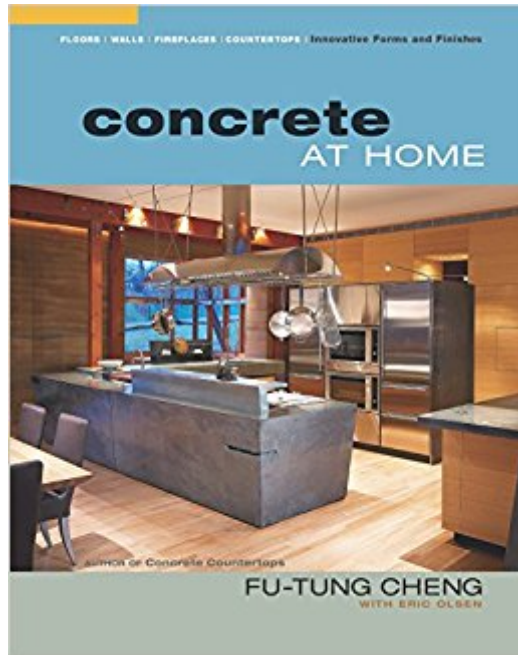


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Concrete At Home: Innovative Forms And Finishes



Synopsis

Fu-Tung Cheng's surprise bestseller *Concrete Countertops* paved the way for a fresh look at a familiar surface. His new book moves beyond the kitchen and transforms this commonplace material into an elegant medium that can be used throughout the house. Combining cutting-edge design with helpful how-to information, *Concrete at Home* offers ingenious ideas for planning and building walls, fireplaces, mantels, hearths, and exterior and interior floors, as well as tips on incorporating architectural elements such as counters, sinks, columns, and water pieces into the project. The construction of forms, footings, and ties is detailed in clear, easy-to-follow instructions, and special attention is given to finishing techniques, including adding color, texture, and inlays.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Cheng (*Concrete Countertops*) brings his skill and creativity to the rest of the house, exploring the design and building of floors, walls, patios and fireplaces as well as kitchen counters and sinks—all using concrete. Not one to stick to basics, he offers suggestions for conceptualizing and integrating artful elements—columns, fountains, inlays—into nearly every room. Copious close-up photographs show Cheng and his team at work as they frame, pour, shape and finish concrete-centric projects for various clients. The book breaks down projects into manageable pieces, while detailed instructions and diagrams lead readers from idea through preparation to execution. Finishing touches and whimsical elements are important, and this detailed

manual "contains a healthy respect for the discipline of the basics plus a twist of attitude from the artist." Readers possessing both skill and moxie will do best with this volume; since timing, measurements and other considerations are so important when working with concrete, the best approach would surely involve a thorough reading—•or two—•before deciding which one to undertake. And with a bit of thought and creativity, a wide variety of found objects (bits of coral, even a bowling trophy) can add personality to a piece. Cheng manages to infuse a DIY book on a nontraditional subject with personality, and his dry humor and offbeat approach to home design come through nicely. (Apr.)

Eric Olsen is a journalist. He has published hundreds of magazine articles, a few short stories, and six nonfiction books. Olsen directed the International Institute of Modern Letters, a literary think-tank that helped writers who were victims of censorship, and created the first American City of Asylum, in Las Vegas. He was also the executive editor at Time Inc. Health, a Time Warner company. He is a graduate of the Iowa Writer's Workshop. He lives in Las Vegas.

"Concrete at Home" by Fu-Tung Cheng and Eric Olsen follows in the footsteps of Cheng's "Concrete Countertops," but differs in that it is a much broader work. It is great at illustrating the possibilities of concrete in your home but is less an instruction manual, as some of these projects are fairly unsuitable as do-it-yourself upgrades. Although not really a do-it-yourself book, it has an instructional component and is good at explaining things like monolithic slab on grade concrete methodology, interior slab with radiant tubing, screeding, control joints, reinforcement, inlays, and many other important concepts. The chapter I was most interested in was chapter three, "Floor Transformations." The discussions of inlays, stamps, and finishes were of particular interest to me, and Cheng did not disappoint. The sections on stamping and use of found objects as embellishment were good, and there is a brief "Stamping D.I.Y." outline on pp. 62-64 that, while good, is too brief for a beginner. The chapter on countertops is great (as you would expect,) and I enjoyed the designs highlighted in part two, especially the emphasis of color and texture as central design elements. I also loved the aesthetics in the too brief section "Innovations in Concrete Block." Other sections of the book weren't as applicable to me (I seriously doubt I will ever have to deal with concrete walls, for instance,) but the illustrations were all very good and I enjoyed even the more esoteric parts of the book. I recommend this book to people considering home concrete projects without reservation. Understand, though, that this is not really a do-it-yourself book. There are instructions on how to do certain tasks, but I doubt that many people could successfully use them

with no other training or instructions. That may sound like a shortcoming, but I think the book is best for envisioning the possibilities of concrete, figuring out what you really want to do, and taking that project to contractors (and possibly architects or engineers, as well) to execute. If Cheng had written a book detailing the "how to" of each of the project types he describes, the volume would be gigantically unwieldy and infinitely less useful to most readers. Most homeowners will like this book as a storehouse of brilliant concrete ideas, and some contractors might also like to read it as well, not for the technical information, but for the illustrations and concepts. If you are beginning to think in terms of concrete in your home, I think this is a great book to start with.

Fu-Tung Cheng's latest book is no more than a glorified coffee table book, seeking to either inaccurately convince buyers that it is a 'how to' guide, or to establish a racket on the sale of concrete related products and courses. For those who have read his first book, perhaps a little trial and error will allow you to apply the proper technique and achieve the desired results. If you haven't applied the techniques from his original title and you don't want coffee table decor, avoid this one. If you have applied the techniques from that title, you might be better served by thumbing through the latest book at a local bookstore. Shame on you Fu-Tung Cheng.

I was looking for more of a how to book. This is not it. I have Mr. Cheng's other book, Concrete Counter Tops Made Simple, so I expected a book more along the lines of a how to or do it yourself style of book. I would keep this book just for the pictures, good ideas, references, and lists of resources for supplies and tools. I usually don't take reviewers seriously and buy books anyway for what I may find useful in them. But many of the reviewers were pretty much spot on about this book.

I was led to believe this book was more hands on and informative when it came to working with concrete. The book was more for the coffee table as the pictures were beautiful. That's why I gave the book 2 stars! I wish I had bought Cheng's other book 'concrete countertops'. Oh well...this is the problem with purchasing online!

If you adore books and don't have the Internet, this is a great one for design ideas and shows the wide breadth of how concrete can be applied. You should build a concrete coffee table, and then put this book on it. Fu-Tung Cheng is an expert, the book has fantastic images, but nothing you can't find from Cheng on the Internet.

A well crafted book, ideas and how-to as in his others books from the father of concrete in the home great detail so the the heavy duty crafter can accomplish the project ok, some are for a professional but your local professional can be directed, inspired perhaps

We used this book along with Cheng's other book and DVD when making our own concrete countertops. It was very helpful to us because we did a "pour in place" countertop where you build the molds right on your existing cabinets and pour the wet concrete in the molds for a seamless finish. Cheng's method for countertops focuses mainly on building molds in your backyard or garage, pouring the concrete, and then flipping the finished pieces over so you start with a smooth finish. This book has a lot of good examples of poured in place projects, so it was helpful to use this in conjunction with Cheng's countertop book.

This book is a classic and a must have for anyone considering custom concrete finishes, counter tops etc.

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