Renovating A Grade II Listed Building? 4 Things Learned From Experienced Plasterers

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LONDON, July 2013----Makeover Builders' recent renovation of a Grade II listed building in Islington, North London, shows 4 key points about traditional plastering that anyone considering similar work should know.

1. Matching materials - Dry lining may be less labour intensive, but haired lime plaster (a mix of lime and horse hair) applied by hand is usually required in listed buildings. This method of plastering has practical as well as aesthetic benefits. 'We use the haired lime for all cases where traditional materials are needed. The finish is rougher than modern mixes, so it matches the old look, and the hair stops surface cracks,' explains Makeover Builders director Barak Chever.

2. Coving options - If the building is Grade II (rather than Grade I or II*) then it is worth checking with the local authority whether or not coving and cornices have to be made to match the originals in appearance. 'We use a coving specialist for this type of work. He makes reverse molds and fibrous plasterwork that we then put in. It can cost £300/m, so if it's allowed and they prefer it, clients go for plain coving,' says Chever.

3. Old walls and damp - Gypsum plaster is used throughout modern and non-listed buildings because it dries quickly. However, water-repellant additives that stop gypsum from crumbling in the damp also stop walls from breathing. Lime plaster, on the other hand, is more breathable and, therefore, a better choice for old buildings where walls have been or are a bit damp.

4. Adapting to new materials - Because the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 came in after many period buildings had been modified, any plasterwork should be done by a skilled tradesman with knowledge of how to fix haired lime to modern substrates like metal wire and plywood.

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About Makeover Builders:
Makeover Builders is a North London-based professional design-and-build team taking on residential and commercial commissions for interior and exterior works across the city. Director Barak Chever has over 12 years' experience in the construction industry, both in Israel and the UK, and established links with architecture and interiors firms in London.

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