

Venetian Plaster the Natural Choice

Limestone-based plaster came into widespread use in fine neo-classical interiors in the 19th century, but gorgeous marble infused material finds its origin in the Venetian Renaissance of the 15th century. It is one of the oldest building materials known to man. Today's Italian tradition of trowel-applied plaster is referred to as stucco antico or antique plaster.

In Toronto, two passionate artists have taken up the apprenticeship offering the timeless beauty and full range of characteristics of Venetian plaster through their company Chameleon (italianplaster.ca)

PLASTER EASILY PRODUCED IN ANY COLOUR

Kevin Nicol worked in paint retail for more than 10 years and as a result of a chance collaboration with a wonderful father & son team, had his first exposure to Venetian plaster. "I was astounded by it's tactile beauty, Old-World elegance, flexibility in its look and its durability." With partner Daina Zeoli-Bray, who was schooled in fashion & design, he started Chameleon in 2003, to great acclaim. Most of their business is high-end residential applications through word-of-mouth or from within the interior design and architecture communities.

Imported directly from Italy, Chameleon's plaster is the real thing. It is composed of limestone, granite and marble, and brings with it all the beautiful qualities of natural stone. The plaster is totally porous and can be easily produced in any colour. Furthermore, its lime-based alkalinity provides mould-inhibiting properties.

In comparison, North American plaster, which is formulated using resins, silica sand and titanium flakes held together by glue binders, has a very waxy quality that may clog pores. This can lead to undesirable problems with mould and mildew.

Nicol and Zeoli-Bray take each job from quote through execution personally, affording their clients even greater value and peace of mind. The first step necessitates a decision on the final desired look, be it textured or smoothly polished. Next, clients provide a colour sample that Nicol matches using Chameleon's tint machine. He favours Benjamin Moore pigments, which are the industry's cleanest and offer a large and vivid range of options. A sample board is then created and brought to the client's home for fine tuning in order to take into

consideration on-site light conditions. In all, this process takes about two days. Installation time is size- and technique-dependant, but that average room can be completed in 2.5 days, allowing for curing time between coats. Cost is based on square footage, and ranges from \$8 to \$15, which Nicol says is very much in line with the cost of high-end wallpaper, but provides a superior seamless and durable finish.

The talented pair, whose creative accomplishments are exceptional, note two trends that speak volumes about the flexibility of the product. The first is towards untinted plaster (white) or neutral grays that have the appearance of concrete, for that modern industrial look. Quite literally, at the other end of the spectrum, Chameleon is increasingly involved in projects demanding vibrant colour pops (green, saffron, red, purple) with plaster being applied on a feature wall and showcased like the work of art it is.



Be sure to visit Chameleon's website for a wealth of additional information, and a great gallery of impressive pictures.

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