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Metallic Epoxies Shine Bright in Car Dealership

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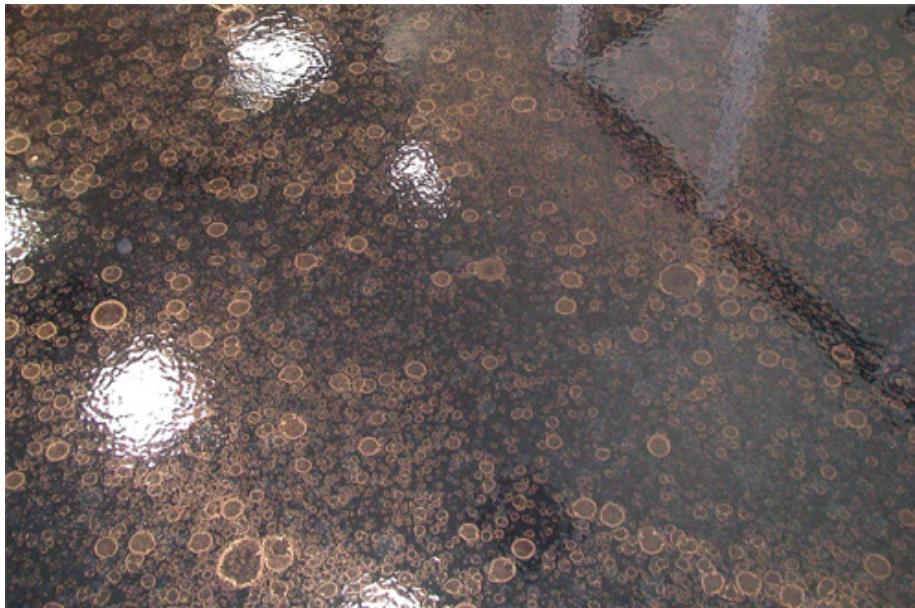
This gleaming showroom floor may be the most complimented element of the Jordan Ford dealership's new building.

Before Rick Vasquez of San Antonio based River City Coatings began work on the showroom floor and outdoor service area of the Jordan Ford auto dealership in San Antonio, most of his jobs had involved quick-turnaround resurfacing projects. A typical job was refinishing kitchen floors in fast-food restaurants, where speed and organized execution were paramount so as to not disturb workers and interrupt service.

The car dealership's large, freshly poured surfaces, with stained decorative accents outside and a metallic showroom-quality finish inside, would be a unique addition to the contractor's portfolio of work.

When Mike Trompeter, CFO of Jordan Ford, proposed these unique features to the contractor, Vasquez said, "I can do that."

In 2007 the Jordan Ford car dealership began building a new showroom and service area at the site of its existing dealership. Founded in 1919, the venerable company intended to remain open during construction, and the old structure was torn down once the new building was up and running. The dealership's new home includes a porch and service area that features a total of 12,000 square feet of traditional stained concrete outdoors and 6,000 square feet of metallic showroom floor indoors.



(/images/Feature_Photos/CD905/Decorative_Concrete-Project_Profile_2.jpg)

Technique, practice and timing ensured the client received the desired effect from the dispersion agent used on this floor. Recreating and maintaining the exact same effect throughout the floor can be a challenge, says Jim Rowe of Miracote. Taking notes so the "recipe" can be recreated is helpful.

Brick outside

Included in the 12,000 square feet outdoors is 5,000 square feet of stained concrete scored into a brick pattern leading up to the service area of the dealership. Strips of a contrasting color outlined by scoring separate the brick pattern into lanes, which direct customers in their vehicles to service stalls. Once the concrete for this area was laid, Vasquez used a Mongoose engraver from Engrave-A-Crete to score the area. The Mongoose is a crack-chaser saw on wheels with a guide that goes down in front of the tool to keep it going in a straight line. "It is an expensive but really neat tool," says Vasquez. After the scoring, he used Kemiko Cola acid stain to color and a urethane topcoat to seal.

Just outside the front entrance to the dealership is the "porch" where customers step into and drive away in new vehicles. In the concrete of this outdoor entry area is a 18-foot decorative detail that features a compass and a sun design. Vasquez drew up the design based on the client's request - the sun appears throughout the dealership's marketing, and the compass accurately indicates true north as a happy customer first pulls away. Vasquez scored and stained the design into the concrete, finishing it with an Arizona Polymers UV-resistant urethane topcoat. The detail is big enough that when customers park on it, the sun and compass direction can be seen beneath the vehicle.



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Metallics indoors

The interior showroom of the new dealership features 6,000 square feet of metallic-finished concrete with a unique mottled pattern. "This finish was completely new to us at the time," says Vasquez, "but the owner was looking for something really different to stand out." Vasquez stepped up to the challenge.

The bronze and black metallic colors were chosen because the color scheme appears in the dealership's marketing materials. At the time, Miracote was the only company manufacturing metallic finishes for decorative concrete purposes.

The metallic-looking surface has a speckled, "fish-eyed" appearance that was achieved in several steps. First, Vasquez scored a diamond grid pattern into the concrete. Then he applied a black primer (Miracote Chameleon Epoxy, in Midnight Black) to

the concrete as the background color and allowed this layer to dry overnight. The following day, another black layer was applied, and 10 to 15 minutes later, the bronze metallic pigment (Miracote Chameleon Symphony Pigments and Effects, in Metallic) was mixed with Miracote's Chameleon Dispersing Agent. This mixture was sprayed over the black base layers. When the mixture hit the black layer, the dispersion agent and the bronze and black interacted like oil and water, creating the fish-eyed effect. "It takes technique for sure," says Vasquez.

Only after the first couple hundred feet could they know if enough spray mixture was getting onto the floor, Vasquez says. Timing is one of the most important parts of this technique, he notes. There is a small window before the dispersion effects "heal" where the mixture is still malleable, marks from spike shoes will dissipate, and adjustments to the effects can still be made. If you wait too long, spike marks will remain in the floor.

Jim Rowe, western regional sales manager for Miracote, compares seeing the dispersion work to watching an amoeba swimming around a petri dish. He agrees that timing is everything. Letting the black epoxy layer do just the right amount of "setting up" first is the key to making the effect work, he says. If you wait too long, you won't get the effect, because the epoxy is too set up - but applying the dispersion layer too soon allows less control over the effects. "Unless you keep a lot of control on that, it's hard to keep track. It's something you really have to keep a handle on to keep it uniform. And if your sprayer starts acting up and you're on spike shoes, you're in trouble. So you have to have a backup sprayer ready."

A urethane topcoat is applied within a 24-hour window after epoxy application.



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The popularity of metallic finishes like this has grown since Miracote released the product three years ago, says Rowe, and it is the dispersion that provides the unique effects. "It's kind of a niche thing," says Rowe, "but we call it the wow factor because people see it and their mouth goes wide open, either during the installation or when seeing the effect." Rowe also says that because there are so many unique effects possible with this technique and because it can be so hard to control, notes should be taken on exactly how the process was done so that it can be replicated if necessary. There are practically infinite possibilities, depending on the formula and timing, he says. The difficulty in repeating an effect is what made this project a particular challenge for the contractor.

"This choice of surface was actually kind of a mistake," says Trompeter of Jordan Ford. "We were going to tile the place, and the tile we chose ended up being four times more than our budget because of a miscommunication with the tile company. So at the last minute we decided we couldn't go with tile and so were looking for alternatives." Their search brought them to a flooring company with a 10-by-10 foot area of its showroom that featured the metallic concrete finish. Vasquez spoke with the owner of the company, found out who prepared the floor and obtained information from Miracote on how to create the effect.

After a test section on an upstairs hallway of the car dealership, Trompeter told Vasquez which effects he liked best, and Vasquez tried to replicate those as closely as possible on the showroom floor. "Of course it's impossible to completely duplicate," concedes Trompeter, "but it's because it's like art. It makes (random) designs just however, but that's what is so cool about it."

According to a report from the client, the showroom floor is possibly the most complimented element of the new dealership.

River City Coatings has worked on more dealership jobs since this project, including doing coatings and decorative work. "We are qualified for this work now mostly because of our experience with sealers - knowing what works and what doesn't for decorative concrete," says Vasquez.

As River City Coatings continues to tackle projects with new surfaces and effects, it has begun to create its own innovative combinations of dispersion agents and epoxies. "There are an infinite amount of possibilities, and so many different looks that can be done," Rowe says. "So it's only limited by your mad scientist mentality. How many different concoctions you want to brew up is completely up to you."

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