

Why You Should Not Paint Brick

Written by Don "Brickman" Foster, Masonry Cosmetics

A question that I often get asked is if there is ever a time when painting exterior brick is "ok". When answering that question, I first share that brick were not intended to ever need to be painted or coated like other products that are out there. Brick is a finished product. Once you paint your brick, it becomes compromised and it's no longer maintenance-free. Brick is one of the best building materials we have and paint does not make it stronger, does not help it to last longer, and does not assist in protecting it from the elements. Once you paint a brick wall, you change the wall and turn it into a maintenance wall that will need to be repainted repeatedly over the years to come. Metal and wood are examples of building materials that can use added protection. Paint can protect the metal from rusting and the wood from rotting, but again it will need to be repainted repeatedly over time. Also, metal and wood have different absorption characteristics than brick, and it can be easier to remove the paint from those products when it comes time to repaint. Not so easy with brick though. Brick are produced in many different sizes and textures. Some of those textures can make it difficult to get the failing paint removed when it is time to paint again. The paint buries itself into some of the rougher or coarser textured brick. Failing paint is difficult to get out when you are ready to repaint and It's never a good idea to paint over an already failing paint!



There are several ways you can go about removing the paint from your brick wall. You can use scrapers, pressure washer, sand-blasting, or chemicals just to name a few. But you have to remember that a brick wall is more than just a brick wall. It is a brick and mortar wall. Care has to be taken not to damage the brick and mortar wall when removing all the paint. Paint removal can be very messy and not good for the environment depending on what method of paint removal you choose, and how you dispose of the removed paint.



Another problem with painting brick is that brick are naturally breathable. It's one of their many strong characteristics. Brick slowly absorbs heat, cold, or moisture depending on the outside conditions and then slowly releases it. Brick insulates against the extreme temperatures. When painted, the bricks natural response is compromised! Especially when water is trapped and cannot move because of the paint. In freeze/thaw markets, which most markets are, spalling of the bricks surface can happen. I have seen this again and again so many times. Once the spalling/damage happens to the brick, a whole new set of problems arise. I have never said you do not need to maintain a brick building, but I have often said do not create a problem that should have never been there to begin with. Painting brick does not set you up for success but eventually leads you down a path of failure.

I also see an even bigger trend with new brick homes being painted, which makes no sense at all. Brick are made in so many wonderful colors and sizes, not to mention the designer/architectural creativity that makes some of the most attractive and beautiful brick homes that can gain value over the years. The day you paint that new home, is the day the value of the home has diminished.

There really is not a good time for me to recommend painting exterior brick. I do understand the home or building owners that want to change the outdated look of their brick, but there is a right way to change the color of your brick. One that is long-lasting, and will never hurt or compromise the brick it is applied to. The right way starts with finding and using a Proven Masonry Stain (a stain that is not a paint or paint-like). You want to be careful of the watered-down paint-like stains that are on the market. These paint-like stains say that they are good for brick and often offer a 25-year warranty. Be careful what a piece of paper says. If the company has been around for 20 to 25 years, they should have a list of jobs they completed over those years. Ask them for a list of 100 jobs that are in the Midwest Area that have lasted for over 20 years. If they are serious, they should easily have that list available! Field performance is the best way to show the longevity of a product.

Here at Masonry Cosmetics, we have an unique Proprietary Proven Masonry Stain that is Transparent/ Translucent in nature. Compared to the other semi to opaque products, our product does not seal the brick in any way. We will never peel, crack, blister, or flake because our product does not create a layer like other paint-like stains that are out there do. A stained brick, using our proprietary process, will look natural and get wet just like the unstained brick next to it. Our Proprietary Proven Masonry Stain uses color theory on most projects and absorbs into the pore structure of the brick it is applied to creating a chemical bond. This product color enhances the brick and when applied right will last the test of time. There are three main factors you need to successfully change the color of your brick. First, the right product. We truly believe that we have the best Proprietary Proven Masonry Stain for changing the color of absorptive brick and currently have over 300+ case studies to support that claim. Second, the product needs to be artistically applied the right way, by using polyester brushes, one brick at a time. Also, it cannot be rolled or sprayed on. Third, applied in the right conditions to clean, dry, and warm walls. The outdoor temperature is important. It is very difficult to stain in temperatures under 40 degrees.

Thanks for reading,

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The Brickman on Painting Brick: Youtube: https://youtu.be/_9j2GVvDv28

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