

Installing stacked stone wall cladding is easy – ***YOU CAN DO IT YOURSELF!***

Whilst Artistic Stone rock panels can be installed by most home handyman with a limited knowledge of building and construction, we strongly recommend that Artistic Stone rock panels be installed by professional licensed tradesmen or contractors. Artistic Stone veneer rock panels are quick and easy to fix to a wall with a good quality neutral tile adhesive. Compared to building a traditional stacked stone wall, it is possible to cover a large wall in a short period of time because of our large size (600mm x 150mm). There is no need for grouting, therefore once they are laid the job is finished.

Before you start, please read the below basic helpful tips for installing Artistic Stone stacked stone wall cladding:

- Apply your corners first, alternating the long and short returns.
- Be sure to keep the work level as you go. Snap a chalk line every 100 to 200mm, and use a level to check stone as you apply them.
- Use a trowel edge, nippers or other sharp, blunt tool to trim stone. For straight cuts, use a diamond or masonry saw blade.
- Conceal trimmed edges with grouting, or hide them by turning the cut side upward above eye level or downward below eye level.
- Avoid long sections of straight, unbroken grout lines in standard grout installations. Be sure to use a consistent joint width. Average 10-15mm thickness or less is standard.
- When installing in a dry, hot climate or onto extremely dry surfaces, be sure to wet the stone and the wall first so they do not absorb moisture from the mortar. You can spray or otherwise apply water onto the back of the stone or dip it into water. Spray or brush water onto the wall as well. Allow both to dry a few minutes to remove excess water.
- If any mortar accidentally falls on the face of a stone during installation, do not wipe it off. It will smear and discolor the stone. Instead, leave it until touch dry, and then brush it away with a dry brush.
- Avoid water runoff onto your installation. Divert water away with flashing, cant strips and/or gutters.
- Do not install below water level, and do not expose stone to chemicals that will stain it.
- Do not use wire brushes or acid on the stone surface.
- Do not use wet brushes or sponges to wipe mortar grouts. They will cause the mortar to smear and stain.
- Local building codes vary. Be sure to check the requirements in your area.
- Lay out the stone near your work area. As you install, choose stone that varies in color, shape and size.
- Apply stone from the bottom up.

Tools and material needed

A quality brick or tile wet saw that tilts for angle cutting; this may be hired on a daily basis from a local equipment rental company. A tilt saw is only required for angled cuts such as 45 degrees to form mitered corners or other angled pieces; otherwise a non tilt saw is sufficient. An angle grinder may be used for cutting, but it is slow and inaccurate. It should only be used for cutting around small protrusions in the wall such as pipes, steelwork etc. Also required are the following: a steel trowel, notched trowel, scraper, stiff wire brush, masonry brush, large sponge, selected Rock Panels and recommended neutralized tile adhesive

Preparation

Rock panels are heavy, therefore it is critical that they are fixed correctly. It is also critical that they are fixed to the appropriate wall or substrate. Brick, masonry or block wall is the best. Rock Panels may be applied over any masonry surface, concrete block, brick, cement, etc. Painted surfaces must be sandblasted, or otherwise stripped of paint. If a new wall needs to be built of a thinner and lighter substrate, then there is only one product suitable- fibrous cement board.

First you must ensure that your timber or steel frame is very strong and is structurally capable of supporting the weight of the rock panels which weigh around 5.5kgs or 12lbs each. The fibrous cement board must be a minimum of 18mm or 3/4 inches thick to support the weight of the rock panels and must be securely fixed to the framework constructed from either timber or steel. We suggest that the board should be glued and screwed to the frame. Screw fixing at 600mm or 24 inch centers using screws that are a minimum of 50mm or 2 inches long. Cover the entire frame, where contact with the fibrous cement board is made, with a good quality mastic type adhesive. To ensure safety, strength and permanent fixing, this work should only be done by a qualified and licensed builder.

Fixing

Make certain the back of each rock panel is free of dirt, sand, or loose particles. If necessary, wash them completely. If the back of the panel is dry, dampen it first with a wet sponge, but do not saturate. This prevents the rock panel from pulling the moisture from the adhesive, allowing it to cure naturally and with a stronger bond. When fixing the rock panels- use a generous amount of recommended neutral tile adhesive and apply it to the back of each panel and to the wall. It is important to screed the tile adhesive on to the wall as would normally be the application method used for laying tiles.

By applying the adhesive to the back of each panel and to the wall, this ensures the maximum possible adhesion to your wall surface, as all the gaps, voids and cracks are filled. It is critical to ensure that a strong bond is formed with the wall. The recommended type of adhesive should be a high quality neutralized tile adhesive. It is critical to use only the specific adhesive recommended for wet areas, for water features or in or near swimming pools.

Mix the appropriate tile adhesive to a creamy consistency for a minimum of 5 minutes or as per manufacturer's instructions. When fixing rock panels it is necessary to start the bottom row on a level line to maintain a consistent level as you work up the wall. It is also important that they rest on a secure base such as a concrete floor or footing to help carry the weight. The rock panels should be overlaid or offset so that a "brick pattern" starts to form, this looks best and helps eliminate vertical joint lines up the wall. The panels should not be "stacked" one on top of the other in a single line up the wall .

Press each rock panel into the adhesive, rotating slightly, forcing some of the adhesive to squeeze out freely. Any adhesive forced out beyond the finished joint or on the panel surface itself must be removed before the adhesive is allowed to set. Remember tight joints will provide a neat appearance. Be sure not to allow any adhesive to harden on the face of the rock panels as this will help in the cleanup process.

Corners

When corners are required the procedure is fairly simple but can be time consuming if forming mitered corners on site. Select one rock panel and mark the point where the join should be and cut it on a 45 degree miter to form a right angle. Where you make the cut is determined by the position of the adjoining rock panels. Once cut, check the panel to make sure it forms a perfect 90* corner. The colour, the width and thickness of the stone pieces should match to form a continuous look that seems to "flow" around the corner, never use 2 different panels to form a corner, the result will be very disappointing, because the stone colour, texture and thickness will not match.

Cleaning the stone

Excess dirt and film may be removed using clean water and a stiff brush, it's important not to allow adhesive to dry on face of the rock panels. Remove it prior to it hardening.

WARNING: Do not use acid wash because it has been known to have an adverse effect on the stone and can possibly cause staining.

Sealing the stone

Natural Stone may be sealed with a good quality penetrating sealer only after thoroughly curing which usually takes 4 weeks on inside work. Follow the manufacturer's instructions on the application of sealer. Sealed stone may be easier to keep clean and maintain than unsealed stone and certain sealers also repel stains. However, sealers must be periodically reapplied, especially on exterior applications, and could alter the natural colouring of the stone. Certain sealers are designed to enhance the colour of the stone and may create a permanent wet look. Always test a sealer on a sample of stone or an off-cut before applying to the entire stacked stone wall.

Summary

- Clean the brick, masonry or block wall first. The wall surface must be clean and free of dust, dirt or paint etc.
- If using timber or steel frame, with fibrous cement board, ensure that it is strong and structurally sound
- Make sure that the recommended adhesives are used for fixing the fibrous cement board to the frame
- Apply a generous amount of adhesive to the back of each panel and the wall surface to ensure maximum adhesion
- Make sure the bottom row is level and straight
- Fix the rock panels in a "brick" pattern or offset, never on top of each other
- Fix the rock panels as tight as possible to each other, avoiding unsightly gaps
- Cut one rock panel, to form a corner, on 45* miter. Never join 2 different panels to form a corner.
- Always seal the stacked stone veneer when finished and never use acid wash to clean the stone.

Disclaimer: The information provided here is intended to be general only. It does not purport to be comprehensive. You should not act on the basis of information contained herein without obtaining qualified professional advice from a licensed professional which can be tailored to suit your specific circumstances and needs.