

# INTERIOR DESIGN

The background image is a photograph of a restaurant interior. The ceiling is a complex, multi-faceted geometric structure. Large windows provide a panoramic view of a city skyline, with the Empire State Building being a prominent feature. The restaurant is furnished with tables covered in white cloths and orange upholstered chairs. A small table with a menu stand is visible in the foreground.

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# Stuck on Stucco

STUCCO, STAINED PLASTER, FRESCO, VENETIAN PLASTER, COLORED CONCRETE: ALL ARE WORDS used to describe the new material finishes being applied to walls at several notable job sites. Although one could legitimately trace historic use back to the mud-caked cave walls of pre-history, more refined precedents would probably include Venetian and Spanish palaces.

From a technical point of view, however, today's materials are a far cry from their ancient brethren. Traditional stucco, composed of fired and re-wetted limestone, compares little in terms of content, durability and flexibility to today's compounds, according to Stephen Balser of Art In Construction, one of the American leaders of this movement. In business for 15 years, Balser, who refers to his material as Artisan Plaster, has more than three dozen formulas to meet various applications that include, most recently, floor and wet situations. The material is either trowelled on walls or cast into furniture and countertops, and offers a much more flexible, less expensive, more consistent alternative to stone, he says. "It takes the curse off of Sheetrock, to make it look as if the wall grew there." From smooth and waxy to rough and chalky, intensely pigmented to color-metamorphosing tints, the material can assume a myriad of looks.

It was love at first sight for Clodagh, upon seeing one of Balser's first plastering projects. "Stephen and I have been collaborating for years, experimenting with additives such as bronze metal dust that turns green in damp weather or blue when dry. We even put straw in my office wall."

Tom Sansone of TAS Design appreciates the material as a "metaphorical blend to existing architecture." For the Sony offices in Miami (see May 1996 *Interior Design*), ugly columns were coated to integrate with the exposed concrete slab ceiling.

No flash-in-the-pan phenomenon, chances are we will continue to see refinements to this type of finishing technique for a long time to come.

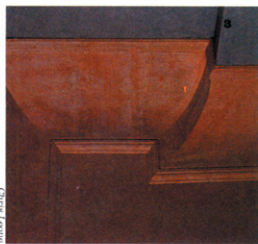
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**1** Resolution; **4** Architecture in collaboration with Glenn Rescalvo Design Studio used Art In Construction for the Simint showroom.

**2** Clodagh applied a gray/black Artisan Plaster in the executive bathroom and **4** a rich shade of red in the interior core of Elektra Entertainment.

**3** Art In Construction can build moldings out of its Artisan Plaster.

**5** Turret Collaborative Architects used Stucco Lustru Veneziano to create a brilliant blue wall at the Market at Newport.



Glenn Rescalvo