



THE RIGHT MIX

Flooring craftsman blends passion and process

Artistic Surfaces' Harvey Namm

by Steve Freeman

Floors are often overlooked when describing aspects of great buildings, but there's no ignoring the work of Harvey Namm, owner of *Artistic Surfaces*.

Once an installer of everyday carpet, tile and linoleum, Namm transitioned to become one of the best terrazzo floor subcontractors in the southeast. Today, his craftsmanship can be seen at airports, upscale department stores, posh hotels, museums, theaters and sports arenas. Even when obscured by foot traffic, his terrazzo flooring glistens like brightly

colored confetti set in a high-gloss, smooth-surfaced walkway.

"It's very durable, it brightens any space and it brings interest to an area," says Namm, President of the company based in Pompano Beach, Fla., north of Fort Lauderdale.

Terrazzo is an old-world craft, originating in Italy during Roman rule. Today, workers apply a wet mixture of cement or epoxy plus chips of granite, mother-of-pearl, shell, marble or other aggregates onto a concrete surface. Once the floor is cured, they use a machine much like a floor polisher to

skim off the very top layer to reveal the variety of aggregate pieces. After it's cleaned, polished and sealed, the floor achieves a grandeur that impresses all who step onto it.

The technique also allows for the addition of sections. Thin metal strips can be glued to the base floor to create a pattern of sections that can hold different colors of wet mixture. Acclaimed artwork can also be computerized to create a template for a terrazzo floor. Plus, the floor can be adorned with flat metal ornamentation shaped like palm leaves, stars, flourishes and geometric images.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF ARTISTIC SURFACES (LEFT); DIGIVISION PRODUCTIONS (RIGHT)



The Flagler Museum, Palm Beach, Fla., trusted Artistic Surfaces to lay down 8,100 square feet of epoxy terrazzo surface in its Kenan Pavilion, a new structure for the museum to match the main building's rare Beaux Arts design.

Namm's most recent homage to an artist is the 10,622-square-foot lobby of the Carnival Studio Theater housed at the Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts of Miami-Dade County. It features artwork from Cuban artist José Bedia.

"Because the installation was to incorporate the work of one of the most exciting young artists in the world, it was important that the execution be of the highest level of quality, artistic expression and precision. Not a simple task," says Roberto Espejo, who was then the Senior Associate for Pelli Clarke Pelli Architects and currently is with Behar Font & Partners, P.A. "... Harvey and his crew not only brought an enormous amount of collective experience with expert metal workers and seasoned epoxy and rustic terrazzo installers/finishers, some with almost 50 years of experience, but they were open to share their wisdom and practical knowledge to what was a fairly dynamic process."



Daniel Beaucage (left), Chief Operation Consultant of Artistic Surfaces, discusses blueprints for the next big project with President Harvey Namm.

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Harvey Namm, Founder and President,
Artistic Surfaces

FROM THE GROUND UP

Namm was raised in a home behind his father's linoleum store in Brooklyn, N.Y., but he and his creative spirit were destined to venture far from there. He started working for him when he was old enough by helping to clean up scraps of material

left by the workers. In time, he found work installing flooring applications—carpet, tile, granite and marble.

By the time he was considering careers in college, he knew deep down that his proven skills in flooring would be his life's work. The transition



The UF Health Shands Cancer Hospital, Gainesville, Fla., features a 7,396-square-foot epoxy terrazzo floor by Artistic Surfaces that is beautiful, easy to maintain and durable.

to high-quality flooring happened as a matter of pursuing new opportunities. After joining with a partner and working in Brooklyn, they expanded to pursue projects nationwide. New customers included Macy's and Bloomingdale's stores.

Back then, he was skilled at installing pre-made terrazzo tiles—a quick and less-expensive alternative to customized projects. Once the partnership dissolved, he took the Florida region and made another decision. He wanted to move beyond installing

terrazzo tiles and learn the real art of terrazzo floor surfacing and its potential for displaying one-of-a-kind artistic beauty.

Namm hired an expert terrazzo subcontractor in Florida and set about learning from him. Eventually, Namm bought him out, including his equipment, tools and workers.

STEP BY STEP

Desired images that will ultimately grace the floor's surface are initially computerized and turned into complex

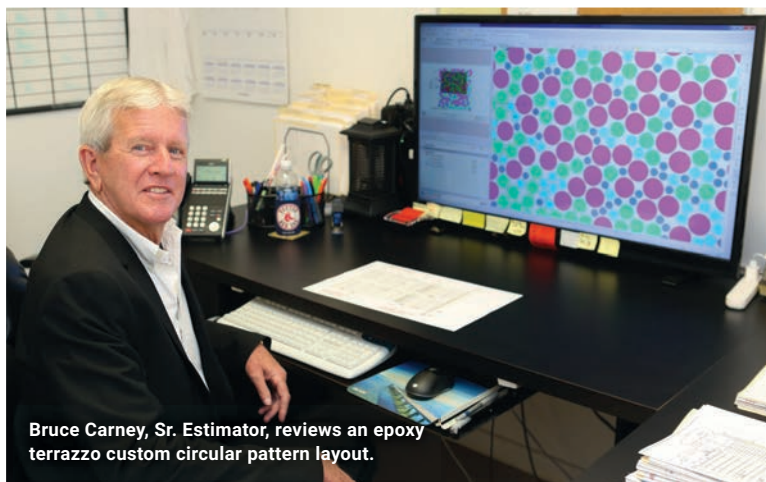
design plans, complete with exact measurements and color mixture specifics.

On day one, the workers prep the surface by removing any covering down to the concrete base and repairing any imperfections. They also test the slab for moisture tolerance and other potential threats to the final terrazzo floor, ensuring its longevity. A large grinder is used to make the base surface porous so the epoxy mixture will bond well.

Crew members then take to their knees to precisely mark off the sections from the computerized plan. Thin strips of metal go between colored sections.

Once the template is represented on the surface, the crew begins making mixtures of mortar that are poured into the designated sections marked by color. Hand troweling helps ensure an even and consistent coating.

Hours later, after the covered surface cures, the crew grinds a thin layer off the top, revealing the various colors of the added materials. After further



Bruce Carney, Sr. Estimator, reviews an epoxy terrazzo custom circular pattern layout.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF ARTISTIC SURFACES (TOP); DIGIVISION PRODUCTIONS (BOTTOM)

precision grouting between sections, the floor is polished.

A small space can take several days to complete. Large terminals and lobbies can take several months. The new South Terminal of Miami International Airport was a half-million square-foot space that took Namm's crew seven months.

At Fontainebleau Miami Beach, the crews laid a terrazzo floor with 250,000 pieces of medium-sized white glass for a trendy, monolithic look. "Every piece was placed by hand, with a quality control supervisor on site to check the spacing of each hand-set piece," Namm says.

A WALK TO REMEMBER

Namm stepped into terrazzo specialization 35 years ago. It was a step into the backbreaking work and yet people-pleasing profession of customized terrazzo installation. Today, Artistic Surfaces employs 60 people, 45 being installers.

Over the past 25 years, Artistic Surfaces has won 20 awards, 10 of those from the National Terrazzo & Mosaic Association and most of the others from the Construction Association of South Florida.

Namm also saw a way to be an innovator. He recognized early on that the equipment used to level and grind a floor surface and the hardened mixture of aggregate did not account for warps or unevenness in the floor. This caused uneven treatment in the finished look of the floor.

"The industry standard permitted a tolerance of up to one-fourth of an

inch in a 10-foot area. That was more than I liked. My background in stone and tile told me it was too wavy to be acceptable," he says. He found a manufacturer that made machines that did a much better job of flattening the floor. The new equipment provided fewer variances.

The company also expanded to provide customized concrete surfacing, which is ideal for places like Florida with consistent weather patterns and transitional indoor-outdoor gathering spaces.

"Decorative concrete processes are extremely popular in California ... and relatively unknown in Florida and the eastern portion of the United States," Namm says. "Our company has ambitious plans to bring its eco-conscious technique to the forefront of our exceptional flooring repertoire."

Whatever the floor's location or uses, Namm and his crews know how to make people take notice of the attractive floor begging for attention beneath their feet.

So it was at the Beaux Arts-styled Flagler Museum in Palm Beach, Fla., where the quality of a new 8,100-square-foot building had to match the grandeur of days gone by, even while incorporating contemporary structural soundness to accommodate its tens of thousands of visitors each year.

"Artistic Surfaces helped us provide the owner with a 'trophy' facility," says Dale Hedrick of Hedrick Brothers Construction. "The Kenan Pavilion addition to the Flagler is a spectacular replica of a 1920s train station. ... The terrazzo work that the company provided is the perfect finishing touch." 🐾



Kevin Seibel, Estimating Director-Terrazzo/Sr. Project Manager, holding floor samples.



Andrea Smith, Office Manager, matches paint colors to custom epoxy terrazzo sample.

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