

New home rises from the ashes on the strength of Merkrete products

By Randy Schultz

Autumn in the Los Angeles basin does not quite fit the traditional vision of falling leaves, hot cocoa and frost-coated pumpkins. More likely you will find a day much like Saturday, November 15, 2008...warm, breezy and disturbingly dry. For Loan Leblow and her husband, Robert, it was perfect weather for just relaxing around the house even after – unbeknownst to the Leblows – a muffler fell off a car and landed in a grassy area adjacent to the freeway in the nearby city of Corona, California.

By Sunday night, however, the consequences of the hot muffler on the parched ground were clear. A raging wildfire, aided by strong winds, had claimed 109 houses in Yorba

Linda and 35 in nearby Hidden Hills, including the Leblows' home which burned to the ground.

New hopes, old pros

A rebirth has now begun in Hidden Hills and surrounding areas. Desiring a home that would not only replace, but improve upon their previous one, the Leblows opted for an elegant domicile with a large courtyard, cozy patio and rooms adorned with an abundance of sleek travertine.

Maldonado Tile & Marble, a local Fullerton company that had closed down its business for several days to help residents prepare for mudslides in the aftermath of the fire, was selected to install all of the tile areas.

Owner Brandon Maldonado wanted to make certain that the tile would offer optimum beauty and durability. So naturally, he brought in Merkrete, leading providers of waterproofing, elastomeric coatings, flooring and underlayment products.

“With my staff and I having volunteered during the fires, I felt an emotional investment in this home,” said Maldonado, who has provided tile work for three different residences that have risen from the ashes of the Yorba Linda/Hidden Hills fires. “And I felt confident that Merkrete would provide the quality and reliability that was so important for the underlayment systems. Merkrete is a trusted vendor, a trendsetter that is very knowledgeable and committed to strong customer support.”

Products that perform and protect

For this particular job, Maldonado



Hydro Guard SP 1 ensures waterproof, crack-resistant surfaces in high traffic areas.

opted for Merkrete’s Hydro Guard SP1 waterproofing membrane, 720 Marble Pro (medium-bed) thin-set and one of Merkrete’s regular non-sanded grouts.

“Brandon likes to use a membrane on all of his installations, and he has had a lot of success with our Hydro Guard products in the past,” said Brett Mauney, western area sales representative for Merkrete, a division of Parex USA, Inc. “So when I recommended our new SP1 speedy curing and low VOC membrane, the latest Hydro Guard offering, he was very receptive.”

New Hydro Guard SP1 is a fast-drying, load-bearing waterproof and crack isolation membrane offering excellent elongation, adhesion and high strength properties. Installed in a liquid state, it can be applied to practically any architectural form or irregular shape and be ready for foot traffic within just two to four hours. An environmentally responsible low



Hydro Guard SP 1 rolls on quickly and easily.



Merkrete products apply effortlessly, even in tight spots.



Floor surfaces are prepped for a beautiful home rebirth.



Installers take the full measure for quality workmanship.

VOC product with a built-in microbial for mold and mildew resistance, Hydro Guard SP1 exceeds ANSI A118.10 and A118.12 membrane requirements.

“It’s a great product,” added Maldonado. “We were very happy with the coverage and the nice flow that Hydro Guard SP1 provided, and the overall quality seems outstanding.”

Maldonado chose the Merkrete 720 Marble Pro mortar because of its reliable performance with large format tiles, many of which were being used for the Leblow’s home. The 720 Marble Pro offers excellent impact resistance and flexibility. This non-shrinking product is also water-resistant and known for its adhesion strength.

Craftsmanship that instills confidence

Tile and marble were set over approximately 2,650 square feet, including all of the floors and countertops, with the exception of the four bedrooms. Flooring features light travertine with an elegant Versailles pattern in four different tile sizes, from 24x16 inches down to 8x8 inches. The master bathroom is luxuriously appointed with Crema Marfil marble highlighted with Emperador Dark mosaics and moldings.

The Leblows love the elegant components of their new home.

“The tilework is beautiful,” said Loan Leblow. “We are very pleased with the excellent workmanship provided by Merkrete, Maldonado and Newcastle Development. I feel confident that the

very best products were used, from top to bottom, and that kind of quality really stands the test of time.”

Maldonado stressed that his team, parlaying Merkrete’s coordinated efforts, was able to create a colorful, intricately patterned tile showcase that still met the Leblow’s budget for ordinary tile.

“It has always been Merkrete’s goal not only to provide the best products in the industry, but also to offer key tactical support to our clients wherever possible,” noted Tim McDonald, vice president of Parex USA., Inc./ Merkrete brands. “We have established many long-term business relationships because of this.”

Green adds value

In addition to its reputation as an industry innovator, Merkrete prides itself on its development of “green” products and methods that address environmental concerns. Low-VOC Hydro Guard SP1 is just one more example of Merkrete’s eco-friendly approach. This green mentality can be found in many of its new products as well as in shipping, distribution and other resourceful solutions that continue to earn LEED credits for buildings that utilize Merkrete products. Several “green building” techniques were an added factor in the construction of this new Hidden Hills home, which is designed with a flat roof to accommodate solar panels in the future.

As summer approaches, the hot, dry season will return to Southern California. The Leblows, however,

feel confident that their new home will bring them happiness and contentment, year after year, thanks to the fastidious work of Merkrete, Maldonado Tile & Marble and Newcastle Development. After a time when tragedy had reared its ugly head, a dedicated group of professionals responded by demonstrating the resilience of creativity and beauty.



Tile is installed under the kitchen serving bar.



Merkrete 720 Marble Pro makes setting tile a smooth operation