

cult-to-cover surfaces to dry overnight to the point that they are more workable. This user-friendly part of the system is one of the fac-



A closeup of an elaborate tile pattern.

tors that makes for such unique finishes with the Overlay Compound. Thus, we simply get the countertop covered and as smooth as possible. Then allow it to dry overnight.

The following day (after any sanding), we are ready for the oxidization process. The oxidization process is literally as it sounds. Metallic salts in the Oxidizers are reacting with the lime content (alkalinity) in the Overlay Compound to create an oxidized finish that is in the pH of the cementitious veneer. As this is a pH reaction, the change is permanent and not affected by moisture or spills of anything other than acidic or staining materials. The application is simple. Hydrate the surface sufficiently with water so that the gray is a uniform darker tone. This is accomplished by scrubbing water into the surface with a scrub brush to break the surface tension. This will eliminate any crawling (or cissing) of the stain as it's applied by ensuring that there is uniform porosity to the Overlay Compound. Additionally, the water will help the stain migrate into the Overlay Compound. Normally, two to three colors of Oxidizers would be used. They are applied wet on wet and lightest to darkest. Then, the Oxidizers are al-

lowed to sit for at least three hours to react. After this three-hour window, residue is mopped off with a damp rag. At that time, any areas that need further coloring can be corrected. These corrections should be allowed to sit for at least one hour. Then, after wiping the surface down again with a damp rag, you can make final judgments. If the colors are as desired, and the material looks good wet, it is most likely ready for the Liquid Hardener.

The Liquid Hardener serves multiple purposes, the first of which is that it densifies the Overlay Compound. Densification is defined as the Overlay Compound having the



Aaron Cohen of Seattle Architectural Finishing Studio completed this counter working over existing Formica and utilizing L'Aqua Blue and some Old Rust.

remainder of the soft lime "set-off" by the Liquid Hardener as it catalyzes any lime. A welcome side effect is that the Liquid Hardener also creates a fairly sealed surface that will allow moisture vapors to evaporate, while not allowing moisture from water to rapidly penetrate. Both of these contributions lead to the Overlay Compound being much harder at the end of the process.

For sheen in an area where food preparation is not an issue, wax is ap-

plied. But, if the surface is in a kitchen, some sort of counter topcoat is recommended. There are several one-part acrylic epoxies, urethanes and acrylic topcoats on the market that will work to create a high-sheen, somewhat durable surface. However, regular maintenance (like a reapplication of the topcoat) is recommended annually. At the same time, it is important to note that using these epoxies, urethanes or acrylics over the Liquid Hardener is not recommended. Remember that the Liquid Hardener also seals the surface to moisture penetration. Therefore, waterborne topcoats have a difficult time marrying into the surface. In other words, the Liquid Hardener works as a resist. As a result, the Liquid Hardener should be left out if intending to use a waterborne top coat.

Maintenance of the finished countertop is equivalent to that of granite.

Do not cut directly on it. Do not spill hot grease on it. Do not take a hot pot directly from the stove and set it on the counter. Cleaning is accomplished by simply wiping with a damp cloth. Methods and applications are unlimited. Everything from tumbled marble to slate textures can be accomplished on countertops. The only difference is in preparation and application of the Overlay Compound. You may find further explanation of techniques and methods at www.BellaVernici.com or by attending one of the training sessions offered nationwide. Good luck with your upcoming projects! TFF

Rodney Ray is art director for Bella Vernici Studios. For additional information about this decorative concrete product, contact Bella Vernici Studios at www.BellaVernici.com or toll-free at 1-888-508-FAUX(3289).