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Intro: Painting with Colored Cement

This deals with the use of colored cement as a paint to colorize cement structures.

Humidity passing through a cement roof can cause ceiling paint to blister and peel. Not so with colored cement, which sticks like crazy to cement, even wet. With luck, an interior cement "paint" job is a lifetime paint job.

On the outside, cement paint helps seal cracks.

I use a pressure sprayer for preliminary cleaning.

One interesting advantage to using cement as paint is that spiders appear to not like raw cement. There are very few spider webs where surfaces are painted with cement. If you paint them with house paint, the spiders come. Some insects (butterflies?) taste through their feet, I think. Although not insects, that may explain why spiders don't like to hang out on raw cement. Whatever the reason, fewer spiders in the house is good. Fewer cobwebs to clean results in less time spent cleaning.



step 1: Materials

The basic materials needed are cement and pigments to colorize the cement. Concrete acrylic fortifier can also be added to improve bonding and perhaps weather resistance on exterior surfaces. I'm not sure if adding acrylic fortifier decreases the spider-repelling properties of the cement. For interior painting it may not be as important to use it, anyway.

I use both regular gray Portland cement and white cement, depending on the colors I am after. For darker colors, I use gray cement. The more pigment you use, the more intense the colors will be. The cement is the binder, though, so an excess of pigment could mean not enough binder and result in a chalky surface.

Pigments for cement come in liquid and powder form. I prefer the dry powder form, since I can mix the pigments with cement and store them for later use. (Water in the liquid pigments would harden up the cement.) One way to mix the different powders is to put them in a closed container, such as a plastic bucket with lid, and shake them.

Unlike the powdered pigments available from some art supply stores, the pigments from hardware stores are more limited in color, and a lot less expensive. Red is sort of a "red oxide", yellow is sort of ochre. There is also a green, blue, and black. With those basic colors, which are not true primary colors, you can mix a range of colors.

This Wikipedia link will tell you way more than you need to know about Portland Cement. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portland_cement



step 2: Tools

Tinted cement can be brushed on with a house brush, or broom head. Being stiffer than a house brush, the broom head is sometimes the best choice for thick mixes using sand.

A paint roller can also be used. I sometimes make my own rollers with texture designs for creating colored design patterns on walls and floors.

5 gallon plastic buckets can be used as mixing containers. Mixing can be done with a stirring stick, but a drill motor and paint mixer do the best job of breaking up any lumps.

Plastic mixing tubs (mine came from Home Depot) are good containers to mix in and work out of. Held at a slight angle, they make good roller trays for coating paint rollers.

If your hands are going to get cement on them, you will probably want to use rubber gloves, also. Heavy rubber work gloves are available at hardware stores.

I like to have a water dispenser available for sprinkling small quantities of water. Solid particles tend to settle to the bottom, so water to adjust consistency sometimes needs to be added.

See this instructable for an easy way to make a sprinkling water container, which is also good for garden use. <http://www.instructables.com/id/GARDEN-WATERING-JUG/>



step 3: Techniques

A cement painting artist will be creative. There are lots of ways to get colored cement from Point A (the reservoir) to Point B (the wall, ceiling, or floor).

You can fling watered down cement with a brush from a distance, creating splotchy color effects. The dripping of excess material, especially over irregular textured surfaces can make beautiful multicolor effects.

Solid coats of thicker consistency, even containing some sand, can be brushed on with a broom head.

Lighter consistencies can be brushed on with a house painting brush, or roller. Small brushes are good for detail work.

I sometimes make my own textured rollers for creating different patterns. The one in the photo is made of PVC pipe, with "nagahyde" (vinyl upholstery material) adhered to it with clear PVC cement, as is used for joining plumbing parts.)



step 4: Colored Cement Projects

These are some of the colored cement paint jobs I have done at my guesthouse (Beautiful backwoods Puerto Rico. Models and musicians are especially welcome as guests.) The underlying architecture is a cement block house which was here originally. The wood and corrugated iron roof rotted away and I replaced it with one using "nylon-cement" construction techniques, which are similar to ferro-cement techniques except that nylon fishnet replaces the chicken wire used in ferro-cement.

For more on nylon-cement uses see: <http://www.instructables.com/id/ZIPPER-STAIRS-a-new-type-of-stairway-using-Nylon/>

Also: <http://www.instructables.com/id/ROAD-REPAIR-with-NYLON-CEMENT/>



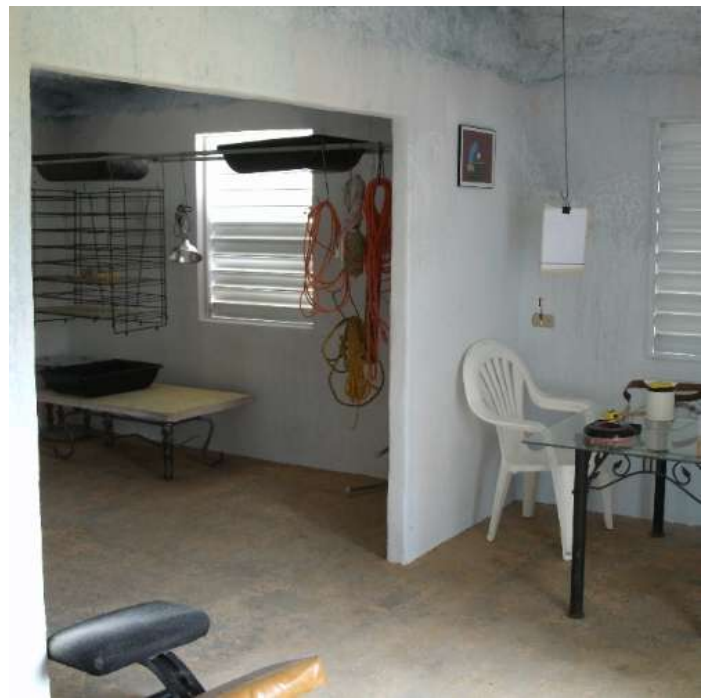


Image Notes

1. The floor has a darker brown base color with a lighter orange cement on top, which was applied with a design roller. Acrylic sealer was applied on top. Without the sealer, foot traffic tends to wear away the surface and create dust.





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