

## Bella Vernici

One of the least-tapped and most profitable gold mines in decorative finishing is the floor. With the occasional exception of the floor cloth or a disclaimer-ridden painted finish, the floor is often avoided due to the tremendous abuse it receives. However, you can turn fear into fortune with a concrete system that allows you to explore the limits of your creativity. The product is the Bella Vernici Architectural Concrete System, developed by a conglomerate of artists and concrete contractors looking to go beyond the realms of traditional decorative concrete installations.

"This is not the slab-pouring, monolithic look you may currently associate with concrete," reported Product Development Director Rodney Ray. "Nor is it the highly-acidic, monochromatic look often alluded to when discussing unpredictable decorative concrete stains. This is actually a water-based, low-to-no odor decorative concrete veneer and chemical staining system that is designed with decorative being the operative term."

Bella Vernici works over any existing substrate, including such problem areas as ceramic tile and Formica. The surface should be prepped with the proper primers. If skimming is required, that is accomplished with Serico (a.k.a. Slick-Um) for gaps up to one-eighth inch. For deeper fractures or wider joints, use Terra Stucco (a.k.a. Tuff Tex).

After the surface is properly primed and/or skimmed, it is ready for the Bonding Primer. This high-adhesion primer can be brushed, rolled or sprayed on. It is preferable to apply two thin coats—about 20 minutes apart—and then let the Bonding Primer dry for approximately one hour.

After the Bonding Primer comes the Overlay Compound. "The Overlay is the real beauty of the Bella Vernici System," reported Ray, explaining that the Overlay Compound is a unique combination of marble flour, lime, fly ash, Portlands and ultra-fine aggregates that come in powdered form. The pow-



**Bella Vernici transforms floors and other surfaces.**

der is mixed at a 2:1 ratio with the liquid Enforcer Additive. Most other overlays on the market use water as their medium for mixing. However, Bella Vernici's Enforcer Additive features a blend of various emulsions that give the Overlay added flexibility, adhesion and hardness without the risk of over-dilution of the binders.

The stains or "Oxidizers" can be applied the very next day—no need to wait 30 days, as required by most slab applications. The Oxidizers feature little or no acids (depending on color) and are comprised of the finest metallic salts to give color integrity and intensity without noxious odors. To apply, simply load a bug sprayer with Oxidizer and mist the surface. Additional colors are added light-to-dark and wet-on-wet.

Total reaction time is about three hours, and users are encouraged to err on the light side while waiting for the reaction to occur. Choose about three colors to spray: the first at 100-percent coverage, the second about 65 percent and the third around 25 percent. After waiting three hours, mop the floor with water to reveal the results. If you decide to add more color, do so and wait about an hour before mopping it off. As the alkalinity of the concrete has mostly oxidized, the second reaction will take less time.

The process is completed with the use of Liquid Hardener, a densifier that cures the Overlay and sets the color as it seals against moisture penetration. Simply mop on two or three coats until holdout (defined as the media beading up on the surface) is achieved. The floor does not have to be dry prior to applying Hardener, but wait about 30 minutes be-

tween each Hardener coat. After one more overnight drying, the system will be durable enough to withstand traffic on driveways, garages, pool decks, countertops, etc.

That's the final required step if a matte finish—which lends itself well to stonework and ancient-floor looks—is desired. Some clients prefer a higher sheen, which is best accomplished with floor waxes. Ray recommends strongly against using acrylics and urethanes, since they marry themselves into the surface layer of the concrete and later plasticize as they heat up from foot traffic, hot-tire lift, etc. "As they peel off, they take the color right along with them," he said.

Ray pointed out that waxes provide a more durable and natural sheen, plus they can be re-applied in specific areas without leaving lap lines. "We've now developed a wax (Brown Gravy Wax) specifically for concrete that performs better than any we've ever used. It has a brown cast to it so it can further intensify the colors of the Oxidizers," he said.

However, waxes are not recommended for kitchen countertops, since they are not safe for areas where food is prepared. "For these scenarios, we have a one-part acrylic epoxy that can be rolled or sprayed on for a high-sheen finish," Ray said. "Once applied, unless someone is constantly walking or driving on the counter, you should never have a problem with color wear."

For more information about this unique decorative concrete system, visit [www.BellaVernici.com](http://www.BellaVernici.com) or call 1-888-508-FAUX(3289).

**Look for a feature on Bella Vernici in the next issue of *The Faux Finisher*.**