

Brushing Up on Paint Quality

By Jim Turner, Regency Wallcraft

As a contractor, what's your calling card? Whether providing new homes or remodeling existing structures, there are key design issues. In the new home market, maximum curb appeal, spacious living spaces, energy efficiency and architectural details are important selling points. In remodeling, expanding existing spaces, redesigning room layouts and upgrading cabinets, floorings and lighting are priorities. These are all calling card elements for a homeowner when evaluating a new home builder or remodeling contractor.

After your client moves, the focus shifts from their anticipation of a new living space to home maintenance issues. Fortunately, most modern materials require relatively little maintenance. With a light cleaning, they render years of carefree service. However, there is one exception. It covers the largest square footage in any home.

For those who may still be wondering, a home's painted surfaces may be what your client remembers most after the newness wears off. As a wallcovering contractor, I often hear about their poorly painted walls. They feel they have been "cheated" on their paint job. The walls show every mark or abrasion. When they attempt to clean areas, the paint just washes off the wall.

It doesn't seem to matter whether they spent \$10,000 on a remodel or \$1,000,000 for a custom home—their walls typically receive "builder's flat" paint. This finish level has some advantages, one-sided as they may be. First and foremost, it's cheap. And running a very close second, it is easily touched up. From a builder's perspective, it's easy to see why contractor grade paint is applied. It gets the job done.

These paints are primarily chalk, clay or other filler, with a small amount of inexpensive binder or resin. When applied, the resin soaks into the surface, leaving a "poor" wall surface. As a ceiling paint, they work beautifully. Overhead, they receive no abrasion or wear and generally require no washing. And they gracefully age over time. The same cannot be said when used for traffic or heavy duty areas.

It might surprise you that this situation has not escaped the attention of paint manufacturers. Imagine an irate homeowner, paint can in hand, demanding to know why their company's paint is washing off the wall. I have heard this story from more than one paint salesperson. In the homeowner's mind, that company makes bad paint.

It is no secret that not all cans of paint are created equal, even from the same manufacturer. However, paint manufacturers have been developing better performing flat or very low sheen paints to satisfy a homeowner's desire for better quality and the contractor's need for lower cost alternatives to the premium line. Through advances in resin formulation, flat or near flat "silken"

paints are washable and stain resistant. The following is a sample of locally available products.

Benjamin Moore—Regal Aqua Velvet

Coronado Paints—Cerama Gard

Pittsburg Paint—Manor Hall 86-6

Porter Paints—Silken Touch

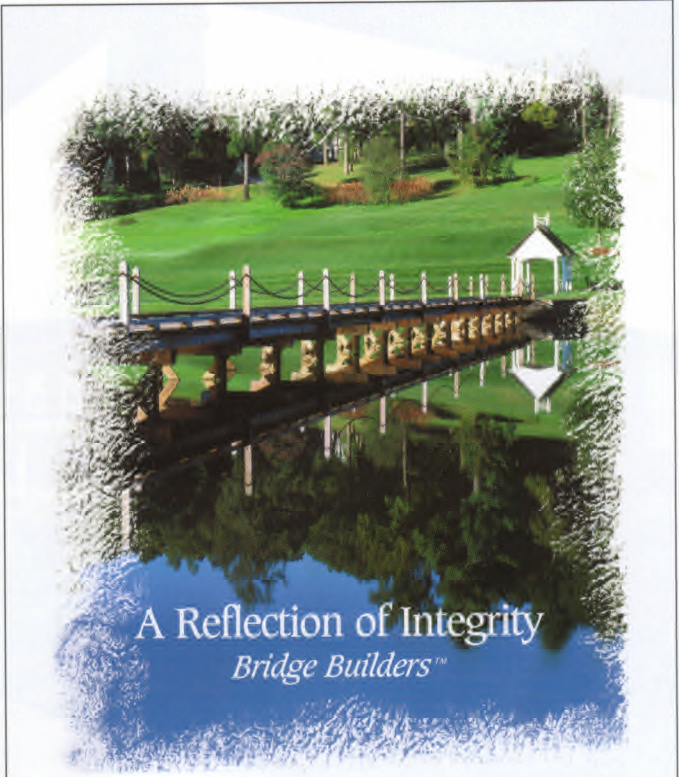
Sherwin-Williams—EverClean

These "silken lustre" flats offer smooth application with outstanding hiding. They are ideal for hallways, family rooms, mud rooms and children's bedrooms—wherever top performance in a flat wall paint is needed.

As Zig Ziglar, a leader in sales training and value buyer strategies, counsels: "Your clients don't really know what they want, until they know what's available!" It's our task to let them know what's available.

Jim Turner, president of Regency Wallcraft, is a decorating contractor in Columbus, OH. He is a member of the Central Ohio Chapter of the National Association for the Remodeling Industry (NARI), and serves as their secretary. He is a frequent contributor to Painting and Wallcovering Magazine, as well as Master Paperhanger Magazine.

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