available upon request.

☎ (888) 222-7501

🌐 www.eandasupply.com

🌐 www.bayferrox.com

TST releases new Top Finish Self-Leveling Compound

Total Solution Technology announces the release of Top Finish Self-Leveling Compound, a 100 percent concentrate product that can restore structurally sound yet worn concrete in preparation for floor coverings. Self-Leveling Compound provides an exceptionally smooth, uniform surface without air bubbles, while also offering high abrasion resistance and flexural and compressive strength.

Applications can include industrial floors and warehouses, processing facilities, civic centers, and institutional, municipal and residential floors. Mix this product mechanically or by hand. Since hand-mixing generates little shear force, TST recommends allowing the fresh mortar to slake for 5 minutes and then stirring it again.

☎ (586) 604-5828

🌐 www.totalsolutiontechnology.com

Two new colors in Seal-Krete Floor-Tex coating line

Seal-Krete, an industry leader in concrete and masonry coatings manufactured by Convenience Products, now offers grab-and-go convenience in two premixed colors for Floor-Tex Textured Concrete Coatings: Nantucket Gray and Wicker Brown.

Floor-Tex is a premium acrylic paint that hides stains, discolorations and imperfections in concrete, which makes it a great coating for concrete with minor cracks and stains. It provides a durable and decorative nonslip finish on walkways, porches, patios, pool decks and wood stairs. It is low-VOC and nationally compliant. In tests performed on commercial sites, Floor-Tex outwears conventional antiskid coatings, paints and stains. Floor-Tex is self-priming for easy, fast application. It's also available in tint bases and can be tinted to 36 additional colors.

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ACI's improved powerful, compact de-duster

Air Control Industries has improved its JetBlack blower-powered personnel de-dusting unit. The new unit is more compact yet has greater air output without any increase in energy consumption.

The new JetBlack is the product of a reconfiguration of the previous model's internals, which results in enhanced airflow to give 10 percent greater output (2.75 psig) plus a reduction in overall size that makes it less obtrusive and easier to install within the workplace.

Like the original JetBlack, the new model is safe and economical to run. Because it delivers a high volume of air at low pressure, it can be used even against exposed skin. It is economical to operate too, with operating costs being 90 percent lower than typical compressed air systems.

The standard hose length with the wall-mounted unit is 142 cm (56 inches), and noise levels are still lower than 78 decibels. A spare filter is included with each new JetBlack supplied, and accessing the filter is much easier on the new model. All replacement parts are interchangeable with both versions.

As an option, and to be to be compliant with OSHA requirements, the JetBlack outlet nozzle can be fitted with a chip-guard.

☎ (207) 445-2518

🌐 www.jetblack-air.com



TST releases new Top Finish Concrete Resurfacer

Total Solution Technology announces the release of Top Finish Concrete Resurfacer, a 100 percent concentrate, high-strength, nonsag, nonshrinking mixture of portland cement, co-polymer and cement additives engineered to restore structurally sound yet worn concrete surfaces. Sand and water must be added in the mix. The mixture can be applied by a crew or by one person.

Top Finish Concrete Resurfacer is a multipurpose repair material used in concrete rehabilitation systems or stucco-mortar refinishing systems. It can be rolled, trowel, squeegeed or sprayed and can be colored using powder iron oxide pigments, liquid concrete colors, acid stain or dyes. Top Finish can be applied in a variety of colors, forms and textures used in residential, commercial or industrial coatings.

☎ (586) 604-5828

🌐 www.totalsolutiontechnology.com

Tide pool and spa project instructional DVDs available

Aspiring artists who wish to learn how to build a rock and water pool have a training DVD as a resource. Richard L. Winget has created two training videos in his Rockscape 101 series, with progress currently being made on a third. The two-DVD set "Rockscape 101" presents tips and tricks of rockscape artistry, including tools and specialty suppliers. "Rockscape 101 Series 2" is a three-DVD set that presents a laguna tide pool and spa project. Both DVD sets are available separately or can be bought together at a discounted price.

🌐 www.carve-right.com



Empire Blended Products launches new line of Rainbow products for decorative concrete

Empire Blended Products has introduced a new line of decorative concrete products under the preexisting Rainbow brand. The new line features 20 products for repair, restoration and home improvement.

Founded in 1946 and still a family-owned and operated business, Empire Blended has been engineering cutting-edge concrete products designed to meet and exceed customer expectations. Here's the new line of products, with more expected to be released soon.

- Bayferrox Integral Color
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- Rainbow Color Release Powder
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- Rainbow Dry Acid Crystals
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- Rainbow Fine Overlay
- Rainbow High Gloss Concrete Sealer
- Rainbow Integral Color for Concrete
- Rainbow Lightweight Vertical Wall Mix
- Rainbow Lightweight Countertop Mix
- Rainbow Non-Acid Polymer Stains
- Rainbow Primer for Overlays
- Rainbow Self Leveling Topping Mix
- Rainbow Slip Resistant Additive
- Rainbow Spray On Topping Mix
- Rainbow Stampable Overlay
- Rainbow Vertical Wall Overlay

☎ (732) 269-4949

🌐 www.empireblended.com

SASE introduces high-performance dust extraction equipment

SASE Co. has introduced two new high-performance dust collection tools, the Bull 240 Dust Collection System and the Bull 1250 EBS Dust Collection System. The Bull 240 includes 28 feet of 2-inch hose along with a vacuum wand and floor tool. It operates at a quiet 65 dB level. The Bull 240 offers a continuous elongated bagging system and secondary filtration with two HEPA filters.

The Bull 1250 EBS Dust Collection System includes 50 feet of 3-inch hose and 100 feet of heavy-duty power cord. It too is quiet, operating at only 78 dB. The elongated bags provide more than 42 square feet of filter area. Secondary HEPA filtration and a manual filter shaker system provide high performance and durability.

☎ (800) 522-2606

🌐 www.sasecompany.com

Husqvarna launches high-performance dust collector

The Husqvarna DC 6000 will replace the DC 5500, a vacuum cleaner with a traditional two-filter system. The patented double-shell cyclone technology with automatic filter cleaning takes the DC 6000 to the next level. The new system matches highly productive Dual Drive grinding machines, the Husqvarna PG 820 and PG 680.

The centrifugal force in the double-shell cyclones separates 95 percent of the dust from the intake air. The dust is then collected in a Longopac system, which allows fast, drop-down, dust-free disposal into individually sealed plastic bags. The air continues into the filter cylinder, where the filter catches the remaining dust. Also, compressed air is used to always keep the filter clean and effective. The purging cycle is computerized for optimum filter cleaning, which results in a productive dust collector with no loss of suction over time. All of this means significantly less dust on the floor and in the air, which saves time but also contributes to a healthier working environment for the users and surrounding area. The DC 6000 is equipped with a HEPA 13 rated filter.



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Husqvarna's new grinding cup wheels

Husqvarna has introducing several new cup wheels for hand-held surface preparation applications.

The G Series is comprised of three cup wheels made to grind concrete. Each model is available in 5- or 7-inch diameters. The G1013 is designed for hard to very hard concrete. The G1043 is made to cut medium concrete. The G1073 cuts through abrasive concrete.



If you need to remove epoxy or glue, the Arrow Cup Wheel is the perfect choice. It has a high removal rate and is available in 4-, 5- and 7-inch diameters.

The PCD Cup Wheels were developed for high removal rates of vinyl, epoxy or glue. They are available in 5- or 7-inch diameters.

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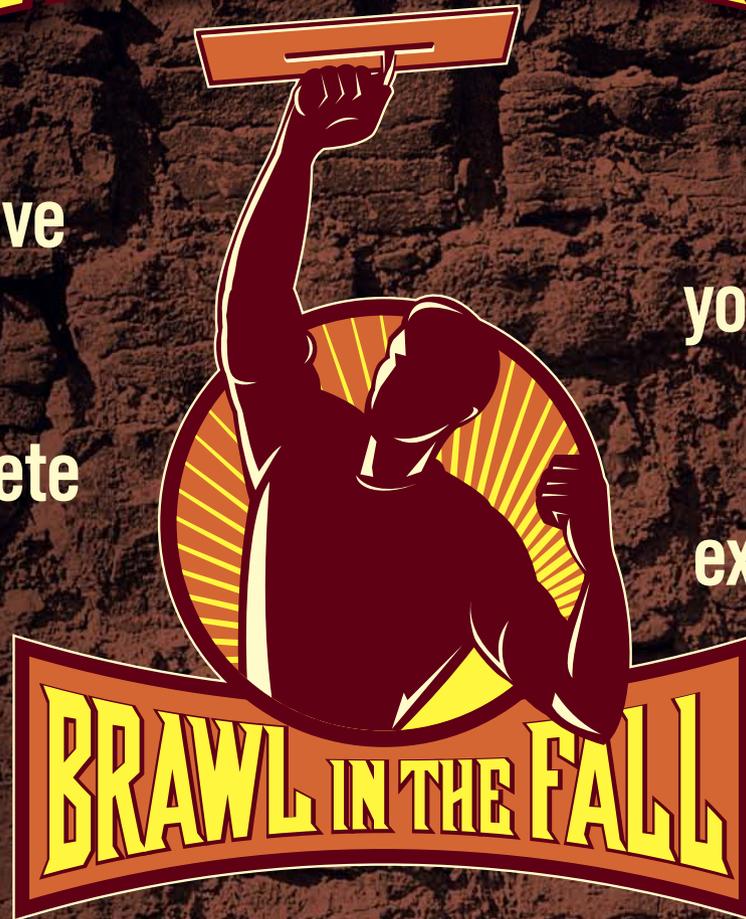
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How to Use Samples, Mock-ups and Models to Your Best Advantage

by Karen Van Heukelem

SAMPLES, mock-ups and models take the guesswork out of decorative concrete finishes and offer a sense of security for the owner, designer and contractor. They quickly get everyone on the same page before crews permanently place any concrete on the site.

My company, Colorado Hardscapes Inc., and I are working on a project for a municipality in Colorado. As with any city project, multiple decision-makers with a variety of opinions oversee every step. Projects like this can be intimidating at first, which is one reason this situation reflects the importance of using samples, mock-ups and models.

This particular project involves installing a new toddler pool at an existing outdoor water play facility. Colorado Hardscapes' portion of the job includes faux rockwork and specialty paving.

To begin, we created a maquette of the rockwork. "Maquette" is a French word meaning "scaled model," and in fact, the word "mock-up" is an imitation of this. The landscape architect on this project started referring to it as a "French model" so he would remember.

I spent several weeks in the studio fine-tuning the maquette to match the audience, design intent, and character needed for the space. Meanwhile, Colorado Hardscapes' rock artisans created a mock-up of the rock with the texture and color we intended to use on the feature.

Then the fun part began: Getting everyone on the same page. The general contractor added me to the agenda for the next owner, architect and contractor meeting. With an eager audience of eight people, I unveiled the maquette with a faux rock sitting right next to it. Both our maquette and our rock mock-up were a big hit. After some constructive dialogue and multiple camera shots, the excitement level rose even higher. More importantly, all parties involved knew exactly what the rocks would look like.

The city decided to keep the rock mock-up to help them determine colors for other items on the site. We took the maquette back to our shop to begin manufacturing.

Exploring possibilities with samples

Before the meeting ended, the landscape architect told me that we needed to talk about the design for the splash pad. The original design called for some etches in the concrete surface, but he wanted to know what other ideas Colorado Hardscapes might have.

Samples also helped us sell the new ideas as we went. I studied some of the renderings, listened to their dreams for the space, met with the landscape architect to show him some rough ideas and then came up with an excellent solution for him. However, the idea wasn't something I could just pull off the shelf and show him. So he had to wait anxiously as I brainstormed with others at the office and in the shop until we fine-tuned the idea and created a sample.

Since this is an area for water play, there is an ocean aquatic theme throughout the entire site. To enhance that, I nestled some hidden crabs and starfish into the surface of the rockwork at eye level for toddlers to discover. The landscape architect wanted the splash pad to look as if some of the pool came up onto the "shore" and washed away some of the surface, leaving behind some playful tide pools, all the while maintaining a safe and flush surface. And of course, we had a budget we needed to stay within.

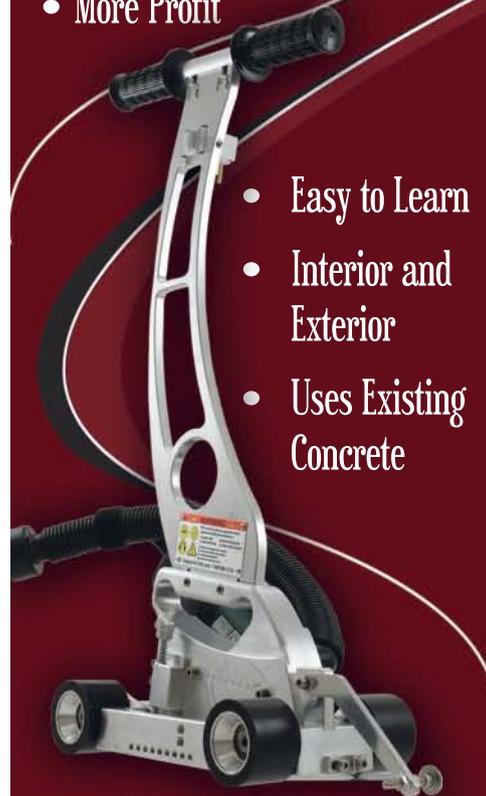
We developed a rough sketch and a sample showing our idea. To achieve the look, we utilized a series of wavy lines, saw cuts and broom-finished concrete. Colorado Hardscapes Sandscape, LithoMosaics with sea creatures and Lithocrete made of seashells, glass, and rock contributed to a cohesive look. When the landscape architect saw it, he was amazed — he did not know something like this was possible with

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concrete. He made my rough sketch look much more professional and took it and the sample to present to the city. Everyone loved the concept.

I received an email from one of the decision makers at the city stating, “I was able to see the sample for the spray ground — I love it!!! Exactly what I was imagining! Thank you for being so innovative with this project and making it a reality! I appreciate it!” Samples can communicate far more effectively than any drawing, written or verbal communication. Everyone is on the same page before the work even starts.

We work in an industry where a successful project is determined by whether or not it met expectations. If communication between the client and our crews gets distorted, frustration or disappointment is sure to follow. We do what we can to minimize these frustrations. Samples provide the visual communication tools which proposals, phone calls and even color charts cannot produce.

At Colorado Hardscapes, we are fortunate to have a working Design Center, where clients and designers can peruse an array of concrete samples. Almost every sample in our collection is a direct result of an actual or proposed project. We insist on creating a sample for every job we do, large or small.

Like all of our business practices, this concept evolved with the progression of Colorado Hardscapes. In the early 1980s, we started installing stamped concrete. Because decorative concrete was a relatively new concept back then, we found that samples were necessary to show clients what we proposed to install, as well as to clarify the installation for both the client and our crews. Colorado Hardscapes’ vice president, John Buteyn, remembers: “One catalyst for making (unique) samples for every job was when customers chose the color from one sample and the pattern from another. They convinced themselves that they had chosen the color and pattern from the same sample and believed that we had installed the wrong pattern.” By 1990, samples had become standard practice for us.

Creating samples stimulates the desire to try something new. Samples also provide artisans in the field with something they can reproduce.

Make it a habit to create a sample for every project, preferably in the design phase



A maquette prepared by Colorado Hardscapes Inc. to propose the layout, size and form of rockwork that their division, di Giacomo Inc., would build at an upgraded outdoor aquatic center in Broomfield, Colorado.

Photo courtesy of Colorado Hardscapes Inc.

when working with a landscape architect or architect. Being in relationship with the design industry in the early stages of any project increases the likelihood you will be on the final project when it hits the streets. Even if you are not involved at prebid level, insist on samples once you are contracted. Get an approved sample, with the client signing off on color and texture, before placing any concrete.

Test your plan with mock-ups

Mock-ups are equally important, for both flatwork and interior concrete floors. Some flatwork jobs require an on-site mock-up. These are typically at least 100 square feet and show details relevant to the particular site. For exterior concrete, they will show expansion joints, saw cuts, and caulk where applicable. For interior concrete, they will show finish, saw cuts, caulk, patches, crack filling, edge details and any other requirements. For interior floors, especially if others place the concrete, we insist on doing a mock-up on-site. We typically perform this mock-up in a closet or a room where other floor coverings will cover it.

Also, we encourage the design community to insist on mock-ups from all of their decorative concrete contractors. Some contractors may see this as an unnecessary hassle — creating samples for every project or dream does take time and resources. But while we create our samples to help please the client and the

design community, it is equally important for contractors to create samples for their own security.

Samples, mock-ups and models manage expectations. They show our crews what we promised the client, and they prove the finish is possible. Once we are equipped with these tools, second-guessing and misinterpretation of finishes, colors and details become things of the past.

Because of the importance of samples to every project we install, Colorado Hardscapes employs a full-time artisan devoted to creating samples. Our shop is set up for the fabrication of our samples with all of our sealers, materials and colors at her fingertips. Every sample she creates is labeled and then logged into a database with instructions and recipes on how to recreate it.

Whether you start with a full-time sample maker or utilize one of your skilled finishers as needed, if you are not doing samples, mock-ups or models now, I highly recommend you start. 🛠️

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



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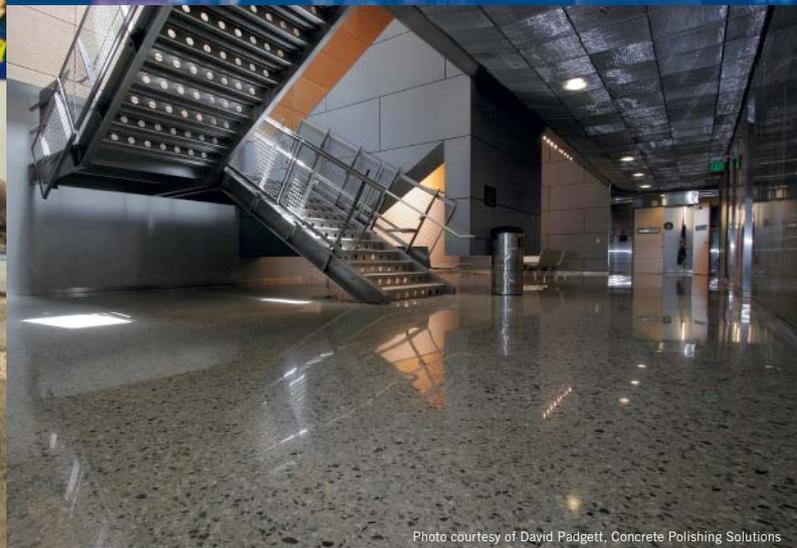


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ARTISAN IN CONCRETE

Paul Schneider, Patterned Concrete of Cincinnati Fairfield, Ohio

by Stacey Enesey Klemenc

PAUL Schneider is one of the lucky people in this world whose hobby and occupation are one and the same: decorative concrete. “Most people don’t think of a hobby as something you make money off of,” he says. But he does it.

“Decorative concrete is fun and exciting. I love being challenged by the customer to create a look from something that starts with a thought,” he says.

As vice president of Patterned Concrete of Cincinnati, a small company he formed in April 1994 as a licensee of Patterned Concrete Industries, Schneider, 55, has designed and installed decorative concrete for a wide scope of commercial and residential projects — everything from municipal buildings, theme parks, casinos and shopping centers to restaurants, pool decks and patios.

Patterned Concrete’s work largely involves staining and stamping, with a consistent 50-50 ratio of commercial to residential. Most of his work is done within a 100-mile radius of Cincinnati, in cities such as Indianapolis, Columbus, Ohio, and Lexington, Kentucky.

Learning the ropes

During his college years in the late ’70s, Schneider worked as a laborer for Baker Concrete Construction, an Ohio-based contractor with a national presence, and his interest in concrete construction steadily grew. Although he considered switching majors from accounting to construction management, he listened to his advisers and took construction management electives instead, as his schedule permitted. Schneider graduated on time from the University of Cincinnati with a bachelor’s degree in accounting. He had planned to return and work on a degree in construction management, but that never materialized.

“The (full-time) job I accepted with Baker kept me working out of town for the next six years, so pursuing another degree part-time wasn’t an option. I started as a laborer and worked my way up to an operations manager running large projects in places such as Atlanta, Washington, D.C., and Fort Drum, New York,” recalls Schneider.

One of his more memorable Baker projects, he says, was placing and finishing the concrete at the Georgia World Congress Center, the big convention center in downtown Atlanta. “Here I was, 23 years old and responsible for a quarter million yards of concrete and 1.5 million square feet of floor,” he says.

Schneider was instrumental in helping to create Baker’s decorative concrete program in 1988. When he left to start Patterned Concrete of Cincinnati a few years later, Baker signed on as one of his clients.

He considers the company’s owner, Dan Baker, one of his two most influential mentors. “He taught me about the concrete construction business and how to treat a customer,” Schneider says.

His other mentor is Mike Archambault, who was one of the owners of Patterned Concrete Industries in 1988, when Schneider became involved with stamped concrete. “Mike was a star before his time,” Schneider says. Archambault taught him that if you’re not willing to put it in your backyard, you shouldn’t sell it to the customer, and that above all, you should treat people with respect.

Supporting the industry

A big proponent of paying it forward, Schneider belongs to a variety of professional organizations. He’s been a member of the American Society of Concrete Contractors for 10 years and currently serves as the director of its Decorative Concrete Council. Last year, he says, the all-volunteer council published five different white papers that addressed issues concerning sealers. “I was part of that particular task force that compiled a glossary, characteristic chart, installation checklist, and application and maintenance guides. It was about a three-year process.”

The DCC is an organization that focuses on helping decorative concrete contractors advance through education and networking while staying abreast of the latest trends and products. “We try to be a full resource offering decorative concrete contractors our expertise and reputation,” Schneider says. He points out there is more to this industry than just

Photos courtesy of Patterned Concrete of Cincinnati





Photos courtesy of Patterned Concrete of Cincinnati

building things with concrete, which is where most contractors' expertise lies. There's also the business side, where many tend to be weaker.

The ASCC can be a big help there, he says. The group offers position statements on problems and practices to help contractors with negotiations and proposal submittals, as well as providing training in safety, marketing and business administration. It hosts an email forum, where members can post questions, and Membership Information Exchange (MIX for short) groups where noncompeting peers meet twice a year. "The ASCC can help you become a better contractor all the way

around," Schneider says. "If you ask for help, members will provide the resources."

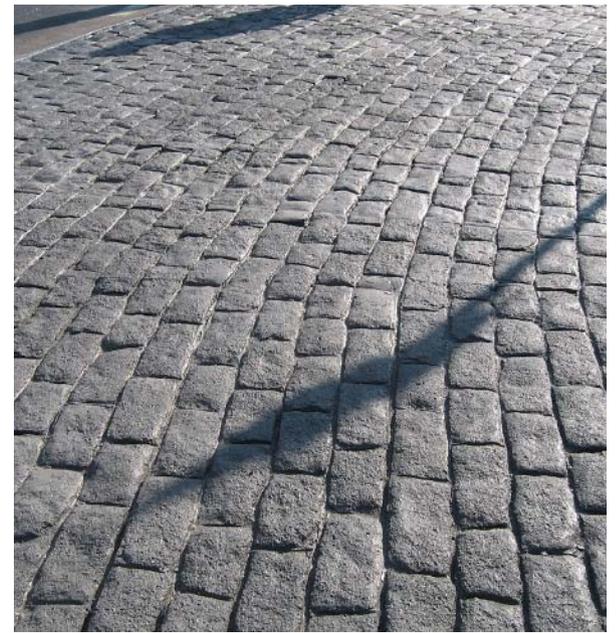
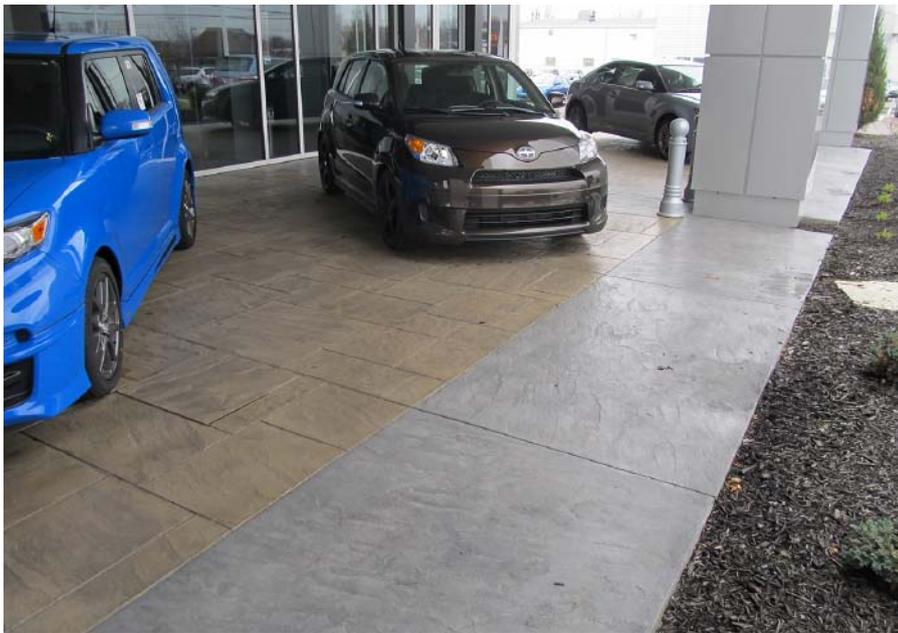
Each year, the council also installs a community service project somewhere in the country. Materials are donated, and members volunteer their time and pay their own way. Last year, he says, they chose the Western Kentucky Veterans Center in Hanson, where he and his team stained 5,000 square feet of existing concrete to tone down its brightness. They also created two focal point areas — one looks like a giant checkerboard that's used for occupational therapy exercises and games, while the other features a compass point and various military emblems to create a gathering place

and to help foster conversation.

"That project was life-changing for me," Schneider says. "It gave me a chance to give back to the veterans who have given us so many things in our lives. It was quite an honor to interact with those men who in turn were so appreciative of us helping them out."

Besides his ASCC involvement, Schneider is a member of the Home Builders Association of Greater Cincinnati and has served on the associate board. He also belongs to Allied Construction Industries, a nonprofit trade association for commercial contractors in greater Cincinnati, as well as the local chamber of commerce.

It costs money to belong to all these



organizations, but to Schneider, it's well worth the money spent. If you're active and take advantage of what these groups have to offer, he says, "you'll reap more rewards than what you put into it."

Another endeavor that has paid off for him involves the World of Concrete. For the past two years, Schneider has taught a hands-on stamped concrete training class, which he says has opened doors for him as a consultant.

Stamp of approval

Schneider's favorite aspect of his decorative concrete work is when a client gives him artistic freedom with a project

from planning to final product, rather than dictating exactly what needs to be done.

His showroom, which consists of 800 square feet inside and 3,000 square feet outside, displays more than 20 stamp patterns in an array of 24 colors. This allows his customers to see the real color instead of just looking at a color chart. He exclusively uses Patterned Concrete Industries stamps, which he says are the best in the business.

"I have some stamps that are 26 years old and have 1/3 million square feet under them," he says. "And they still leave the same impression they did when they were brand new."

For those just breaking into the business,

he offers advice. "This is your chosen profession. Treat it with respect because a lot of good things can come out of it. If you do not know the answers, ask questions and get training from reputable sources. Get involved and give back to the industry that is going to give you a good life. If everybody helps one another, we'll all make the industry better as a whole." 📱

🌐 www.patternedconcrete.us

See more photos from this feature online at ConcreteDecor.net

Polished Aggregate Floor Scores Points at New Nike Store

Nike Running at The Grove, Los Angeles

by Joe Maty

It's all about branding with the big-name consumer retail companies these days, and Nike is one of the biggest brand names around.

At the new Nike Running store at The Grove in Los Angeles, a polished concrete overlay was chosen to help produce the brand impression sought by Nike and architect McCall Design Group of San Francisco. They handed the ball to Mark Beamish Waterproofing (MBW), Anaheim, California, to execute the game plan: installation of a cement-based overlay from Raeco Inc. with a custom aggregate mix, followed by diamond polishing.

The playbook dictated a fast-moving formation, with no margin for error and the



Photos courtesy of Mark Beamish Waterproofing Inc.

Project at a Glance

Client: Nike Running at The Grove (retail store owned and operated by Nike Inc.), Los Angeles

Decorative concrete contractor: Mark Beamish Waterproofing (MBW) Inc., Anaheim, California

www.markbeamish.com

Architect: McCall Design Group, San Francisco; Dennis Wu, project manager

www.mccalldesign.com

General contractor: David Nice Builders, Los Angeles

Designer: Nike Inc., Beaverton, Oregon; Tim Rupp, lead designer

Project manager: Nike Inc.; Jen Gagner, project construction manager

Project description: Installation of cementitious overlay on existing concrete, tile and plywood flooring surface, including custom decorative aggregate; densification and polishing of overlay

Products used: Raeco SLT HS self-leveling, structural-grade floor-topping overlay with decorative aggregate; Raeco R-2000 latex bonding agent; Raeco densifier; Convergent Concrete Technology Pentra-Guard (EXT) sealer

How long from start to completion: 7 days

Challenges: Accelerated project schedule for retail location in upscale shopping venue; achieving aggregate exposure and variation in aggregate distribution specified by owner; coordination and execution of one-time overlay installation to facilitate seamlessness in flooring surface

time clock ticking, to meet the demand of quick turnaround and a flawless, seamless floor. The location — an upscale shopping venue just south of Hollywood — and the demanding schedule required precision planning and execution to mix and install 70 to 80 batches of Raeco's SLT HS, a self-leveling, structural-grade floor-topping mortar touted as producing a very hard, durable surface.

"A key was the training," says Chris Lott, MBW project manager. "We've done the Raeco material before in this kind of installation, but not with this variation in aggregate. We took a lot of video of the sample process and passed it along to the foreman. We walked through everything, mentally practiced everything, and the foreman knew what it was going to take.

"They had the right measurement containers from Raeco, and that was a key. This kind of job starts slow, but when they got into a rhythm they knocked it out."

The look of a field house

The owners of the Nike store sought to produce a field-house vibe with the design of the store, says Dennis Wu, project architect for McCall Design Group.

"The goal was to specify a flooring material that could provide a backdrop for the bleacher-wood wall finish," Wu says. The flooring material also needed to be consistent in texture and "simple yet impactful," he says. Last but not least, it had to work when installed over an old floor.

Lott says the 3,000-square-foot flooring install presented logistical challenges for MBW, as the shopping mall is pedestrian-oriented, with streets that are closed to motor traffic in evenings.

Then there was the messy existing flooring — residual tile, plus plywood and concrete where tile had been removed. In preparation for overlay, metal lath was installed over the plywood, the concrete was shotblasted and the tile was cleaned.



A primer, Raeco's R-2000 latex bonding agent, was applied by paint roller to all the surfaces. This is allowed to cure to a tacky level, then the self-leveling overlay is installed, Lott says.

Allowing enough cure time prior to diamond grinding is important. "You want to grind in a timely fashion," Lott says. The optimal time is 15 to 18 hours after application of overlay, he says.

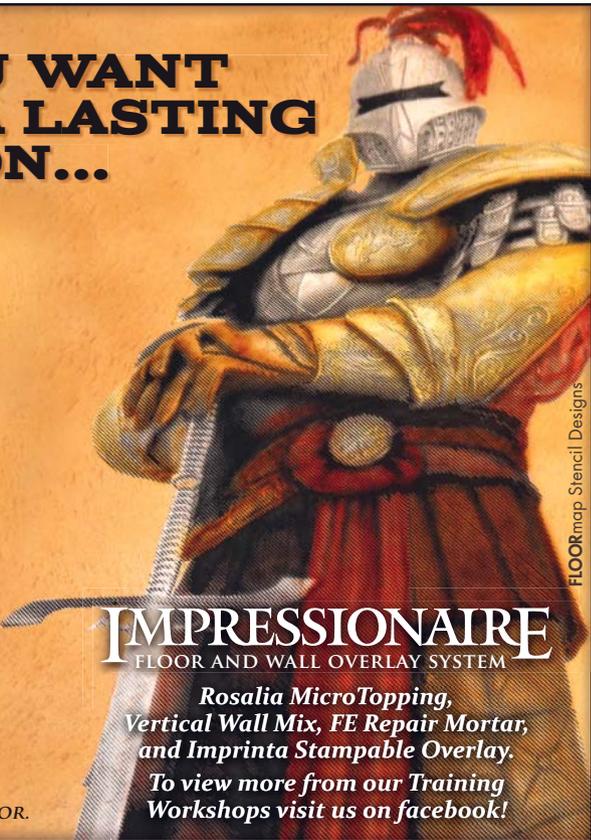
A key to the installation was incorporation of aggregate — in this case dark-colored pebbles of 1/4- to 3/8-inch size. Nike insisted on a certain level of aggregate exposure to give a salt-and-pepper appearance. At the same time, aggregate concentration was not completely uniform. To get the variation sought by the owner, MBW used twice as much aggregate in every fourth or fifth batch mixed.

Under the microscope

Nike representatives put MBW through the paces in developing samples of approximately 3 feet square, Lott says. The samples were given the complete polishing treatment, including edge work with hand-held grinders.

The diamond grinding and polishing

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process achieved a level 2 polish, starting with an initial grind using 60- to 80-grit metal-bond diamonds, followed by subsequent passes with 100-grit hybrid and 200- and 400-grit resin diamonds. For densification, Raeco's sodium silicate densifier was applied. MBW also applied a clear sealer, Convergent Concrete Technology's Pentra-Guard (EXT), a lithium-fortified product. A high-speed burnish was a final step.

A special decorative element was added at the front-door entrance, where MBW shotblasted "1979" into the overlay surface, a reference to the year of a major Nike milestone — introduction of its Air shoe technology. For this process, MBW used a stencil based on a layout from Nike. The entryway surface was given one grind step with 100-grit resin-bond diamonds. Densifier was used, but subsequent polishing passes were omitted. A man in the Los Angeles area supplied the stencil, but Lott can't remember his name.

Dash to the finish

For its efforts, Mark Beamish Waterproofing won first place this year at the American Association of Concrete Contractors' Decorative Concrete Council (DCC) awards competition, in the Polished Concrete category.

MBW went into sprint mode to ensure a winning result on the Nike store project, the company says. Logistics presented the primary challenge, as the overlay material sets quickly, demanding a "flawless first-time application," the company said in its submission to the DCC awards program.

The specification of a seamless floor added the requirement of a one-night, nonstop installation plan. The company devised a process where three crew members mixed the overlay and aggregate material while three others poured and two worked to level the overlay. One additional crew member trailed behind, smoothing out the final finish. Prep work was done in a morning, install was done in one night, and grinding was completed over a four-night period.

Key players on the job included foremen Ramon Zavalza, who supervised the overlay pour, and Jose Tovar, quarterbacking the polishing program. Lott calls Zavalza "one of the best in the country with overlays" and says Tovar possesses "world-class skill" in the concrete polishing field. "Together, they

know what it's going to take, what looks good and how to make things right."

McCall Design Group's Wu says the overlay delivered "a consistent texture in terms of sand-to-aggregate ratio. Through polishing, the topping achieved a subtle level of reflectiveness. When the wall was clad with refinished bleacher wood, the floor juxtaposed and amplified the natural warmth in the wood and further enhanced the field-house design concept."

When the client floated the field-house idea, Wu says the designers worked closely

with MBW to develop a control sample that achieved the right amount of texture, reflectiveness and color. As construction began, MBW developed a fixed-size mock-up on the premises so it could be reviewed in exterior and interior lighting conditions for reflectiveness and color before final installation.

Wu says McCall Design Group is satisfied that the flooring choice and material echo the overall design intent, and gives MBW points for an installation that was "effective and efficient." 🚚



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Concrete Ribbons Beautify Courtyard

United Nations Plaza, San Francisco

by Gail Elber

WHEN the U.S. General Services Administration decided to renovate the federal office building at 50 United Nations Plaza in downtown San Francisco for its own use, officials set out to make the building a model of environmental sustainability.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 funded the project — the 77-year-old building's first renovation — and international firm HKS Architects undertook a renovation that included environmental remediation, installation of environmentally friendly building systems, restoration of historically significant interiors, and restoration of the central courtyard.

When the building was constructed in 1936, architect Arthur Brown designed a courtyard with classical fountains, which were never built. For the courtyard renovation, sculptor Cliff Garten conceived a design of plaited ribbons of concrete pavement accented by modern cubical granite fountains. Sections of the ribbons appear to rise from the pavement and twist to form benches.

Garten wanted the precast benches to complement the color of the granite fountains, and the pavement to match the benches.

To cast the benches, Garten called on Quick Crete, a precast-concrete



The benches have a different finish on each face.

Project at a Glance

Client: U.S. General Services Administration

Decorative concrete contractor: Quick Crete, Norco, California

www.quickcrete.com

General contractor: Hathaway Dinwiddie, San Francisco

www.hdcco.com

Design and project management: HKS Architects

www.hksinc.com

Project description: Precast concrete benches integrated with pavement in an undulating design

Challenges: The precast benches had to match the pavement; sections had to be fitted together with tight tolerances.

Photos by Jeremy Green

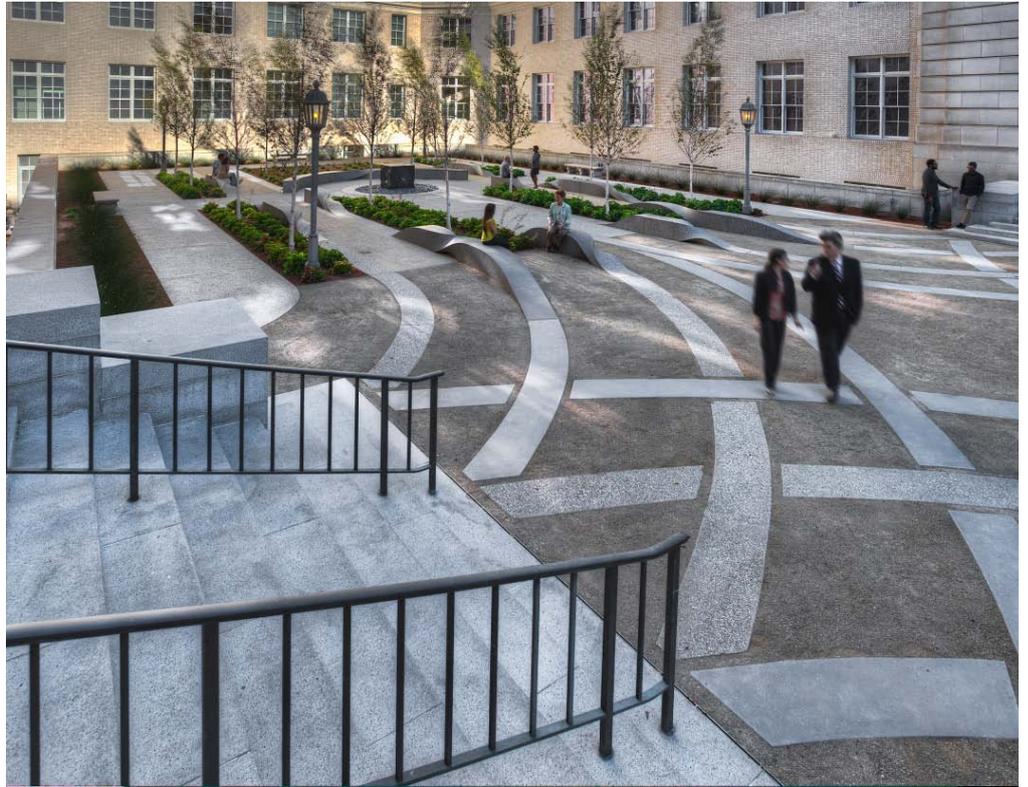
manufacturer based in Norco, California. “We work with Cliff quite a bit,” says Rick Crook, Quick Crete’s president.

Garten created drawings of the benches in Rhinoceros, a 3-D modeling program. Quick Crete used the Rhino files to CNC-machine a model of the bench. Then technicians laid fiberglass around the master to create a mold for the concrete. Quick Crete’s mold-making process is proprietary. “We use CNC pieces,” Crook says. “It’s a little bit of technology and a little bit of old-fashioned work with your hands.”

Each bench was made in two or three sections. A traditional precast joint is 1/4 inch, Crook says, but at Garten’s request, Quick Crete made the tolerances tighter than that to make the joints inconspicuous. After Quick Crete staff fitted the sections together at the plant and Garten approved their appearance, they transported the sections to San Francisco and shimmied them together.

Each exposed face that twists around the benches has a different finish. One is polished and the other two have different sandblasted finishes. “It looks like you’ve got a lot of motion there,” Crook says.

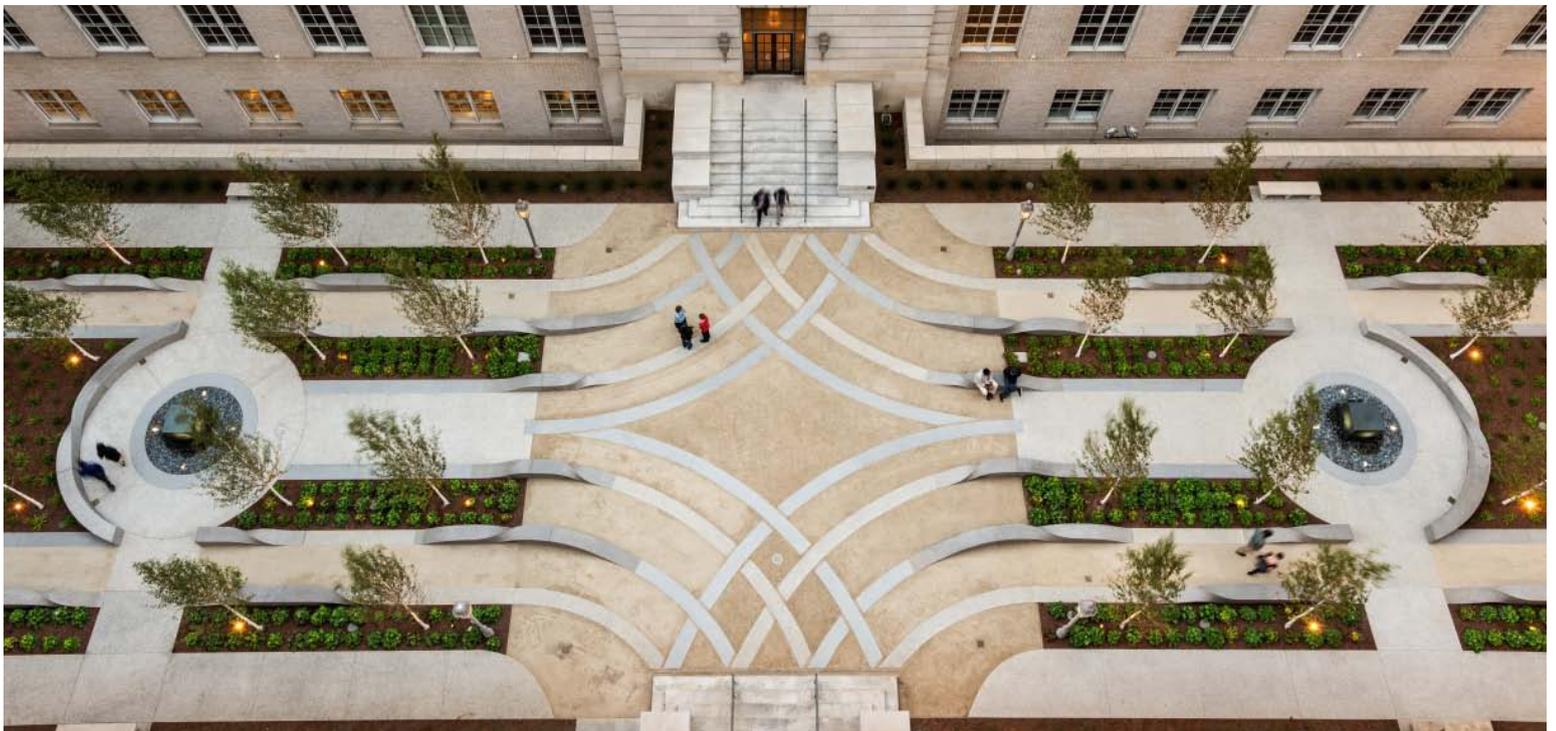
As for the pavement ribbons, general contractor Hathaway Dinwiddie poured those using a mix formulated to match the color of the benches. The ribbons of pavement border pervious walkways made



with decomposed granite. Plantings of birch trees and shade-tolerant, drought-tolerant plants complete the courtyard.

The 50 United Nations Plaza project is expected to earn a LEED Platinum rating, and with its sustainable plantings and recycled concrete, the courtyard is expected to earn a LEED Gold rating. But

the courtyard is a treasure for other reasons as well. Don Douglass, fine artist specialist for the GSA Pacific Rim Region’s Art in Architecture program, calls it “a wonderful place for employees to relax momentarily during their workday.”



San Francisco general contractor Hathaway Dinwiddie poured ribbons of pavement that define pervious walkways made with decomposed granite.

Architectural Concrete Stands Tall

Edie and Lew Wasserman Building, UCLA, California

by Stacey Enesey Klemenc

As the newest addition to UCLA's Jules Stein Eye Institute, located near the Westwood Village campus gateway, the Edie and Lew Wasserman Building rounds out a trio of buildings that house research and programs dedicated to restoring and preserving eyesight.

The six-story, 100,000-square-foot building provides three dedicated floors for the Edie and Lew Wasserman Eye Research Center. The center includes operating rooms and various eye-related clinics, which will allow patient exams, testing and surgery to be conducted on location. The building also houses offices for the departments of neurosurgery and urologic oncology.

"The Edie and Lew Wasserman Building is designed to meet the Jules Stein Eye Institute's growing needs, ensuring the



Photos courtesy of Morley Construction Co.

Project at a Glance

Client: University of California, Los Angeles

General contractor: Morley Construction Co., Santa Monica, California

www.morleybuilders.com

Architect: Richard Meier & Partners Architects LLP, Los Angeles

www.richardmeier.com

Scope of project: A six-story building that features glass and steel window systems, metal and cream-colored terra cotta panels, and architectural concrete. A total of 6,516 cubic yards of concrete were poured, including 2,429 cubic yards for the core walls. Wall form area totaled 91,569 square feet.

Cost of project: \$114.5 million

Timeline: Site preparation began in July 2010; building to officially open in October 2014

Challenges: Protecting two free-standing shear walls that were 110 feet above grade during the entire construction process. By nature of the design, the concrete walls were the first thing erected.

Awards: First place, Vertical Application, Over 5,000 Square Feet, 2014 Decorative Concrete Awards, presented by the American Society of Concrete Contractors Decorative Concrete Council; Best Medical Project in the Los Angeles Business Journal's 2013 Commercial Real Estate Awards competition; and a 2011 Community Impact Award in the Los Angeles Business Council's Los Angeles Architectural Awards competition. The building's core and shell also achieved the Leadership in Energy and Environment Design Gold certification from the U.S. Green Building Council.

institute's development into the leading eye research and treatment center of the 21st century," says Peter Hendrickson, UCLA's associate vice chancellor for design and construction.

So it only seems fitting that the \$114.5 million project, built by Morley Construction Co. and designed by Richard Meier & Partners Architects LLP, caught the eyes of the judges for the sixth annual Decorative Concrete Awards competition, sponsored in 2014 by the American Society of Concrete Contractors. The building placed first in the category of Vertical Application, Over 5,000 Square feet.

With an intriguing mix of facade planes and strong geometric shapes, the dramatic building features classic Meier elements: a marriage of glass-and-steel window systems, formed metal panels, cream-colored terra cotta panels and highly visible architectural concrete. The use of architectural concrete, in this case, was in massive concrete core towers that anchored the building at its east and west ends.

These concrete towers — one of the most prominent features in the design — were





The Wasserman Building is anchored at its east and west ends by tall, massive architectural concrete core towers. Seen here are form work panels in place for a pour. Architectural concrete, including white type II/V portland cement with black, yellow and red color additives, was only used on the exposed components.

the first things built, says Joseph B. Didone, project executive with Morley Construction Co., the general contractor. “We determined it was easier to build the concrete walls ahead of the structural steel building,” he says. “So at one point we had these shear walls standing 110-feet high not tied into anything. It was quite a sight to see.” The walls were poured full-height floor by floor and then stacked.

“Layouts of reveals and lift lines, intended to align with future finish elements, needed to be precise,” says Chris Forster, vice president of Morley Construction. Consequently, electronic distance measurement (EDM) and global positioning system (GPS) layout instruments were used, along with more traditional methods involving plumb bobs and fishing lines, to achieve the level of accuracy the famous Meier modular design demanded.

“We consider concrete as a possible material for construction with most every project we design,” says Michael Palladino, Meier’s principal in charge of the Wasserman project. “When done by experts in construction like Morley, architectural concrete establishes a sense of permanence, stability and timeless quality.” His firm likes to design areas with large expanses of glass to bathe the interior with natural daylight, he adds. “Architectural concrete gives the stability needed to balance the lighter and more transparent component of the design.”

Concrete is also versatile, with subtle tonal capability, allowing it to pair well with a wide cadre of building materials, he says. “It’s completely flexible. You can design the texture and the color to be compatible with the building palette.”

The dominant UCLA palette is warm colors, and the concrete



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The building's southwest corner — where (from left to right) glass, concrete and terra cotta all come together — is architect Michael Palladino's favorite view.





in the Wasserman building needed to boast color and shading that was compatible. “We like to mix gray and white cement to lighten the concrete, which makes subtle coloring of the concrete most successful,” Palladino says.

Extensive mock-ups were done to refine the mix design and forming materials ultimately used to construct the building. To achieve consistency in the architectural concrete’s color and texture, Didone says they had to ensure they used the same vendors and the same raw materials from the same batch plant throughout the entire construction process.

The project executive says besides the challenge of maintaining a consistent concrete color, there was the task of controlling the tie-hole pattern spacing. “It wasn’t your typical 24-inch on center spacing,” Didone says. “We had to have special plywood made (to make the forms) to meet the architect’s requirements.” But the end results were worth it, he concedes. The tie holes are his favorite architectural detail.

As a final product, Forster says, “The concrete within the Wasserman building not only provides the structural requirements needed in the building but also creates a cool, inviting appearance that blends and at the same time stands proudly apart from the other features of the building.”

One of the biggest challenges for the architect was integrating this building with the other two Stein buildings nearby, says Palladino. “This is a very thin building designed to maximize daylighting for all the building users,” he says, with expanses of glass on both sides as well as throughout the interior.

He’s very pleased with the building’s palette, placement, scale and massing. “By adding a third building to the Jules Stein Eye Institute, we’ve defined a great outdoor space and landscape for the entire campus to enjoy,” he says. 🚗



What's The Best Way to Strip Sealers from Stamped Concrete?

by Chris Sullivan

Question: How do I strip sealer from my stamped concrete patio? The installer used color hardener. Will I lose the color off the top when I strip? Will it weaken the concrete? Should I use a liquid stripper or blast it off? Can I stain the concrete after I take off sealer?

I have often said that stripping sealer from stamped concrete is one of the most miserable jobs I have experienced. The job of stripping any coating from concrete is hard enough, but add in the variations and texture of stamped concrete and the job becomes that much more difficult. The questions asked here are fairly common when the reality of having to strip old or failing sealer from concrete presents itself. The most important question, and most common, is whether the sealer should be removed with a chemical process or a mechanical one.

The short answer is almost always to use a chemical. When removing sealers and coatings from stamped concrete, the two most important factors to consider are removing all the sealer and not changing

the color or profile of the concrete surface during the process. Most mechanical processes for removing sealers and coatings involve grinding, scraping or blasting, all of which impact the concrete surface and tend to profile or scratch the surface. This is why chemical strippers, which do not impact the concrete surface, are the most common method for removing sealers and coatings from stamped concrete surfaces.

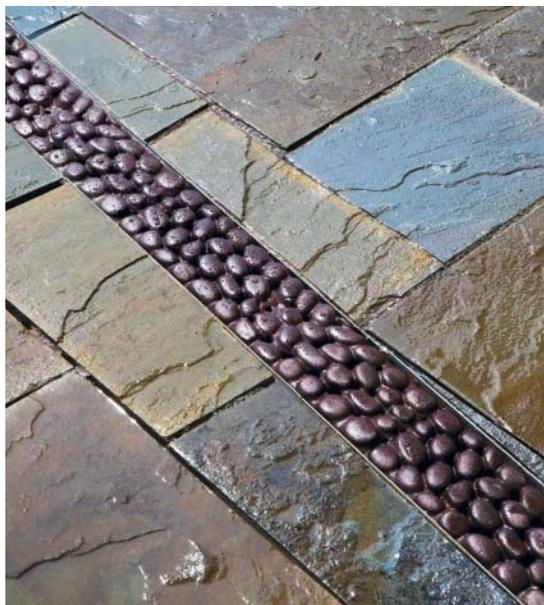
However, a mechanical process may work in certain instances. Soda blasting, a less aggressive mechanical method, has become more widely used in recent years to remove sealers and coatings successfully. Soda blasting utilizes special high-pressure blasting equipment with commercial-grade baking soda granules as the blasting medium. Under high pressure, the baking soda granule is hard enough to break down the coating, but not hard enough to profile the concrete. The downsides are the dusty mess the process creates and the alkalinity of the baking soda dust and its effect on plant life and landscaping.

In regard to the other questions, chemical stripping should have no effect on the color or the concrete surface if the concrete

was installed and stamped properly. The active ingredients in chemical strippers are designed to break down plastics and will have no effect on concrete. That being said, depending on the type of colors or pigments used to provide secondary color highlighting and antiquing, the chemical strippers may remove some of those colors. In my experience when powder release was used to antique the concrete, chemical strippers had no effect, but if acrylic tints or post-applied antiquing colors or powders were used, the chemical stripper can remove some of the color.

As a side note, if antiquing color was added to the sealer, as is popular in some regions, the process of stripping the sealer will remove all of its color as well.

Lastly, to answer the question about staining or color-treating the concrete after the sealer is chemically stripped, yes, you can — if the stripping process was performed well and the sealer and stripper residue was completely removed. Cleaning with soap and water (hot water if possible), scrubbing thoroughly, followed by a clean-water rinse is a critical part of the stripping process. Any stripper residue will impact



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the performance of new sealer being applied to the concrete surface. In many cases I have found that it takes two, maybe three rounds of chemical stripper to get all the sealer off.

It is also important to note that there is a big difference between a chemical stripper and an organic solvent. I often find the two products used interchangeably, and some confusion exists regarding their differences. They are two very different products. I discuss solvent in my *Concrete Decor* May/June 2013 Concrete Questions column, titled "Can You Restore Solvent-Based Sealers?"

Chris Sullivan is vice president of sales and marketing with ChemSystems Inc. He has led seminars and product demonstrations throughout North America. Reach him at questions@concretedecor.net.

Find Chris' earlier Concrete Questions column on restoring solvent-based sealers at

www.concretedecor.net/decorativeconcretearticles/vol-13-no-4-mayjune-2013/concrete-questions-can-you-restore-solvent-based-sealers

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Getting Into Decorative Concrete: A Guide for Newbies and Old-timers, Too

by Doug Carlton

THE path to success is riddled with pitfalls of uncertainty. However, the decorative concrete industry is full of potential and reward, and numerous tools are available to help those who want to build a long-term reputable business. A solid foundation for such an adventure is not only important, it's mandatory.

Unfortunately, however, the formula for success used by most individuals in our business falls short.

Far too many skilled decorative professionals falsely believe their success hinges on their expertise. Most feel the more they know about concrete counters, polishing or staining, the better their odds are of being viewed as successful artisans or, maybe better put, successful artisanal business owners. Sure, expertise

is important, but it's only a fraction of what you need. The rest is our focus today.

The ability to sustain your business long enough to prove your value is the tallest hurdle for breaking into or transitioning into the decorative concrete trade. My goal is to reduce the size of this hurdle by suggesting actions beyond the effort and cost of attending yet another product-sponsored seminar.

Step 1: Choose your specialties wisely

Not often do you hear a successful decorative concrete owner say they stumbled into their particular trade. Most spent many hours dissecting decorative options and opportunities, even to the point of testing the waters, before investing additional effort or capital. Choosing to

offer concrete countertops over polished concrete, by example, could mean less of an investment at first but far less profit in the long run. Also, choosing to stain interior concrete over stamping exterior hardscapes could seem like less effort but, again, ultimately be less profitable.

The first step in determining the best decorative services to offer is to compare the amount of necessary start-up effort and capital with earning potential. The only way to determine earning potential is to research the going rate in your locality. A low price per square foot usually means abundant local competition or competition with poor bidding habits. A higher-than-average rate usually means less competition and a trade that may be a good choice. This has nothing to do with how good you or your crew is at any type of decorative concrete.

Timing is the most overlooked necessity in today's business decision process. Part of choosing wisely is recognizing good timing from bad, risky timing from stable. Run the proposed plan by trusted professionals such as your CPA, lawyer and banker.

The people on your team of professionals will also view risk and reward from an objective viewpoint, usually offering sound advice from a different perspective. Pick your professional team wisely and trust their advice.

Step 2: Test the waters

Used equipment publications and classifieds are full of contractors who failed to properly test their local waters. They jumped in without researching things such as profitability, leverage risk, local building trends and learning curve. The plan sounded good in theory, but they quickly became overwhelmed when their plan turned to action.

There should be few major surprises if a plan's foundation is properly placed. Testing the waters is an opportunity to see how efficient your crew is at any particular type of decorative concrete. (Please remember that efficiency will improve as you and your

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crew become more experienced.)

I'm convinced it takes at least three attempts at a type of decorative concrete to see if it is a good fit for your business. The first attempt is usually chaotic, unorganized and nerve-racking. The second attempt is better. The third attempt should supply enough information to see if this is something worth taking on or not. My advice is to rent the equipment necessary during this fact-finding mission until you are 100 percent satisfied the craft is a good fit for you.

Will the proposed decorative task require more manpower and equipment? Will the proposed task require additional insurance and risk? Is the proposed task seasonal in your area? All these questions are worthy of consideration before taking the plunge.

Step 3: The plunge

As I view life from my third decade in the decorative concrete trade, I have more hindsight than some. Looking back, I recall the excitement of plunging into another phase of decorative concrete or expanding

an existing implementation. One big step came many years ago when we added an outside salesman to our business in order to help promote and organize our 10-man crew. Honestly, it was more expensive than I anticipated, yet the expansion also proved to be more profitable than my team of professionals anticipated, at least over the long term.

My point is that the plunge rarely goes exactly as planned in every detail. The ability to calmly accept challenges and move forward is vital. Not every project will be perfect. Some customers will be elated at job's end, and some will offer constructive criticism regardless of your level of effort. Part of accepting the challenge of plunging into a mysterious new phase of decorative concrete is making a commitment to do whatever is necessary to succeed.

One final tip: It's not recommended you evaluate a decorative concrete project the minute it's complete, especially soon after you've taken the plunge. Some projects are tiring, and the time to evaluate what was learned, or improvable, is not while you are

exhausted or worn out. Recuperate first, then critique what you did and identify what need improvement. 🛠️

Doug Carlton is working on his third decade in the decorative concrete industry. He's the owner of Carlton Construction, located at the base of the Big Horn Mountains in northeastern Wyoming. Doug can be reached at carltondoug@sbcglobal.net.



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Build the Perfect Pool Deck

Part 1 of 3: The Subgrade

by Jason Geiser

How am I going to keep this pool deck from settling and cracking, when they just finished digging it and want me to pour it next week?

There's already water in the pool, the color hardener and release agents are going to get everywhere, and the owner wants concrete edge coping!

Where am I going to run the rainwater? I'm boxed in by the house and retaining walls.

I have ladder and handrail supports, a diving board and basketball hoop jigs that have to be put in, and they have to be right.

I know as soon as somebody falls I'm going to be getting a call because the deck was too slippery!

Most of these pools are salt water. Salt is bad for concrete. What do I seal them with?

If you have poured concrete around swimming pools, you know that it provides unique challenges that you usually don't have to deal with on normal patios or sidewalks. This article is the first in a series that will explore proven tricks and tips to help ensure a successful installation for you and your clients.

The subgrade

Unstable subgrade is the primary culprit in cracking, shifting and settling in concrete around pools. We can all agree that concrete is only as good as what you put it on top of.

Let's explore the reasons for unstable subgrade around pools. When a pool is installed, the top of the finished walls all have to be level. However, 95 percent of backyards have some type of slope to them. This leads to a situation where you're going to have large areas with several inches, and in most cases, several feet of fill. I realize that this varies depending on the terrain where you work, but out of the 75 to 100 pool decks I have done, I can only remember one that has not had to have grade cut or filled.



Images courtesy of Jason Geiser

Deco-Crete Supply Inc., Orrville, Ohio, drills holes for piers to install a pool in the Wooster, Ohio, backyard of Dan and Tina Oliver. Orange marks show where the holes are to be dug.

how
TO

With that in mind, you have three options.

Option one is to let all the fill settle. This option is generally not feasible, because it does not go over well when you tell a family that has decided to put a pool in that they will have to wait for the dirt to settle. Not to mention, the pool builder doesn't want you holding up their money. Could you compact it in lifts? The answer to that is yes, but in my experience, when they dig the pool they're utilizing that dirt to fill in low spots as they excavate. So, it leaves questions. Is the dirt going to compact well enough? Are you going to be on-site when they're digging and get in their way to make sure it does compact? This is not very realistic.

Option two is to bring in stone or some type of premium fill. This works well if the deck is small, but on a bigger job this option can quickly get very expensive. It is usually difficult to get to the areas you're trying to fill, so this option can also present problems with access.

Option three is to support the deck some other way. In my experience this has been the best way to solve these problems. We know that every type of pool, whether it is concrete, metal or fiberglass, has walls that are hopefully never going to move. The concrete sitting on top of the pool wall won't settle. What we need to worry about is the concrete outside of this support.

Measuring out the grid

On steel-wall pools, which are typically a vinyl lining pool, the kit usually comes with deck supports. These are triangular pieces of metal. One side gets bolted to the wall and the other side gets poured in with the foundation of the walls. They stick out 3 feet from the deck, spaced about every 4 feet, and are 5 inches down from the finished concrete height. These will support the first 4 feet of concrete around the perimeter of the pool. If the customer just wants a normal walk around the pool, simply utilizing the deck supports in combination with some horizontal rebar will do the job.

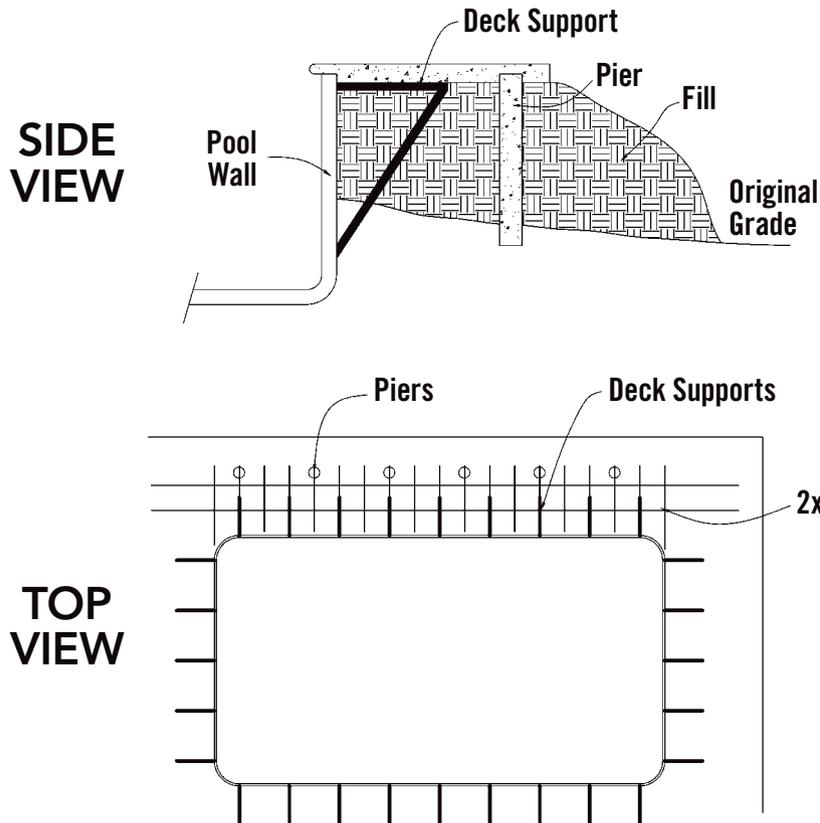
Concrete pools have no deck supports.

You will need to create your own supports. For this, and for the concrete beyond the reach of the deck supports on steel wall pools, I use piers.

The most important part of this is the placement of your piers.

Visualize a 6-foot-by-6-foot grid around the pool. Start counting off from the edge of your last solid support. For example, on the steel-wall pools that have the deck supports, you would go out from the pool a maximum of 6 feet from the end of the deck support, with 6 feet of spacing between each pier. To be clear, your deck supports typically support the first 4 feet of the deck, so the farthest you should go out from the pool edge is 10 feet.

Use marking paint to mark all the pier locations before you start drilling. Remember the deck supports only carry the first 4 feet, so anything further out than that needs a pier. For concrete pools, your spacing starts 7 feet out from the walls. It is important that, no matter how big the area of concrete, you stay with a maximum 6-foot-by-6-foot pier spacing.



Drilling the holes

Now that you have your holes marked out you're ready to start drilling. I have an 8-inch auger attachment for my Bobcat that makes quick work of the job. If you don't have an auger attachment or access to the site is limited, a two-man auger will do the job, though it will be a bit slower and harder on your back. Or if you just enjoy blisters, have several days to kill, and don't want to go home to the wife, you can dig them by hand (not recommended). All you need it to be is 8 inches in diameter.

Auger the holes down until you hit virgin dirt. This is usually 3 feet to 8 feet deep. If the fill is deeper than that your best bet is to put the piers in during the backfill. You can tell when you have reached virgin ground when drilling becomes harder. Another good sign that you're to the right depth is if you start to pull sod out from grass that was covered up when it was backfilled. Once you're there, get all the loose dirt out and compact the bottom of the hole with the end of a spud bar.



Above: When you see chunks of sod in the dirt on your auger, you know you're down to virgin dirt.



Right: Cleaning leftover dirt out of the hole.



Photos courtesy of Jason Geiser

Drop in the pier forms

Utilize any 6-inch PVC pipe for the pier forms (the cheapest, thinnest-walled material you can find will do the job just fine). To determine the length of the pipe for each pier you will measure from the bottom of the hole to the top of the concrete and subtract 5 inches. Cut a piece of pipe to that length and stick it in the hole. The pipe prevents cave-ins. At this point you will want to keep dirt and stone from falling into the pipe, so either tape the top with duct tape or put a piece of plywood on top of each pipe.



Forms, final grading and rebar

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All I have ever used is #3 bar and I have never had a problem with it. If you use #4 on everything else you do, use that. We install a 2-foot-by-2-foot rebar grid and make sure the rebar is placed on top of the piers, the deck supports, and the top of the pool wall. I realize that different parts of the country have different codes, so you may have to adjust this to meet your local codes. Hopefully you get the picture.

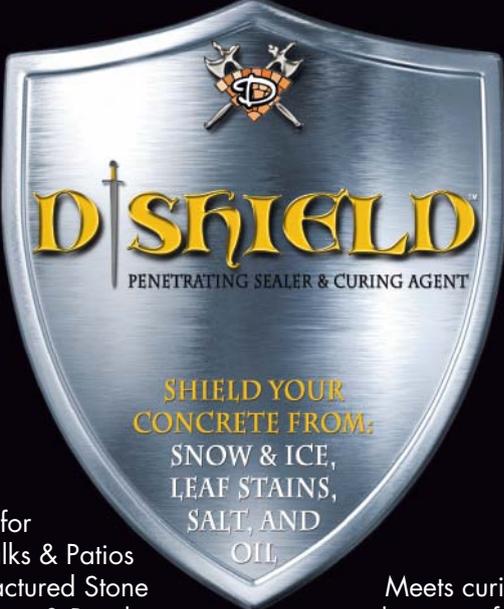
Fill the piers with concrete

Finally, when you are pouring the concrete deck, fill your piers up and vibrate to ensure consolidation inside the piers. By using this method, the fill can settle and the concrete deck will still be structurally sound. The rebar will carry the weight of the concrete deck as the subgrade settles under it. I have gone back to see jobs where we implemented this technique. You can see a void under the concrete, but the concrete deck is in great condition because the piers in conjunction with the rebar are holding it up.

Over the years I've given it a lot of thought, and I believe for those of us in freeze-thaw states, the installation method I describe here is better for the concrete, because the ground can't freeze underneath it and make it move. After you use this method, the fill can literally settle underneath the deck and it will still be structurally sound. I pity someone who decides they don't want a pool anymore and tries to tear out a pool deck done like this. 🛠️

Jason Geiser owns Deco-Crete Supply and Cornerstone Concrete Designs, both based in Orrville, Ohio. He can be contacted at jason@deco-cretesupply.com.

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Filling Joints in Decorative Concrete

by Nick Dancer

RECENTLY I attended a training event for floor repairs. About 30 guys gathered together who had a wealth of knowledge on concrete and could share stories for days about moisture problems, tight deadlines, and the pains of being a subcontractor. However, I noticed that many had very little experience in determining the best way to fill a joint and the difference between various joint fillers.

For the purpose of this article we are going to talk about contraction joints, more commonly called control joints, and the products used to fill them. Control joints are cuts placed into the concrete at the time of pouring, or shortly after, to control random cracking in concrete. This works by creating a weakened area in the slab — concrete cracks follow the path of least resistance. The goal is to have your concrete crack inside a nice clean cut rather than randomly throughout the pour.

For some concrete projects, joint fillers are only an aesthetic concern, while in other situations they are integral to the concrete's long-term performance and lifetime cost. So let's take a closer look at the types of common joint fillers and types of projects where they work best.

Urethane or flexible joint fillers

Flexible joint fillers may be the most recognizable type to many contractors. Flexible joint fillers have been around for many years. As the name implies, they stay flexible when cured to allow the slab to move while the joint filler stays in place. These are a great fit for all outdoor concrete surfaces and light-traffic interior floors. These joint fillers keep dirt, debris, and water from gathering in open control joints. Their flexibility also makes them great for expansion joints, construction joints and all outdoor concrete projects. The inherent weakness in these types of fillers is their inability to transfer load or down pressure. These fillers will not hold up under heavy wheeled traffic, such as forklift tires.

Installation

Flexible joint fillers are one of the easiest fillers to place. These products typically



For the cleanest installation of flexible joint fillers, it is important to tape both sides of the joint.

Photos courtesy of Dancer Concrete Design

come in a standard caulking container and can be installed quickly and affordably.

Semirigid joint fillers

Semirigid joint fillers are the most recent advancement in control joint filling. They continue to gain attention as polished concrete and finished concrete floors have become popular in retail, commercial and industrial settings. In heavy-traffic environments, especially under forklift loads, control joints take a lot of abuse. Joints can be a burden in these environments if not properly filled, as they create points of contact for the floor traffic. At these points of contact the concrete can break or chip along the joint, resulting in joint spalling.

Semirigid joint fillers serve a structural purpose in the open concrete joint — they carry the load of traffic across the open joint. This provides protection along the joint edge and adds years of useful life to a concrete floor. Semirigid joint fillers, when bonded on both sides of the joint, will also keep dirt, debris and water from gathering into open joints.

Joint filler hardness is measured using a Shore A gauge per ASTM D2240.

“The harder the filler is, the less it will accommodate dynamic movement,” says Scott Metzger, owner of Metzger/McGuire, which makes joint fillers. “Ideally in selecting a joint filler we aim for a hardness that provides sufficient edge protection but allows for some degree of expansion/contraction at the joint.”

Installation

These semirigid products are dual-component products that require mixing before placing. Due to the fast set times, dual cartridge containers or dual-component pumps are used to place these types of fillers. This type of joint filling usually involves investment in equipment and training.

Joint fillers for seamless floors

In seamless resinous flooring applications, joint filling is integral for the successful system installation. The purpose of a seamless floor is to have no exposed control joints. Each manufacturer may have a different type of joint filler to be used with their specific flooring installation, but these joint fillers are usually made of special blends of epoxies or urethanes. The joint fillers have similar properties to the

resinous flooring system being installed, so they bond with the applied flooring. When filling joints for a seamless floor, always make sure to use the vendor's approved joint filling procedure and products.

Installation

Joint fillers for seamless floors are typically troweled or poured into the open joint and then ground down or scraped smooth with the surrounding surface.

Most joints fillers come in various tints. Some people find that joint fillers provide a cleaner, more finished appearance, while others choose to fill joints for performance reasons. As a contractor, it is your duty to understand what products work best in each situation and make the best decision for your client. Your reputation is counting on it. 🛠️

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



Control joint fillers can be installed in contrasting colors. Here, different-colored joint filler breaks the floor into large squares.

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Quality Control Procedures That Will Increase Your Countertop Profits

by Lane Mangum

THINK of your concrete countertop business as a bucket you fill with water. You try to make as many sales as possible (in other words, put in lots of cups of water).

You try to keep your price as high as possible and do large projects (use large cups).

But if the bucket is leaky, all of your efforts are in vain.

How do these cost leaks occur? First, let's look at what costs are involved in making concrete countertops. Besides overhead, there are material costs and labor costs.

Material costs for concrete are quite low. With from-scratch mixes, your concrete costs should be around \$4 to \$6 per square foot. Even when you add all consumables, such as forming materials, rubber gloves and diamond pads, your costs shouldn't be much more than \$10 per square foot. So optimizing material costs is not going to have much effect on your profitability.

Compare that to labor costs. You should be at about one man-hour per square foot for the whole process. If you have an employee who costs you \$20 per hour including taxes and insurance, your labor costs are double to quadruple your material costs, even if you're operating at optimum efficiency. Furthermore, labor costs can rapidly escalate any time you have a mistake, redo or callback. This is the biggest "leak" in a concrete countertop business. So how do you stop the leaking? Quality control.

A quality control checklist

There are so many details to keep track of with concrete countertops. Making any high-quality concrete requires care and precision, but casting countertops (or shower surrounds or fireplaces) requires attention to many details. By developing quality control procedures for all those details, you will ensure that your projects run more smoothly and you keep those labor costs down.



Template with tabs that was created to fit a very crooked wall and corner.

Photo by Jeffrey Girard

✓ 1. Templating

- Always template any piece that's not completely free-standing. Corners are never square, walls are never straight, and nothing is ever built exactly to plan.
- Before you go out to a job site to template, require the project manager to sign off on a templating checklist, ensuring that all cabinets are fully installed, the job site is clear and accessible and all plumbing fixtures are on-site. That way, if you get to the job site and it is not ready, you can simply leave and assess the trip charge that is in your contract.
- Have a separate templating tool kit that contains absolutely everything you need — level, hot glue gun, extension cord, permanent markers, etc. Also, print a list of everything you need to take, so that you can double-check that you have everything before leaving for the job site.
- Use extreme care in templating, and note absolutely everything in various colors of permanent markers, especially the finished edges, cabinet seams and inside perimeter of sink cabinets.
- Place all the sinks and faucets inside the cabinets to make sure they will actually fit. Pay attention to windowsills that

might interfere with faucets. Determine exactly where each fixture is going to go (for example, the soap dispenser on either the left or right side of the sink). Get the client's approval of your plan.

- Make a sketch of the room that brings together all of this information, including any site considerations, such as stairs to be navigated.
- Take photos of the finished templates on top of the cabinets, so that if the cabinets are changed later, you can prove that your templates were correct.

✓ 2. Forming

- Think through where you are going to put any seams. It is extremely important to line up any seams with the cabinet seams (which is why you marked those on the templates). Be sure to get client approval for seams and their location.
- Make sure the templates are oriented correctly before you build the forms around them.
- Make sure that you put edge molding on the correct edges, and that it is oriented correctly (for example, that the molding in one edge is not upside down compared to the other edges).

- Use extreme care in creating and placing sink and faucet knockouts. Make sure you have specified whether undermount sinks will have an inside edge that is exactly flush, slightly larger or slightly smaller than the actual sink hole.

3. Mixing and casting

- Whether you're mixing from scratch or using a bagged mix, use a scale to weigh everything, including water, as precisely as possible.
- Use a printed batch report and check off each item twice: once when you measure it and again as you add it to the mixer.
- Take care to ensure that corners and edges are filled completely, depending on your technique. For example, with GFRC, the mist-coat spraying process tends to spit out sand that collects in corners.

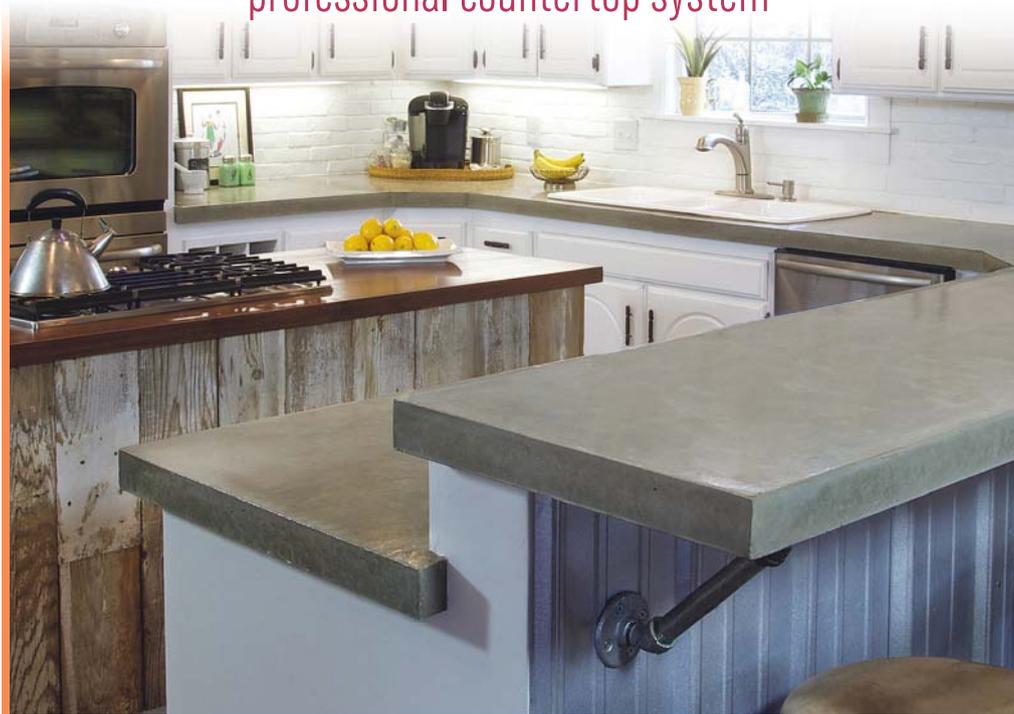
4. Processing and sealing

- Make sure the back side is flat before stripping the forms.
- Lay the templates on top of the slabs to double-check that they are correct.
- Put the faucets and sinks in the holes to double-check that they fit.

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Important: sink hole size and client communication

The manufacturer's paper template that comes with an undermount sink usually specifies a hole that is slightly larger than the sink opening, resulting in a small step into the sink. To me, this defeats the purpose of an undermount sink, and most clients agree.



Our policy was to make the sink hole slightly smaller than the sink opening, resulting in no step and easy cleanup. We call this a negative reveal.

However, this backfired spectacularly on one project.

This particular client had a very expensive Franke sink with a deep, asymmetrical bowl design. We took possession of the sink at templating time and carefully created a beautiful, precise undermount sink opening with a custom drainboard. I remember going out into the shop to look at the completed countertop before installation and admiring the sink hole, saying, "Wow, this is the best undermount sink hole you've ever made. So smooth and even! Great job!"

Installation day, I got a phone call from the client,

screaming and demanding his money back. He was furious because this Franke sink had a bevel on the inside lip, rather than being slightly rounded. By creating a negative reveal, we had covered this bevel.

We had to redo the project, all because the sink hole was 1/8 inch too small.

After that, we added a clause to the contract that stated all undermount sinks will have a negative reveal unless otherwise specified in the job description.

Even if that clause had been in the contract, we still should have noticed that there was something different about this sink and asked the client how he wanted to handle it. It would have taken 30 seconds and saved us thousands of dollars.



Photo by Jeffrey Girard

The redone top, with sink bevel revealed.

- When exposing aggregate, grind adjacent slabs together to ensure even thickness.
- After grouting, make sure there are no grout drips on the bottom edges of the countertops.
- If a bottom side is going to be visible from some vantage point in the room (such as the overhang of an island that is visible when you are climbing stairs), finish the bottom also.
- Check the color against the sample the client approved. If there is any difference, bring it to the client's attention right away. Don't just hope they'll accept it when you show up to install.
- Depending on your sealer, there are many details to consider. Never apply a sealer to a client's project if you haven't practiced with it and tested it thoroughly. You want this final, critical step to go smoothly. Many high-performance sealers require multistep and even multiday processes.

5. Installation

- As with templating, require the site manager to sign off on a checklist that ensures the site is ready for installation and that nothing about the cabinets has changed (unless you specified something that needed to be fixed).
- As with templating, have a dedicated installation bag and a checklist. Don't forget the plumbing fixtures! There are a lot more tools to bring for plumbing

installation, so this checklist is particularly important.

- Transport slabs on edge, like sheets of glass. Flat slabs are more likely to crack from bumpy roads and potholes.
- Check the templates against the cabinets first. If anything has changed that apparently makes your slabs not fit, you can template again and charge for the redo, because you have photos proving that your first templates were correct.
- If all is well, scope out your route into the house, and place sawhorses along the way in case you need to set heavy slabs down to rest.

Each of these steps takes mere seconds or minutes, but they will save you many hours of work and prevent redos. Develop checklists and procedures for quality control and your business will flourish. This is especially important when you have employees. Experience is not easily transferable, but systems are.

Consider this scenario (a real-life example from an experienced concrete countertop maker): You formed a sink hole backwards and didn't discover this until installation, and you had to redo the job. Here are the consequences:

- Suppose this is a 50-square-foot kitchen and you have high material costs of \$10 per square foot. That's an extra \$500 in materials.

- Suppose you have low labor costs of \$20 per hour. That's an extra \$1,000 in labor.
- The job you had lined up right after this one got pushed back, resulting in a loss of \$5,000 in revenue for that month. That revenue can never be recovered, because you can't turn back time.
- Total loss: \$6,500
- Prevention of this loss, by using a checklist, would have taken just a few seconds.

Besides saving you tons of money, quality control will also make your life less stressful, help you present a professional image and result in happier clients. That, along with the increase in profitability of your concrete countertop business, makes quality control not only worthwhile, but also essential. 🛠️

Lane Mangum is vice president, business services, of The Concrete Countertop Institute. As marketing and sales manager for Jeff Girard's concrete countertop manufacturing business, she transitioned the company from hobby-level to dominant regional fabricator of concrete countertops in just a few short years. Lane now teaches other concrete countertop companies how to do the same. Contact her at lanem@concretecountertopinstitute.com.

7 Tips to Bring Your Concrete Countertops to the Next Level

by Mark Celebuski

1. Make the switch to steel casting tables

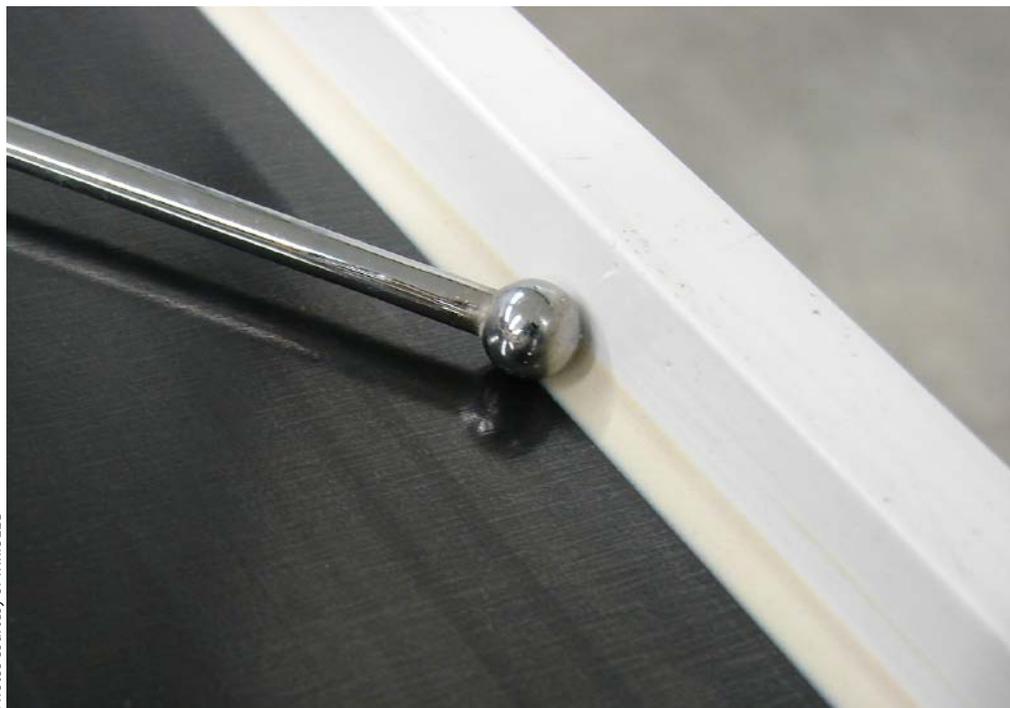
A LOT of surface defects can be traced back to the form surface. Minor blemishes in melamine can lead to major problems during processing, such as areas that are slightly retarded. What happens is that the concrete gains access to the sugars in the wood through a pin hole in the surface of the melamine. The sugars act as a retarder and prevent the concrete from setting up, leading to a surface blemish.

A 5-by-10-foot steel casting table can be set up for under \$1,000, including a ridged steel base (\$200 for a 3/16-inch sheet). You can use twister pads on a floor buffer to polish the steel to 1,500 grit, then seal with one coat of Trinic SB Sealer. (*Editor's note: Mark is a partner in Trinic LLC.*) Cured pieces can be slid around with your pinky.

"Hot-rolled plate" is what most steel sellers carry. You can identify it by the black coating on it. The coating on it is rust that has been deposited at high temperatures. Cold-rolled steel is brighter with a slight



Steel casting tables with two-sided tape and plastic rails make for quick, clean, efficient project setups.



Perfect caulk joints in a variety of radii are possible with clay caulk.

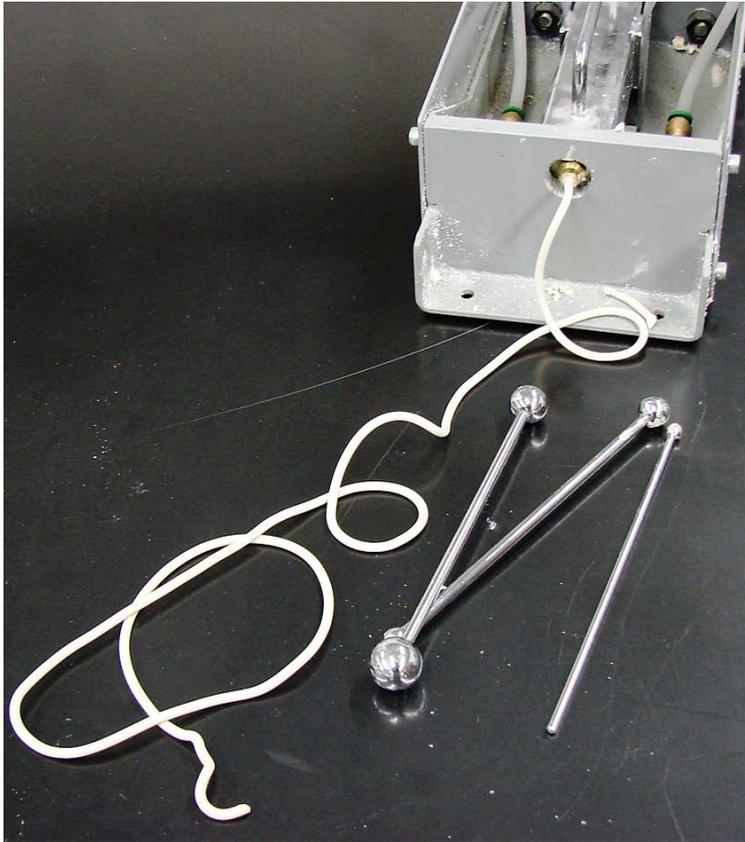
oil coating on it to prevent rust. Hot-rolled plate costs less, but the grain is not as tight and therefore more visible. You may also notice roller marks if you look closely.

Cold-rolled steel starts out as hot strip which is run through an acid pickling bath to remove the black rust coating, then rolled. Cold-rolled plate has a denser and tighter grain structure with a shiny finish. It is lightly oiled to help stop rust. It costs more than hot rolled and may be harder to source.

The answer for a caster seems to be hot-rolled on a budget or cold-rolled if you require the slightly better finish.

2. Caulk with clay

I admit that I was a silicone caulk holdout, and, I never achieved what I would call perfect edges. Clay caulk from an extruder will bring your edges to the next level. With silicone caulk, the clock starts



Warm clay caulk is extruded into strands, worked into place and then tooled.

ticking as soon as the caulk hits the open air. Get it perfect or you'll end up with a mess. You also have to wait for the silicone to cure before you can cast, something that always bothered me.

3. Use carnauba wax as your mold release

I have yet to find form release oil that works as well at eliminating bugholes as wax does. Wipe on the wax, immediately wipe off the excess, let it dry, then buff it with a cotton cloth. Make sure to use a furniture-grade carnauba. The automotive grades have petroleum distillates in them and may cause bugholes. Be sure to wax right over the clay caulk. TreWax Paste Wax is one brand we recommend. I've also used Butcher's Paste Wax.

4. Smooth your bottoms and round over your bottom edges

Feel is just as important as looks in our business. I've seen customers recoil in horror when they touch a sharp edge. You can wet the bottom of GFRC pieces to aid in finishing. Another option is to hit them with 50 grit before stripping.

Bottom edges can be rounded over with 50-grit hand pads followed by 100, just enough to take the sharpness off.

5. Tighten your seams

I realize that concrete is not CNC-cut to perfection, but it is possible to have nice tight seams that don't draw attention to themselves. One option is to match-cast your pieces. Separate pieces by a thin strip of metal during casting. The pieces have to fit in the field. A very tight radius where two pieces meet is a must. You can also back-cut each piece slightly so the bottom edges never hit and stop the top edges from coming together.



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6. Make GFRSCC

SCC stands for self-consolidating concrete. GFRC stands for glass-fiber reinforced concrete. Add the two together and you have a time- and labor-saving method for producing concrete surfaces.

One thing that has never made sense to me is all the hand placement and rolling folks were doing when applying GFRC back coats. Why not design a mix flowable enough to not require hand placement and dense enough to not require compaction? Trinic has developed mix designs and additives to do just that. Strength tests of this method equal or in many cases exceed hand-placed and rolled GFRC made the conventional way.

Another technique I've developed is to cast a self-consolidating GFRC mix with no face coat and slightly vibrate the mix to lift the fibers off the face. The reason this works is that the specific gravity of glass fibers is less than cement and sand, causing them to lift off the face very slightly during vibration.

7. Consider CSA additives for faster turnarounds

CSA stands for calcium sulfoaluminate cement. It offers quick setting time, high strength, tiny expansion and low shrinkage. Before you get too excited, know that it's brownish grey in color. Plus, it's very hard to control when used as a 100 percent portland cement replacement. I prefer to use it as a 25 percent portland replacement. You can offset the color with titanium white, and the working and set times become much more controllable.

We've developed self-consolidating GFRC mixes with added CSA that can be cast in 4-foot by 8-foot-by-5/8-inch sheets, strippable a few hours after casting. They are perfect for shower walls, large-format tile, wainscoting, building panels and more.

You can turn your little shop into a big shop if you can get the projects you're working on out the door sooner. 🚚

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

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Hands-on Grinding & Polishing Tips

New Uses for Ice, Pool Noodles and Kitty Litter

By Bryon "Bru" Bruington

Use ice to introduce water into a wet-grind application

When you are wet-grinding a very hard concrete floor, the water reduces surface tension and flushes fine particles to the surface, where they act as a secondary abrasive. You can use ice to introduce the water slowly, helping it penetrate into the slab. Using ice will eliminate water splashes onto walls or finished surfaces and reduce the amount of slurry otherwise generated in a full wet cut. And it can be placed several thousand feet ahead of the primary work area. Ice is cheap and is a great resource on jobs that do not have a water hookup.

Use pool noodles as backer rods

Your kid's pool noodles are a great alternative to backer rods. You can pick them up at any dollar store, usually year-round. These noodles can be very easily cut into custom strips for odd and awkward joints. They will stand up to polyurea and epoxy, and the small holes in the Styrofoam swim noodle happen to be a great cell size for absorbing the material. This will help the noodle grab the material and stay in the joint through expansion and contraction.

Cleaning small oil spots on new and polished concrete

If you develop a deep oil spot on newly poured or polished concrete, you can use brake cleaner to remove it. Brake cleaner leaves little to no residue after the initial treatment. It is very easy to use and evaporates very quickly. WD-40 can help with a deep oil stain as well, but it leaves a heavier residue behind. Both products can be spot-cleaned using a solution of a little water and vinegar or ammonia.

Cleaning large oil spots on new and polished concrete

If you develop large oil, transmission or hydraulic fluid stains, use kitty litter and a natural acidic cleaner to remove them. Mix the kitty litter with the acidic cleaner to the point of saturation. Once mixed, take the mixture and spread across the stain. The mixture should measure about 1/2-inch thick. Using a 6 mil poly, cover the spread. Now take blue or green painting tape and tape the perimeter so no air can get in and dry the spread out. Leave it covered for a minimum of 48 hours, making sure the spread is still moist. After you remove the patch, use a floor scrubber and thoroughly clean the area.

Edging very hard concrete edges

If you have a tough concrete slab with very hard edges, take a little spray bottle and spray some water in front of the edge grinder. The water will capture debris and help the diamond tools cut. The result acts like a cutting slurry paste used in other abrasive industries. It will also help you remove cure-and-seal, light coatings and adhesives.

You can also sprinkle a little play sand as a secondary abrasive if needed. Be careful not to use too much water because it could compromise your vacuum filters. The speed and friction of your abrasives should dry the debris before it reaches the filters. 🛠️

Bryon "Bru" Bruington is technical sales director for KutRite, a producer of products for the concrete grinding, polishing and scarifying industry. Email him at b_bruington@kutritemfg.com.



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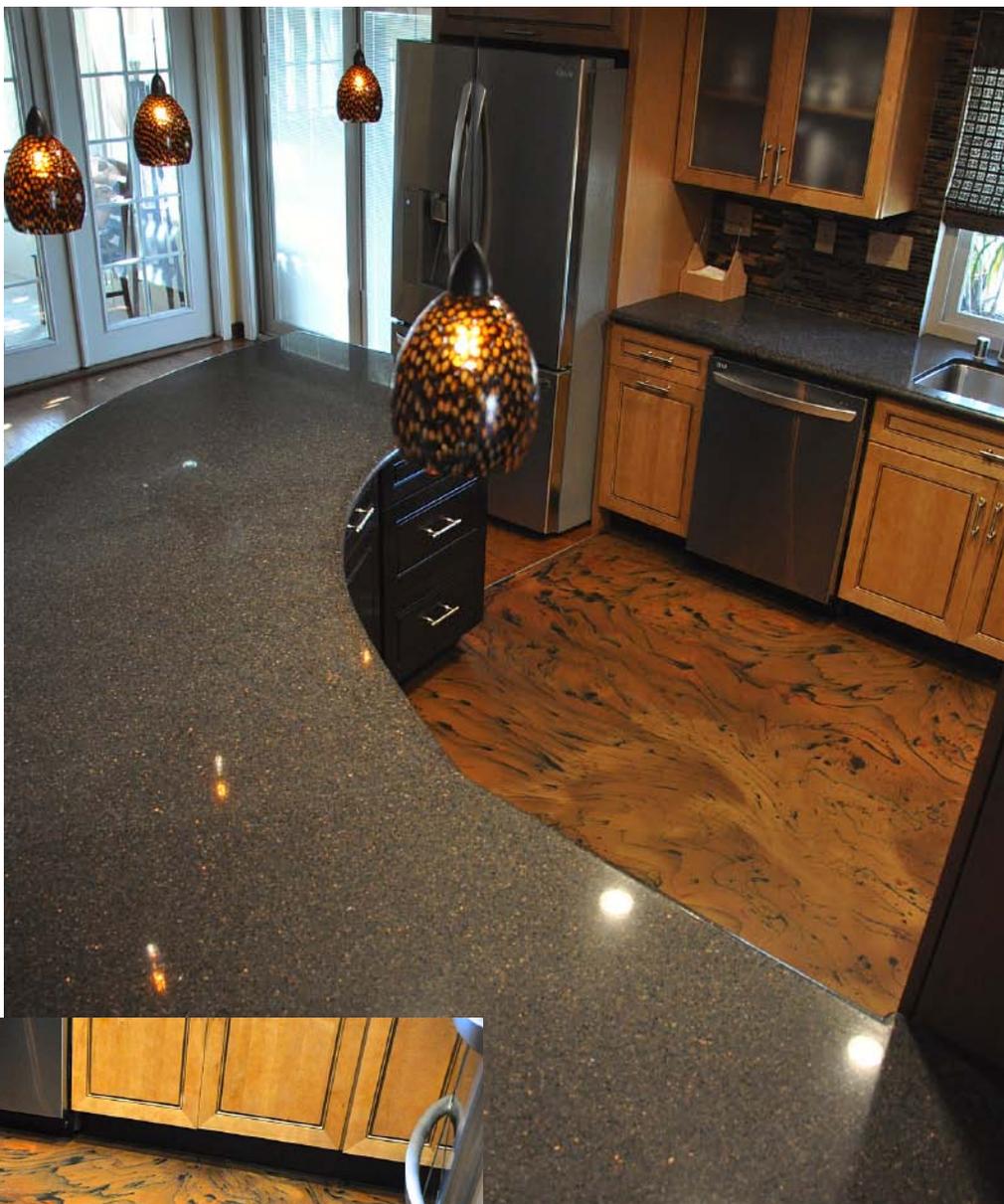
Tiger Stripes in a San Diego Kitchen

by Vanessa Salvia

THIS wild floor design in a San Diego home should tame the outdated notion that epoxies are only for airplane hangers and garage floors. Marc Di Zinno, a technical architectural representative for Westcoat Specialty Coating Systems, used Westcoat EC-38 Liquid Dazzle to make the pattern, with the help of Sean Wilson, owner of Concrete Technology Inc. in Fallbrook, California.

After Westcoat made a presentation to San Diego-based McFarlane Architects, one of the firm's lead designers, Cecilia Caputo, expressed interest in the potential of epoxy and arranged to have this work done in her home kitchen. Westcoat developed nine Liquid Dazzle colors in 2004, then introduced nine more because the product was so popular. "Three years ago we developed the assembly to splash separate epoxies on top of wet solid colors," Di Zinno says. "That system is called Dazzle Effects, and that's what we used here."

This job entailed grinding the floor, then repairing cracks with Westcoat epoxy gel. "We double-primed it with a 10 percent solid epoxy and then applied the first coat of Liquid Dazzle in a color called Café, a metallicized 100 percent solids epoxy." Then a color called Mocha was splashed on in a north-south direction for consistency.



Photos courtesy of Westcoat Specialty Coating Systems

Atop that went a splash of Ruby. "This is an immediate application," Di Zinno says, "all within the hour. Then we watch the drift and movement of the products. This provides a very custom, unique look."

Satin-finish clear polyurethane was applied over the top of the finished system. The client loves it, Di Zinno says. 📱



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