



Project Profile



Justice Blue is one of two custom colors created by PPG Industries for the concrete floors at Justice, Just For Girls stores nationwide.

Justice, Just For Girls Retail Floor Charlotte, N.C.

by David Searls

At a Justice, Just for Girls retail store under construction in Charlotte, N.C., Jason Burke and his small crew toss colored confetti as high in the air as the store's high ceiling will allow. The confetti — 1/4-inch acrylic latex chips — lands in random patterns on the still-wet coated concrete floor.

"The higher the ceiling the better," says Jeff Sledge, project manager at Management Resource Systems, the High Point, N.C., general contractor that is building the Charlotte store. "They'll throw it as high as they can to increase the randomness of the way it falls."

By the time Burke and his crew from Columbus, Ohio-based CPI Industrial Co. check out of their motel

at the end of the week, the hard, glossy finish looks festive and welcoming — but it will also be easy to maintain. Store managers will love that.

The concept of fun, as it relates to preteen girls, is critical to the development of the growing Justice chain. According to the corporate profile of Tween Brands Inc., parent company of Justice, the stores sell moderately priced sportswear for "tween" girls aged 7 to 14, plus accessories, intimate apparel, jewelry and lifestyle items. "Justice celebrates tween girls through an extraordinary experience of fashion and fun in an 'everything for her' destination," states the profile.

As Debbie Rowe, design manager



Photos courtesy of Christopher Kimball Photography



The Justice floor's color scheme is cream-based with color chips of orange, green, white and two different blues. Iridescent glitter and star-shaped sequins are added to the sealer for extra glamour. PPG Industries and Tween Brands spent three months developing this concept.





in store planning for Justice at Tween Brands, describes the floor's color scheme, a cream base with color chips of orange, green, white and two different blues, "fun" seems to be the operative word.

And that's before she mentions the iridescent glitter and star-shaped sequins in the PPG MegaSeal SL (Self-Leveling) Crystal Clear, one of four types of PPG MegaSeal epoxy used in the Charlotte store and new Justice stores across the country.

It took three months of trial and error and many flooring samples before PPG Industries and Tween Brands came up with a concept for a unique and attention-grabbing floor prototype. It had to be as cost-efficient as it was striking.

"When we were developing the concept, we knew that carpet wouldn't hold up too well in strip centers," Rowe explains. "And tile didn't look fun and different."

The visual hook is the eight-foot wide, bright blue drive aisle that delivers foot traffic from the front entrance to the customer service counter.

Five pieces of advice on working with retailers

The perspective of a marketing specialist for a decorative concrete product manufacturer

by Brandon Carpenter

In recent years the decorative concrete and coatings market has made its way over to the retail market. Retailers have unique needs that they have to address, and decorative concrete and coatings are becoming a more and more popular method for filling those needs.

Five of the biggest issues facing retailers are: **installation time, consistency, maintenance, odor and cost.**

Every week, day and hour that a retail store is open, it is making money. Therefore, it is no wonder that there is no bigger factor to a retailer than **installation time.** Time is money. All retail stores being built are fast-track. Store openings are always set to coordinate with another event, such as holidays, mall openings, or the old-fashioned grand opening. Store openings simply cannot be delayed, and there are often liquidated damages when they are.

Retailers are very aware of their tight time needs, and the time that it takes to install a particular floor will often make the difference when creating the specifications. Fast-track construction can be an issue for decorative concrete coating applications, which usually require that no other trades be working during the installation. For this reason, it has become commonplace in the retail environment to have decorative concrete coating applications completed over nights and weekends. Because of this concession, retail projects often go to smaller, more flexible installers rather than larger, less responsive companies.

Another hurdle concrete coating contractors have had to overcome regarding retail work is **consistency.** The aesthetic beauty of concrete coating work is crafted diligently by hand. It is not the repetitive placing of pieces or gluing covers to the ground. Concrete-coating work moves, flows, lives and breathes. That is perfect for residences and even wonderful for the mom-and-pop single outlet retailers, but it does not work at all for chain stores. Most chain stores strive to have consistency in their stores.

There are a couple of things that can be done to help a coating customer achieve that cookie-cutter repetitiveness throughout a chain. The simplest is to have all of a retail chain's store floors installed by one contractor. It is far easier for one contractor to repeat the same decorative concrete coating job over and over. The floors may not be identical to each other,

but as they are not right next to each other, they can get close enough. At some point it is not practical to have one installer complete all of the applications for a chain of retail stores — at that point, consistency or something with a reasonable resemblance to it can be achieved by using a small network of contractors who are all familiar with the application and are using the same products and finishing techniques.

Having a maintainable floor is also important to retailers. This can be a strength for decorative systems, as there are a wide variety of high-performance sealer options that allow for limited maintenance on a floor. However, if a retailer wants a high-gloss, shiny floor, they have to do something to maintain it. To minimize maintenance, most retailers prefer a low-gloss or matte finish. This is recommended, because it not only reduces maintenance, it also avoids the inevitable wear patterns that show up when retailers rearrange racks. Even if not requested, providing a simple plan for recommended maintenance will be appreciated and save you time answering the unavoidable maintenance questions.

As with any business or residence these days, **odor** can be a serious issue for retailers. Many of the best sealers, stains and products for the decorative concrete and coatings industry have odors. Even if they are not harmful, they can be a problem if they are offensive.

If the retail store is unattached to other structures and is empty during new construction, this may not matter. But if the retail store is in an indoor mall and the mall is open for business, there will likely be an issue with any products that produce an offensive or harmful odor, even if the store is empty. Plan for this ahead of time, and don't gamble on the mall not noticing.

What is the **cost** of time, consistency, maintainability and green products? It's not cheap. Often, the quality of the products and applicator end up being a casualty of cost. Gorgeous decorative concrete or coatings work far too often gets topped with inadequate sealers or coatings, and inferior installers are brought in to give their bungled renditions of beautifully crafted samples or mock-ups.

In any case, the cost of a quality sealer should always be accounted for. There are few things as senseless as a decorative floor finish that is "walking off" due to an inadequate sealer, something far more likely to occur in the high-traffic environments found in retail stores.

Even with quality sealing products, decorative concrete coatings are affordable, and that is why they are showing up now more than ever in retail stores.

Brandon Carpenter works in brand development for Urethane Polymers International. He was previously employed by Floric Polytech Inc.

PPG worked with Tween Brands and CPI president Charlie Flanagan to formulate a coating system that would meet the retailer's design needs.

The system they created is installed by CPI workers on a new concrete floor in a sprawling mixed-use Charlotte development called Blakeney Town Center. Monday is a relatively easy first day. Foreman Jason Burke and his crew of two shotblast and thoroughly grind the floor before applying a coat of moisture remediation sealer. Justice shares a stand-alone building with two other retail spaces, but at the time the work is being completed, only one is occupied. With no immediate neighbors, noise or dust isn't a concern.

Later in the week, they spread PPG's MegaSeal 100-percent solids epoxy floor primer. That's followed by either a cream-colored 16-mil coat of MegaSeal SL Epoxy for the bulk of the floor or a bright blue coat of the same product for the drive aisle. These colors — dubbed Delicate White and

