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Getting plastered -- with style

BY JO WERNE

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How would you like your living room walls to look like silk? Or a bedroom with walls that feel as soft as velvet? Or a family room with walls that appear ancient?

It's all possible with paint and plaster products from OIKOS, a 20-year-old Italian company. And you don't have to go to Italy to shop for the products.

Five years ago Elias Benalloun moved from Caracas, Venezuela, to Miami, opened DecoFinish and became the first and only distributor of OIKOS products in the United States.

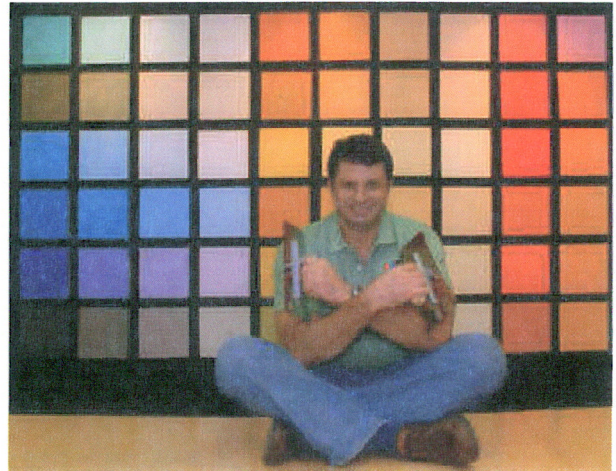
The products are water-based and solvent-free, making them eco-friendly. And because the products are water-based, there's no odor.

"You can move into a house the day it's applied," says Benalloun. "There is marble dust and lime putty in the composition; marble dust gives it the shine."

Faux finishing textures include silk, velvet, damask marble, stone, pearl, Venetian plaster and antique, to name a few. DecoFinish offers a vast range of colors but also can custom-color any shade in its laboratory adjacent to the North Miami Beach showroom.

"You can bring in a Benjamin Moore color chart and we have pigments to match any color," Benalloun says.

However, OIKOS paint and plaster products are not for do-it-yourselfers. They are thick and must be applied with a stainless steel trowel. Brushes don't work with this type of decoration. "You should hire a certified applicator," says Benalloun, who has eight on his staff who were trained in Italy. "I've trained 300 applicators in South Florida during the last five years. If someone can't find an applicator in their area, I'll send one of mine to do the job."



DONNA E. NATALE PLANAS / MIAMI HERALD STAFF

COLORS GALORE: DecoFinish owner Elias Benalloun, trowels in hand, sits in front of a wall of Venetian plaster samples

INFORMATION

DecoFinish, 2012 NE 155th St., North Miami Beach; 305-940-8022 or www.decofinish.com. Store hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday, closed Saturday and Sunday.