The name says the facility is for the dogs, but the look has dog owner written all over it. After all, does a dog really care about the aesthetic appeal of his surroundings? Then again, the dogs were probably never asked.

But no matter; whether it’s the pet or the master who’s getting the love, the owners of K9s Only in Tarzana, CA, have created a doggone attractive home away from home for their four-legged guests. And the appeal of the environs can be attributed at least in part to the colors and effects created by the concrete floor staining artistry of Demmert & Associates, Glendale, CA, using a waterborne stain product supplied by Smith Paint Products, which manufactures products in Pennsylvania and California. Working in concert with K9s Only owner Bobby Dorafshar, Demmert & Associates transformed the concrete floors of a former warehouse building into a multi-colored, durable surface.

“It’s a neat project; it’s for dogs but it’s really for people,” says Doug Demmert of Demmert & Associates, making the point that the dog owner is being made to feel at home, knowing his or her pet is being put up in first-class digs. The facility’s top-of-the-line accommodations include private rooms, with beds and televisions tuned to—we’re not pulling your leg—the Animal Planet channel.

The facility’s grand opening earlier this year drew Hollywood-celebrity dog lovers and other guests, who enjoyed hors d’oeuvres, martinis, and a tour. Dorafshar is well known as one of the Los Angeles area’s foremost dog trainers. He and wife Kelly, in 1997 founded the non-profit animal rescue organization New Leash on Life (NLOL), based in Newhall, California.

K9s Only and its Wellness Center offer training, grooming, water rehabilitation, weight management, massages, acupressure, and other services and treatments. The amenities include...
private suites, with filtered air and water, plasma TVs, and home-cooked meals.

The look at K9s Only is partly the result of a process that encompasses floor cleaning and preparation and application of the waterborne stain, followed by a clear sealer and wax-type polish.

**The creative process**

“It was an old warehouse floor, so we had to grind the floor with a planetary head grinder,” Demmert says of the K9s Only project. “That cleans the surface, removes debris, exposes fine sand aggregate in the concrete, and prepares the surface to receive the stain.” The dust and debris are collected by vacuuming and mopping.

Demmert & Associates mixed and matched various colors, applying the stain using an airless sprayer. A “doe skin-type” color named “fawn” was used in the halls, a green color in the kennel area. No stain was used in the food-preparation area, where just a clear sealer was applied. Other vibrant colors were used in the play, boutique, and pool areas.

Color depth and intensity can be controlled by the number of spray passes. “We did two to three passes, at most, because we wanted the concrete to show through,” Demmert says. More stain was applied in creating the kennel logo on the floor, to make it stand out.

The sealer used is a solventborne acrylic product supplied by GST International. Four to five coats of an acrylic wax, also from GST, was applied to protect the surface against soiling and scratching. The wax is relatively simple to maintain by cleaning and applying a special solution that refreshes the shine and hides scratch marks. In addition, new coats of wax can be applied to repair and maintain the integrity of the sealer and the stained concrete. The waxed surface is resistant to a diluted bleach solution that is used to clean the kennels.

**Getting technical**

The waterbased stain, Smith’s Color Floor, is based on a modified acrylic polymer, is nonreactive, and contains no solvents or acids. The stain works by penetrating the concrete pores and depositing the pigments onto the surface of the concrete, floor topping, or other cementitious surface. Application by pump-up or other sprayers yields the variegated appearance usually preferred, as opposed to a monotone, paint-like look. A multicolored effect can be obtained by applying different-colored stains, one on top of the other, after allowing for dry time.

Spraying different colors at the same time will produce a swirled effect.

Smith Paints offers the stain colors in different series—Classic, which includes different hues of various colors; Old World, a highly diverse palette; and the High Chroma series of vibrant colors, often used for logos and other decorative features.

Chuck Brunner, vice president of Smith Paints, says contractors tailor the application process to create their own signature look and effects. Keys to successful application include the existence of an intact, clean substrate. In the K9s Only project, the solventborne sealer that was used “brings the color to life” and generates a “wet look,” Brunner says.

Smith Paints also supplied a biodegradable, “green” cleaner/toughener that reacts with unhydrated calcium hydroxide on the concrete surface to strengthen the substrate. The recently introduced product, Smith Cleaner and Toughener, is sprinkled onto the substrate, agitated with a floor buffer using a nylon brush, and then allowed to dry. The product is not an
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applied to the surface, left in place for several minutes, and then pulled off and inspected for the presence of any residue that remains loose on the surface.

Brunner and Demmert concur that waterborne stains offer certain advantages in many applications, including absence of corrosive acids and consistency and predictability of color. The color produced when using acid stains can vary widely, since the acid chemically reacts with lime present in the concrete substrate. In some cases, this result is just what the designer or client is seeking; in other situations, particularly where the substrate is aged, acid chemistry presents challenges.

“You can do more with the waterbased stain, in terms of blending colors, and it gives predictable results with color, because the color is not the result of a chemical reaction of the acid and the lime content in the concrete,” Demmert says. “It’s easier to work with, and predictable in terms of the final color achieved.”

Also, in this case, the floor surface was not uniform in age and composition, with previously repaired sections. “With this approach, you can go right over the patches and the results are consistent and uniform,” Demmert says. It’s very durable, the color selection is broad, and you can use certain techniques to get a mottled appearance. So it’s unlimited in terms of design possibilities.”

Demmert adds that the interest of many designers and building owners in “green” materials and methods also is driving greater use of waterborne materials. At K9s Only, however, the look was the hook for facility owner Dorafshar.

“They wanted something different, something fun, and I think they got that,” Demmert says. “And they wanted it to be colorful, something other than bare concrete. It’s a nice feel; a nice look when you walk in, kind of playful.” As the canine guests might exclaim when getting a first look at their accommodations, “Wow!”

Or, translated into dogspeak, “Bow Wow!”
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