

TECHNICAL SOURCE GUIDE

QUICK BRICK

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The most efficient quick-brick method that I have come across utilizes 4' x 8' sheets of compressed polystyrene from a local lumber yard, a stencil, a spray gun, a heat gun, and water-based paint. I have used this method for over ten years and have often found it to be the most expeditious way to achieve a convincing effect. Although a three-person crew should be used, labor is efficient because of the fast rate in which the process is executed, with one person running the spray paint gun, one person moving the stencil, and one person running the heat gun.

Although I have used 3/4" and 1" width of 4' x 8' polystyrene sheets for this purpose, greater thicknesses can be used if the effect is to create greater depth in the grout line between the stones and bricks. A stencil is cut from 1/4" or 1/8" lauan or heavy sheet plastic to the size of the brickstone that is needed. It helps to shellac or varnish the stencil if it is a wood product in order to prevent the possibility its premature degeneration brought on by the application of paint.

An acrylic paint, the base color of the brick / stone, is sprayed on to the polystyrene through the stencil creating a brick / stone pattern on the white polystyrene. While the paint is still wet, another member of the crew uses a heat gun, on the highest setting, to follow the grout line. As the heat gun passes over the grout area (that area between the painted brick / stones), the exposed raw polystyrene will retract or cave in slightly onto itself. This indentation or caving-in creates the three-dimensional grout line and consequently the brick / stone effect. It is important that the person with the heat gun move quickly after the paint has been applied in order to utilize the heat deflection properties of the wet, water-based paint. The heat gun should never touch the polystyrene surface, but pass over it, allowing the heat to etch the lines. Propane torches become too hot and hair dryers never become hot enough. It is important to remember that good ventilation and proper respirator protection are mandatory for all parties involved in this process. Do not overheat the polystyrene, because the material could ignite, or excess fumes be emitted.

After the process is complete translucent grout colors can be applied to the sheets of brick. Brick/stone facades can be repainted very quickly if necessary, with a roller. Although a similar technique of etching the grout lines can be achieved through the use of a charcoal starter, the effect is safer with a heat gun because of the reduced heat and the finished effect is more realistic because of the inconsistencies in the grout line.

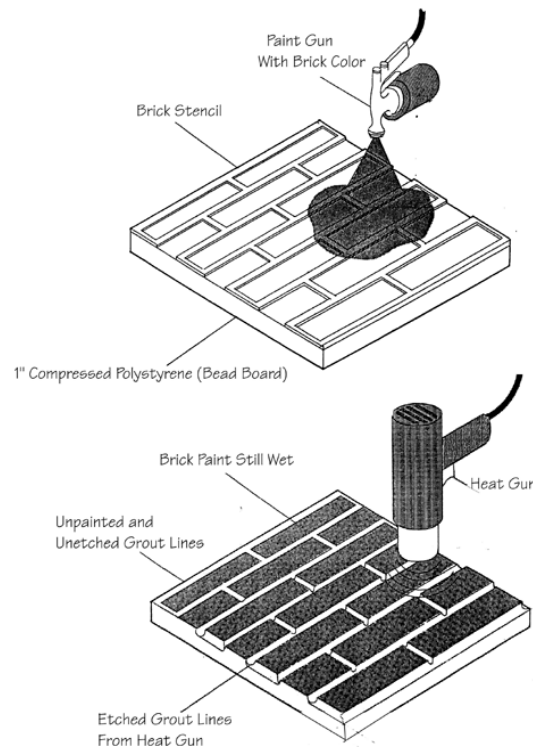
In specialty areas, such as stone or brick trim around windows and doors, hand-painted stones can be applied with a paint brush and the grout lines etched with a heat gun while the paint is still wet, as shown in the flag stone and cut stone illustrations. This technique of hand painting bricks and then etching grout lines was recently done on the house facade for the play "Just Between Ourselves" produced at the University of Wisconsin - Oshkosh. In both

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cases, the brick / stone appear realistic in the finished state utilizing a minimum amount of labor, time, weight and cost.

The 4' x 8' sheets of polystyrene are usually attached to a 1 x 4 flat frame structure. For permanent attachment, sheets are fixed to the frame by using panel adhesive or one of the other many polystyrene adhesives on the market. For the production of "Just Between Ourselves", sheets were attached in a temporary manner using 2" dry wall screws and large fender washers. The screws were placed through the washers and pushed through the polystyrene and then screwed in the wood of the flat frame. The flat frame was constructed so that a framing member was placed behind each seam of the polystyrene sheets. Seams which existed between the sheet of polystyrene were filled in with drywall spackling compound and molded to resemble the brick or stone surface.

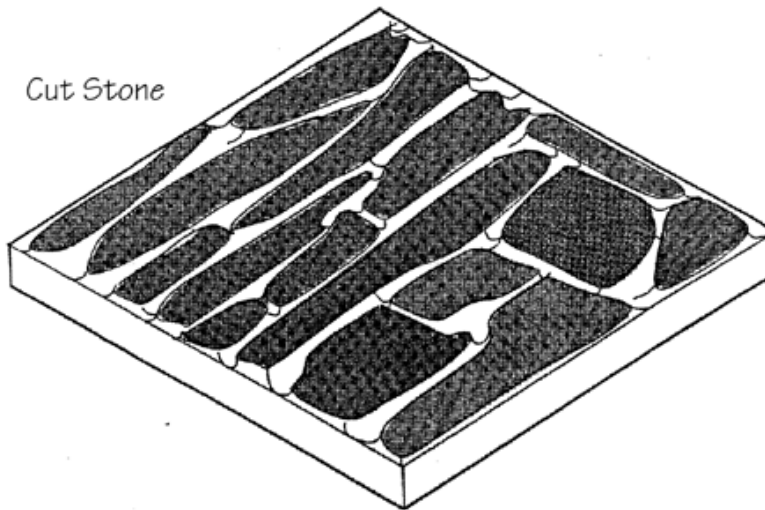
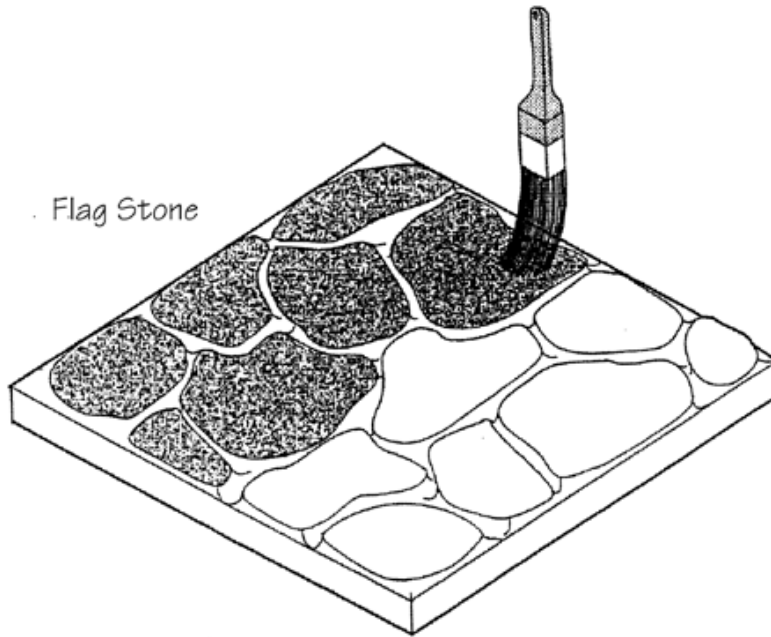
Although the flat elevation for "Just Between Ourselves" illustrates the quick brick technique when used on a smaller flat surface entire two-story building facades can be created with this same technique as seen in fine photographs of the set for "Gemini", produced at the University of New Mexico. In this case the very same process was used making the construction and load-in assembly time minimal.



Quick Brick Process

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Quick Brick Examples

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