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construction services

Decorative concrete is no longer just the same old pour: It lasts longer and is easier on your pocket

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Is there anything more significant a building material today than concrete? Going as far back as ancient Egypt – and perhaps even farther than that – has there ever been a more widely used building component? Look around you – concrete has ubiquity unrivaled by anything else. It holds such significance in our lives that cement (the

“glue” of concrete) is the second most widely used natural resource globally. It is used for building small, single family houses to major municipal projects and everything in between. As useful as it is and continues to be, there is nothing particularly exciting about the stuff. It’s gray, it serves its purpose and beyond that, what more can you say about it?

Well, there’s actually plenty more that can be said about this wonderful and reliable substance and it can be summed up in two words: Decorative concrete. No longer is concrete that reliable old gray lady that quietly does its job. Concrete has experienced an impressive renaissance of late due

entirely to the popularity of modern stamping and decorating technologies. With an almost unlimited smorgasbord of patterns to choose from and a color pallet that any accomplished artist would be proud of, decorative concrete is no longer just the same old pour.

The decorating process begins when pigmentation is added directly to the concrete mix. The concrete is then poured and smoothed and highlighting colors are applied to the surface. Heavy duty stamping mats are then used to give the newly poured slab a variety of looks including slate, flagstone, tile and even wood plank. There are some 40 different patterns to choose from. The finished product looks

so authentic that it often invites knees to the ground inspection.

Many traditionally used paving materials such as brick, real stone and unilock are now taking a back seat to decorative concrete for a multitude of reasons. Decorative concrete is half the cost, lasts a lot longer, is far easier to maintain and offers such a wide array of looks that anybody’s discriminating taste can be satisfied. Additionally, the pigments and other components that are added to the concrete pump up its durability which enables the finished product to outlast all of its rival materials. As a matter of fact, some insist that the finished product has three times the strength of standard concrete. It can therefore

easily stand up to the frigid temperatures experienced throughout the northeast winter season.

Most excitingly is that decorative concrete does not begin and end with pouring new surfaces. State of the art overlay systems are available today that can be used to bring just about any existing concrete surface back to life with a brand new, decorative look. Existing walkways, pool decks and patios are just a few of the places overlays are used. And, overlays are no longer restricted to only exterior areas. Resurfacing has become extremely popular for garage and basement floors, entry ways, restaurant floors and even counter tops. Overlays become an extremely attractive option when you consider that the expense and hassle of having to rip out old concrete is avoided. And, with proven 6000 psi strength you’ll have a surface that will last a lifetime.

When it comes to pouring new concrete or using overlay systems, there really are no limits to what can be achieved. Not only is the mix integrally colored but additional coloring can be applied to the surface to achieve beautiful shade variations. Even after the surface has sufficiently set up, stains can be used to further highlight the appearance. Etching and staining concrete is also becoming abundantly popular. Once you’ve had the chance to see decorative concrete for yourself, you’ll wonder why you’ve ever settled for anything less.

An additional consideration when deciding on a decorative installation is the value you’ll be adding to your building or home. Choosing a decorative driveway over the more traditional blacktop, for example, will add substantially to the bottom line. It will cost more up front but it will last a lifetime, will boost property value markedly and will pay for itself over and over again.

Finally, some contractors install stamped concrete exclusively while others make it just a part of what they offer. Either way, make sure to choose a contractor with experience and one who has a strong track record of satisfied clientele. Do not be afraid to request references and ask to see samples of their work. All good contractors accumulate photo albums of their past projects and they’d be happy to show them off.

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