

ARTISAN IN CONCRETE



Jon Kopp Quality Epoxy, Gilbert, Arizona

by Vanessa Salvia

JON Kopp of Quality Epoxy LLC in Gilbert, Arizona, got into metallic systems strictly by accident. And now, after 20 years in business, he wouldn't change anything. He has a huge social media following and satisfied clients who hire him based on what only he can deliver.

Thirty years ago, Kopp transferred to Arizona from Los Angeles as a ramp agent/supervisor for America West Airlines. Later, a friend of his had purchased a home and called to ask if he would help him paint the garage floor — literally using house paint.

"I did that and when I was done I told him it looked nice but I guarantee we did it wrong," recalls Kopp. "I said we should research how to really do this and start doing it right."

The friend seemed interested, so that evening Kopp made fliers advertising garage coating services. His friend, however, backed out. "He didn't want the risk of starting a business. That was the best answer he could have given me because I moved forward on my own —

and in my own way — and now here I am many years later," says Kopp, who has always had an entrepreneurial streak.

Kopp and that buddy are now casual acquaintances, and Kopp is grateful he let him move forward alone. "I don't know if I would have been able to stay in business if I had a partner who wasn't interested in running a business the same way I was," Kopp says. "The only way forward is to take risks."

Let the chips fall

Two decades ago, the coatings business was much less sophisticated than it is now. Kopp taught himself using the products available at the time. He's never had any training and never worked with anyone else doing what he does.

His first job involved an extremely basic solid-colored two-part epoxy from the hardware store. Kopp quickly realized he needed to start using higher-quality materials if he wanted to stay in the game. So he switched over to Arizona Polymer Flooring products, a brand he still uses today. (APF is now a



brand of ICP Construction, a division of Innovative Chemical Products.) Kopp buys his metallic powders from Cohills.

Early on, Kopp offered only solid-color flooring, but then began offering a five-layer system with 5/8-inch chips. He wanted to make himself stand out in an area where others offered three-layer systems with 1/4- or 1/8-inch chips. "Technology was changing and I not only wanted to keep up but I wanted to best the competition," he says.

But then, in 2010, Kopp got "burned out" on doing so many chip floors. "I felt done, just over it, ready to sell my business and quit," he says. "I was bored."

That's when he stumbled upon metallic coatings on the internet and got a new lease on life. "Nobody in my area was doing them," he says. "I knew then that metallics were what I wanted to do."

He went back to APF with his new plan. The company was on board, and Kopp was able to create metallic floors with APF products that weren't on the market yet. Within the first six



months, he started mixing colors and using different disbursement methods with solvents. “And I figured out which solvents would give me what effect,” he says.

He truly appreciated the unique look of a metallic system, as it was similar to what he already did but different enough to keep him interested. “The more I worked with it, the better I understood the medium and how to manipulate it to my advantage,” Kopp says.

“I knew it wasn’t a cut-and-dried, uniform system like the chips. This was something I could be creative with.

Every floor is unique and moves on its own will.” He’d found his niche, he says, and was sticking with it.

Now, Kopp continues to offer chip flooring but he charges a minimum of \$1 more per square foot because he dislikes doing it. He also wants to encourage his customers to choose the more unique look of the metallic system.

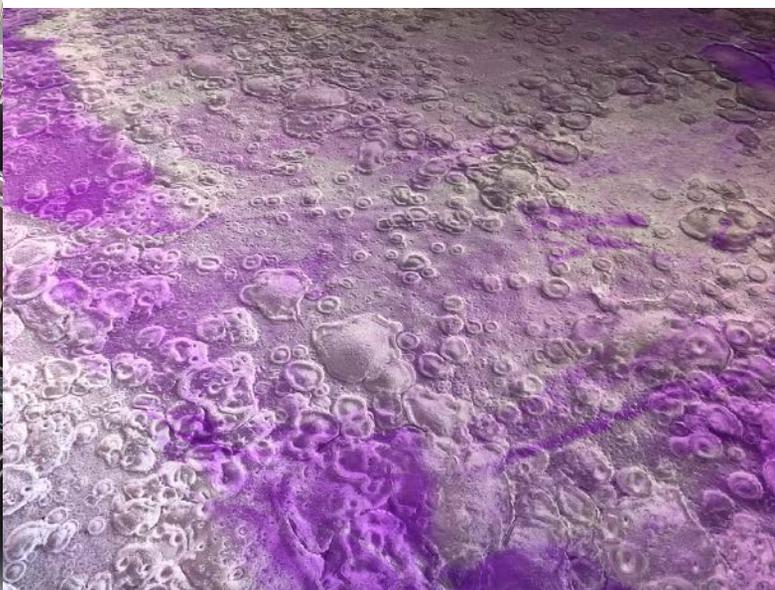
“People call me up wanting the chip floors because they want a multicolored floor and don’t know what a metallic system can offer,” he says. “When I explain to them that for much less they’re going to get a durable, high-

quality, beautiful floor with color disbursement throughout and a 3D appearance with a 100 percent urethane that is UV protected, most don’t want the chips anymore. But if they do, that’s what they’ll get.”

No two are alike

With his metallic flooring, color disbursement and its 3D appearance are what’s most appealing to his customers. Kopp has done water-colored floors that look like oceans, as well as earth tones in browns or contemporary grays.

Metallic systems are so eye-



catching and captivating that most of his customers quickly change their minds when they see examples of his metallic work. Kopp has developed his own technique, so other metallic flooring installers can't exactly achieve Kopp's look.

Living in Phoenix, every job is challenging because of the extreme changes in temperature year-round which range from 20 degrees to 120 degrees Fahrenheit. "In the extreme heat, you have to get your product out of the bucket as soon as you can because when it's confined it's going to

flash a lot faster than when it's on an open floor," he says.

Kopp most appreciates when his customers trust him enough to let go of their expectations. "I'm confident in what I'm doing and I don't want to let them down," he says. "I'm constantly preaching that a metallic system doesn't have a uniform look. Even if you pick the same colors as another job, they'll never look exactly alike."

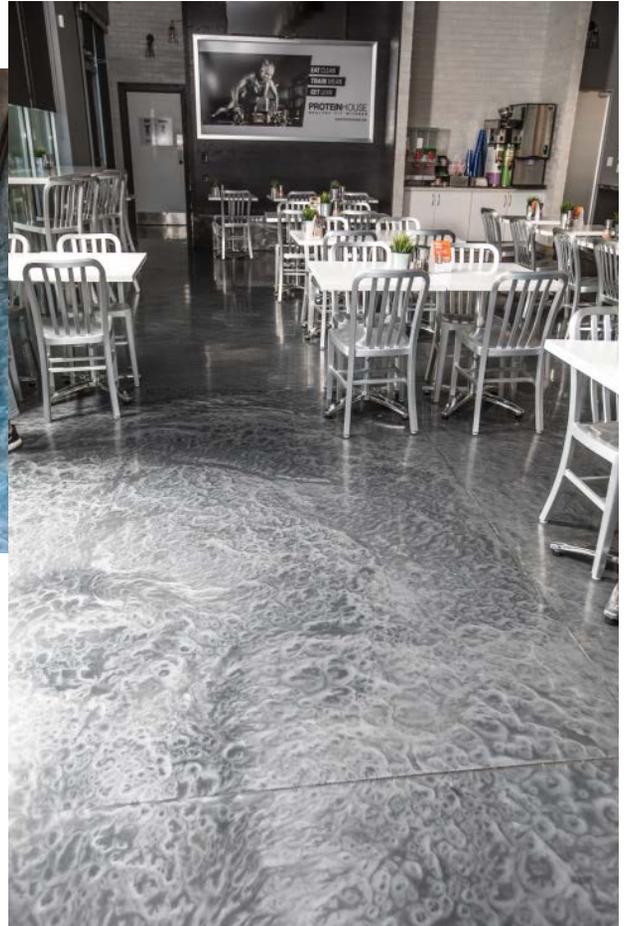
Family and friends

In the residential arena, Kopp installs metallic systems in garages and

on patios, walkways and driveways. On the commercial side, he does a significant amount of work for restaurants and hair salons.

His wife, Monica, a former dental assistant, has now become his right-hand woman, something he says should have happened years ago. Hindsight is always 20-20, he says, as it turned out they share the same unending work ethic and having her work alongside him is a dream.

"She's the best employee I've ever had," he says. "Her love and passion for what we do is almost equal to mine. We don't



even have to talk about who does what. We just know what needs to be done.”

The world has noticed, because Kopp has more than 70,000 likes on his Quality Epoxy Facebook page, and photos and videos of his work have been shared thousands of times. He has more than a quarter of a million people visiting his Facebook page each week.

“People share my posts like crazy because they’re visually appealing,” he says. “My metallic floors don’t look like other metallic floors. And, I’ve always stuck to my No. 1 rule from the very first day — I am an owner-operator

not a babysitter. People appreciate and respect the fact that my wife and I do the work ourselves.”

Some people steal Kopp’s photos and post them as their own. This really irks him “because a metallic floor is a representation of the artist who does the floor,” he says.

“Whenever you see a metallic floor you like, don’t call someone else to install the floor because it’s disrespectful and they wouldn’t know how I do what I do because I haven’t trained them. Whoever’s work you like, that’s the person you should call.”

Kopp gets calls from contractors and homeowners worldwide who want to talk to him about his work. Someday, he says, he’ll develop a training program and share his secrets. But in the meantime, he and his wife are busy and fulfilled. He enjoys knowing his work is inspiring a new generation of metallic artists.

“If my work can inspire new people in this industry that’s great,” he says. “That makes my day.”

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