Painting Cement Stucco

General
Portland cement plaster (stucco) may be painted to change the color of an existing or to a new stucco finish. When painting cement stucco is desired, it is typically recommended to use “vapor permeable” paints. Permeability helps prevent water condensation and allows for water to pass through the wall as a vapor. The SMA generally recommends an exterior acrylic paint with a perm rating of 7 or higher and is made specifically for cement stucco.

Elastomeric coatings will hide hairline cracks, but may create long term vapor or condensation issues for cement stucco. They can alter textures and require more maintenance. Removal of elastomerics can also be expensive. Relying on exterior coatings for water protection should be considered carefully. Generally, proper stucco installation and good flashings are preferred as a better long-term solution with minimal maintenance.

Fog coating is a cementitious paint made specifically for colored cement stucco finishes to fix discoloration issues. Fog coat cannot be used over an acrylic finish or painted stucco. Smooth trowel stucco may require special fog coat material. Contact your SMA manufacturer and refer to SMA Technical Bulletin “Fog Coating.”

New: Painting new cement plaster should be done when the Ph level has dropped to acceptable levels per the paint manufacturer. Generally this is a Ph of 8 or lower.

Old: Re-painting stucco is common and acceptable. Existing paint should be soundly bonded to the stucco and compatible with the new paint product. Texture muting can be a concern as each layer of paint can mute or change the texture of the stucco.

Dark colors can have an impact on stucco and may lead to efflorescence. Efflorescence is a harmless salt that can be found in cement mixtures. Hairline cracks absorb and hold rain water. Salts slowly leech into the rain water mixture. On warm or sunny days following a rain, the darker color can heat the stucco surface, drawing the salt-laden water to the surface through accelerated evaporation. The result can leave a white efflorescence powder. Efflorescence can be cleaned but may re-appear a few times until salts are flushed out. Refer to the SMA paper “Efflorescence” for more information.

The SMA provides this information as general guidance on painting cement stucco finish coats; each situation or product may alter procedures. The SMA can provide no warranty, express or implied, for following general recommendations.