

How to Avoid "Orange Peel" in Marble Restoration

The "Orange Peel" Effect on Marble

Working with marble polishing powders is both an art and a science. Improper use of polishing powders can result in what is known in the stone and tile industry as "orange peel," that is, marble that has a dull and wavy or rough and dimpled appearance. Fortunately, there are ways to avoid or correct the orange peel effect and achieve the desired finish.

About Marble Polishing Powder

Fred Hueston, Chief Technical Director of Surface Care Pros Learning Institute explains how the ingredients of polishing powders work together to achieve the desired finish on marble, "Powder polishing uses superfine abrasives and oxalic acid to achieve the deep shine on marble surfaces. The oxalic acid is used to accelerate the polishing process by reacting with the calcium carbonate. The combination of the abrasive and the attack of the oxalic acid result in a polished surface. The use of oxalic acid as an accelerator allows the craftsman to polish most marble at a 400-600 hone."

How Orange Peel Happens

The use of oxalic acid as an accelerator can backfire if the marble is exposed to too much of it or for too long. Evidence of trouble can appear as etch damage or as orange peel. Hueston describes the difference, "There is a big difference between etch damage and orange peel. Etch damage is caused by the acid sitting on the stone too long and destroying the calcium carbonate. With orange peel, the abrasive plays a part. The acid is rubbed into the surface

in more of a burning effect, attacking and moving the calcium carbonate."

How to Avoid Orange Peel

Certain types of marble are more prone to orange peel than others. Hueston specifically names negro marquina, crema marfil, and other soft marbles. To get the desired results, stone restoration contractors have to practice patience and persistence. When you start polishing, Hueston suggests the following steps:

- Apply a small amount of polishing powder.
- Work the polishing powder for several minutes, making sure to check it often by pulling the slurry back with a window squeegee.
- If a shine is not being produced, fight the urge to add more powder.
- Work the powder a little longer before adding more powder.

How to Remove Orange Peel

To remove the orange peel, re-hone the marble. Hueston warns, "Orange peel cannot be removed with more powder."

Stone restoration contractors can follow Hueston's suggestions to avoid orange peel damage when using the powder polishing method.

For more information, register to earn a Stone Restoration Master Course Certificate. You'll learn how to restore natural stone floors, countertops, and walls, engineered stone, and granite floors, using the most efficient and effective restoration procedures. Also included in this program is the Stain Care Pro course with a one-year subscription to the Stain Care Pro app and Understanding Sealers.

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