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Tech Note  
3 Dimensional Scenery

## Basic Concepts of Rock and Brick Walls

It is possible to find many references for information about creating brick walls, stone and mortar walls, and similar three dimensional effects. The treatment in many books, however, tends to be very broad, while the treatment in product manuals is expected to be very specific. The following is a basic outline of commonly used techniques, intending to give a step by step set of directions for experimentation, neither too broad nor too specific.

A 3 Dimensional rock or brick wall face generally has several distinct components:

- 1) Physical substrate
- 2) Foam coating
- 3) Scumble base coats
- 4) Spatter or speckle effects
- 5) Low lights, high lights

### **Physical substructure**

For walls and other non-floor surfaces, the simplest substructure is “pink” foam. It can easily be carved with simple hand tools to create brick or stone patterns of almost any variety. Texture and randomness can also be created using an industrial heat gun. Care should be taken to insure adequate ventilation.

### **Foam coating**

“Pink” foam, or other similar foams, will require a coat of special material for a) flameproofing and b) to create an easily paintable surface. Uncoated foam will suck up large amounts of paint, color unevenly, etc. This initial coat may also be tinted to act as a base color.

Rosco “Foam Coat” is the most widely used product in this category. Sculptural Arts makes a “Sculpt-or-Coat” than can be used similarly. The two products are of very similar price.

### **“Scumble” base coats**

The term “scumble” is properly used to indicate “a very thin coat of color over [an already painted surface]” ([www.thefreedictionary.com](http://www.thefreedictionary.com)).

Rock wall effects often use multiple scumbles over both the “grout” area and the stone area. These can be scenic paint highly diluted with water or with a glaze formula (such as Rosco’s “Clear Gloss Acrylic Glaze”).

## **Spatter**

Though not usually used for brick, an uneven rock wall is likely to use several finely spattered colors. Rough marble may use coarser, streaky spatters (smooth marble would generally be created in a very different manner than described so far).

## **Low and High Lights**

The final step is to add low and high lights. This process will be familiar to anyone trained in theatrical makeup design. Shades slightly lighter and darker than the original scumbled colors (and somewhat more opaque) should be mixed. The lighter should be applied to raised surfaces to create “high lights”. The darker should be applied in appropriate areas near high lights and in low lying areas- such as the corners of mortar grooves- to create “low lights”.

With the basic process described above, almost anyone can concoct effective looking 3 dimensional brick or stone walls, and consistency over large areas can be achieved with a little practice. Recreating a specific texture, or matching work that someone else has begun, can be a significantly greater challenge.

More information regarding specific products and recipes can be found at [www.rosco.com](http://www.rosco.com) and [www.sculpturalarts.com](http://www.sculpturalarts.com).