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Venetian Plaster History Page:

Venetian Plaster History and Information

Have you ever marveled at the beautiful glowing plaster walls of Italy? These ancient walls that grow even more beautiful with age were plastered with a technique the Italians call "Decorative Stucco". The term "Venetian Plaster" is what we in this country use to refer to the same process.

Venetian Plaster

Many public and private buildings in Italy have walls of marble or other stone -- huge, heavy slabs and blocks erected to create a wall whose exceptional beauty and elegance would endure for thousands of years.

In Venice, however, it was impossible to use marble or stone for the walls of any structure. Architects and designers of the city built in water used stones only as necessary for load-bearing portions of the foundation. The remainder of the building had to be constructed to be as lightweight as possible.

For many years, Venetian architects and designers experimented with various methods and materials, looking for a way to finish walls to give their city the same enduring elegance as cities built on the mainland. And so "Venetian Plaster" was born.

The technique consisted of hand-applying several layers of plaster to the wall, with the last few layers creating the decorative effect. These decorative layers were of a plaster made of powdered or ground marble or limestone, thinly applied to create a wall finish that had the visual depth, richness, cool touch, and natural elegance of stone or marble.

Over time, as the lime crystallized in reaction to the air (carbonation), the plaster returned to its original state of stone, creating a wall finish that was stronger than any painted finish.

Today, Venetian Plaster has caught the attention of architects and designers worldwide.

Not a Faux Finish

Although some DIY companies are offering a product they call Venetian Plaster, it is usually only a faux finish. These products are typically just a very thick acrylic paint, designed to be

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applied using simple techniques which require no special training. While they and other faux finishes attempt to mimic the appearance of marble and stone, they fall far short of the rich stonelike look and feel available with true Venetian plaster.

Authentic Imported Italian and Venetian Plaster

Through many years of non-use, the historic Venetian plaster formulas and techniques were almost lost. But during the 1960's and 1970's, a small handful of pioneering Italian companies began to rediscover the plaster finishes and techniques which were traditional to their decorative heritage. By 1980, "Stucco Veneziano" (translated into English as "Venetian Plaster") and other rediscovered unique historical decorative effects were being enthusiastically accepted by the Italian market.

Today, thanks to the efforts of this small handful of pioneers, Plaster Artistry™ is able to offer to you a large portfolio of Venetian plasters and other authentic Italian wall finishes. Our portfolio includes a wide range of looks, textures, and technical performances from only the best Italian plaster manufacturers.

Every company whose products we feature must be committed to producing only the highest quality products possible. The artisans of Plaster Artistry™ have traveled to Italy to personally meet and train with some of the finest Italian artisans; it is their companies' plasters that we are pleased to be able to offer to you.

Plaster Artistry™ is committed to featuring only true authentic Italian and Venetian plasters that will last a lifetime.

The Vibrant Glowing Color

For walls that come alive with color, Plaster Artistry™ features authentic, restoration quality earth and oxide colorants, the same colorants which were used by Renaissance artists. These authentic earth pigments, in their purest crystalline form, are unlike most pigments available on the market today.

The crystalline form of authentic earth pigments will catch the light and cause your walls to glow from within -- a look that is unattainable by any paint product. And the range of hues available is breathtaking -- imagine the colorful splendor of the Italian Renaissance!

Authentic earth colorants were the only ones considered by the Italian government for the restoration of the frescoes in Florence's Cathedral Dome of Brunelleschi. This beautiful building has the largest dome in the world made entirely of bricks; an architectural and engineering marvel, and vitally important piece of Italy's art history.

So whether you choose color that is subtle or bold, your walls will come alive with beautiful, vibrant, glowing color.

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Marmorino

Marmorino is one of the Venetian plasters which is currently gaining popularity. The word "marmorino" means, literally, "little marble". The plaster is made of coarsely ground Carrara marble; when skillfully applied, the subtle sparkle of marble is evident.

Cool as stone to the touch, with a satiny look and feel, Marmorino gives your walls an understated elegance.

Mantovano - A Fascinating History

Mantovano, one of our signature finishes, is a unique and intriguing wall finish which dates back to the 11th century.

At that time, the growing city of Mantua (now Mantova), needed more space and a better defense. To meet those needs, architect Alberto Pitentino modified the flow of the River Mincio to create a moat of four artificial lakes surrounding Mantova. Wandering outside the city in those times was quite dangerous, so people would look for raw materials as close to their city walls as possible.

While the limestones used by the people of Venice came from the delta of the Brenta River close to Venice, the limestones used by the people of Mantova were pulled from their moat and the River Mincio. The limestones from the two different areas, when ground, made plasters which were quite different in character. Because of its more fluid nature, the Mantovano plaster had to be applied using a brush and a trowel.

The resulting wall finish knew great popularity during the Italian Renaissance, when the Gonzaga family ruled the city for three centuries after seizing power from the Bonacolsi family in 1328.

During the Renaissance, Mantova was one of the most important European courts, hosting artists like Pisanello, Mantegna, Perugino, Correggio, LB Alberti, Giulio Romano, Rubens, and many more. In that period the architecture of the city was deeply changed and many of Mantova's famous palaces were built, their walls finished with the unique and intriguing Stucco Mantovano.

During the centuries after the Renaissance, the city of Mantova lost popularity and declined, and the Stucco Mantovano finish and technique were lost.

One of our suppliers, located less than 50km from Mantova, could not let such a unique traditional wall finish disappear. After years of research in the libraries of Mantova they found the original application technique and important clues to its formulation. After more lab work they were able to bring back to life the Mantovano wall finish.

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With Stucco Mantovano, you can have in your home a piece of the unique history of one of the wealthiest and most powerful cities of the Italian Renaissance.

The Unique Wall

The demand for decorative plasters in the high-end market is gaining momentum. Architects and designers are looking for a wall finish with a unique signature, and authentic Italian plasters are the answer.

Skillfully applied to both interior and exterior walls, they show the hand that applied them by subtle variations in color, texture, and sheen. The uniqueness and beauty of your walls cannot be matched, and they will only grow more beautiful with age.

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About Us Page:

Plaster Artistry™ is a unique company of artisans trained and certified in the centuries-old techniques of Venetian plaster, decorative plaster, and Italian stucco wall finishes. We are well able to meet the needs of every client, whether you are an individual who wants to dress up a single space in your home, a business owner/manager who wants to create a more upscale ambience, an interior designer looking for the best options for your high-end client, or the architect/builder of a large commercial project.

Project Manager

From the time he was a young child, our Project Manager had a keen interest in the arts. His first exposure to plasters was as a young child. Growing up in an Antebellum home that his parents refurbished, he participated in the replastering of the home's interior. Passionately interested in music, he went on to college to double major in Music Composition and Vocal Performance, while studying Classical Guitar and Keyboard as well. Today, he continues his love of music as a multi-genre songwriter.

His interest in the visual arts started in college, and he has continued to expand his artistic skills. His curiosity and love for beautiful plasters eventually led him to study the almost-lost art of authentic Venetian and Italian plastering. Studying at a prestigious school in the heart of the Venetian region of Italy, he learned the skills handed down through the centuries, from generation to generation of skilled artisan. Continuing his quest for excellence, he returned to Italy's Venetian region to study privately under one of Italy's great Master Artisans.

Not only an accomplished artisan, he has many years of experience as Executive Manager of a successful chain of businesses. This invaluable expertise enables him to manage the unique needs of your project, regardless of its size.

Design Coordinator

Our Design Coordinator had a love for the arts from earliest childhood. Growing up in a family of creative and artistic people, her own creativity was given free reign to grow and develop. She does not remember a time when she was not drawing or painting, and began making jewelry at a very young age. At 12 years of age she began to sew, and soon was modifying patterns and creating different things to wear -- setting her apart from her peers.

She went on to get a Masters Degree in Apparel and Textile Design, graduating with honors. Her first job out of college was as a textile designer. Over the years she has continued to add many new talents to her ever-expanding palette of skills. Traveling to the heart of Italy's Venetian region, she studied the ancient, authentic methods of Venetian and Italian plastering at a prestigious Italian plaster school. Later, in Italy, she further refined those skills in private lessons with one of Italy's great Master Artisans.

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Her talent and expertise in the field of design gives her a unique ability to work with homeowners, designers, and architects, enabling you to choose the best Venetian plaster finish, in the best colors for your needs, regardless of the scope of your project.

Plaster Artistry™ is continually seeking ways to better serve the needs of every client, whether you are an individual homeowner or the largest commercial builder. Our Project Manager has recently added a large number of European partners, enabling us to pull together any size team of skilled and experienced artisans, to complete any size project on schedule.

Our Design Coordinator seeks out both the authentic ancient plaster wall finishes, and creative new ways to use the plasters, enabling us to continue to expand your selection of beautiful wall and ceiling finishes. Plaster Artistry™ -- the perfect team to bring the beauty of authentic Italian decorative plasters and stuccos to your home, business, or project.

Plaster Artistry™ is headquartered in Nashville, Tennessee, USA.

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Venetian Plaster Finishes Pages:

Aquarello

Finely pebbled texture with a soft cloudlike appearance and matte finish. Can be scrubbed or washed with high-pressure systems without damage. Resistant to aerosol graffiti because it can be cleaned with acetone. In Italy, it is used for urban historical buildings. In your home, it looks great in any room.

Textured Aquarello

We added layers of texture for the rustic look of peeling plaster. You may also choose to add a high-relief stencil in a pattern to complement your home or business.

Calcenova

Smooth semi-gloss finish with translucent marble-like appearance. Natural lime Venetian plaster is used in Italy for restorations where authenticity is important. Cool and smooth to the touch like polished stone.

Calcenova Arredo

A bit of resin was added to Calcenova for improved performance. The resin enables this plaster to take darker colors, and makes it more durable for higher-traffic areas.

Coccio Pesto

The Venetian plaster known as Coccio Pesto has been in use since Roman times, when artisans added crushed roof tiles or bricks to their plaster, giving it a characteristic light salmon color. This recipe adds real Italian old roof tiles to fine Marmorino; the bits are easily visible in the finished wall surface. Satin finish.

Dilavato

Rising from the smooth surface of this finish are various-sized grains of multi-colored marble. This authentic Italian plaster looks and feels exactly like an antique plaster which has weathered over time. Matte finish. Available in the warm colors of Italian country homes: pale gold, warm pink, ochre, and white.

Dilavato with Mother of Pearl

In the coastal communities of the Mediterranean, artisans would frequently add bits of shell to their plasters, as it was a bountiful filler. Here, we have added ground Italian Mother of Pearl to Dilavato, giving it a naturally elegant sparkle. Use it wherever you would like to bring a smile!

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Etruria

Authentic Tuscan plaster. Quartz crystals give it a texture that has both sandy and smooth areas, with a look that is mottled matte and shiny. A unique look that is very strong, durable, and scrubbable.

Mantovano

Unique historical decorative stucco with an intriguing organic pattern. Satin finish, cool and smooth to the touch, will last forever. Very popular during the Italian Renaissance in the palaces of Mantova (Mantua), Italy.

Marmorino

"Little Marble" Italian plaster is traditionally very popular in the Northern part of Italy. The Carrara marble dust adds a subtle sparkle. Satin finish, extremely smooth, and cool to the touch like marble.

Lugano

Artistically applied layers of Marmorino are stained and antiqued to create the time- and weather-worn patina of an old world plastered wall.

Marmorino Old Wall

This artistic rendering of an old, peeling marmorino wall was developed by Plaster Artistry's artisans at the request of a respected designer for use in her own home. Its warm, glowing patina and casually elegant feel will transform any room in your home or business.

Strange Marmorino

In Northern Italy, some choose to add a layer of Calcenova over their Marmorino, giving it a glossy, glasslike look and feel.

Marmorino Swirl

This lightly textured matte finish uses Marmorino to give your walls a warm "Tuscan Farmhouse" appeal, yet fits perfectly into almost any design setting.

Textured Marmorino

We added a bit of texture within the layers of this Marmorino. Still smooth and satiny to touch, but with added visual interest. The subtle sparkle is from coarsely ground Carrara marble.

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Marostica

This finish was developed by Plaster Artistry™ as a perfect coordinate for certain textured finishes; also works great on its own. With a finely pebbled surface and a texture that is both rustic and refined, it feels right at home in decors from modern urban to rustic lodge. Available in earthy colors from concrete to deep mahogany, plus custom colors.

Metallo

The mica flakes contained in this Venetian plaster bring your walls and ceilings alive with the glowing patina of hand-rubbed metal. Available in your choice of rich shades of gold, silver, bronze, copper, verde, and custom gold- or silver-toned pastels.

Rasacalce

Warm, rustic, textured authentic lime plaster with the time-worn feel of weathered stone. Satin finish.

Rasato di Calce

This very elegant Venetian plaster, also known as "Salt and Pepper", has tiny grains of black volcanic sand embedded in classic white Marmorino. Its satiny finish adorns the walls of the many palaces and villas designed and built by Italian Renaissance architect Andrea Palladio. In your home or business, it gives an elegant, timeless appeal to any room. May also be tinted in pastel colors.

Modern Mantovano

Textured, translucent appearance is smooth to the touch. This resin-based Venetian plaster takes deep, intense colors. We polish it to a mirror-like gloss. Washable and patchable, good for high traffic areas.

Travertino

This historic classic of the decorative tradition in Tuscany and central Italy has the look and feel of unpolished Travertine stone. The Carrara marble flour and selected sands make it highly durable. Travertino -- it will last a lifetime. Also looks great applied as quarried Travertine stone blocks. Looks best in natural stone colors.

Verona

Inspired by the ancient marble sidewalks of Verona, Italy. This dramatic work of art captures perfectly the look and feel of worn, cracked, weathered marble, complete with the deep grainy

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pits, polished by hundreds of years of pedestrian traffic. Creates a richly dramatic setting on the walls of any style home, whether modern, traditional, or rustic. Made from real Carrara marble.

Veneto

This striking Venetian plaster is another Plaster Artistry™ exclusive, developed by one of our artisans. Layered color with black pebbled accents create the look of a stone slab. Great as an accent wall or an entire dramatic room. Smooth, glossy finish.

Veneziano BiColore

We used two colors of Veneziano to attain this interesting effect. Shown here in Red/Terracotta, you can choose your own two colors to complement your home or business.

Veneziano

Textured, translucent appearance is smooth to the touch. This resin-based Venetian plaster takes deep, intense colors. We polish it to a mirror-like gloss. Washable and patchable, good for high traffic areas.

Veneziano Classico

A smooth, glossy classic Venetian plaster with universal appeal. Shown here in two colors, can also be done in a single color, where you would see tone-on-tone variations of your chosen hue.