

**TECHNICAL BULLETIN #3****CHARACTERISTICS OF SMOOTH TROWEL FINISHES**

Smooth hard troweled finishes (including Santa Barbara Finish) are achieved by using regular stucco or a special blend of stucco containing a finer grade of sand. This material is hand troweled to produce a flat, very smooth, hard finish. Santa Barbara finishes should not be confused with Mission finishes which have a slightly rougher texture and an undulating surface.

Smooth trowel finishes are the most unforgiving of any finish. Imperfections are inherent to the finish and should be expected. Common problems are:

- A. Blemishes (such as pock marks or trowel marks.
- B. Uneven coloring
- C. Burn marks (areas of dark grey or black caused by the troweling process)
- D. More pronounced lap joints and scaffold levels
- E. Cracks are more noticeable

Cracking is the most offensive problem. The compaction of the stucco necessary to attain the desired hard, smooth finish makes for a brittle surface that will crack with the slightest movement. Movement of the plaster can have many causes; causes over which the plaster may have little or no control:

- A. Earth movement
- B. Stress transfer from the structure
- C. Wind, seismic, vibration or impact stress
- D. Warping and twisting of underlying framing or sheathing
- E. A blow from an external source

In applying a smooth trowel finish, the plastering contractor should make sure there is sufficient curing time before the application of the finish coat. A minimum of fourteen days (preferably longer) after application of the brown coat, to allow for the normal hydration cracks to develop in the brown coat, should pass before application of the finish coat. Also, the Association does not recommend fog coating any smooth finish.

*This Association recommends before applying a smooth trowel finish* the plastering contractor advises the customer in writing before beginning the job that cracking, burn marks, uneven color and blemishes are the rule rather than the exception.

**DISCLAIMER**

While every precaution is taken to insure that all the information contained herein is accurate and as complete and useful as possible, the Associated Plastering & Lathing Contractors Association of San Diego (APLC) cannot assume any responsibility or obligation resulting from the use of any of the material or information contained herein.