

FOR AESTHETIC VALUE AND PERFORMANCE,

VENEER PLASTER PROVIDES PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS

By Ed Jakacki
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A one-coat veneer plaster system provides a smooth, uniform wall finish in this Las Vegas residence.

Veneer plaster is an innovative, practical and highly aesthetic alternative to conventional drywall and plaster wallsystems. Unfortunately, however, the expectations about what veneer plaster is and what it can do sometimes get a little out of hand. A common misperception about veneer plaster is the belief that it combines *all* the benefits of drywall and *all* the benefits of conventional plaster.

Not true.

Veneer plaster provides a number of important performance advantages, and it can solve a wide range of aesthetic concerns, but it is not a “cure-all” which meek every standard for every type of interior wall construction.

Veneer plaster does, however, offer specifiers and contractors an excellent means of meeting three construction criteria: aesthetics, impact resistance and abrasion resistance. In fact, deciding which type of veneer plaster is best for any particular project depends largely on which of these criteria must be met.

But, before getting into more detail on selecting specific types of veneer plaster, let's first discuss some basics.

Veneer Plaster Benefits

On the most basic level, veneer plaster systems are composed of a drywall type base board, a basecoat and a veneer finishing material. The board is attached to wall framing similar to conventional drywall and is finished with either a one-coat finish or a two-coat basecoat/finish application.

Veneer plaster systems were developed and refined during the 1960s and early 70s. The idea was to take advantage of large size gypsum panels to improve speed of installation, while providing a more monolithic appearing, harder, abuse-resistant surface. In addition, by using a high strength pre-packaged gypsum plaster, overall plas-



The designer selected an abuse-resistant veneer plaster system for the master suite/nursery in this Coventry, RI home.

ter thickness is reduced from conventional 1/2 in. to a mere 1/16 in. or 1/8 in. The combination of reduced thickness and high strength material yields a faster drying time and a more serviceable finished surface.

Even though the initial cost of veneers is more than regular drywall, overall job cost often favors veneers due to their faster finishing time. Drywall joint treatment and its required drying time before decoration can begin in as little as 48 hours because, unlike drywall, only a single drying cycle is required.

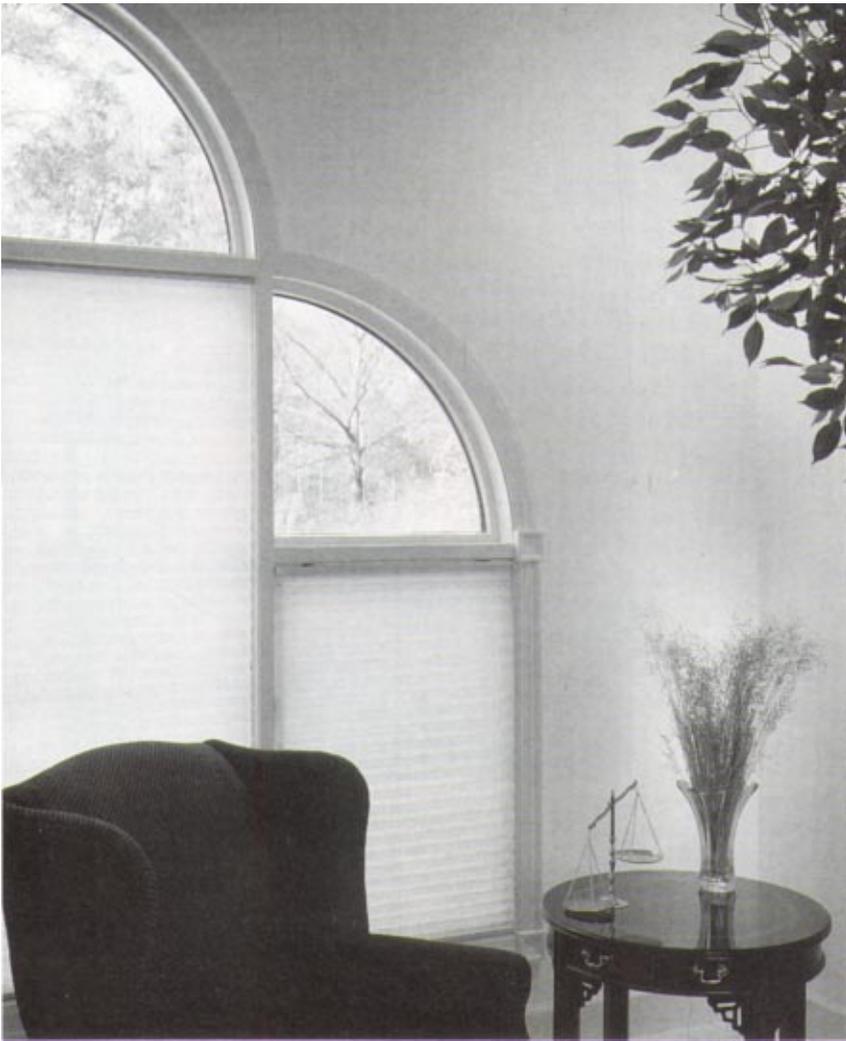
Veneers also provide more decorating options. The finish can be applied either smooth or in a variety of textures. It can be painted or covered with a wall covering. It also lends itself to the creation of design details such as vaulted ceilings, reflected cornice lighting and other touches that add unique, upscale appeal.

Veneer plasters are widely used in both residential and commercial construction. As acceptance of the systems has grown over the years, so too have demands in terms of performance and appearance. Unfortunately, no one veneer plaster system can meet all expectations.

Achieving Superior Aesthetics

Although many veneer plaster systems provide a finished appearance superior to drywall, the most cost-effective means of providing improved appearance is a one-coat installation. In comparison to drywall, a smooth one-coat veneer wall delivers a more monolithic, uni-

Veneer - Cont'd on page 11



Because of its superior joint concealment, a one-coat veneer plaster system was selected for this Tallahassee, FL residence.

form appearance, a smoother surface and superior joint concealment. The surface is harder and more abuse-resistant, and contractor callbacks due to nail pops, ridging and joint banding are virtually eliminated.

One-coat veneer plaster systems, however, will not completely compensate for defects such as wall undulations and joint deformation, which will remain noticeable, especially under oblique lighting conditions and/or when the surface is decorated with a high-gloss paint. With a one-coat system, it is also difficult to achieve the superior surface smoothness commonly associated with conventional plaster.

To achieve the ultimate in a smooth veneer plaster appearance,

it is necessary to apply a two-coat system. Available finishes include job-mixed lime/gauging plaster and a mill-mixed lime /gauging finish. When appearance is the only objective, lime/gauging plaster is one of the most logical choices because it is easier to work with. Lime/gauging plasters provide the smoothest possible surface and are the easiest-working material; however, they provide no more surface hardness than typical drywall. The two-coat system gives the installer a much greater ability to reach the ultimate in aesthetics. A two-coat system will compensate for defects such as light wall undulation and joint deformation. It will also deliver a surface smoothness more equal to conventional plaster.



Veneer plaster systems were used extensively in the recent renovation of the Stouffer Vinoy Hotel, in St. Petersburg, FL. More than 15,000 sq ft of basecoat and lime/gauging plaster were installed over the walls and ceilings of the hotel's restored ballroom.



The impact resistance of veneer plaster systems makes them especially appropriate for high traffic areas such as this dining/conference room.



More than 51,000 sq ft of interior finish plaster was applied to walls throughout the hotel's dining room.

Attaining Maximum Performance

For large scale commercial construction, abuse resistance and long-term life-cycle are of ten the most crucial considerations in selecting wall finishing materials. Again, veneer plaster systems provide specifiers with a number of answers.

Veneer plaster walls offer major advantages over both gypsum board and conventional plaster in terms of impact and abrasion resistance. The remarkable

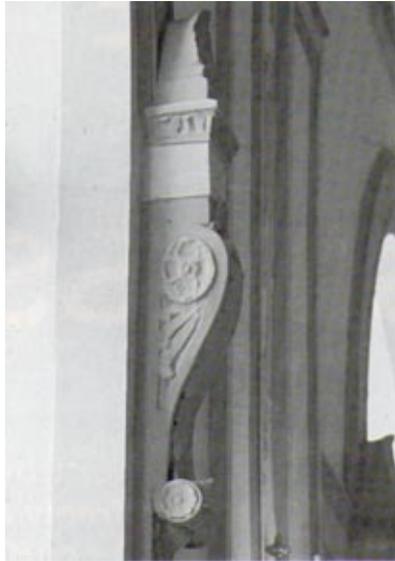
hardness of USC's Imperial Finish was demonstrated recently when our company tested the abrasion resistance of five interior wall materials: gypsum board; vinyl-covered gypsum board; Diamond Interior Finish over Imperial Gypsum Base; and Imperial Finish over Imperial Gypsum Base. Each sample was oscillated under a steel brush weighed down with a 25 lb weight. After 10 oscillation cycles, the brush wore through the gypsum board face paper. After 15 cycles, it wore through the vinyl-covered gypsum panel. After 50 cycles, it wore through the Diamond Interior Finish. However, after 1,000 cycles, the Imperial Finish surface was still intact. The steel brush had barely even marred the finished surface!

End Uses

So, the question remains, which veneer plaster system should be used on which types of projects?

There are no cut-and-dried answers, but, based on cost, appearance and performance requirements, general guidelines can be established.

One- and two-coat veneer plaster systems are usually best suited for residential and light commercial construction, where appearance and cost are higher priorities than abuse resistance and long-term life cycles. One-coat interior finish plaster is frequently specified for a wide range of residential and light commercial

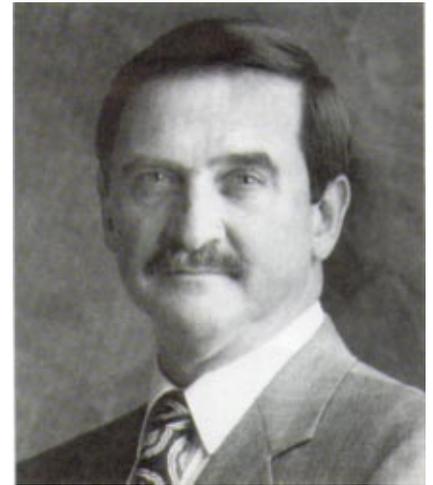


Veneer plaster was used to recreate an array of intricate details in the Stouffer hotel's original plaster work and columns.

projects, while the more costly two-coat veneer plaster system is often used on higher-end construction or where critical lighting conditions exist in order to achieve superior aesthetics.

One- and two-coat veneer plaster systems are generally best suited for public, government and institutional construction, such as hospitals, schools, dormitories and office

buildings where abuse-resistance and long-term life cycles are primary concerns. Again, the two-coat finish system is used to achieve superior aesthetics.



About the Author:

Edwin J. Jakacki is Product Manager, Construction Plasters for the United States Gypsum Company where he has been employed since 1957. Ed shares his expertise through his position as USG's technical representative serving on AWCI's technical subcommittees. Currently he is chairman of Technical Subcommittee #3, on Gypsum Board, Gypsum/Metal Lath and Gypsum Plaster. □