

INTERIORS IN EXPOSED CONCRETE:

raw sensual TIMELESS

Popularly chronicled in the 20th century for its brutal honesty and expression, exposed concrete has always been championed by yesteryear designers. With advancement in technology, revolutionary surface treatments, expansive scale and the ability to merge with a diverse material pallet, concrete is now being used in unexpected and versatile ways.

Our distinguished designers bear witness to the recurring theme of exposed concrete in contemporary interior spaces, with a host of looks inspiring modern, urbane and textured 21st-century concrete styling coupled with its timeless dignified ruggedness, which is both hard wearing and aesthetically striking.



“Respect the material and it will bestow you with shear excellence”

– Dipen Gada

Every material in the field of construction has its own unique characteristics and manifestations. Concrete is one amongst them. Concrete in its most basic form is made up of pebbles, cement, water and sand. It is renowned for its strength and texture. Its adaptation as a construction material took its baby steps after industrialisation. Slowly and gradually as the expenses increased, in using stone as the whole and sole material, alternative materials were under search.

The word ‘concrete’ was used for the first time in 1750, by Bernard Forest de Belidor as a description for mortar in his book ‘Architecture Hydraulique’. Concrete emerged as an alternative material, but now has taken up the construction industry as a revolution. Over the course of decades, the volume of concrete and the amount of the material used has been continually reduced, thanks to the better calculation methods and formwork techniques. Almost no other material manages to carry out such contradictory associations. Stigmatised, on the one hand, celebrated on the other, it evokes highly diverse reactions. Its potential seems almost inexhaustible and continual innovations in how its applications make it a valuable material.

We as a firm adapted concrete as a structural material, but as time turned, our vision and scope widened. We started accepting concrete not only as a static sub-structural material, but also as an aesthetic feature material. After trying our hands on the usage of concrete as an architectural skin, we experimented with colour pigments, additives, floor surfaces, furniture, inlay work and the list goes on. Concrete as a material is not easy to handle, and thus excess usage of it in its





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1-2. Residence projects highlighting the usage of concrete as wall surface treatment and in the outdoor floor surface in combination with inlay technique

3-5. Concrete with its unique characteristics has an inexhaustible potential in terms of application, specifically as an aesthetic feature material. It can be rendered and adorned through embossed and engraved designs

exposed form will kill its esteem. Using diverse materials in its exposed form is secondary, but the control over its usage is something, which is pivotal.

Our firm has always believed in maintaining the natural finish endowed by the material. Concrete in its raw form is very earthen and unfinished which can be further rendered and adorned. Excessive use of exposed concrete makes the space gloomy, so in order to avoid that, we always try to create a fusion between exposed concrete and the conventional materials. We have always looked upon concrete as an art material. Concrete art in any project is taken into account right from its planning and designing stage. Playing with the natural light and the shadows cast by the feature elements adds a magical touch to the building as well as its surroundings. Thus, the placement of these artworks or feature walls is dependent on the sun path and the sciography patterns. Also, concrete has a higher amount of heat transmission, which makes it a priority to consider its placement depending upon the sun. This shows how crucial is the play of light in the process of designing.

The designers in the firm and I myself, have always tried to balance the use of a material. After a period, we started looking at concrete not just as a construction material, but also as an art material. Present day scenario limits the use of a materialist exposed form as the on-site expenses such as shuttering, formwork, casting, etc. has shot as compared to the conventional ones. However, if we design, the formwork and centring smartly, then we can create an explicit play with the exposed materials.

Talking about the textures and designs in concrete, we have constantly evolved and proved to be better project by project. Many times, it has happened that we experimented with the co-ordinator in-charge at the site, resulting in something unexpected and exciting. Such moments gave us a boost and encouraged our confidence to use a material in all its possible ways. The texture or the finish majorly depends on the formwork we do. We love experimenting with materials such as ply, foam sheets, fibre sheets, wood, etc. as formwork. The resulting element is an amalgamation of embossed and engraved designs.



Before using exposed concrete elsewhere on sites, we practised at our own office, along with an engraved script which speaks about our firm's motto. It is an exposed concrete's slab, with beautiful engraving. Self-flowing concrete was taken into account for this slab. After the success of this experiment, our boundary of limitation widened and we became more confident about adapting the new ideas and techniques.

After understanding the materials and their characteristics thoroughly, we

as a firm can proudly say that it has been an exciting journey to learn and play with the true textures and we will keep on evolving with every upcoming project. ●

The principal designer and founder of the firm Dipen Gada & Associates (DGA), Mr. Gada holds a Bachelor's degree in Civil Engineering from M.S. University, Vadodara, Gujarat. Since its inception in 1993, DGA evolved from an exclusive interior design firm to a civil and architectural planning firm and attained the position as one of the most respectable and admired firms in India with an aim to leave a global footprint. The work of DGA is regularly featured and has made an appearance in more than a hundred national and international design journals and magazines. The practice has won accolades from many eminent affiliations like IIID, VM&RD Awards, Artist in Concrete Awards and many others. Mr. Gada was also the Chairperson of the IIID Vadodara Chapter from the year 2006 to 2008.

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6. Concrete can be used as a sculptural material, and not just a construction material. Concrete art in any project is taken into account right from its planning and designing stage

7. The use of concrete in interior spaces evokes a highly diverse reaction. A fusion between exposed concrete and other conventional materials, playing with light and shadows cast by the feature elements add a magical touch to the interior spaces, thus adding to its remarkable aesthetics

8. The self-flowing exposed concrete slab, with beautiful engraving at our office space, was one of our first successful experiments. The engraved script of the firm's motto set into concrete widened our exploration of new techniques and ideas