



A Home to Marvel

November 2, 2002

With 10,000 square feet of wall space requiring molding and millwork, even new trowels had to be custom made for this California home.



Parts of the many shapes of trowels.

An assignment of 50,000 square feet of wall space requiring textures so challenging that custom trowels were created to accomplish the desired effect is enough to make anyone's spider sense tingle. The 25,000 square foot home of Avi Arad, executive producer of such Marvel Comics character films as "Spider-Man," "X-Men," "Blade," and the upcoming "Daredevil," "Hulk" and "Sub-Mariner," was a project demanding super heroic construction practices from the wall contractors.



The center gallery gets the Tuscany application.

The texturing work involved a plaster stone finish over crown, pencil and baseboard wood molding, drywall and door casings.

“With thousands of linear feet of different moldings, we created trowels in the shapes of the moldings,” says Ofer Regev, who is head instructor and works in product development and technical support for TexSton.



An arch gets the Tuscany surface.

It's clobberin' time!

“Lot 29,” as the project is inconspicuously referred to, looks like the mansion occupied by the West Coast Avengers. Inside, Joseph Hughs, of Mesa Drywall Inc., of Anaheim, Calif., was assigned to install a Level 5 smooth drywall finish. National Gypsum’s 5/8-inch board was used, and a multitude of angles and corners faced Hughs.

“Once installed, the walls would receive a number of unique finishes,” says Hughs. “We did do some interior white plaster, specified for certain areas. We’ll install plaster on a wall that might be more likely to get banged around.”



Surfacing the curve of the staircase.

Needless to say, with some of the industry's issues with post-construction drywall problems, Hughs makes sure his company's work is perfect before any surfaces are applied.

"We do a diligent job of going through and thoroughly inspecting the wood framing," explains Hughs. "Without us doing that, we're not ensuring ourselves of straight and consistent lines. Levels, straight edges and spray-paint areas need to be shaved of shims. We're installing the skin over the bones and we won't even start hanging drywall unless we make sure that framing is perfectly straight."

Hughs does not worry that he may lose a job to competition based on his willingness to delay a job in the name of perfection.

"If we delayed a job and created adversity, we might lose the job," he adds. "But we do it for the betterment of a project not to stall or hold it up. We make sure it's done right the first time."

Mesa Drywall sent a supervisor to visit the site more than a week in advance of hanging the drywall to go through every room in the house with an 8-foot level and a can of red spray paint. The super will spray areas or studs in need of attention, giving the framer time to go through and fix these areas, helping to keep the job on schedule by spotting problem areas in advance. Framing quality depends on the framer.

"Framing quality is the result of supervision during construction and how adamant a framer is on upholding that quality," Hughs says. "A multitude of factors can cause cracks, moisture in wood or temperature fluctuations after occupancy. Wood breathes and moves."

Mesa Drywall applied Level 5 using Hamilton's Prep Coat, three coats of embedded mud in the joints and then the company returned to use an airless spray machine to spray any textures, back roll and sand the joints.

"We also go through and do a prepaint inspection, a final punch before giving it to the painters," Hughs explains. "When you get big volume walls, you put lights on

and find stuff. We do a very diligent job and that is how we continue to get these types of projects.”



Fiberglass custom trowels.

Excelsior!

TexSton supplied eight workers to assist S.P. Painting Inc., of Encino, Calif., with the finishing of the wall surfaces. The wood molding and baseboard surfaces were primed with a waterproofing penetrating primer, followed by a basecoat (the company’s own material with a polymer additive), and Terra and Tuscany surfaces with an additive designed to give the material flexibility and good adhesion to the basecoat. All this preparation is because these surfaces are applied over a wood substrate.

“Finally, we go over all this with two more coats, burnishing the surface to give it a stone look,” Regev says. “When dry the next day, we sand the surface with 220 sandpaper to give it a smooth feel and a little gloss.”

The walls were marked with pencil lines using a RoboToolz rotating laser system. With the laser, Regev’s crews took a horizontal line and leveled the line across all the wall surfaces. The zero point measured 16 inches from each horizontal line to the ceiling. After vertical lines are created, a Dremel 35,000 rpm grout cutter with 1/8-inch drill bit was used to drill grout lines on top of the stone-like finish. Once those grooves are all made, grout material fills them, the same color grout as used on the floor, giving the walls a stone block appearance.

“The challenge of the job was when you have a project with one or two detailed surfaces, it’s normally not a big deal to go over the detailed surfaces with a trowel,” Regev says. “Because there were so many different detailed surfaces, we had the millwork people supply us with the original shapes of the moldings and I created tools made out of acrylic but that material wore down too fast and lost its shape. Our next step was to contact a fellow who does bicycle parts from fiberglass. We gave him the molding shapes and he created fiberglass atop the tools, all trowel-

type tools. We ended up with customized trowels with wood handles and a fiberglass “blade” in the shape of the moldings.”

With teamwork worthy of the Fantastic Four, Mesa, S.P. Painting Inc. and TexSton accomplished the desired result.

“We’ve been successful because of cooperation with the high end,” says Hughs. “We work together and create synergy on the job. Lots of supers appreciate and respect that because it makes their lives easier. We do that and supply high quality and value.”

‘Nuff said. W&C