

COLOURED GRC

GRC planters and street furniture can be coloured in a variety of ways including the integration of a pigment or with the application of different types of surface coatings such as paints or acid oxides. Each of these colouring options has its own advantages and disadvantages. So, the following information may be helpful in making the right colour finish choice for the GRC products on your projects. However, no matter which colour finish you choose to go with, it is generally good practice to obtain an actual colour swatch from your GRC supplier. Electronic swatches are notoriously unreliable because they are highly reliant on the computer and monitor being used to view them. Therefore, the same electronic swatch may look considerably different on two separate computer monitors.

■ Pigment Colouring

GRC pigment colouring is the process of integrating a colour pigment into the slurry during the mixing stage of GRC manufacture and is by far Satu Bumi's most popular GRC colouring option. The big advantage of pigment colouring is that the process does not change the natural concrete appearance of the GRC which to many architectural purists is a desirable and essential element of its appeal.

However, it is also important to be aware that pigmented GRC will have all the subtle imperfections that come with a natural looking product. Therefore, if you are more interested in the solid colour and completely consistent look of a clinically manufactured product, you would be well advised to consider a GRC paint finish rather than an integrated pigment option.

■ How pigmented GRC works

The pigments that are used to colour concrete are made up of very small, coloured particles that are around a tenth of the size of cement particles. When pigment is added to concrete slurry the smaller pigment particles cover the larger cement particles and dominate the colour spectrum of the product. The consistency of the raw materials, the right dosage of pigment and water to cement ratios of the slurry mix, the adequacy of the mixing process and the consistency of both the finishing and curing processes are all important issues to manage in adequately and consistently covering the cement particles in the production process. However, since GRC planters and street furniture products are typically made in batches and by hand, there are always going to be some variations in colour consistency between two different GRC products. Therefore, although these differences will not be dramatic and are generally quite acceptable to Satu Bumi's customers, they will be noticeable with a discerning eye. Accordingly, if your tolerance for minor variations in colour is low or you are not comfortable with the less intense and more natural look of pigmented GRC, you should consider one of the other colouring options.

■ Pigmented GRC fading

The inorganic concrete pigments used by Satu Bumi are UV resistant and do not fade. However, some pigmented GRC planters may appear to fade over time and this is generally caused by small light-coloured efflorescence crystals forming on the surface of the GRC. When scattered on the surface of a GRC planter these white crystals tend to make the pigmented GRC look lighter and give the appearance of fading. However, when this happens, the planters can be washed down with a soft bristle brush in conjunction with a highly diluted acid that will dissolve the efflorescence crystals and bring the planters back to their original colour.

■ Paint Colouring

The main advantage of painting GRC planters is that you can attain virtually any solid and consistent colour you desire whilst still retaining the other benefits GRC has to offer. However, you do lose the natural concrete appearance and there is also the normal maintenance cost of repainting over time.

In addition, there are ranges of texture paints that can be used to add interesting textured finishes to GRC surfaces. These texture paints are marginally more expensive than standard paint. However, where a relatively subtle textured finish is required, the use of a textured paint is a less expensive alternative to the creation of a purpose built precast mould to achieve a similar result.

■ Acid Oxide Colouring

Acid oxides applied to GRC products penetrate a very thin layer of the surface of the GRC and can provide relatively natural and attractive looking metal and stone appearances. Chips and scratches can unearth the base concrete colour of the GRC. However, if this happens, it is a very simple process to touch them up.

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