

# A Tale of Two Floors



Bill Harris sprays the final coat on one of the new floors in Modello Designs/Royal Design Studio's new location.

The new building that houses Modello Designs and Royal Design Studio came complete with thousands of square feet of fresh concrete slab. Carpeting or laying sheet vinyl on these surfaces was simply out of the question for companies that specialize in custom surface decoration! Instead, I saw this as an ideal opportunity to showcase a variety of decorative options and different concrete surfacing systems. In this article, I'd like to share just two of them with you.

## Art Deco Office Floor

For this project, we chose to use Spray-Top, a unique and easy-to use

surfacing product from Concrete Solutions. Spray Top is a polymer cement product that can be sprayed on, similar to paint. The polymer/powder is mixed with water just before use, strained and placed in a pressure pot. It is then simply sprayed through a specially designed nozzle in an ultra-thin layer on the floor, resulting in a very smooth finish.

Concrete Solutions has done extensive research and development to create a fail-proof system for their contractor customers to incorporate our Modello patterns into their projects and they teach this in their training classes.

The hard concrete slab was pre-

pared by grinding and cleaning and then received two layers of the Resurfacer product, an underlayment that is poured on and troweled using a unique tool that allows you to trowel the product smooth while standing up. After that, an initial layer of Spray-Top that was tinted to a soft ochre color was sprayed on.

The Modello design that was chosen for this office floor features a very unusual, interesting and complex tile pattern that is interspersed with overlapping circles that are rendered in stripes and dots. I discovered it in a book of all-over Art Deco patterns and thought it would be ideal for an of-

fice that was being designed with an Art Deco theme.

### Toning for Subtle Texture & Depth

In order to give the surface some nice mottling and an organic look, I



**Art Deco Office Floor—toning.**

used a custom mix of colors (Fawn and Yellow Ochre) from our Modello Dye Stain line. These are acrylic-based stain concentrates that are mixed with distilled water and then sprayed or applied with the tool of your choice. To the first layer, I poured the stain into a pump-up yard sprayer and misted it over the entire surface. This could have been done as well for the second layer, but instead I used nylon brushes to apply the stain in a soft toning layer, much as you would use a wall glaze. I took special care to soften out the brush strokes as I worked so that they would not be visible in the stain color when dry.

### Pattern Application

For this design, the pattern repeat is realized in a series of four different “tiles,” and each was cut into a 24-inch by 24-inch piece. We snapped intersecting chalk lines and began laying out the pattern from the middle, lining each one carefully up against the last in rows across the floor.



**Art Deco Office Floor—laying out the pattern.**



**Art Deco Office Floor—pattern ready.**

### Pattern Ready

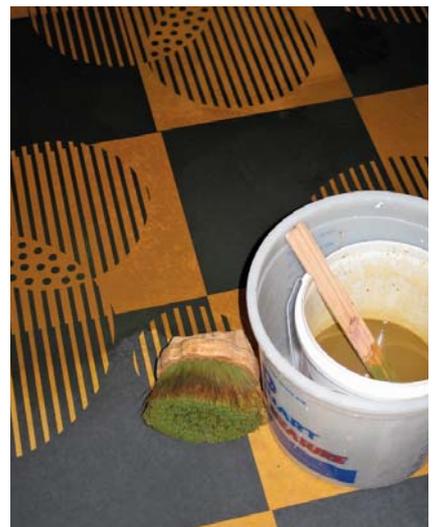
Here is the pattern laid out and ready for the next layer of Spray-Top. Concrete Solutions’ “system” for using Modellos calls for using our low-tack 4mil Blue Mask material. Because the Spray-Top surface underneath is so smooth, the Blue Mask adheres easily and also removes easily. Its color also allows it to remain more visible beneath the thinly applied Spray-Top product.



**Art Deco Office Floor—another layer of Spray Top.**

### Simple Spray Solution

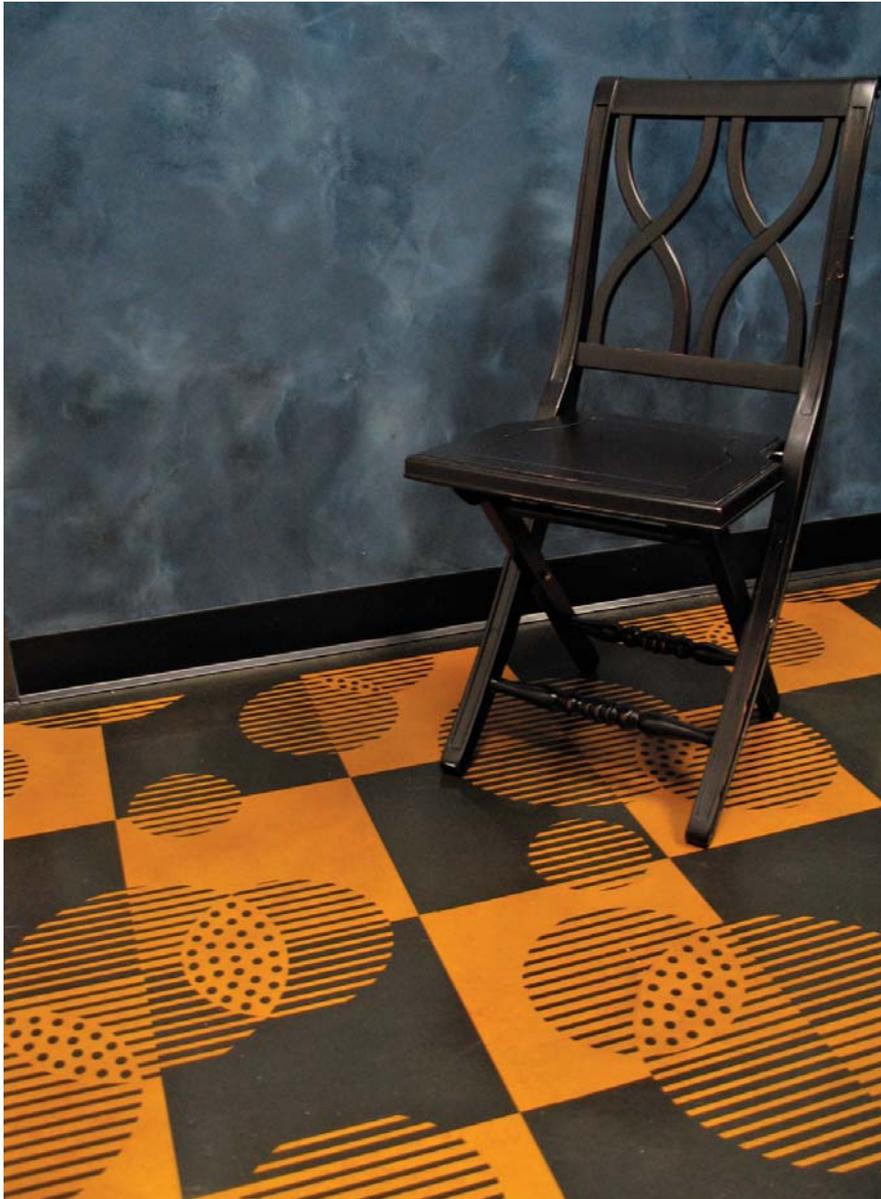
The next layer of Spray-Top applied over the pattern was tinted black. While the careful laying down of complex pattern took hours, the sprayed application of concrete took minutes! It dries in about an hour, making this an ideal production finish for decorative concrete contractors.



**Art Deco Office Floor—unifying the finish.**

### Unifying the Finish

Another layer of the Modello Dye Stain mix was applied again on top to unify the colors and to create a more organic, mottled look. After ample drying time the floor was top-coated with their HP Clear Urethane



**Art Deco Office Floor—the dramatic final result.**

Sealer and then waxed for additional protection.

The end result is a completely custom floor with a dramatic Art Deco design.

### **Italian Tile Interpretation**

The main lobby entrance for Modello Designs provided the opportunity to incorporate a new series of classic Italian tile patterns in a more contemporary and custom application. My concept was to create a look of randomly scattered and layered tiles. These would be differentiated by incorporating three different decorative concrete tech-

niques to show off not just the patterns but also the decorative possibilities for using them!

My good friend, Bob Harris from the Decorative Concrete Institute, was happy to incorporate this project as part of a training class we held there using the overlays, stains and colorants from the Colormaker system for concrete resurfacing.

After properly preparing the concrete slab surface with grinding, crack filling and careful cleaning, a layer of Colormaker's Pentimento was troweled on and acid-stained by Bob and his students.



**Italian Tile Floor—Modello installation.**

### **Larger-Than-Life Design**

We began by laying out the tile patterns that were to receive the first decorative treatment. The tile patterns are quite large, ranging in size from 1-foot to 6-foot diameter. We used the outer perimeter edges of the vinyl to define the tile area.



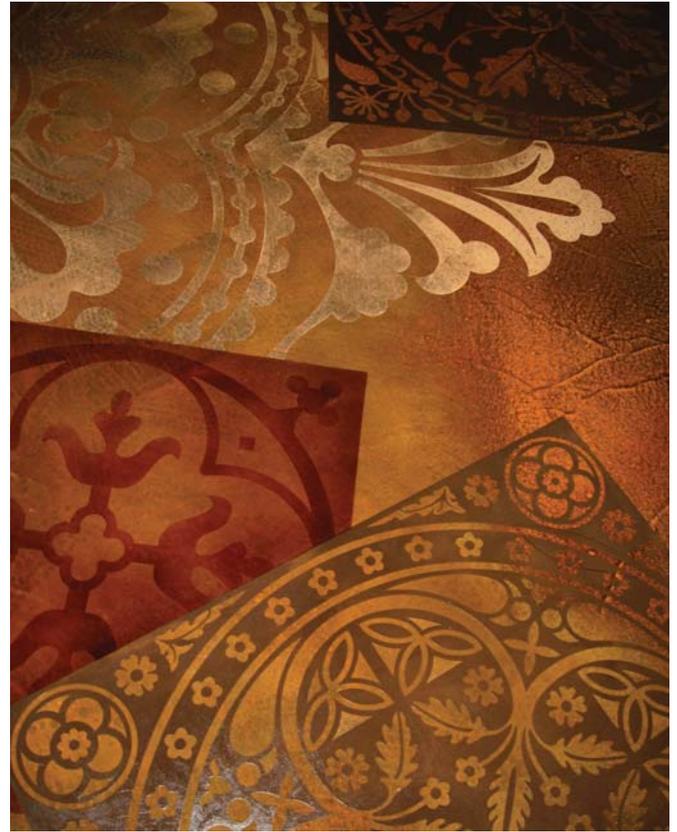
**Italian Tile Floor—Sgraffino Overlay.**

### **Sgraffino Overlay**

The first tiles were embossed by troweling over them with a layer of tinted Sgraffino. Sgraffino is a micro-topping that can be troweled on and comes in Regular, Fine and Super Fine, which refers to the size of the aggregate in the product. We



**Italian Tile Floor—Acid Etched Pattern.**



**Italian Tile Floor—the final result.**

used Super Fine for the smoothest look and easiest workability for this technique. It is important to apply this troweled layer thinly enough that you can still see the Modello pattern below. Otherwise, it will be very hard to remove.



**Italian Tile Floor—airbrushing.**

### **Airbrushed Pattern**

When the Sgraffino tiles were dry enough, we taped around their edges and covered them to protect them while we added the next layer of tile patterns. These tiles were “airbrushed” using a cup gun and compressor using Decographic Dyes. These dyes are solvent-based, and are ideal for this technique because they dry almost on contact, which prevents any wicking under the Modello vinyl pattern. They are also translucent, so we were able to spray in the tile detail first. After removing the Modello, tape was used to define the outer edges of the tiles and the same color was lightly applied all over in the background, producing a tone-on-tone pattern.

### **Acid Etched Pattern**

The last layer of tiles, which actually appear to be on the bottom, were done last by taping off and protecting the first two tile layers and using gelled Muriatic acid to “etch out” or remove the acid stain color in the areas of the

pattern, producing a dramatic lighter design on the darker background.

### **Italian Tile Final**

The above photo clearly shows the three techniques where the tiles appear to be layers, one on top of the other. It looks complex, but you now know how simply this can be achieved! **TFF**

### **Resources**

- [www.modello designs.com](http://www.modello designs.com)
- [www.modelloconcrete.com](http://www.modelloconcrete.com)
- [www.decorativeconcreteinstitute.com](http://www.decorativeconcreteinstitute.com)
- [www.concretesolutions.com](http://www.concretesolutions.com)
- [www.colormakerfloors.com](http://www.colormakerfloors.com)



*Melanie Royals is the President/Creative Director of Royal Design Studio and Modello Designs. A renowned artist and educator, Melanie helps to lead and expand the industry with the constant creation of new designs, products, techniques and applications for decorative finishers. [www.royal designstudio.com](http://www.royal designstudio.com), [www.modello designs.com](http://www.modello designs.com), [www.designamour.com](http://www.designamour.com).*