

SHAPED MURALS

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Many cultures have traditions of decorating houses and public buildings. A plastered surface should protect the building wall from decay. But it can also be beautiful



Since lime plaster is a bright white, and works well on earthen walls, it can be used with earthen wall sculpture to create decorations. In places like Haiti where wooden decorations are too expensive, vibrant artistic traditions can be continued with shaped murals.

Images above, clockwise from top:

African symbol for 'Love will Prevail' by Maria Benasa for BSI; Interior earthen plasters by Jen Turner of Homegrown Hideaways; Alison Kennedy's home in Utah (photo by permission from www.earthbagbuilding.com); Phoenix mural by Jen Turner.



Murals can be simple shapes, or have different colors added. Lime can also be plastered around mosaics, although it is harder to get a smooth surface.

If an earthen shaped mural is added to a concrete and cement stucco wall, the wall should face the sun so it can dry out well.

Locate your mural where the lime plaster will not need much repair. Lime plaster works well under a small roof overhang. It does not last well on the tops of exposed site walls.

In cold, wet climates lime plaster may need repair every 4 or 5 years.

This is done with a watery paint of lime and pigment, but the plaster will look more like paint. Most of the old buildings of Ireland and the Mediterranean are finished this way. Under a deeper overhang, and in warm locations lime plaster will need less repair.

Shaped murals must be attached well to the wall base! On a smooth finished wall, attach some mesh, or finer fish net.

A small or linear mural can be attached to some nails or screws with string. If applying on stucco, pock-mark the stucco, and add some lumpy concrete texture also, so the shaping can hold well to the wall.



Build the shapes with a heavy plaster or cob mixture- a lot of straw and enough clay to hold it all together well.

Start shaping your mural, but as you work round the shapes. Rounded shapes will be easier to plaster.



After building the shapes, smooth them with a finer plaster layer. Mix chopped straw or fresh horse

manure into this layer. The fibers give strength to the plaster.



But always leave texture so the next layer of plaster will adhere. Poke finger holes or scratch the plaster before each layer dries.



Finish with a top coat of colored earthen plaster for an inside wall.



The gray layer shown at left is exterior earth plaster under a deep overhang in a very dry climate. It is also on the protected side of the buildings (not hit by storm winds).

Use a colored lime plaster for most exterior walls. Plaster the lower sections first so that the upper plaster overlaps plaster layers lower on the wall.



Simple iron oxide pigments used in making glazes for pottery work well for coloring lime. Or local earths or sands of rich colors can be used.

Test your colored plaster dry first. Lime plaster dries much lighter than it appears when wet! At left is the dry first coat of the African symbol from the first page.

To get the finished mural as bright as shown on the first page, we used plaster that looked very dark!



For more information about how to make and use lime plaster, see

<http://buildsimple.org/resources/See%20How%20to%20Make%20Lime%20Plaster.pdf>