

primer should be allowed to dry eight hours or overnight. The second coat can be applied the next day and the topping installed as soon as the primer appears clear and is touch-dry. Bella Vernici supplies a bonding primer for application over concrete and recommends a transitional primer topped with bonding primer to prepare substrates other than concrete for overlays.

At this point, the toppings may be sprayed or troweled on. Pachade recommends troweling for areas smaller than 1,000 square feet. He also recommends troweling for vertical surfaces. The ease and speed of spraying make it the preferred method for larger areas.

Concrete Solutions Web site claims, "If you know how to spray paint, you can apply Spray-Top."

Coloring

Of course, the greatest appeal of concrete toppings to a painter is the color potential. There are various ways toppings can be colored. One is to simply mix a powdered oxide pigment into the topping in a bucket with a drill and



Photographs courtesy of Concrete Solutions



Applying the Ultra Surface Strap-Top System.

mixer with rounded blades. These pigments can be added as supplied or mixed on site to create a custom color. The colored topping is sprayed on just like paint, and, like paint, if the customer doesn't like it, the topping can be recoated with a new color.

The cementitious makeup of sprayable concrete toppings creates other coloring options more commonly associated with concrete than paint. Acid-based stains react with the lime in the cement to create a natural mottled look. An acid-stained surface gives the impression of depth. In contrast, a solvent-based dye gives a more uniform surface look. Water-based stains may also be used, but Pachade recommends them only for horizontal applications, as they tend to run down vertical surfaces. Bella Vernici also supplies liquid oxide colors that can be sprayed onto the topping (which must be well hydrated) or dripped or drizzled on for more varied effects.

These coloring techniques are especially dramatic when used with stencils. Stains can be applied as a stencil is "weeded" — different parts of the pattern are removed to apply different colors. Acid stains thickened with gel are less likely than liquids to bleed under the stencil. A stencil can also be used with different colors of overlay. The stencil is placed after the first overlay is sprayed and then a second layer of topping in a contrasting or complementary color is sprayed through the stencil.

Painters installing concrete?

Painters are not about to become concrete contractors, but now they certainly have a new option for expanding their business. They can color or correct stained or discolored concrete just the way they improve worn or dated painted surfaces. Concrete Solutions claims, "Once it is dry, Spray-Top looks similar to a professionally finished color hardener or integral colored concrete job. Even the most experienced concrete finisher will have difficulty telling the difference."

But besides opening up new business opportunities, sprayable concrete toppings open up new creative opportunities as well. Rodney Ray says, "How easy are these products to use? They are extremely user-friendly, but they are advanced enough to appeal to even the most skilled artisan."

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