



THE NATIONAL
TERRAZZO
— & MOSAIC ASSOCIATION —

Great Expectations

Comparison of Benefits: **Terrazzo vs. Polished Concrete**



Pacific Gate - San Diego, CA - Nathan Padilla Bowen, Photographer

Choosing between terrazzo and polished concrete involves balancing durability, aesthetic appeal, and cost. Terrazzo offers exceptional longevity, design flexibility, and a seamless, easy to maintain high-end finish, making it ideal for luxury and high-traffic areas. Polished concrete, while more cost-effective suits projects with a rugged, industrial look. It may not meet the aesthetic demands of upscale environments. This comparison highlights the core benefits and applications of each material, guided by expert insights and case studies.

Terrazzo

Durability and Longevity

Extremely durable and long-lasting, a 100-year floor

Less prone to cracking and imperfections

Maintains appearance over time with minimal maintenance

Design Flexibility

Wide range of color options from any paint color fan

Versatile aggregate size options, from micro-blend to super-sized

Customizable aggregate materials (natural stone, semi-precious stone, shells, metals, recycled materials: glass, mirror, porcelain, concrete) offer eco-friendly options and unique textures.

Aesthetic Appeal

High-end, luxurious aesthetic suitable for class-A buildings, major institutions, and high-traffic areas (airports, schools, hospitals, lobbies)

Can achieve intricate designs and patterns with brass or other inlays

Seamless finish with no visible joints, even in large installations

A clean, elegant backdrop that enhances the interior design

Installation and Performance

No shrinkage or expansion, maintaining precise design integrity

Quick installation with epoxy fill, allowing for faster project completion

Can be poured over existing substrates, including quarry tile, brick pavers, marble, stone, wood, and tile, within hours

A permanent floor, it can be repaired and restored indefinitely

Low Maintenance

Easy to maintain with simple cleaning

Resistant to staining, impact, and wear



Polished Concrete

Polished Concrete

Cost-Effectiveness

Lower initial cost compared to terrazzo

Affordable option for budget-conscious projects

Ease of Maintenance

Simple maintenance with occasional polishing

Aesthetic Versatility

Popular for a less refined, industrial, or rustic look

Suitable for environments where a natural, rugged appearance is appropriate

Installation Considerations

May not meet aesthetic expectations in luxury or high-traffic environments

Requires more careful pouring than does a structural slab to minimize inconsistencies

Susceptible to shrinkage, curling, and visible joints

Prone to imperfections, especially in more elaborate designs

Highly susceptible to cracking and movement



Expert Insights: Frank Klemaske, Executive VP of Business Development and Sales at T.B. Penick and Sons, Inc.

Experience and Perspective:

Frank Klemaske has 40 years of experience in decorative concrete.

His company, T.B. Penick and Sons, is an accredited contractor with the NTMA and ranked as the top decorative concrete contractor by *Concrete Construction* magazine.

Polished Concrete Limitations:

Often fails to meet high expectations in luxury or high-traffic settings.

Prone to cracking and visible imperfections, which can be unacceptable in high-end designs.

Terrazzo Advantages:

Offers superior durability, design flexibility, and aesthetic appeal.

Appropriate for high-traffic areas and luxury buildings.

Provides a seamless, high-end finish with extensive customization options.



Case Study: Pacific Gate Condominiums

Initial plan to specify polished concrete was reconsidered due to potential imperfections and less refined finish.

Terrazzo chosen for its durability, design flexibility, and superior appearance.

Final design included a 90% mix of marble with brass ring inlays, creating a luxurious lobby space.