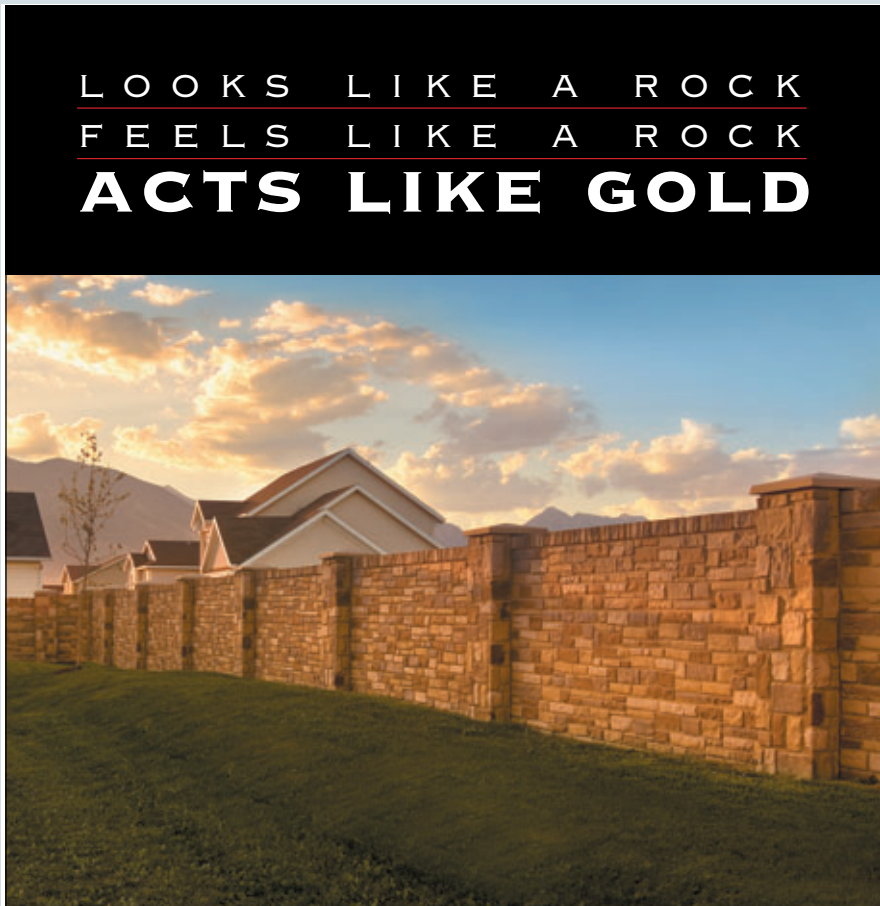
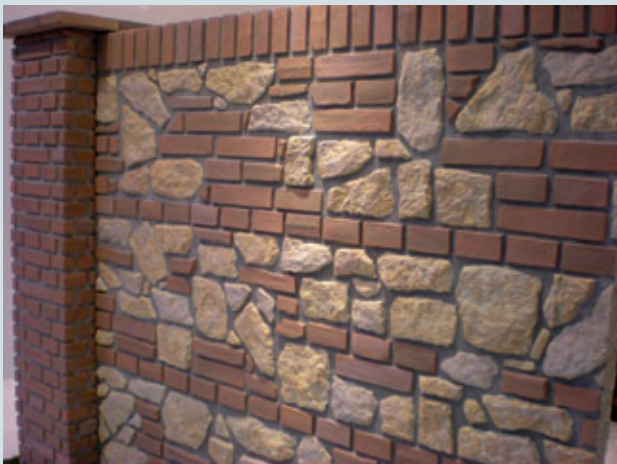




SPECIAL PRINT | PRECAST CONCRETE ELEMENTS

Precast success - Italian style

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Precast success - Italian style

The name Verti-Crete might not be common in Italian vocabulary, but “beautiful precast” is a concept that’s easily translated—and appreciated by Cappellari SRL. Located in Poggio Rusco, Italy, the company has been in the precast business for more than 50 years and enjoys a good share of business creating prefabricated concrete buildings. The idea of producing additional precast products had always been appealing to the company, but Cappellari executives understood the need to balance innovation and tradition in their country. So with the results of a market research study in hand, Cappellari partnered with Verti-Crete to create a new business, Recap. In Italian, the name is an abbreviated translation of “fence” (recinzioni) and the parent company’s name “Cappellari.” And it’s created a thoroughly new way for Italy to see concrete.

Since both the parent company, Cappellari, and its sister company, Truzzi Prefabbricati, were already well known in the construction industry, Recap approached more than 100 business connections to gauge interest in the possibility of precast boundary walls. “We felt good about the quality of Verti-Crete walls,” explains Emanuele Bocchi, Marketing Director of Recap. “But we wanted to know if this application would be interesting to engineers and architects who normally do buildings. Italy is a very old country with a lot of very old fences. We wanted to know if architects would put our fences alongside the historical ones.”

The feedback was clear: builders were very enthusiastic about the simple installation and cost savings that Verti-Crete walls offer in comparison to traditional masonry. The patented Verti-Crete system produces two-sided concrete wall panels and seamless posts that mimic the look of real stone. However, Recap learned that not just any precast wall would do. It was extremely important to find a design that would specifically fit the Italian market.

An American solution meets Italian design

To personalize the wall systems, Recap employed the services of a prominent Italian designer who studied masonry

patterns in the local area. They then collaborated with Verti-Crete—a hemisphere away in the United States—to create mock-ups of new wall designs.

“We are quite far away from Verti-Crete,” says Bocchi, “but this process was very interesting going from design drawings and photos to working models. We were very particular about the impression we want to make.” Verti-Crete worked through several variations of wall textures with Recap, even importing actual bricks from Italy to create new molds. The extra efforts paid off. “The response from our customers was very good,” reports Bocchi. “We also had many complements from our designer about how the process was managed and how true the patterns are to our local architecture.”

Recap builds opportunities with five new designs

Recap launched its precast wall offerings with five custom patterns that are unique to the Italian market:

- Recap Mattone recreates a traditional brick wall, but with a texture, size and shape of bricks that are commonly used in Italy. Because these differed so much from American brick, Verti-Crete obtained local materials from Recap to create accurate impressions.

- Recap Rustico mixes stone and brick and mimics many Italian walls built during and after the World Wars. Because of the economic situation when built, the original walls were fashioned with rubble, rocks and broken brick, using as little mortar as possible. The challenge for Verti-Crete with this product was actually to make the pattern “less perfect” so that it would blend in with the irregular walls nearby.
- Recap Scanalato and Recap Scanalato Spot mimic long, overlapping horizontal planks. The result is a very clean, modern look the architectural market in Italy loves. A hexagonal, rather than a square post and the halting pattern of Recap Scanalato Spot add to the uniqueness of the design.
- Also very modern looking, Recap Ondulato suggests a basket weave pattern with long horizontal strips that undulate in depth. This pattern shows excellent relief when the sun shines on it and customers enjoy the simplicity and eye-catching effect.

The designs were put to the test in a country recognized worldwide for its sense of style. And it worked. After being trained by Verti-Crete in the concrete staining, Recap meticulously creates realistic stone colors in



Recap launched its precast wall offerings with five custom patterns that are unique to the Italian market



After being trained by Verti-Crete in the concrete staining, Recap meticulously creates realistic stone colors in a process that's surprisingly fast



The installation of the Verti-Crete walls is very simple



The patented Verti-Crete system produces two-sided concrete wall panels

a process that's surprisingly fast. Architects and customers alike appreciate the flexibility of the look—and the difficulty telling Recap's product apart from actual masonry.

Beyond aesthetics – customized production solutions

The collaboration between Recap and Verti-Crete didn't end with custom designs. With a different operational setup than many Verti-Crete licensees in the U.S. and elsewhere, Recap had some specific system requirements. A largely automated operation with machinery throughout the plant, Recap needed to automate the forming system and the precast panels to be removed from the side rather than the top. This required a completely new frame design.

"We decided to ask Verti-Crete to modify the mechanism bearing the divider sheets

so that the panels would be connected to a hydraulic moving rail system," said Alberto Truzzi, the company's owner. "By automating the opening and closing of the system, we can use less manpower while maintaining very high quality." Verti-Crete also helped modify the system with external vibrators to fit the automation needs. "The support and collaboration we had from Verti-Crete to develop this solution was excellent."

The look of success

Production of Recap precast fencing has been going since April 2009 and the response has been overwhelmingly positive. "Customers are impressed because our wall textures look very real," comments Bocchi. "Precast fencing is something completely new in this area, and people like the value and the quality of the product. You can't see scratches, and the texture is all very detailed and clear. It looks very expensive, but it is not."

Recap is building its business through a variety of marketing tactics. The company continues to receive high interest at trade-shows throughout Italy. To educate builders on this new precast offering, Recap has instigated an intensive web marketing and direct mail plan. "We've received more than 1,000 inquiries from direct mail in just these few months," says Bocchi. His outlook for the future of Recap is as attractive as the company's products. "We are selling and getting great customer feedback," he says. And that's a success easy for anyone to understand. ■

FURTHER INFORMATION



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