Textures

By Jason Fell, Technical Director
Drywall Information Trust Fund

We on the West Coast feel like the pioneers when it comes to textures. We also feel we have experienced and conquered most of the problems that relate to texture.

Textures on the West Coast have developed into what I refer to as the basic eight:
1. Skip Trowel
2. Knock Down
3. Splatter
4. Fog
5. Orange Peel
6. Fog and Splatter
7. Roller Texture
8. Ceiling Texture

These basic eight have been around for over 30 years, and there are variations of each of these from contractor to contractor. This in itself can be a problem, which is why I always advise architects and specifiers to require a full size sample panel in the spec. This can solve many problems down the road as the job progresses. I also recommend that whoever has the final approval for acceptance view and sign off on the texture sample. How often have you had the general contractor, architect and everyone on the jobsite say fine, go for it, and the owner or CEO walks in 24 hours before the building is to be turned over and disapproves the texture job for aesthetics. Usually this occurs after the carpet is down, paint applied and the Mayflower van has pulled up with all the furniture and computers.

If I could modify our basic eight textures, it would be to add another to the list, Number nine would be smooth wall. Every drywall contractor knows that even smooth wall is a texture on its own. Most owners and a lot of architects want the smooth finish and see it as a deduct or cheaper finish because all you have to do is tape and top. In other words, spec the Volkswagen and demand the Cadillac via a punch list. How many times has that happened?

Back to the industry problem: Mainly, due to the wide use of the airless and the recycled face papers, funny things are happening to our finished product, mostly associated with the smooth wall finish. Depending on who you talk to, everyone has a different fix or feeling toward the shadowing problem of smooth wall.

Through the college of hard knocks, I have found that our paint today, thanks to the federal government, is fast becoming a whitewash due to the lack of, or restriction of, various chemicals by the feds. You can see through the paint today and it lacks body. I’ve steadily watched this go on for the past five or six years.

What happens is that you have a smooth, slick sanded drywall joint and the airless hits the wall allowing the face paper nap to stand up much like my son’s hair when he used too much dap on it. What we see now is a transition line between that smooth, slick joint and the stiff standing nap. Some of our manufacturers have hit this problem straight on with the development of coatings that, when applied, reduce the transition line and seal the wall.

Put these problems aside and perhaps all drywall should be textured, assuming that smooth wall is also a justified texture on its own. If we, as an industry, pushed this requirement, then it truly would be buyer beware if they elect to cut cost and not texture.

One of the biggest improvements I’ve experienced is the development through AWCI of the recommended specification for the five Levels of Gypsum Board Finish. This document is excellent and, in my opinion, stops the finger pointing. In other words, “What was bid, what was given.” This document will reduce the number of complaints and misunderstanding between architect, owner and contractor, and AWCI is to be complimented. To be totally effective, this must be, and currently is, run through ASTM and CSI.

Again, I recommend every drywall contractor get a copy of the specs for AWCI’s five Levels of Finish and try to present it to your customers.

About the Author

Jason Fell has been employed for the past 11 years as Technical Representative for the Drywall Information Trust Fund, a nonprofit organization representing the drywall industry for over 35 years. He is a member of ICBO, CSI, and ASTM’s C-11 drywall committee.

Note: To obtain copies of the Recommended Specification: Levels of Gypsum Board Finish, contact AWCI at (703) 684-2924.