Acrylic finishes are a blend of 100% acrylic copolymers, an aggregate either composed of marble or quartz, liquid pigments and other proprietary ingredients. This “high performing” finish was originally designed to go over Exterior Insulation Finish Systems (EIFS). EIFS is designed to be very flexible and crack resistant. Therefore, the finish must have the same characteristics as the rest of the assembly. While acrylic finishes won’t stop portland cement plaster from cracking, it has a higher crack resistant quality than cement-based finishes.

Acrylic finishes have other qualities that make them a popular alternative to cement-based stucco finishes; namely color. The finish uses very stable wet pigments to make the product integrally colored. These stable pigments along with the specially formulated 100% acrylic binder, promote resistance to fading, chalking and yellowing. As a result, the finishes tend to maintain their original appearance over time. Acrylic finishes give your plaster assembly a consistent and durable finish with an unlimited color selection. Many textures are also available to suit your design needs. “Specialty” finishes are available that provide other aesthetic options and/or have increased “mar resistance” than the standard finishes.

Many acrylic finish manufacturers have Dirt Pickup Resistant (DPR) technology in their products. This “DPR” technology causes the finish to cure into a tough, non-tacky coating that resists the accumulation of dirt, mold and pollutants. Many manufacturers also offer upgrades to standard acrylic finishes including: light-weight finishes making them more user-friendly, the addition of silicone boosts durability to withstand the most damaging environmental conditions and adding biocides to the products during the manufacturing process is designed for extra resistance to fungi and algae growth.

One more advantage of acrylic finish is that it is less moisture permeable than cement stucco. Acrylic finish won’t darken or discolor during prolonged rainstorms. It also adds weather resistance to the portland cement assembly while still allowing the assembly to breath.

“Steel Trowel Smooth” finishes are not recommended. Applying a smooth finish requires the substrate beneath the finish to be very smooth and making a plaster brown coat smooth is difficult at best and also an expensive process. It is recommended to use either Sand Fine or Sand Coarse Finish over a traditional plaster brown coat. It is also recommended that an acrylic primer that matches the color of the finish be applied to the brown coat prior to the application of the finish. This will allow the finish to dry evenly and the end result will be a more consistent and “brighter” colored wall!

In the event a smooth steel trowel finish is required, many acrylic finish manufacturers offer smooth finishes. Some manufacturers would recommend the use or even require the application of an acrylic base coat [an EIFS base coat] between the finish and the brown coat to “level out” the brown coat surface.

Nevertheless, when applying acrylic finishes right over a traditional brown coat, the brown coat should be as level, uniform and “closed” as possible. In addition, many if not all acrylic manufacturers recommend the use of an acrylic primer prior to the application of the finish [primer should be avoided with some acrylic “smooth” finishes]. For more information and application procedures, call your local acrylic finish manufacturer representative.