

# Wall & Ceiling Contractors Gear For Increased Spray Texture Business



**T**oday's open-design interiors, featuring high ceilings, skylights and large window expanses, are creating new contractor opportunities for spray texturing both commercial and residential walls and ceilings.

Aesthetic appeal is an important factor. But spray texturing also masks surface variations enhanced by the contemporary architectural style's flood of natural light.

Wall and ceiling spray texturing was initially developed by West Coast builders for new apartment and condominium construction. Now it has spread in recent years to other parts of the country where the benefits of an improved interior finish, plus substantial time and material savings, have become well known.

Builders unfamiliar with spray texturing often expect to pay more for such an extra. Actually they pay *less*,

**By Dennis Collins**



compared to conventional smooth-finishing of drywall. Under critical lighting conditions, conventional finishing requires additional preparation for drywall mechanics—including a third coat of topping on each joint, perhaps even hand-floated over the entire wallboard surface.

Wall and ceiling spray textures, on the other hand, go on fast. The deliberately irregular finish helps hide minor defects and diffuses light across wallboard surfaces. Spray textures, can typically be applied in several hours (including masking) for most 2,000 square foot homes or commercial structures. Ceiling textures can be applied equally as fast.

Moreover, with today's wide range of stylish texturing possibilities featuring, fine, medium, or coarse ceiling aggregates, plus non-aggregate wall sprays, architects and designers can let their imaginations run wild.

By adjusting mixture consistency and/or varying the atomizing pressure, contractors can create custom effects from spray spatter and spatter knock-downs to orange peel finishes. White, light-reflecting surfaces can then be left unadorned, or finished with a coat of paint.

What are the real opportunities in today's commercial and residential spray texture markets? This is perhaps best answered by three successful wall and ceiling contractors who have found their market niches and, like all others in this business, are continually assessing the potential that lies ahead:

**How popular are spray textures in your region as a finishing treatment for walls and ceilings?**

**STEVE CARSON**, Vice President, Acous-Tex Corporation, Alvin, TX: "Our work is largely single-family residences and almost all of it in the Houston area is textured—all of the ceilings and probably 99 percent of the side walls. Once in a great while, you'll see slick walls on the very big custom homes."

**TOM JOHNSON**, Vice President/General Manager, Mader Southeast Inc., Orlando, FL: "Texturing interior surfaces is the norm for Florida's residential market, and just about all commercial concrete ceilings are specced for textures. Vinyl, however, is the popular wallcovering choice in our commercial sector."

**BRET BRADY**, Field Superintendent, E.F. Brady Company, San Diego, CA: "Spray texturing has held pretty steady in San Diego since the 1970s. I'd say 90 percent of both commercial and residential work calls for some kind of ceiling texture, maybe 50 percent are specced for wall textures. Residential probably leans more towards texture on the walls."

**What factors do you see contributing to this pattern of acceptance?**

**STEVE CARSON (TX)**: "Spray texturing delivers a better finished product. When you put a good, uniform texture on walls and ceilings, it covers wallboard blemishes and irregularities. Application time is real important too. With our big machines, we can do a complete house in just 2½ to 3 hours."

**TOM JOHNSON (FL)**: "There are advantages in texturing as far as hiding surface flaws, and the aesthetics of the



textured "look" is also an important factor in this market. Plus, when you're going to spray texture, you two-coat rather than three-coat drywall surfaces."

**BRET BRADY (CA)**: "We find spray textures are quicker to apply versus smooth finishing, and they're also very low maintenance. A small indentation from a child's toy shows up on a smooth wall, but the variations in even a light texture will hide it. Texturing options also provide a degree of artistic expression from the inside of the building, rather than just exterior surfaces."

**Have you seen improvements in spray-based textures in recent years?**

**STEVE CARSON (TX)**: "Today's spray textures are really doing the job. Through our Drywall Interior System Contractor Association (DISCA) here in Houston, we've worked with several manufacturers in developing new formulations. And it's working out. There is less fallout. Better stand-out. And sprayability has really improved."

**TOM JOHNSON (FL):** "I think the textures we're using now spray better, plus provide improved coverage and workability. They go on fast and provide a quality appearance."

**BRET BRADY (CA):** "I've seen more consistency in the mixing, causing fewer clogs and related problems on the job site."

**Is there a broader selection of texture options to chose from today than previosly? What's "hot" in your area?**

**STEVE CARSON (TX):** "We now have a range of texturing alternatives, and the ability to offer new "looks" can be important. For example, sand textures used to be very popular here, especially for multi-family housing. Now, a lot of ceilings are sprayed very heavy with a medium aggregate and finished with a knock-down or Monterey Drag effect. Orange peel texturing is the most popular sidewall treatment."

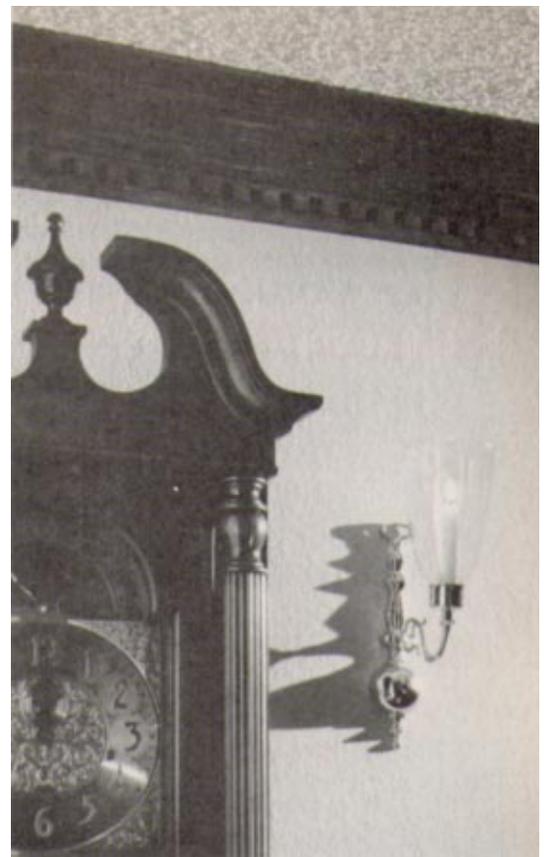
**TOM JOHNSON (FL):** "For com-

mercial work, the selection of ceiling textures is much the same as five years ago—fine, medium or coarse. The conventional polystyrene popcorn type of finish, however, seems to be giving way to a knockdown treatment with large, flat spatters from a dime to a half-dollar in size."

**BRET BRADY (CA):** "We've been mixing and matching textures depending on different architectural preferences. A light orange peel with a heavy knockdown is a popular ceiling treatment. Typically in residential, they like to have a light texture on the walls so they don't have to worry about the upkeep."

**What do you see as the future of spray textures in your region over the next five years?**

**STEVE CARSON (TX):** "Spray textures will continue to be popular in this market. When we came here 11 years ago, eight-foot conventional ceilings



were standard. Now we're dealing with big sliding doors, more skylights, vaulted ceilings, 45-degree angles, even curved walls and corners. Under these conditions, spray texturing makes especially good sense.

**TOM JOHNSON (FL):** "Spray texturing is an accepted finishing treatment here. And since we're in a growth market, I would expect the popularity of spray textures to climb along with the building boom we're experiencing."

**BRET BRADY (CA):** "There is a lot of work going on right now in San Diego and buildings are using more and more neutral lighting and a lot of glass to show off the coastline. Spray textures help diffuse this surface light and useage should increase right along with the number of hotels, motels, retirement homes and other structures going up in this area."

