Techniques for Concrete Surfaces: Doing Wonders with Concrete Brushes by Ashlee Seay

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Tiles can be a great but expensive addition to a home. Homeowners who can't afford tile surfaces often use another alternative - concrete. Compared to tiles, concrete surfaces are cheaper and more durable. What's even better is that concrete flooring can be decorated with different patterns and colors.

Several concrete finishing techniques can be done to achieve the proper look for a concrete surface. The most common techniques are the following: hard trowel finishing, porous trowel finishing, brushed finishing, stenciling, stamping and staining. Each of these is carefully done to make a dramatic effect on the texture of the surface.

Hard trowel finishing is mostly used for indoor surfaces made of non-porous materials. This is not advisable for outdoor finishes since the concrete can get slippery when it becomes wet. An electric or gasoline powered trowel is commonly used for the hard trowel technique. Though the process can be easily done, timing should be considered since the concrete must be hard enough to support the weight of the trowel.

Unlike hard trowel finishing, the porous trowel technique can be used on exterior surfaces such as patios, porches, and pool sides. The technique makes the concrete surface look better and smoother than the hard trowel finishing. Though the results are different, porous trowel finishing is done almost in the same manner as hard trowel finishing.

Brushed finishing is simpler compared to both hard trowel and porous trowel finishing. It is often used for driveways, patios, sidewalks, pool sides, or other areas of the home with heavy traffic. This technique uses concrete brushes like brooms to make patterns and create friction on the smooth concrete. What's even better is that the concrete can be dyed or stained to match the home's color and style.

Another technique for concrete surfaces is stenciling. The process is quite simple: stencils with different patterns are placed on the surface while chemical stains are added using a concrete brushes to help make the process easier and faster. The good thing about this technique is that it allows homeowners to apply attractive and durable designs for their flooring and counter-tops.

Stamping and staining are two widely used techniques for concrete surfaces. Staining changes the composition of the surface to alter the color of the concrete. This is done by using a concrete brushes to apply chemical stains that will penetrate the concrete's pores. Stamping can be used to make the concrete look like natural wood or stone. This finishing process, along with the staining technique, can be used for outside surfaces such as patios and driveways to create stone designs.

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