

Stayin' Trim

There's Not Much of a Trend in Trim, Just a Lot of Variety

To trim, or not to trim, that is the question.

The answer? There's more than one answer. Many contractors don't regard trim as that important, only, as it were, the icing on the cake. But others look at trim as the icing that makes the cake. Usually, with a topic like this, we'll talk to several contractors

throughout the country, and, even though there might be some differences of opinion, an overall pattern emerges, upon which the story is built. With this story, however, the responses were so varied that, instead of trying to impose a pattern that is not there, let's just look at the responses in all their variety. Since trim is not a standard appli-

By Thomas G. Dolan

cation such as, say, drywall, but rather a product that is applied in bits and pieces, it is perhaps fitting that this story proceeds in bits and pieces.

An initial question is—Just what is trim? Here, as in many other aspects of this subject, there was no clear consensus. So let's hazard a rather broad-based definition. Trim, whether applied on the interior or exterior, is the final finishing touches to the work, usually for aesthetic purposes, though not always. Not a very concise definition, perhaps, but broad enough to include what most people think of when they hear the word trim.

"Every job we do has some trim on it, whether vinyl, EIFS or

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foam," says Greg Oaks, estimator at Oaks Brothers, Inc., Greenbrier, Ark. "It's always been that way for as long as I've been in the in the business."

Oaks uses a plastic trim to finish off a moisture drainage system, a trim that is not seen. But most are used for aesthetic purposes. "Architects are using trim in several different ways, on windows, doors and cornices, to achieve effects they can't get otherwise," he says.

Oaks adds that manufacturers are keeping the trend going by adding many different textures and colors than before. "Instead of having a

choice of one or two colors, now you can choose up to five," he says. Oaks adds that manufacturers are also continually coming up with new ways to make applications easier. For instance, he mentions that usually you apply EIFS with first the foam, then the fibercoat mesh and brown coat, and then the finish coat. But now there's a company that offers a foam with the mesh and brown coat already applied, which, Oaks says, "eliminates a couple of steps."

Dennis Hand, operations manager, MKB Construction, Inc., Phoenix, is also big on trim. "We've seen some big changes in trim over the past five years," he says. "In our area, bullnose corner beads for drywall are very popular in both residential and commercial buildings. We also do a lot of extruded aluminum trim for architectural features." Hand says that sometimes the trim serves functional purposes such as drop edges or vent screens, while other times the trim is strictly for aesthetics. "Trim allows an architect to take a plain wall or ceiling and dress it up."

The increased popularity of trim results from so many different styles hitting the market, ranging anywhere from \$1.50 to \$11 per linear foot. There's also much more advertising, which creates awareness. Hand says sometimes compound mitres can be tricky to install, but that generally the application of trim doesn't take much in terms of added skill or time.

Inside and Out

John Glass, executive vice president, Joe Banks Drywall & Acoustics, Inc., Mangham, La., reports that "In this part of the

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country we see a lot of fiberglass reinforced gypsum on the inside and EIFS on the outside mimicking stone. Since we don't do stone, I love it. With plastering being a dying trade, newer products such as Styrofoam are much more user friendly and can give the old-fashioned columns and moldings it would be difficult to get otherwise.” Glass believes one reason more and more people are turning to trim is that “Everybody likes their building to be unique.”

For Jim Schimpf Sr., president of Interior Specialty Construction, Ashland, Va., vinyl trim is a way to strengthen EIFS. “The manufacturers of EIFS tell you not to run finish on top of the basecoat where the caulking is,” he explains. “Because the problem when you're backwrapping is that it's a wet product, and the finish tends to go too far into the backwrap where it interferes with the bond. Schimpf says that instead of running the basecoat and the mesh around the end of the foam to form your stop, you can use the vinyl trim to stop flush with the trim so you don't have to wrap around.”

Many different selections of vinyl trim are available from different manufacturers that are complementary with EIFS, Schimpf says. He adds, “I look at the vinyl trim as an insurance policy. It

costs a little more, but you get a better bond between the caulking and EIFS, and, therefore, a better product. You also get cleaner lines for an added aesthetic dimension.”

Schimpf says that this market has been increasing for him. “Trim is not a prof-

it center,” he points out, “rather it's a way of doing better, more lasting work.”

As opposed to using prefabricated trim, such as foam pieces put on corner beads, Stephen Donnelly, president of Stephen Donnelly Company, Bloomington,

Minn., says, “I like to do trim the old-fashioned way” Donnelly has his carpenter do the layout where the trim fits on the wood screen as a guide for the thickness of the trim piece, nail that onto the base coat then fill in with the thicker base coat. “Then when it comes to the finish, just pull the wood screen off and the trim piece is right there, hard in stucco,” Donnelly says.

By doing it this way, according to Donnelly, “You don’t have to worry about wrapping tar paper around wood, which can be a bit like trying to pour a sidewalk onto a wall.”

Donnelly estimates that only about one-quarter of the contractors do it the way he does, but he maintains that foam is more expensive and labor intensive. He adds that his way allows you to look and see what you’ve done, with the ability to change if you want. This makes his process less prone to error. He also says that his way allows the option of putting on either EIFS or stucco without having to make that commitment beforehand. He’s also saved from the problem of either not ordering enough foam or ending up with wasted foam.

On the other hand, William Motes, vice president, American Plastering Company, Inc., Jacksonville, Fla., likes the prefinished foam trim and says that new polyurethane products that hard coat the foam gel form a tougher product than the conventional base coat and mesh. He points to the Disney use of this product for birthday cake castle, and maintains that, though more expensive initially ultimately presents savings in terms of labor and maintenance.

George Stripp, president of Ann Arbor Ceiling & Partition LLC, Ann Arbor, Mich., also maintains that premanufactured trim saves owners more money than does the actual wood product. It also saves time in terms of installation. “We’re seeing more of a willingness to use these premanufactured shapes that are delivered with the finish already on them.”

Stripp cites a job he is doing on the new Greek Town Casino in Detroit, a \$220 million building that has 12,000 linear feet of gypsum reinforced moldings, including crown moldings that come in 10-foot lengths. “We put a cleat on the wall and simply slip the molding over the cleat,” Stripp says.

Depends on Where

Trim, however, is not a big item with all contractors. Some, like Floyd Thrasher, operations manager for Sharpe Interior

Systems, Inc., Sun Valley, Calif., say they use trim only on selected types of jobs. For Sharpe Interior, this is usually department stores. Otherwise, says Thrasher, “Trims have not been as much a part of our work as they were five years ago. Many clients don’t want to pay for it.”

Thrasher indicates the trims he uses are made of good old-fashioned aluminum. “Aluminum, both interior and exterior, stays straighter than plastic and does a better job,” he says. “We tried one job using plastic on the exterior, and it was warping before the finish was put on. Once the finish is on, the plastic will hold, but aluminum holds its shape no matter what.”

Greg Travis, vice president of Lassiter Plaster Company Inc., Murray, Ky., also sees trim growing in specific areas. For his company, it’s in gymnasiums and swimming pool areas, areas with big windows over concrete blocks where an arch effect is created, almost like a church, to let in light. “The windows

create a feeling of more openness and also present a need to decorate that area.” Travis says. He adds that putting trim in these areas involves more curves and arches, and costs more, “though if you figure it right, there can be more profit in it too,” he says.

Vincent Gray, president of Irwin Interior Systems, Inc., Trafford, Pa., is involved in both interior and exterior trim for a new Loews theater, and sees trim being put into similar theater projects. But if it’s not a theater, he says, “We don’t see much change from the basics, such as office projects.” He adds, “There’s no big financial advantage to adding trim.”

Some Say No

Kim Sides, president of Sides Drywall, Inc., Auburn, Ala., also reports that trim is not much of an element in his business, an exception being institutions such as colleges. “Before these

buildings were more utilitarian, but now they’re becoming more aesthetic,” he says.

Richard Morris, senior vice president, Center Brothers, Inc., Savannah, Ga., also doesn’t have much of an emphasis on trim. “In certain areas, you can dress up entrances, halls, corridors and add variety to flat walls, and, in more commercial work places, trim is an inexpensive way to make them look a little classier.”

He adds, however, that there isn’t much of a trend toward trim. But he has no problems with the application. “There’s a lot of premanufactured trim on the market. You just put it up and finish the joints. It saves on labor.”

Several other contractors reported they don’t use much trim. These include Lynn Leitner, project manager, OCP Contractors, Toledo, Ore., who says, “Trim has always been a minor part of our business, and is likely to stay that way.”

Robert Uhrhan, division manager, Drury Company, Cape Girardeau, MO., says, “The only place we use trim in the venting of the overhang, but we really don’t use it as an aesthetic component.”

Joseph Feldner, president and chief executive officer of McNulty Brothers Company, Chicago, says, “What the architects want in Chicago are straight, clean, flat, smooth monolithic walls, and that’s all we do.”

Gary Barrick, president, Diversified Interiors of Armarillo, Inc., Armarillo, Texas, is another who says, “In this part of the country people don’t use much trim.”

When asked why so many contractors don’t use trim, he replies, “The reason is cost. Once you start using trim, it gets pricey.” Moreover, Barrick adds, “You can accomplish the same things with a router or hot knife. The mesh is continuous through the routed joint, while the EIFS trim causes you to start and stop; so it slows you down, as well being pricey EIFS trim is almost never specified because of the price.”

So, there it is—a hodgepodge of different ideas. Perhaps the editor can make it look coherent by bordering it with a nice decorative trim. 