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ON THE COVER



Cover illustration by Katy Betz, www.katybetz.com
Tenth in a series of decorative concrete artwork
Commissioned by The Concrete Network

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PHOTO: ROSEBUD CONCRETE

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The Architects' Choice

LEARN WHY TWO INNOVATIVE ARCHITECTURAL FIRMS FREQUENTLY
USE DECORATIVE CONCRETE IN THEIR DESIGNS

BY SARAH TATE,
CONCRETENETWORK.COM
COLUMNIST

You would expect a concrete contractor to sing the praises of concrete. But do architects and designers also see the value of using concrete for interior or exterior applications? Recently we spoke with two architects who strongly believe in the attributes of concrete: Daniel Monti of Modal Design, a Los Angeles architect who frequently specifies concrete for interior floors and outdoor surfaces, and Jon Feldman of Feldman Architecture, an award-winning residential designer in San Francisco who uses concrete on many of his projects. Here they reveal the qualities they find most appealing about decorative concrete and how they incorporate concrete into their projects.

UNLIMITED DESIGN VERSATILITY

The ability to manipulate the color and texture of concrete gives architects endless options to customize their designs and create distinctive finishes. “From a design perspective, I like concrete because

of its versatility, its capability to take on infinite texture and color variations and its ability to almost instantly modernize spaces,” says Monti. For interior floors, he likes the look of slightly exposed aggregate because it offers a beautiful visual texture. “It creates an appearance similar to terrazzo, but at a more affordable cost,” he says.

In terms of color, Monti prefers integral pigments because they create a more natural effect than topical stains or dyes. “I typically suggest warm earthy tones to my clients. Warmer tones help spaces feel comfortable and bright and steer people’s perceptions away from the cold/hard feelings of concrete,” he says. However, some of his clients request concrete in its natural gray tones, as the owners of the Casiano residence did. In cases such as this, Monti uses accessories like area rugs, cushions and throw covers to soften and warm the room.

Feldman often takes advantage of concrete’s ability to be imprinted with different textures. “House Ocho is cut deep into a steeply sloping hillside and is almost

entirely below grade. Knowing that this would involve a lot of retaining walls, we wanted to achieve a beautiful expression of finished concrete. Board-formed concrete was a natural choice because of its texture and lines, as well as how the grain of the boards imprints on the concrete,” he says. Monti has also used board-formed concrete for landscape and retaining walls as well as smaller features, such as fire pits. “The texture that the wood leaves on the concrete is really beautiful and complements both modern and rustic architecture,” he says.

TIMELESS AND NATURAL

Concrete, which is composed primarily of natural materials, has an earthen quality that gives it a sense of permanence that attracts architects like Monti and Feldman. Feldman, in particular, appreciates concrete’s unprocessed look. “It is heavy, rough, natural and raw. There’s nothing artificial or plastic about it; it’s an honest material,” he says. This lack of artificiality also gives concrete an ageless appeal that will stand the test of time. “Concrete is timeless – it will look good decades, even centuries from

now. In fact we just colored and polished our office floor, which was poured in the 1950s,” says Monti.

Concrete’s natural look also pairs well with other building materials. “For the interior of a home, wood and concrete are a great combination,” says Monti. “I like dark woods such as walnut, cherry and teak. Wood seems to have a softening effect on the concrete. For outdoors, corten steel and concrete are an interesting pairing. Both materials have a natural, rustic appeal that partner well with each other,” he continues.

ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY

Both architects specify concrete for environmental reasons, especially for its ability to conserve energy and improve indoor air quality. “From a practical perspective, I like concrete because it is durable and easy to clean. I recommend concrete floors to families with children and pets.

FELDMAN OFTEN USES BOARD-FORMED CONCRETE BECAUSE OF THE NATURAL TEXTURE AND LINES IMPARTED BY THE WOOD GRAIN OF THE BOARDS. IN HOUSE OCHO, HE LEFT THE WALLS A NATURAL GRAY COLOR TO MATCH THE GRAY BARK OF THE OAK TREES SURROUNDING THE HOME.

Feldman

“Concrete has been a big part of our aesthetic from the beginning. Our clients have seen our previous work and are open to our style. In fact, many of them want the look that concrete provides.”
— Jon Feldman

Concrete floors also offer better indoor air quality when compared with carpet,” says Monti.

In sustainable designs, the inherent thermal mass of concrete makes it an excellent material for retaining heat. “You want spaces to look beautiful, but they also have to feel comfortable,” says Monti. “One of our recently completed projects, the Walnut residence, utilizes polished concrete floors with radiant heating throughout the first floor. As a LEED-designed home, it was an efficient heating choice since there is no supplemental HVAC.”

Feldman also uses concrete flooring because of its thermal mass and ability to radiate heat. For House Ocho, a 2,900-square-foot residence in Carmel, Calif., Feldman specified concrete floors both for their durability and energy efficiency.



FOR HOUSE OCHO, FELDMAN USED A PASSIVE DESIGN TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF SEASONAL SUN AND SHADE PATTERNS. THE CONCRETE FLOORS NOT ONLY SOAK UP WARMTH FROM THE SUN, THEY ALSO FEATURE RADIANT IN-FLOOR HEATING TO CONSERVE ENERGY. THE HOME RECEIVED AN ENERGY AND SUSTAINABILITY HONOR AWARD FROM THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS IN 2007.



FELDMAN CONTINUED THE CONCRETE FLOORS AND THE BOARD-FORMED RETAINING WALLS USED ON THE INSIDE OF HOUSE OCHO TO THE OUTSIDE. HE ALSO VISUALLY EXTENDED THE FLOOR'S PATTERN FROM INSIDE TO OUT USING POURED-IN-PLACE PAVERS SEPARATED BY BANDS OF THYME.



THE INTEGRALLY COLORED MONOLITHIC CONCRETE SLAB IN HOUSE OCHO SERVES AS BOTH THE ON-GRADE STRUCTURAL SLAB AS WELL AS THE FINISHED FLOOR. FELDMAN USED A 4-FOOT GRID OF CONTROL JOINTS TO PREVENT CRACKS AND CREATE A PLEASING PATTERN ON THE FLOOR. THE WARM GRAY COLOR PALETTE ECHOES THE NATURAL ROCKS AND OTHER ELEMENTS FOUND ON THE SITE. A GLOSSY SEALER WAS USED TO INCREASE THE BRIGHTNESS AND REFLECTIVITY OF THE FLOORS.

“Because of concrete’s high heat capacity, it soaks up warmth from the sun and the in-floor heating and slowly releases it into the house,” he says.

CREATES RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE INDOORS AND OUTDOORS

Both architects often use concrete to bridge the gap between indoor and outdoor living spaces and create seamless transitions in their designs. “Because I practice in Southern California, I am always looking for ways to extend indoor/outdoor living. Concrete’s ability to seamlessly blend interior and exterior spaces is key,” says Monti. Outdoors, he likes to break down concrete patios into smaller pads with gravel or plants in between. “This approach helps

avoid the impression of a large, monotonous surface. I also believe that it makes open outdoor spaces more intimate by providing a sense of proportion,” he says.

For House Ocho, Feldman continued the concrete floors and board-formed retaining walls used inside, on the same plane outside. “Additionally, we put glass right up to them, allowing the concrete to bridge the divide between indoors and out. We also extended the organizing lines present inside the home out into the landscape with poured-in-place pavers separated by bands of thyme. These bands visually carry the floor’s pattern from in to out,” he says.

Monti

“From a design perspective, I like concrete because of its versatility, it’s capability to take on infinite texture and color variations and its ability to almost instantly modernize spaces.”

– Daniel Monti



OUTDOORS, MONTI OFTEN BREAKS DOWN CONCRETE PATIOS INTO SMALLER PADS WITH GRAVEL OR PLANTS IN BETWEEN TO AVOID THE IMPRESSION OF A LARGE, MONOTONOUS SURFACE.



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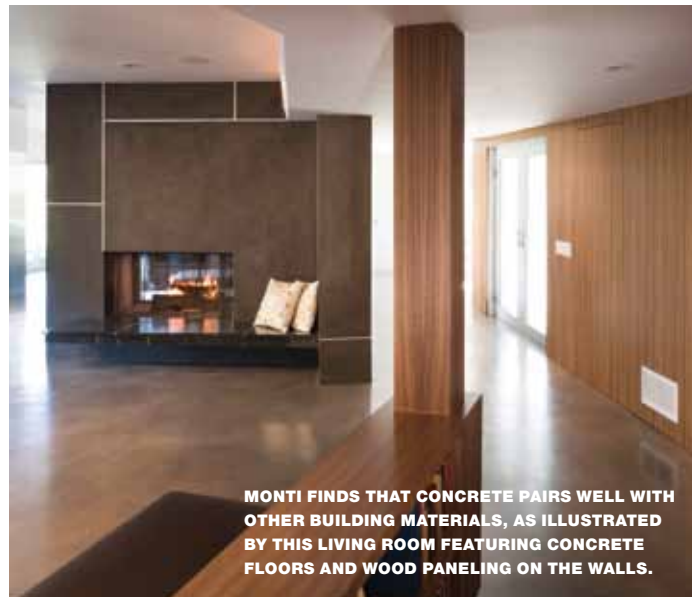


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OVERCOMING CLIENT MISPERCEPTIONS ABOUT CONCRETE

Perhaps the biggest hurdle for architects when incorporating concrete in their designs is convincing their clients how beautiful and versatile the material can be. "I do think that the general public is hesitant towards using concrete inside their homes. We are lucky that concrete has been a big part of our

aesthetic from the beginning. Our clients have seen our previous work and are open to our style. In fact, many of them want the look that concrete provides," says Feldman.

Monti says that some people still associate concrete with institutional or industrial buildings and voice concerns about concrete seeming cold and hard. "Unless a client has seen a well-executed application of concrete either as flooring or cast-in-place walls, they simply don't know the possibilities. To overcome these preconceptions, it usually takes a site visit or good photos of concrete work to convince them it is a great option. However, if I have a client who has a deep connection to another material I don't push – in the end they need it to work for them and their lifestyle," he says. 🌱

BELOW: SOME OF MONTI'S CLIENTS PREFER CONCRETE FLOORS LEFT IN THEIR NATURAL GRAY STATE, AS DID THE OWNERS OF THE CASIANO RESIDENCE. TO SOFTEN AND WARM THE ROOM, MONTI USED AREA RUGS, PILLOWS AND WOOD WALL FINISHES.



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COLOR INSPIRATION

TWENTY WAYS TO GET IDEAS FOR COLORING DECORATIVE CONCRETE SURFACES

BY SARAH TATE, CONCRETENETWORK.COM COLUMNIST

In recent years, colored concrete has become more popular than ever. Although most consumers know that concrete can be colored, they don't know the wide array of options they have. It's up to you, as their decorative concrete contractor, to introduce them to their options and guide them in making their color selection. Because color choices will vary widely from client to client, the best way to determine the perfect color scheme is to get to know your client's personality and tastes (see "Great Sources for Color Inspiration"). Generally speaking, residential clients will pick safe, neutral colors, while commercial clients will pick something unexpected and exciting. You may want to remind your residential clients to keep the resale value of their home in mind. Going too extreme could turn off potential home buyers. One of the best attributes of decorative concrete is that it can be personalized. Spend some time getting to know your clients and discussing color options. Give them a unique product with colors that reflect their personality, lifestyle or corporate brand, and they will be thrilled with the results.



The best way to determine the perfect color scheme for your clients is to get to know their personality and tastes.

GREAT SOURCES FOR COLOR INSPIRATION

1. Your client's favorite color.
2. Your client's favorite food or drink.
3. The uniform colors of your client's favorite sports team.
4. Your client's favorite piece of art.
5. The colors of the furniture and walls in your client's home.
6. The interior design of the home, such as modern vs. traditional.
7. Your client's favorite piece of clothing.
8. Your client's favorite vacation spot.
9. A photograph your client loves.
10. The color scheme of the company your client works for.
11. Your client's love for bling (think metallic coatings).
12. A mood your client would like to create:

brown = stability

black = sophisticated

gray = practical

red = excitement

orange = energetic

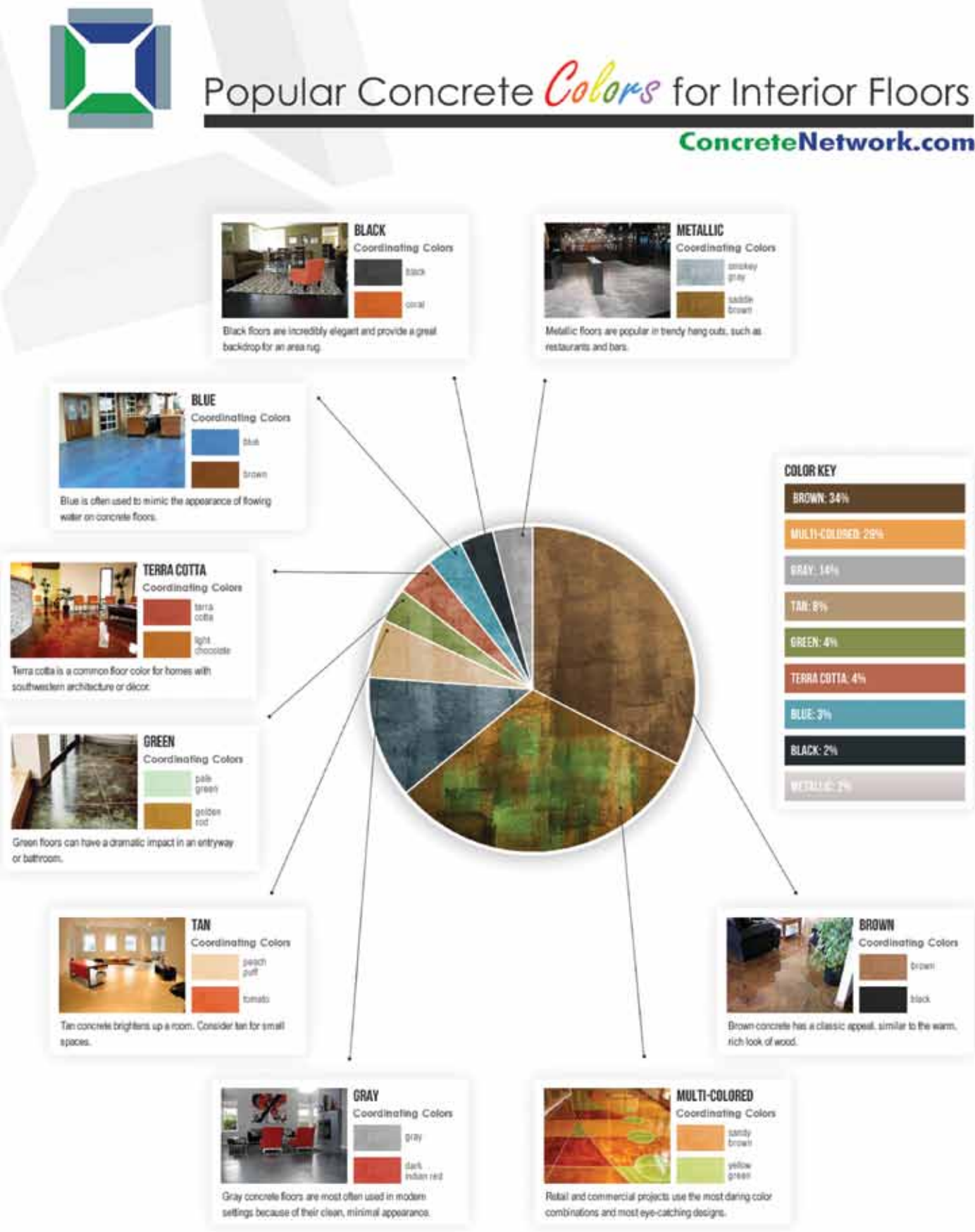
yellow = optimistic

green = refreshing

pink = innocent

13. Nature – the ocean, a river, flowers, leaves, the surrounding terrain.
14. Other building materials, such as granite, marble or wood.
15. Colors symbolic of your client's religious beliefs (especially appropriate for church buildings).
16. Color cues from the exterior and interior style of the home or building.
17. Use Degraeve.com's Color Palette Generator to take any image on the web and instantly generate a dull and vibrant palette. Try playing with some of your client's favorite personal photos that they've uploaded to Facebook or Flickr until you find a palette they like.
18. Browse the user-generated palettes available at COLOURlovers.com for ideas. If you sign up for a free account, you can save palettes and create your own color combos based off of a single color or a photo. This tool is great for coordinating the color of concrete with existing elements, such as walls or furniture.
19. Browse the ConcreteNetwork.com photo gallery to see what colors people have used for decorative concrete projects. You may even consider plugging one of these into the web-based tools mentioned above.
20. Stick with the favorites, such as browns and grays. (See the infographic.)

This infographic shows the most popular color options for concrete floors, based on a recent survey of decorative concrete flooring projects on ConcreteNetwork.com. To download a PDF of this graphic, visit www.concretenetwork.com/floor-colors.



A recent survey of concrete flooring projects revealed the most popular color choices for concrete floors. Rich, warm browns are the most appealing (34%). But the versatility of concrete floors isn't limited to just solid colors. The second most common color choice includes a blend or combination of multiple colors (29%) which creates endless possibilities in design and hue. Homeowners, business owners, architects, and designers recognize the potential for coloring one-of-a-kind floors. Concrete is the only material that offers such a wide range of coloring options. It's the perfect choice for creating dramatic impact in a retail store, for an upscale look in a business office, and for an inviting, personalized interior for discriminating homeowners.

PHOTO CREDITS: Brown (generalconcretefinishers.com), Multi-Colored (ardex.de), Gray (masterpiececoncrete.com), Tan (concreteimpressionist.com), Green (kentmagnell.com), Terra Cotta (concretecounters.com), Blue (SGF Floors), Black (dcandc.net), Metallic (concreteinspirations.ca)

Going High Profile

Tips from the pros for selling and installing upscale decorative concrete floors

BY ANNE BALOGH, CONCRETENETWORK.COM COLUMNIST



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CUSTOM CONCRETE SOLUTIONS

If you want to install decorative concrete floors that attract a lot of attention and serve as calling cards for your business, there's no better market to go after than the upscale floors in high-profile reception areas, offices, salons and retail buildings. These highly visible floors can be especially lucrative for decorative concrete contractors since the buzz they generate often leads to new work. However, these projects also come with a slew of challenges, from overcoming client concerns about the viability of concrete floors in high-traffic environments to meeting stringent expectations for floor color, composition and performance.

So what does it take to achieve success in this demanding field of decorative concrete work? The Concrete Network asked three concrete contractors about their firsthand experiences installing high-profile floors: Don Pinger of Custom Concrete Solutions, West Hartford, Conn.; Gil Koury of Life Deck Coating Installations, San Diego; and Chris Becker of Becker Architectural Concrete, St. Paul, Minn. Here's a summary of what

they've learned along the way and their advice to other contractors considering this line of work.

LANDING THE PROJECT

While decorative concrete floors are becoming more and more commonplace in commercial and retail facilities, they can still be a hard sell to clients who haven't seen how beautiful these floors can be or have doubts about their long-term durability. So how do you convince the skeptics about the attributes of concrete flooring? Displaying your work in a showroom, marketing on the web and customer referrals are several strategies our experts recommend for landing high-profile jobs.

"I get many of my jobs from people seeing my website. I have a very aggressive ad campaign that includes a few different concrete-related sites, like The Concrete Network. I also have a newly expanded showroom that displays the many different decorative concrete applications we offer. My biggest selling point is now my showroom. Ever since I opened the expanded showroom, I

close probably 75% of the jobs that come in," says Pinger, whose company specializes in decorative concrete polishing and resurfacing.

Becker has also been successful using his showroom to land jobs. "The vast majority of these kinds of projects come through interior designers that have an initial concept for their client's project. We have the best success when we have the opportunity to meet with the client at our showroom, and wow them with our sensibility with the materials and show them our digital portfolio. This usually gets them excited about the possibilities," he says.

Koury takes a different approach and attracts customers by maintaining a large presence in the commercial and retail market and building confidence among his clients by being knowledgeable and flexible. "Most of our jobs come from referrals. We are celebrating 30 years in business, so customers know we are a reputable, stable company that will follow through and do great work," he says. Convincing people

We have the best success when we have the opportunity to meet with the client at our showroom, and wow them with our sensibility with the materials.

— Chris Becker, Becker Architectural Concrete

about the attributes of decorative concrete isn't much of a problem for him since most of his clients are already familiar with this type of flooring. "The popularity of decorative concrete floors continues to grow. Many people have experienced the look and feel of concrete floors in commercial applications, such as restaurants, but now more exposure in magazines, retail spaces and residences have made this option more common and desirable," Koury says.

COMING UP WITH A DESIGN SCHEME

In most cases, the design of the floor is a collaborative effort involving the building owner, architect and concrete contractor. But on some projects, the client needs more guidance and will rely on the concrete contractor's experience and creative ability to come up with the best design scheme. In either case, the concrete contractor is expected to play a role in the design and color selection, rather than just being the decorative flooring installer.

"It starts with our creative process, asking questions about the client's business, the designer's goal for the space and, most importantly, the budget, and then creating a concept and samples that exceed their expectations without destroying the budget," says Becker, who does everything from interior flooring to architectural paving, bars and countertops, sinks, and even concrete furniture. "We have a solid reputation as a design/build firm, more so than a company that strictly provides installations, so for both owners and designers, they have an expectation that they are talking to us for our input on not only products and installation systems, but also layout, color and composition."

In Pinger's case, the final design is usually a collaborative effort, even if the customer doesn't think so. "What I mean by that is I use what the overall design of the room or rooms will be to fine-tune the colors and dyes we use. Rarely does a customer give me complete freedom to do whatever I want," he says.

Koury, whose specialty is concrete coating design and installation, also takes the collaborative approach much of the time. "I take the client's wants and needs and balance them with my suggestions and experience to come up with a great flooring system for them," he says.

DEALING WITH EXISTING CONCRETE SURFACES

As you might expect, many of the projects our decorative flooring contractors get involved with deal with existing surfaces rather than newly placed floors. This often entails the removal of existing floor coverings and careful assessment of the condition of the underlying concrete. Becker is especially cautious before taking on these projects, and insists on creating mockups onsite before signing any contracts.

"I try to avoid what may be the biggest challenge, which is the uncertainty of what the actual concrete we will be working on is all about," says Becker. "Creating mockups gives me the chance to see what is really under that carpet, mastic, tile,



LIFE DECK COATING INSTALLATIONS

I take the client's wants and needs and balance them with my suggestions and experience to come up with a great flooring system for them.

— Gil Koury, Life Deck Coating Installations

etc. and eliminate any big surprises that I may not have accounted for in my bid. In one instance, I was bidding on a retail space conversion that was slab-on-grade concrete that had carpet as an existing floor covering. The client wanted stained concrete, so I knew that it would most likely be a grind, microtop and stain process. After a bit of research onsite, I found that a third of the floor had been leveled with a cheap underlayment that would have to be removed and releveled with an overlay. This would have been a real bummer if it was not accounted for in the proposal."

For Pinger, the biggest challenge is getting carpet glue or tile mastic off of existing concrete floors. "Even shotblasting it doesn't get all the nooks and crannies and a lot has to be done by hand," he says.

In established businesses with existing concrete floors, the owners often can't afford to shut their doors while the work is being done, creating a whole new set of challenges.

"This is definitely a challenge but inevitable," says Koury. "We understand that businesses need to stay open during construction and do our best to work around their hours and schedules. It is important to be flexible, efficient, swift and tidy."

Becker agrees with the need to adapt to the situation. "In projects that have to remain open for business, I have to be creative with the clock, working nights and weekends as needed."

SEALING AND PROTECTING HIGH-TRAFFIC FLOORS

With all the foot traffic and attention high-profile floors receive, using a tough, stain-resistant sealer to protect them is a must. High-solids epoxies and urethanes are the top choices of our contractors, who also favor water-based products because they emit no fumes.

"I use two-component water-based epoxies as primers, with two-part urethanes as top coats, but I'm looking into switching more to polyaspartic and polyurea systems once I am comfortable

with installing them," says Becker. Pinger also uses a 100%-solids epoxy as a primer, topped by two-part high-solids urethanes on overlays or regular concrete. With polished concrete, he uses a burnished sealer.

For Koury, the type of coating system he installs and the wear and tear the floor is exposed to determine the type of sealer to use. "Our Westcoat EC-31 100%-solids clear epoxy is very tough and reliable. When a tougher, mar-resistant sealer is needed, Westcoat's EC-95 polyurethane is an excellent choice. Westcoat's new EC-65 water-based urethane is a good choice when fumes are a problem," he says.

MAINTENANCE REQUIREMENTS

Sometimes, clients have a perception that little effort is needed to maintain their floors because they're concrete. While concrete floors are certainly easier to maintain than many other floor surfaces, neglecting them will lead to unnecessary wear and tear that could damage the decorative finish, even if the floor is sealed.

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I use what the overall design of the room or rooms will be to fine-tune the colors and dyes we use.

— Don Pinger, Custom Concrete Solutions

CUSTOM CONCRETE SOLUTIONS

“We traditionally have had to bring up what we feel are the realities of what these kinds of surfaces require for maintenance, to make sure owners understand what they are purchasing and make sure they will take care of the surfaces as we suggest,” Becker explains. His biggest challenge is getting the client on a regular maintenance schedule, which includes cleaning, buffing, periodic applications of topcoats, and using floor mats in the winter. “It’s a big education process that I have to take the lead on. My name is on that project, so it will become my problem if something goes wrong down the road. Generally it’s the smaller retail spaces that do not have an outside cleaning service that have a bigger problem taking care of their floors,” he says.

Koury agrees that keeping clients on a maintenance schedule is very important. He also says that regular site visits to check on floors for maintenance needs is key, since the degree of wear varies depending on traffic and use. “We would recommend site visits every two to three years for a typical commercial concrete floor, with regular cleaning and upkeep by clients during that

time. Polishing can be done more frequently if needed,” he says.

Pinger also stresses the importance of regular maintenance and instructs his clients how to keep their floors clean. “Concrete floors are easy to clean, but it’s not as noticeable when they’re dirty like carpet is, so they often get neglected. With any decorative concrete floor we do, we try to impress upon the customer the need to keep the floors relatively clean. First, they should be just swept. If that’s not enough, we recommend light mopping with warm water and just a couple of drops of non-abrasive soap,” he explains.

ADDRESSING CUSTOMER CONCERNS ABOUT DECORATIVE CONCRETE FLOORS

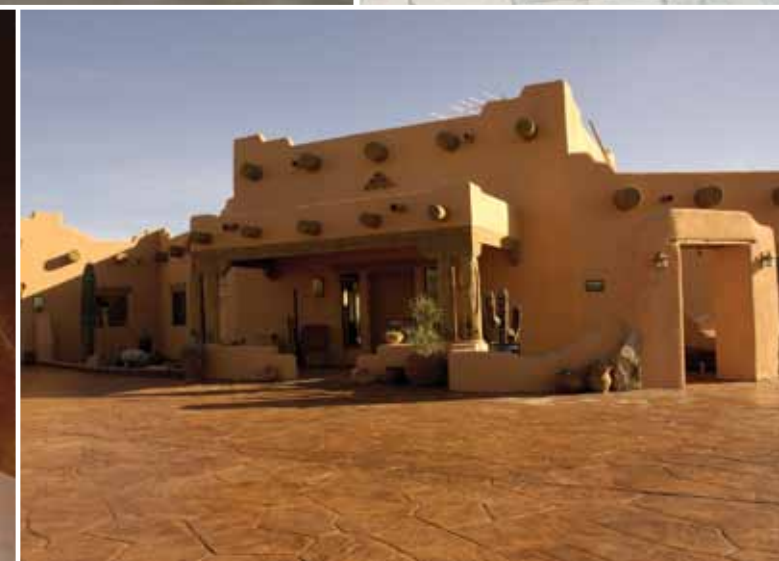
Maintenance is certainly a big concern clients have about their floors, but often other considerations weigh even more heavily on their decision of a flooring material. “The single biggest concern is how slippery the floors will be,” says Pinger. “With overlays, I try to talk them into an application that has texture. With polished concrete, I show them SCOF info (a measure of

slip resistance), and with epoxy floors I talk them into using a topcoat of urethane, which tends to be less slippery. For entryways, I often add some type of additive, like Shark Grip, to the final coat of sealer.”

Koury notes that cost is a chief concern among his clients, especially in this economy. He explains to building owners that a concrete floor coating or stain is often a more economical choice than hardwood or carpet. “We can be pretty competitively priced, depending on the condition of the existing concrete,” he says.

The smartest thing a contractor can do is acknowledge the concerns of their clients and find ways to alleviate them. “It is important to help customers pick a flooring system that will address their specific needs. We accomplish this by consulting with the customer, asking key questions and offering a coating system that addresses their requirements, whether it’s a coating that stands up to heavy foot traffic, is heat resistant, easy to clean or highly decorative,” says Koury. 

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Full Speed Ahead

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD FOR THE CONCRETE POLISHING INDUSTRY? HERE'S A FAST-FORWARD LOOK AT THE OPPORTUNITIES, AS WELL AS THE CHALLENGES, TO EXPECT IN THE YEARS AHEAD.

BY BOB HARRIS, THE DECORATIVE CONCRETE INSTITUTE, TEMPLE, GA.

Back to the future: The year is 1985, nearly a decade before polished concrete made its official debut in the market. At the ripe age of 21, I remember watching this crazy movie in which a teenager named Marty McFly hooks up with mad scientist Dr. Emmett “Doc” Brown. Doc reveals to Marty a modified time machine super-powered by plutonium and a flux capacitor. Ironically, I recently had to change out a capacitor in the inverter box on my grinding equipment, so I can relate. Who knows? A plutonium-powered planetary grinder may be the next big thing.

Believe it or not, there are a lot of similarities between *Back to the Future* and the polished concrete market. I was recently asked my opinion about where the polished concrete market is going in the future. As I gazed into my crystal ball, trying to predict where the industry is headed, it was clear that I needed to go back in time first, just as Marty McFly did, and reflect on all the trials and tribulations I and many others in the industry experienced along the way, not to mention the countless hours of blood, sweat and tears it took us to get where we are today. To put things in perspective, the stamped concrete market got its start back in the early 1950s by a young entrepreneurial genius named Brad Bowman. Fast-forwarding 60-plus years, the stamped concrete market continues to thrive, with new innovations each year. Similarly, we have not even scratched the surface (no pun intended) of the full potential of the polished concrete market.

In predicting the future for polished concrete, I see exciting times and plenty of opportunity ahead. But I also see some changes I'm not so thrilled with. As I peer into my crystal ball, here are a few of the trends I'm foreseeing:

RAPID ADVANCES IN TOOLING AND EQUIPMENT

Like the computer industry, diamond tooling and concrete polishing equipment seem to change



We have not even scratched the surface (no pun intended) of the full potential of the polished concrete market.

ON THE WEB >

Get more insights from others involved in the polishing industry. Read an interview by Bob Harris with Len Sniegowski of Superabrasive Inc. and Chad Zogleman of Structural Services Inc. for their expert opinions on where the industry is headed: www.concretenetwork.com/polishing-future

daily and will continue to advance. We now have diamonds that cut faster, last longer and don't leave burn marks or scratches. We have better pads that amp up the shine and systems that significantly reduce the amount of steps needed to produce that high shine we all strive to achieve. Of course, grinding equipment will continue to advance as well. More machines will be propane powered (we're still working on plutonium), and they will be lighter, sleeker, faster, and more compact and powerful than ever before.

BETTER SPECIFICATIONS

One of the biggest changes I see is the manner in which new concrete slabs are poured when specifications call for polishing. Early on in the industry, mega-high-performance mix designs were being specified, before contractors began realizing that the coarse diamond tooling would simply skate across the dense surface. What's



Like the computer industry, diamond tooling and concrete polishing equipment seem to change daily and will continue to advance.

CONTRACTOR SCORES BIG DESPITE ECONOMY

What Economic Slowdown? I'm Busier Than I've Ever Been!



So says Bob Nesbitt of Flooring Consultants, Inc. In these days of lay-offs, downsizing, sluggish stock markets and downward trending home sales, Bob has found that decorative concrete engraving is the key to earning larger profits than he ever thought possible.

While others sweat as they watch evening news recite grim statistics about the world's economy, Bob's business is flourishing. "I'm in the flooring business," he says, "and everyone needs a finished floor."

It's this knowledge that puts Bob in the enviable position in which he finds himself today with plenty of jobs and some nice-sized paychecks.

Bob's Decision Spells Success

Here's a little of the backstory: Bob knew that hard surface flooring was increasing in popularity and that any new flooring choice he offered his customers should be hard surface. It must also:

- work equally well on old or new floors
- be low maintenance to meet busy lifestyles
- provide pet-friendly and kid-friendly surfaces
- and be extremely durable.

That's a pretty tall order!

After careful consideration, Bob chose decorative concrete engraving using Engrave-A-Crete tools, equipment and supplies as the perfect option to add to his existing floor covering products. He started Floor Covering Consultants as the decorative concrete branch of his flooring business, and it soon outpaced all his other flooring options combined.

That was in 1999! Since then Bob's decorative concrete engraving business has withstood a shaky economy, a housing market collapse, a much more cautious buying public and still it continues to grow. In his own words he's "covered up" with work!

Decorative Engraved Concrete Makes an Easy Upsell

Although he specializes in floors, Bob is quick to point out that decorative concrete engraving is not limited to indoor applications. He views interior jobs as a necessity for the owner, and outdoor jobs as possibly a luxury, so it's often the floor job that gets him in the door.

Once a customer sees what decorative concrete engraving can do for his ugly concrete floor, upselling or cross selling becomes an easy task and often results in a patio, garage floor or driveway being added to the project.

Combining areas into one job increases Bob's profit margin since his crews and equipment are already on site and the projects can be worked simultaneously. Other times a customer is so satisfied with his original decorative concrete engraving project that he calls Bob back to request a bid on another area of his property. Either way, Bob's bank account wins.

Bob's Success Story Could Be Your Success Story

Bob's decorative concrete engraving success isn't the result of a stroke of luck. It is the result of Bob's dedication to hard work, the pride he takes in every job, and choosing Engrave-A-Crete as the supplier who continually provides him with the quality tools, products, processes, training and on-going professional customer service he needs.

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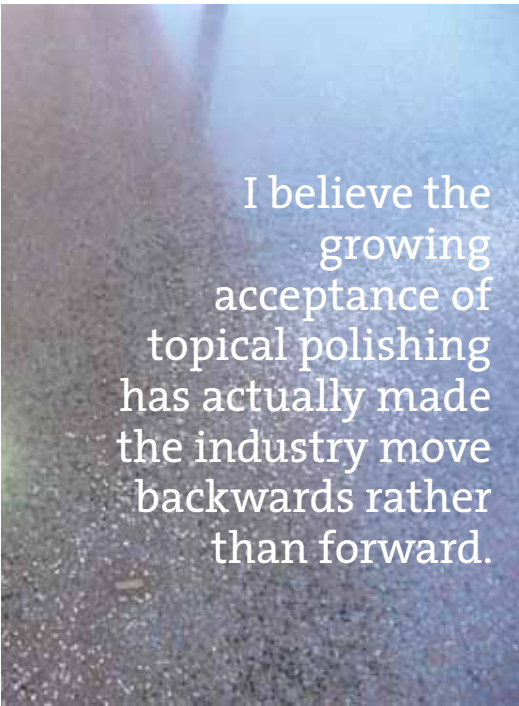
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I believe the growing acceptance of topical polishing has actually made the industry move backwards rather than forward.

more, slabs were not being placed within floor flatness and levelness tolerances, setting the stage for a very nonuniform polish. Within the last two years I have really seen a change to the specifications being written for polished concrete that are very beneficial for contractors. At least, they now give contractors a fair chance to meet the specified finish, such as light sand exposure with no coarse-aggregate exposure.

MORE TOPICAL POLISHING

Another big change I have seen, and one that's often debated, is the growth of topical polishing versus the traditional full grind, hone and polishing process that I and many others prefer. Although, there are certain applications that fit the needs of certain clients, I believe the growing acceptance of topical polishing has actually made the industry move backwards rather than forward. When you consider that one of the weakest parts of the concrete slab is the surface, as a result of finishing, simply burnishing the cream may look impressive when completed, but it will not stand up under extreme conditions when subject to forklift traffic, pallet jacks, and heavy foot traffic. Over the last couple of years, I have compared the wearing of commercial topically polished surfaces with floors that have received traditional full grinding and polishing. Hands down, the full grind and polish outperforms topical polishing in most aspects.

BUCKLE UP

Although I'm pretty certain we will never see grinding machines that will transport us back in time like the silver DeLorean did for Doc Brown and Marty McFly, one thing is for certain: I sure wouldn't want to go back in time to when the polishing industry first started. The future looks very bright for the polishing industry, so you better hold on for a wild ride! 🚗



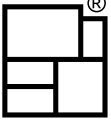
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CONCRETE ROOMS WITH A VIEW

A TOWNHOUSE IN THE SCENIC MOUNTAINS OF SUN VALLEY, IDA., USES DECORATIVE CONCRETE THROUGHOUT TO CREATE AN ATMOSPHERE THAT’S BOTH WARM AND SOPHISTICATED /// *By Anne Balogh, ConcreteNetwork.com columnist*

Eschewing the stereotype of the typical ski chalet, with its log walls, dark interior and rustic décor, this new townhouse in Idaho’s Sun Valley, a popular skiing mecca and arts community, puts a modern twist on the Alpine look by

Having seen our concrete work firsthand, the client was convinced that there would be no substituting the sculptural appeal of concrete the way we use it.

incorporating decorative concrete in almost every room.

“The exterior of the townhouse is a stone-clad structure appropriate for the region. Our challenge was to create a more modern interior while integrating it with the character of the building architecture,” says Fu-Tung Cheng of Cheng Design, who was chosen by the builder to

design and build out the interior of the home. The townhouse is nestled into a mountainside, with beautiful views of Sun Valley and its ski slopes. However, the site limited where windows could be located. Most of the windows

are in front of the townhouse, so some rooms receive no natural daylight. Because of this, it was important to use interior finishes that would add warmth and light

while reinforcing a sense of structural gravity against the backdrop of the mountainside.

“Having seen our concrete work firsthand, both in our Berkeley, Calif., showroom and at Teance, a local tea house full of our concrete designs and installations, the client was convinced that there would be no substituting the sculptural appeal of concrete the way we use it,” says Cheng.



A CUSTOM STAINLESS STEEL PREP SINK WRAPS OVER THE CORNER OF THE PRECAST CONCRETE ISLAND TOP. **LEFT INSET:** AUSTRALIAN JADITE GEMSTONES CAST INTO THE KITCHEN COUNTERTOP ARE PLACED SO THE MORNING SUN ENHANCES THEIR LUMINOSITY. THE POLISHED CONCRETE COUNTERTOP IS ALSO SCATTERED WITH PIECES OF TURQUOISE.



THE MASTER BATH HAS A PRECAST CONCRETE SINK AND A BACKSPLASH LINED WITH GLASS MOSAIC TILE.

BALANCING THE MODERN WITH THE TRADITIONAL
Cheng was given carte blanche to design the interior of all the rooms in the three-story

The project certainly met my goal for a sophisticated interior of a rustic, ski country chalet, without resorting to the usual clichés of peeled logs and deer antler chandeliers.

townhouse, including the entry hall, great room, kitchen, two master bedroom suites, and guest bathroom. Asked to balance the modern with a more traditional sensibility, Cheng used

warm, earthy materials in a mix of smooth and textured finishes with clean, modern detailing. The project included both site-cast and shop-cast concrete elements, including a poured-in-

place decorative concrete floor on the main level of the home, precast concrete fireplace surrounds, a polished concrete countertop with an integral sink, a kitchen island,

and two bathroom vanities.

The color scheme for the interior is predominantly earth-toned, blending neutral

beiges with richer brown, charcoal, and green tones. The client selected the hues from the CHENG Pro-Formula Mix color palette. “It is convenient for our client to choose from formulas that are accurate and proprietary at the same time,” says Cheng. A mixture of concrete finishes was also used to provide a balance of smooth and textured surfaces. “We altered from ground and polished exposed aggregates to our signature unpolished but mirror-finished Geocrete look,” says Cheng.

ATTENTION TO DETAIL
Much of the decorative concrete throughout the home features custom accents such as inlaid gemstones, fossils and mosaic tiles to add an extra level of detail often missing in modernist design. The charcoal-gray precast concrete countertops



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GREAT ROOM ELEMENTS

In the great room, decorative concrete is the prominent design element, used for both the polished floor and the wall-to-wall custom fireplace hearth.

Polished decorative concrete floors help balance the modern with a more traditional sensibility.

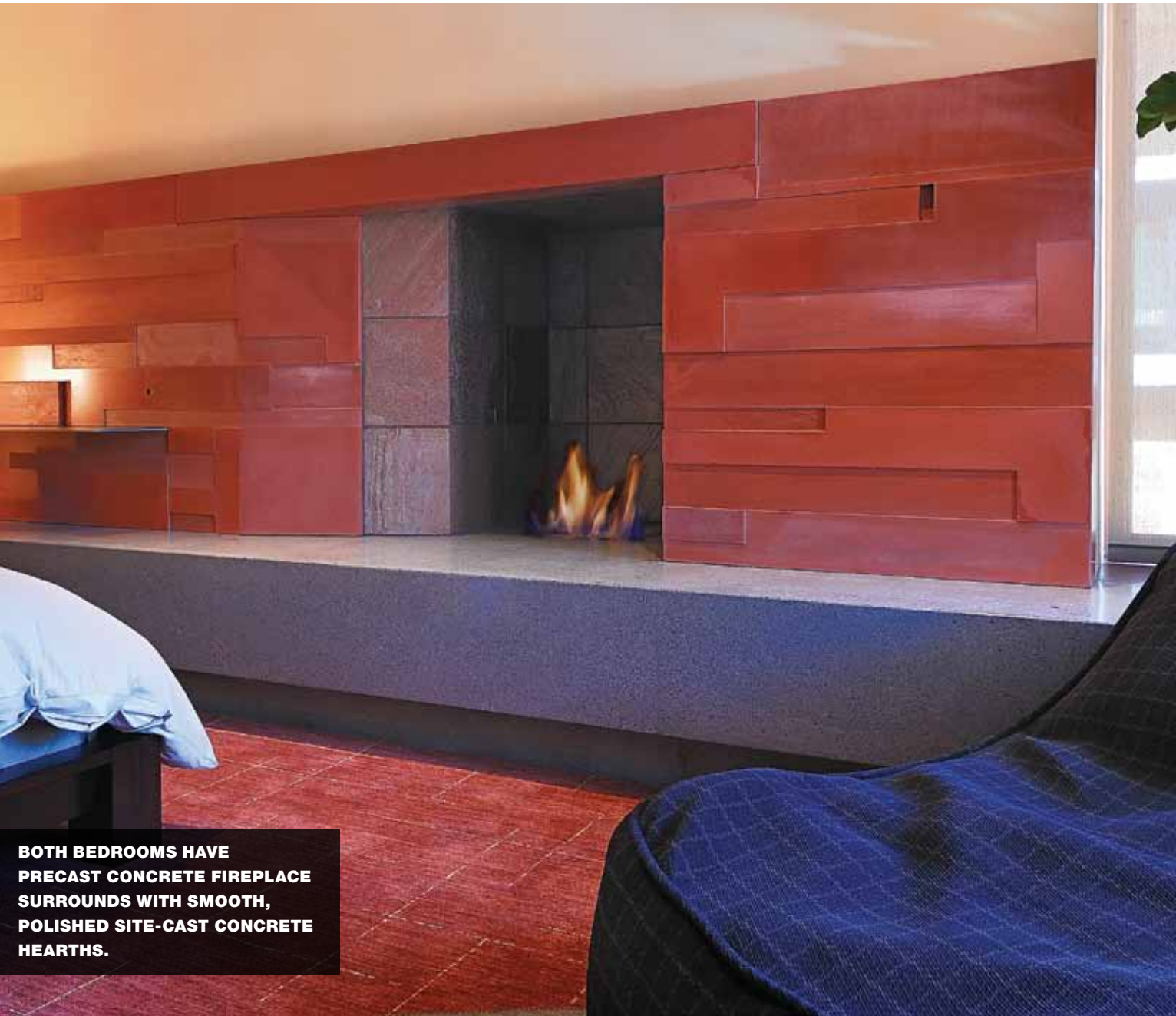
Inlaid ammonite (a spiral-shaped fossilized shell), semi-precious stones and copper accent strips add an extra layer of detail to the design.

The glossy, dark gray concrete fireplace hearth extends the length of the wall, helping to anchor the space.

The cast-in-place concrete hearth complements a custom fireplace surround of ¾-inch plate steel.

Interior finishes add warmth and light while reinforcing a sense of structural gravity against the backdrop of the mountainside.

The great room leads out to a veranda with beautiful views of Sun Valley and its ski slopes.



BOTH BEDROOMS HAVE PRECAST CONCRETE FIREPLACE SURROUNDS WITH SMOOTH, POLISHED SITE-CAST CONCRETE HEARTHS.

in the kitchen are embedded with turquoise and Australian jadite, an apple-green colored gemstone. The main level of the townhouse features beautifully polished decorative concrete floors embellished with inlaid ammonite (a spiral-shaped fossilized shell), semi-precious stones and copper accent strips.

Both bedrooms have fireplace surrounds of integrally colored glass-fiber-reinforced concrete, with fireboxes that use clean-burning ethanol fuel. The surrounds were precast using CHENG NeoMix decorative fiber-reinforced concrete, which Cheng says is easier to use than GFRG because it requires no blending and can be applied more thinly.

The fireplace hearths in the bedrooms and great room were site cast using Cheng's proprietary technique for achieving super-smooth and glossy concrete surfaces. In the great room, the dark-gray concrete hearth beautifully complements a custom fireplace surround of 3/8-inch plate steel.

All of this attention to detail and finish treatments creates an interior aesthetic that reflects the magnificence of the mountain surroundings. "The project certainly met my goal for a sophisticated interior of a rustic, ski country chalet, without resorting to the usual clichés of peeled logs and deer antler chandeliers," says Cheng. "Needless to say, the client was thrilled with the results." 

Interior architect: Cheng Design, Berkeley, Calif. (www.chengdesign.com)
Builder/developer: Edgar Fenwick, Ketchum, Ida.
Location: Sun Valley, Ida.
Project size: 4,800 square feet
Awards: 2010 *Builder Magazine* special focus award for interior architecture

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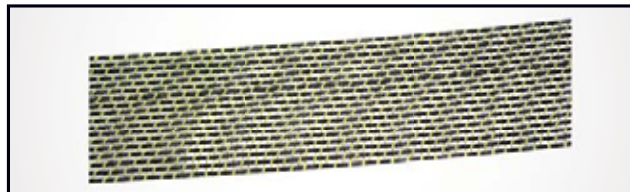
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CONCRETE ON THE BIG SCREEN

GET A BEHIND-THE-SCENES LOOK AT HOW MOVIE STUDIOS ARE USING CONCRETE RESURFACING PRODUCTS TO CREATE PIRATE SHIPS, ROCKSCAPES AND OTHER AMAZING SET PIECES

BY ANNE BALOGH, CONCRETENETWORK.COM COLUMNIST

If you're a big movie buff, then it's likely you've seen concrete play a starring role in some major films. Blockbusters such as *Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest*, *Cowboys & Aliens*, *Angels and Demons*, and *Indiana Jones and the Crystal Skull* used products from Super-Krete to build concrete rockscapes, themed sets and crucial movie props, including the Flying Dutchman pirate ship in *Pirates of the Caribbean* and the Mayan Temples in *Indiana Jones*. For the most recent *Pirates of the Caribbean* movie, *On Stranger Tides*, Super-Krete's Bond-Kote was used to create the mermaid scene, covering all the rocks and other structures on the set to create the look of aged rock and wood. In *Cowboys & Aliens*, the inside of the spaceship and surrounding rockscape consists mainly of Bond-Kote and Micro-Bond.

Movie studio masons on the sets of Universal, Warner Brothers, Disney, Fox and Sony Studios

have been using Bond-Kote, a concrete resurfacing and texturing product, to push the limits with their scenes and produce some amazing results. Here, we talk with one of the masons, Adam Barker, as well as Super-Krete's Tracey Lackovich about this unusual application for concrete coatings.

CN: How did this whole relationship with the movie studios get started, and how did they learn about Super-Krete's products?

Barker: The Local 755 Motion Picture Plasterers (the smallest and proudest of the set-building trades) has a member who thinks outside the box: Mickey Cruz. He plasters all the big shows, and he is the one who saw the strength and usefulness of Super-Krete as a way to provide organic texture and, most important, to encapsulate the project.

Lackovich: Mickey Cruz is a leading plasterer among the studio sets. He first got his hands

on Super-Krete for *Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest* years ago. I was present for some of the stringent tests that the plasterers put Super-Krete products through to determine that they were the right products for them. In the creation of the Flying Dutchman and the famous water wheel from a fighting scene in the movie, they needed to be certain that the product would stick to the existing steel in order to provide the appearance of wood, be flexible enough to allow for serious movement, be workable within their time constraints, and be able to resist the ocean saltwater for extended periods of time to last through the months of filming.

CN: What makes Super-Krete's products easy, flexible materials to work with?

Barker: The main reason I use Super-Krete on the sets we build is that it's the new industry standard



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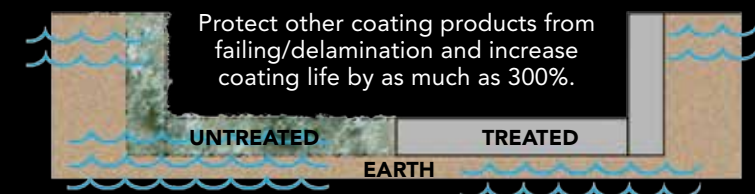
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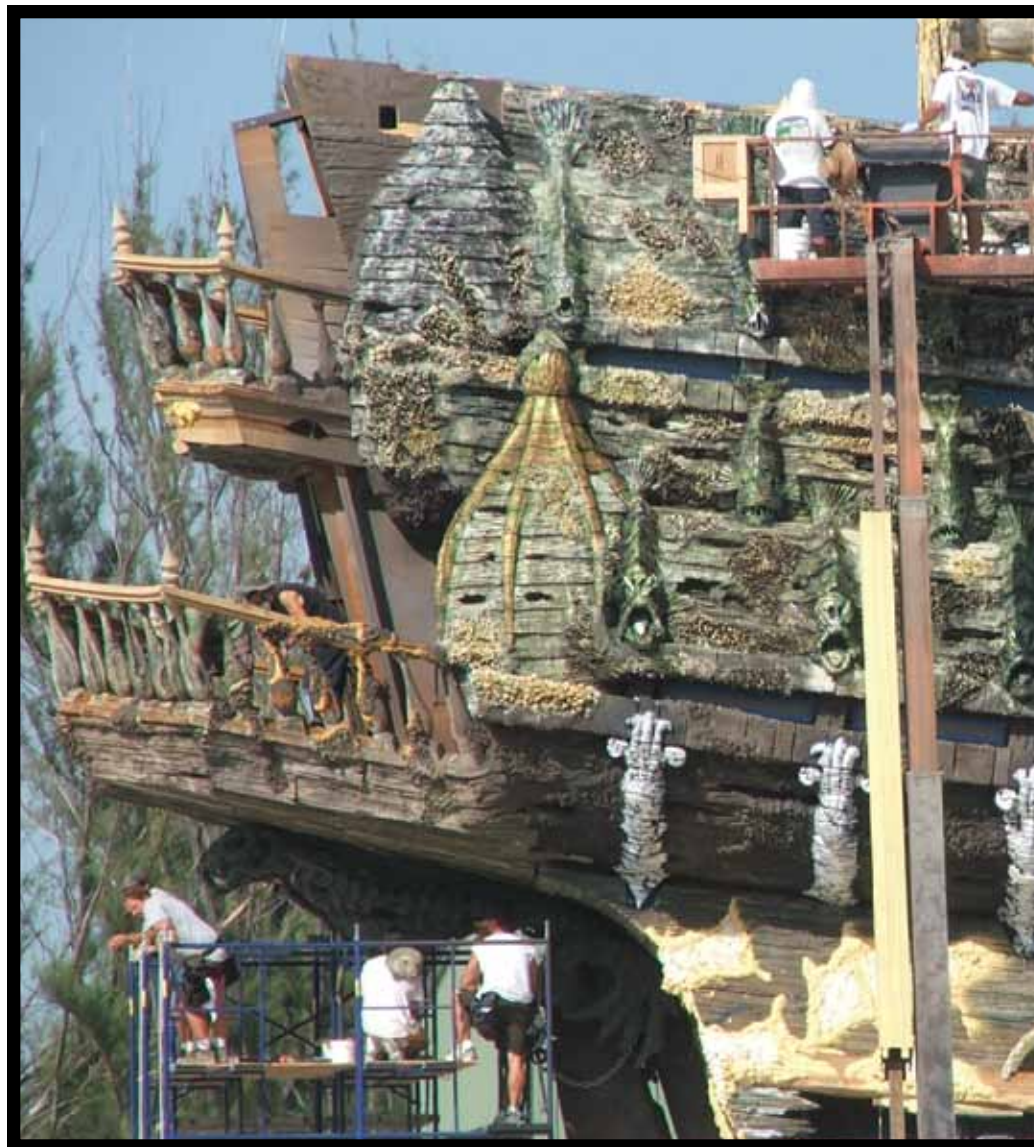
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— ADAM BARKER



of strength. It won't chip off, it's thin and it's tintable. We throw sand into it, use sea sponges and brushes and years of training with Hollywood plaster legends in all places and climates to create sets you think are real. Back in the days before synthetic plasters, we would use thick interior plaster, and we still use it at times to recreate old, decrepit brick, concrete or rock. The thing about Super-Krete is that it will stick to any surface. We joke that it is what holds on the space shuttle tiles.

Lackovich: Super-Krete Bond-Kote and Super-Krete Micro-Bond can be troweled, sprayed, and manipulated in various ways that work for the set builders.

CN: Are these movie "props" always life-size structures or smaller replicas that are computer-manipulated during filming?

Lackovich: Based on what I have seen in person, they are life-size or, in some cases, larger-than-life-size structures.

CN: How well do these structures hold up during filming?

Barker: If we are covering carved foam, luan (a mahogany panel), plywood, or whatever form or structure the carpenters build to create a movie set, they want it lightweight and able to have people around and on it. Construction workers, set dressers, riggers, and electricity and lighting grips are all over these sets. Then the talent arrives, and they would never know that this cave, prison cell or whatever was only built of 1x3-lumber and luan only a quarter inch thick.

Lackovich: The tests they put the products through are intense! For example, I witnessed them applying a thin coat of Bond-Kote to a very flexible metal that was used to build the famous water wheel that the actors fought on. They jumped on it, bent it and flexed it, and Bond-Kote showed no signs of cracking, chipping or deteriorating. They were so impressed that they used it for the entire wheel. For the Flying Dutchman, Mickey told me that during filming in the Bahamas, a major storm came through and dislodged the entire 75-foot ship from the dock. It required assistance from the navy to bring the

ship back to landing. Even after all this, the Super-Krete remained unaffected, without any cracks or repairs needed.

CN: What happens to these movie set pieces after filming? Are they reused in some manner?

Barker: After filming, the sets are always torn down. Most are completely struck down, and in a matter of hours, months of work end up in a dumpster to be recycled and gone through.

Lackovich: Unfortunately, most pieces are destroyed, with the exception of the Flying Dutchman, which is on display at Disney's private island Castaway Cay.

CN: What are some upcoming films Super-Krete will play a role in?

Lackovich: Mickey has gone on with his teams from set to set, thinking of how he can incorporate Super-Krete products into what they are doing. It was used to create the battleship in the upcoming *Battleship* film, and will likely be used to build the yellow brick road in the upcoming *Wizard of Oz* remake. 🇺🇸

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PROJECT: LARIN FELKER, LIFE DECK COATING INSTALLATIONS, SAN DIEGO



A GREEN MAKEOVER

AN ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTING FIRM SAVES MONEY AND CONSERVES RESOURCES BY GIVING THEIR RUNDOWN CONCRETE FLOOR A NEW LOOK

By Anne Balogh, ConcreteNetwork.com columnist

THE CHALLENGE

Nautilus Environmental, an environmental consulting firm, recently moved into a new facility in San Diego and was in need of a tough but elegant floor for its new location. The facility was more than 30 years old and the existing

San Diego, the company hired to restore and stain the concrete floors. “The contemporary look was the primary driver for choosing stained concrete. The cost was also considerably less than traditional flooring options.” Felker worked in collaboration with San Diego design firm

Augustine Design Group to choose the best colors and finish for the floor.

SECRETS TO SUCCESS

To remove the existing contaminants and

create the desired profile for staining, Life Deck used a large planetary grinder with a metal-bond diamond disc on the building’s ground floor. For the less dense lightweight concrete on the second floor, a traditional floor sanding/buffing machine was used with sandpaper attached to clean and prep the surface.

After profiling, both floors were colored using a fast-drying, penetrating stain in a rich brown tone and then sealed with a water-based epoxy sealer. “We choose this type of sealer because of its environmentally friendly nature, ease of application and the low sheen it produces,” says Felker.

The job took about two and a half weeks to complete, from start to finish. The restored floor



A VIEW OF THE STAINED FLOOR FROM THE SECOND FLOOR. **LEFT INSET:** CONCRETE FLOORING COATED WITH A RICH BROWN STAIN MAKES THE LOBBY OF NAUTILUS ENVIRONMENTAL WARM AND INVITING.

The contemporary look was the primary driver for choosing stained concrete. The cost was also considerably less than traditional flooring options.

concrete floors were in poor condition, covered with carpet pad glue, rubber tire marks, stains and other contaminants that required removal. The project involved more than 13,000 square feet of concrete on both floors of the two-story building. The ground floor was a typical slab on grade, and the second story was covered with residue from previous flooring over a lightweight concrete subfloor. Nautilus wanted to give the floors throughout the facility – including the office spaces, meeting rooms, building lobby, and a lab where the company conducts research – a uniform look while restoring their appearance.

DESIGN GOALS

“The goals were two-fold: cost and aesthetics,” says Larin Felker, Life Deck Coating Installations,



SEALED WITH A WATER-BASED EPOXY, THE CONCRETE FLOOR IS ALSO CHEMICAL-RESISTANT, WHICH WAS AN IMPORTANT REQUIREMENT FOR THE RESEARCH LAB IN THE FACILITY. **BELOW:** BOTH FLOORS OF THE TWO-STORY BUILDING ARE STAINED CONCRETE, INCLUDING THE OFFICES.

not only gives the facility a consistent look, it will resist wear and tear and chemicals. Maintenance is also straightforward, simply requiring regular cleaning with a pH-neutral cleaner and the application of a coat of wax annually to extend the life of the finish.

“What I’m offering with applications like this are several solutions in one product or installation,” says Felker. “Stained concrete is generally more cost-effective than traditional flooring and has a longer service life. The green aspects of reusing existing materials and environmentally friendly products manufactured by local companies add up on every level.”

MATERIALS USED

Concrete stain: SC-36 stain in dark brown from Westcoat Specialty Coating Systems
Floor sealer: EC-11 epoxy from Westcoat

STAINING CONTRACTOR

Larin Felker
 Life Deck Coating Installations, San Diego
www.lifedek.com

DESIGNER

Jillion Augustine
 Augustine Design Group, San Diego
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Decorative Concrete WITH GLOBAL FLAIR

A LOOK AT THE STYLES OF INTERNATIONAL CONCRETE CONTRACTORS / By Brian Farnsworth, Bomanite Group International

For those of you that don't know me, my current job with Bomanite has taken me around the world and back again to advance the use of decorative concrete, from training contractors to installation. Every country brings with it a unique feel in the way that local contractors have built their portfolios of decorative concrete work. During my travels, I have had a chance to see many amazing decorative concrete installations that rival the decorative work installed in the United States. Don't get me wrong. I believe that the U.S. is the clear leader in cutting-edge decorative concrete work, now and in the future. But international contractors are thriving and mixing it up (pun intended) using their own distinctive style. I must admit that when I started traveling I had my set ideas of what certain countries and cities would be like. For the most part, my preconceived notions have been blown out of the water. There is top-notch decorative concrete work happening all over the globe.

Places like Argentina, Brazil, India and China have more work than they know what to do with. We see chemically stained floors, imprinted horizontal and vertical surfaces, pervious concrete systems, polished floors, precast work and exposed concrete projects all over the world. Many international contractors have installed quality decorative concrete work for over 20 years and are seeing the fruits of their labors. As quality work continues to be installed, architects and builders continue to turn to decorative concrete when looking for durable, lasting surfaces. All I can say is that if someone decides to open a theme park showcasing all the different cultures of the world, decorative concrete contractors would have it covered.

MICROTOPPINGS

On a recent trip to Argentina, I found some of the most progressive microtopped floors I have ever seen, installed by Guillermo Camarero from Cordoba.



A CEMENTITIOUS TOPPING WAS USED ON BOTH VERTICAL AND HORIZONTAL SURFACES IN THIS BATHROOM IN ARGENTINA TO CREATE SURFACES THAT ARE BOTH WATERPROOF AND AESTHETICALLY PLEASING.



A CEMENTITIOUS TOPPING, INSTALLED BY A CONTRACTOR IN ARGENTINA, TRANSFORMS THIS FLOOR INTO A CLEAN MODERN LIVING SPACE.

If someone decides to open a theme park showcasing all the different cultures of the world, decorative concrete contractors would have it covered.

IMPRINTED AND STAINED CONCRETE

Imprinted concrete is king in our industry, and it seems that as time goes by, architects are looking for alternative solutions for exterior hardscape work. Indoors, we also see amazing chemically stained concrete and polished concrete floors all over the world. I find it hard to imagine that a local architect or homeowner would not want their own decorative concrete projects to look like those shown here.



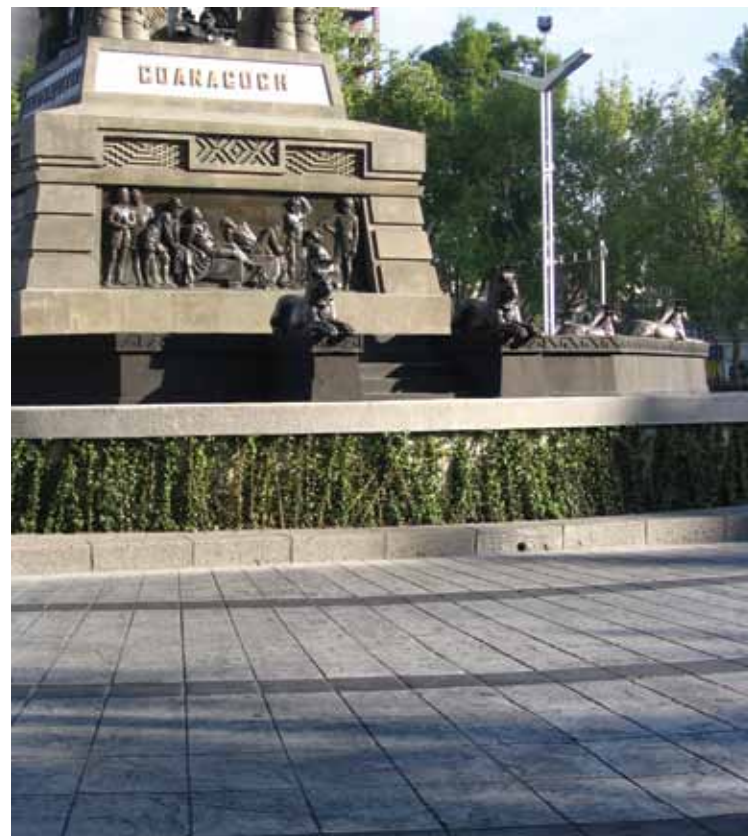
THIS IS ONE OF MY FAVORITE IMPRINTED CONCRETE PROJECTS, LOCATED IN MALAYSIA. I LOVE THE MIXING OF COLOR AND TEXTURE BY DECORATIVE CONCRETE CONTRACTOR JOANNE ONG TAN.

When I started traveling, I had my set ideas of what certain countries and cities would be like. For the most part, my preconceived notions have been blown out of the water. There is top-notch decorative concrete work happening all over the globe.

IMPRINTED AND STAINED CONCRETE CONTINUED



THE USE OF CHEMICAL STAIN ON THE ENTRYWAY TO A GREEN HOUSE AT RABYA JEDDAH, A LARGE CONCRETE AND LANDSCAPE COMPANY IN THE MIDDLE EAST.



THIS WORK, INSTALLED BY PABLO AVILES OF CONCRETE AND PIGMENTS IN MEXICO CITY, SHOWS HOW DURABLE AND BEAUTIFUL DECORATIVE CONCRETE CAN BE.



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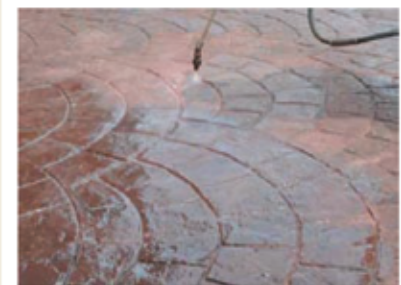
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THE BEAUTY OF NATURAL GRAY

FOR THIS KITCHEN MAKEOVER, CONCRETE COUNTERTOPS, RUSTIC BOARD-FORMED PILLARS AND A FLOOR OVERLAY ARE ALL LEFT A NATURAL GRAY TO CREATE A COHESIVE, MONOCHROMATIC LOOK /// By Anne Balogh, ConcreteNetwork.com columnist

THE CHALLENGE

For this residential kitchen makeover project -- for a client who prefers to use natural, eco-friendly materials -- concrete was the perfect fit. In addition to choosing concrete for his countertops, he also wanted to overlay his existing floor with a concrete floor overlay and use board-formed concrete pillars to flank the ends of his cabinets. He preferred to keep the

With different techniques, we can get GFRC to pretty much look like any kind of concrete you would want.

concrete a natural gray, but wondered if the gray-on-gray effect be too boring and monotone.

“The client already knew what he wanted. He had seen board-formed concrete on a structural wall in an old building and wanted to incorporate the look into his kitchen. He told us he wanted it to be very natural and simple, but he was concerned that all the gray would be a little too monochromatic. We showed him some similar projects using gray, and he saw that by working with different textures and finishes, you can achieve a timeless look,” says Brock Greenberg of Concrete Wave Design, who, along with partner Andrew Noble, poured and formed all of the concrete.

SECRETS TO SUCCESS

For the board-formed pillars, Greenberg wanted them to look as if they were poured in place and the cabinets were built around them. “Since we do all of our casting off site in our shop, we had to come up with a different way to achieve this look,” he says. “We started by ripping down 1/2-inch-thick plywood into 5-inch strips, then built our forms as normal. After properly sealing

the wood, we then placed the strips into our mold in a random order and sprayed them with several coats of release agent before pouring the pieces.” After removing the forms, Greenberg gave the exposed surfaces a very light acid etch and sealed them with a penetrating sealer.

For most of their countertop projects, Concrete Wave Design prefers to use glass-fiber-reinforced concrete versus standard wet-cast concrete. “With different techniques, we can get GFRC to pretty much look like any kind of concrete you would want,” says Greenberg. The lighter weight of GFRC is another reason Greenberg prefers to use it. “We are a two-man operation, so one of the biggest advantages for us is the weight factor. We used to have to get help on

every install we did, but now with GFRC, we can deliver and install pieces up to 12 feet long with ease,” he says. Concrete Wave Design has come up with its own GFRC mix, which incorporates polymer, sand cement, fibers and a plasticizer. They also have variations for their GFRC mix so they can achieve different looks.

The client didn’t want to worry about staining of his countertops, so Greenberg protected them with a topical sealer, taking care to keep the look natural. “Straight out of the can, the sealer will give the concrete a plastic look. We’ve come up with a very effective way to matte down the shine of the sealer, leaving behind a soft, natural glow rather than a harsh, fake gloss,” he says.

Before Greenberg could cover the kitchen floor with the concrete overlay, a lot of prep work was required. “The existing subfloor had staggered layers of 3/4-inch-thick plywood, glued and screwed together. We stapled sheets of metal lath to the floor and topped that all off with an epoxy primer,” he says. For the overlay, he used a cement-based self-leveling product that is highly abrasion resistant. He then protected the floor with a concrete sealer and densifier.

CONCRETE NO LONGER A ‘MYSTERY’

Greenberg says that since he and his partner started Concrete Wave Design in 2005, he’s



THIS STUNNING KITCHEN FEATURES A COMBINATION OF GFRC COUNTERTOPS, BOARD-FORMED CONCRETE PILLARS ALONGSIDE THE CABINETS, AND A CONCRETE FLOOR OVERLAY, ALL IN NATURAL GRAY. ABOVE: ANOTHER VIEW, SHOWING THE DETAILS IN THE CONCRETE PILLARS, WHICH WERE BOARD-FORMED WITH STRIPS OF PLYWOOD TO MIMIC THE LOOK OF CONCRETE WALLS IN AN OLD BUILDING. LEFT INSET: A CLOSE-UP VIEW OF THE COUNTERTOPS, MADE WITH A LIGHTWEIGHT GFRC MIX.

noticed that fewer of his customers need to be “talked into” using concrete. “People are starting to get it, finally. When you open a design magazine, there will no doubt be at least one concrete countertop featured somewhere in it. It’s no longer a mystery. People now come to us and know exactly what they want and exactly what to expect. We like to work with people who can appreciate something unique, and not what their neighbor has.”

PRODUCTS USED

Countertop sealer: EAP from Kinloch USA
Concrete overlay: Level Set Wear Topping from ProSpec
Floor sealer: LS Guard from Prosoco

CONTRACTOR

Brock Greenberg and Andrew Noble
Concrete Wave Design, Anaheim, Calif.
www.concretewavedesign.com



PROJECT: DAVID EERDMANS, HARD TOPIX PRECAST CONCRETE, JENISON, MICH.



SEAMLESS RESULTS

A LIGHTWEIGHT GFRC MIX MADE IT POSSIBLE TO CAST A LARGE 34-SQUARE-FOOT CONCRETE KITCHEN ISLAND IN ONE PIECE /// *By Anne Balogh, ConcreteNetwork.com columnist*

DESIGN GOALS
These homeowners had two demands for their kitchen countertops and island: They wanted a custom color and they wanted the island to be in one piece with no seams. Hard Topix Precast

The countertop color, Bleeker Beige, was replicated directly from a Benjamin Moore paint color chart. “Our customers are experimenting more with color and texture and love the fact that we can pour almost any color from the Benjamin Moore color chart. It really opens up some doors as far as matching countertops to the overall design of the room,” says Eerdmans. After

casting the countertop, Hard Topix gave it a light diamond-grind finish and then sealed it with a topical sealer cured by ultraviolet light to provide long-lasting protection from stains and scratching.

The GFRC countertop mix was designed by Eerdmans and Tom Fischer at Fishstone Concrete Countertop Supply, Elgin, Ill. The total weight of the island, which was poured in one piece, was approximately 450 pounds. The thickness was 2 inches, with a foam core to help reduce the weight. “If poured with our regular concrete mix, the island would have weighed 950 pounds,” says Eerdmans. Even so, four men were needed to carry the piece up the flight of steps and into the house. “With a regular wet-mix concrete this would not have been possible,” he says. 

It’s the customization factor that really draws our customers to select concrete countertops.

Concrete of Jenison, Mich., was contacted to tackle the project and assured them that by using concrete they could do both. “It’s the customization factor that really draws our customers to select concrete countertops,” says David Eerdmans of Hard Topix.

SECRETS TO SUCCESS
The home, which sits on the shores of Lake Michigan, has a large set of stairs going up to the front door, which made access difficult. “We decided that in order to get the 34-square-foot island in the house in one piece, we would have to build it out of glass-fiber-reinforced concrete,” says Eerdmans. The two perimeter countertop pieces were also done in GFRC, so they would match perfectly.



THERE ARE NO SEAMS IN THIS LARGE 10 BY 56 INCH KITCHEN ISLAND. A LIGHTWEIGHT GFRC MIX WAS USED INSTEAD OF TRADITIONAL WET-CAST CONCRETE MIX TO REDUCE THE WEIGHT FROM 950 POUNDS TO ONLY 450 POUNDS. **LEFT INSET:** A CLOSE-UP OF ONE OF THE PERIMETER KITCHEN COUNTERTOPS, WHICH FEATURES A BUILT-IN STOVETOP.

MATERIALS USED

Concrete pigment: Bleeker Beige, from Blue Concrete
Sealer: Rocktop UV, from Surface 519
GFRC concrete mix materials: Fishstone Concrete Countertop Supply

CONCRETE CONTRACTOR

Hard Topix Precast Concrete, Jenison, Mich.
www.hardtopix.com

BOTH THE ISLAND AND PERIMETER COUNTERTOPS IN THE KITCHEN WERE INTEGRALLY COLORED WITH A BEIGE PIGMENT SELECTED FROM A BENJAMIN MOORE PAINT COLOR CHART. THE HOMEOWNERS WERE SOLD ON THE ABILITY OF CONCRETE TO BE CUSTOM COLORED TO COORDINATE WITH THEIR DÉCOR.



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Picture at right is after Fortress Stabilization carbon fiber countersunk staples are installed and the wall is ready to be painted.



KEVLAR NECKTIE TOP WALL ANCHORAGE SYSTEM



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- Protects the value of your home

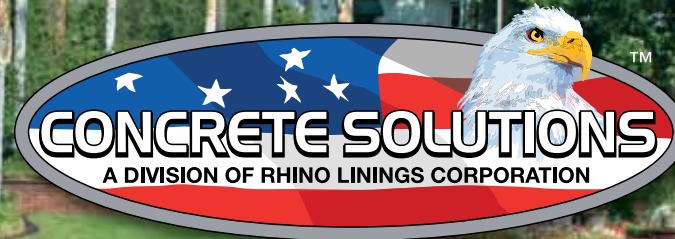
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