Learning a Complementary Trade Gives You More Options to Offer the Building Owner

By Steven J. Collins

The Tacoma Public Library in Tacoma, Wash., was retrofit using the Dryvit Outsulation® system as well as several finishes and coatings, including 100 percent acrylic-based finishes over the cast-in-place concrete entrance.

For close to 25 years, contractors have been providing full thermal system solutions for new construction and retrofit projects. Although EIFS applications will continue to be the contractor’s bread-and-butter business for the near future, many are starting to take advantage of the technical advances being realized by EIFS manufacturers in the areas of finishes and coatings by offering them as a fast, practical and functional approach to building exteriors.

Due to recent improvements in their levels of performance, finishes and coatings now offer a myriad of efficient, effective exterior alternatives. A finish that makes a building’s exterior cleaner longer, a coating that bridges hairline cracks or a base coat that makes a foundation increasingly waterproof, for instance, give the contractor additional value-added options to offer the building owner.
In our ever-changing, competitive world, contractors can no longer compete with yesterday's products. The successful contractor will keep pace with these latest advantages in finishes and coatings by offering the products and services that best satisfy the demands of both the owner and the architect.

**ADDITIONAL BUSINESS**

Finishes and coatings provide the contractor with additional opportunities to find business outside, as well as inside, the EIFS industry. The contractor should be proactive and assist in bringing applications for finishes and coatings to the owner’s or architect’s attention. Often times, building owners are not familiar with the exterior components of a building. This presents a chance for the contractor to suggest ways in which a finish or a coating could achieve the desired result.

The contractor knows the trade and may be the best person to answer questions or offer advice on the finished coatings that should be used on a particular building. To fully take advantage of this opportunity, however, many contractors may need to change the way they do business and learn a new complementary trade, such as spray or roll coating.

Max Trowbridge, president of Trowbridge Restoration, Inc., West Bloomfield, Mich., is one such contractor who has taken advantage of the opportunities in the finishes and coatings market. He has been so successful in applying coatings of all kinds over various substrates that more than 40 percent of his business is now in coatings.

**THE FINISH AND COATING OPTIONS**

Finishes and coatings may be appropriate to use in a host of new construction and reconstruction applications. With new construction, they are used for one-coat stucco applications, to skim coat CMU and in direct-applied, fast-track projects where exterior insulation is not required. For reconstruction applications, finishes can be used to level out existing block walls.

It is important for contractors to be familiar with the major finish/coating options and their appropriate applications, including these:

**100 Percent Acrylic Finishes.** A 100 percent acrylic-based textured finish, better known as the final component on many EIF systems, can add lasting beauty and color to a variety of exterior walls. The 100 percent acrylics, such as Dryvit’s standard DPR (Dirt Pickup Resistant) finishes, have a demonstrated history of long-term performance. They retain their flexibility and color-fastness while resisting dirt and UV degregation.
The 100 percent acrylics can be
trowel or spray applied over properly
prepared substrates such as exterior
masonry, stucco and precast or cast-in-place concrete. They are also suitable for interior finishes.

Elastomeric Coatings. Improvements in dirt pickup resistance, flexibility and durability have contributed to the growth of elastomeric. These coatings look the same and are applied in the same manner as the traditional acrylic finishes, but elastomeric coatings have added functional advantages.

Elastomeric coatings, such as Dryvit® Weatherlast™, are flexible, elastic and weather resistant. They are 100 percent acrylic and provide a protective barrier against water penetration. The coating’s inherent elongation properties allow it to expand and recover along with the substrate, bridging hairline cracks up to 1/32". Elastomeric are also available in textured finishes and are trowel applied as a protective and decorative coat over stucco, concrete, masonry and CMU substrates.

The restoration of existing stucco or masonry walls is an ideal application for textured elastomeric finishes. This allows the contractor to present a higher performance option to traditional acrylic finishes. As opposed to offering just a base coat or skim coat and an aesthetic finish, the contractor can provide a long-lasting exterior weather barrier that protects against water penetration.

Waterproof Base Coatings. The polymer-based, waterproof adhesive base coat, such as Dryvit’s Dryflex™, is especially suited for areas of anticipated high-moisture exposure. It can be trowel applied as a hydrostatic waterproof base coat to foundation walls or as a reinforced skim coat over badly cracked stucco, concrete and masonry surfaces. It helps bridge minor surface cracking and provides an ideal base for elastomeric finishes.

Color Coatings/Paint. Often, an existing building only requires a change or enhancement in color. If this is the case, 100 percent acrylic-based color coatings, such as Dryvit Demandit®, can be brush, roller or spray applied to protect and decorate masonry, stucco, wood, primed metal and the acrylic-based textured finishes found on existing EIFS buildings.

Coatings for Substrate Preparation. Rough masonry or cementitious substrates may need fiber reinforced, 100 percent acrylic-based coatings. The high-build, smooth, creamy leveling coat is easy to apply. Also, roll or spray-on primers are available for the surface preparation of concrete, masonry and stucco to color coordinate substrates with the selected finish, promote adhesion or to consolidate surfaces.

By taking advantage of the latest innovations in finishes and coatings, contractors can expand their business by offering practical exterior alternatives to owners of buildings clad with stucco, concrete, masonry and CMU substrates, as well as EIFS. The use of these high-performance finishes and coatings will translate into greater owner satisfaction, less call-backs and a greater likelihood of increased business for contractors in the future.

About the Author

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