

DESIGNER FYI:

What about walls?

By Kris Linder

Gone are the days of just paint on the wall, or standard wallpaper. Today's walls have many choices — so many in fact, that it can get confusing as to what the new wall treatments are all about.

Besides enclosing you from the elements and sectioning off your home, what else can walls do to enhance your newly decorated rooms? First of all, walls can be scary to some people — they are, after all, big wide expanses of, well, wall! The general feeling is that, if you make a mistake, it'll be a big one. So take the time to explore the many facets of wall treatments — the walls are as important to the palette of the room as everything else you choose to put into it.

Paints aren't just paints anymore. Some are sandwashed, which adds texture (sand) to the paint color; some are glazed using color and a varnish to create a multidimensional Old World look. One of the new popular wall treatment veneers is Venetian plaster.

What is Venetian plaster? It is a thin lightweight material usually composed of lime and marble dust. Some have acrylics added to prevent cracking. This usually is applied by hand with a trowel. Some of the plasters like

Marmorino (which in Italian means "little marble") is grainier than Venetian.

Marmorino is applied in layers and is sometimes burnished.

The primary advantage of plaster is that it can be applied to most anything — walls, paneling, brick and stucco, or over fireplaces and range hoods. Wax can be added over the plaster to give protection and a seasoned Old World look. The wide variety of colors available (and the layering of colors) not only reflects light but will create a stunning effect in any room.

There are many fine craftspeople who can create these fabulous wall finishes for you. Always check out references to make sure they are current jobs and ask what, if anything, went wrong. Asking this question can elicit information that might not come out by simply asking "did they do a good job?" If possible, try to see the work in person.

Designers know many quality finishers, so call a designer or the local chapter of ASID to obtain the names of people who have a good reputation.

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