



A Stylish Clay Finish That You Can Apply

Natural earthen plaster looks good and offers no trowel trouble

CLAY PLASTERS can conjure images of the rough walls in traditional cob-earth and adobe houses. But American Clay, the maker of Earth Plaster, invented a mutable plaster that can mimic styles from silky Venetian to pebbly Provencal.

The formula—natural clay, recycled marble dust, and pigment for color—passes muster with the eco-conscious: low-energy production (it's made in the USA with domestic ingredients), no toxic chemicals, no noxious fumes.

Gypsum plasters, by comparison, emit carbon dioxide as they dry. And lime plasters, which are harder than clay, hold less moisture and therefore don't regulate room temperature as well. Then there's the pH problem: Lime can burn your skin during application.

Earth Plaster pleases restoration purists, too. The material meets most preservation mandates for malleability, flexibility, durability, and mold and bug resistance.

It's also DIY-friendly. Just add water, and

spray it or spread it on specially primed walls. The plaster, which comes in 40 colors, goes on in two coats with no sanding in between, and takes about six hours to dry. "Our best installers are people who've never used [plaster] before, because they don't have a preconceived idea about what it's supposed to do," says American Clay spokeswoman Carol Baumgartel. But should you need help, the company will provide the name of a local installer.

Even without labor costs, though, Earth Plaster costs more than its conventional cousins: about \$1 to \$1.50 per square foot, compared with 22 cents. But just think, the built-in pigments means you'll save on paint. And according to Baumgartel, that extra coin also buys you easy reparability—by keeping it wet, you can save a small batch of the plaster for up to six months for touch-ups. For ordering information, as well as detailed application instructions, visit americanclay.com.

—LISA SELIN DAVIS

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT:
A custom-tinted red Earth Plaster coats shelves in the dining area of a 1920s wood-frame cottage in Venice Beach, California, that was recently rebuilt in a Pueblo Revival style. The homeowners chose soothing Tucson Gold to surround the hearth in the master bedroom.

