

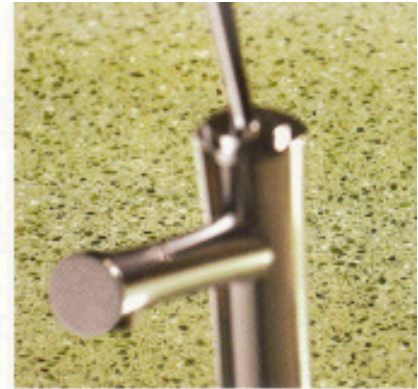
a.k.a. Green Creating Eco-Friendly Spaces

by Anissa Cowley
Photos courtesy of IceStone

Have you ever tried flushing 27 golf balls or a full-size hand towel down your toilet without getting them stuck? A Caroma low-flush toilet is so efficiently designed, it uses only .8 gallons of water as opposed to the typical swirling 5-gallon flush of a commode. Okay, so maybe it isn't every day you experiment with water pressure, but it's one of many things Mick Darlymple and his business partner, Jeffrey Frost, concern themselves with daily.



"Green building" is defined as anything that consumes low energy to use or produce, has low or no chemical toxicity, or contains high-recycled content.



Frost and Darlymple, owners of a.k.a. Green, a new retail outlet for "green-friendly" home products, aren't the only ones in Arizona concerned with "low-energy, high-efficiency" in commercial and private construction. Scottsdale's "Green Building" program is top in the country; in March of last year, Scottsdale became the first city to mandate LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Gold standards, requiring that all new occupied city buildings of any size be designed, contracted and built to achieve "gold level" standards.

"Green building" is defined as anything that consumes low energy to use or produce, has low or no chemical toxicity, or contains high-recycled content. Very few home-improvement stores offer specifically "green" supplies; a.k.a Green fills a niche for clients to "see, touch and feel" the products, including countertops, cabinetry, flooring, tile, paint, adhesives and fixtures.

Consider the vibrant hues in TerraClassic countertops. Made of recycled aircraft windshield glass, the product is durable, artistic and cost-effective. "People love using this for backsplashes and tiling in bathrooms and kitchens," Darlymple explained, pointing out the design he wants to use in his own home. IceStone is known for their eye-catching and contemporary colors, making every countertop a conversation piece. A wide range of companies within each category give the consumer competitive options in design and price-point.

Carpets are non-toxic; usually made of natural fibers and treated without harmful chemicals. InterfaceFLOR makes modern carpet, which can be recycled completely into carpet again. This concept is called "cradle to cradle," as its life cycle never needs to end in a landfill. There is also the option to lay carpet in "tiles" as opposed to one piece, so if an area becomes stained, the entire flooring does not need replacing.

Other alternative flooring includes cork, bamboo, sustainably-harvested wood, formaldehyde-free stains, recycled-glass tiling and linoleum. Durability and easy cleanup makes linoleum popular; Forbo flooring makes a



non-toxic version out of sawdust, corkdust, linseed oil and jute. "Since it's made of all natural ingredients, you could actually compost it completely in your backyard," Darlymple explained.

So, maybe you're not ready to throw the baby out with the bathwater and replace your entire house with "green" quite yet, but you're definitely interested in a step in the right direction. "Paint - that's the simplest change you could make," Darlymple suggests. Safecoat and Soy Sauce (a soy-based paint) are non-toxic and virtually odorless. Don't think for a minute that "green" means sacrificing color options - check out a.k.a.'s wall of swatches to verify. You can even keep your walls "clean" on the inside with Bonded Logic's UltraTouch natural cotton insulation.

This unique shop is also a good resource for advice or in locating architects or designers. "Some people come in and say, 'I can't convert my whole house... which is more important - a photovoltaic system or a healthy interior?'" Darlymple said. Motivation for going green is usually two-fold: preventative healthcare and energy efficiency.

While the partners of a.k.a. Green have taken various turns en route to their current "pasture," they mesh beautifully with their talents and abilities. Dissatisfied with the quality of education he was receiving at Arizona State, Darlymple started his career as a lobbyist, initiating the first statewide

financial aid program. The experience left him a bit "sour" on politics but interested in media. Eventually, he worked in special effects for some elite Hollywood filmmakers before returning to Arizona.

"I remembered this guy, John Wesley Miller, who built a solar technology house in a neighborhood [in Tucson]," he recounted. Enamored by it as a child, Darlymple later realized that "green building has the capability of improving national security by getting us off foreign oil," he said. It became the driving force behind his future work.

Using his experience in film, Darlymple decided to write a television show to increase awareness and demand for green building. Builders told Darlymple they wouldn't spend a penny on something the client wouldn't purchase, so, "I decided to make the customer ask for it," he said. Darlymple spent every weekend of the following year writing a pilot show, which was later submitted to four networks. PBS called immediately, wanting to air it nationwide. The show, to premiere this year, is called "Build It Green."

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Jeffrey Frost, meanwhile, had been working as an architect for a strictly "green" firm, but noticed there wasn't a showroom for clients. "Most people are interested in improving their homes' green standards, but needed to 'touch and feel'... before they buy," Frost said. The two men knew of each other through involvement in the US Green Building Council (USGBC),

Paint it "Green"

Toxic and noxious paint fumes often cause people to practically evacuate their homes during the painting process; conventional paints contain higher levels of VOCs (volatile organic compounds), which produce harmful gas when applied. These VOCs often trigger asthma attacks, headaches, vomiting and can lead to other more permanent respiratory ailments. Today, alternative manufacturing methods enable green-conscious companies to develop competitive-quality paints with minimal VOC pollutants for a product that's nearly odorless; these are labeled as "low-VOC" or non-toxic paints. Don't bother trying to find them at your regular hardware store, all you'll get are "blank looks" at those paint counters. Simply head to a.k.a. Green!

but met again at a conference in Portland where they decided to merge their ideas into one reality.

The television program would fuel customer interest and knowledge, while the retail store would provide the "touch and feel" part of the equation. Darlymple seems to think society is growing into the "green" concept. "Energy-efficient loans are available, and some banks offer a lower interest rate to people buying energy-efficient homes," Darlymple said, as he and Frost debated what this could do for the energy economy, not to mention the original priority - national security - and beyond. But for now, the spark of their vision has certainly blazed a "green" trail for Valley residents. 🌱

■ a.k.a. Green

8100 E. Indian School Rd., Scottsdale
480.946.9600, www.akaGreen.com