Masonry Paint Defects – Snail Trails

Description

Your house wall is freshly painted, the facade radiates a brilliant shine - but *what's that*?
Highly visible vertical streaks spoiling the appearance.

Those are known as Snail Trails!

Snail Trails are shiny vertical run-marks sometimes seen on dry paint films, predominantly on Matt coatings but also on some Low Sheen finishes.

The marks often start from flat topped walls or parapet walls, are usually randomly spaced and running down the wall. They may also be seen on Texture coated walls and are more obvious on darker colours.

These Snail Trails typically emerge the first time the wall gets wet, after rain or heavy dew.

The water draws soluble components out of the paint film and leaves behind unsightly streaks, the "Snail Trails".

The good news is that Snail Trails do not affect the ultimate durability of the coating and they can usually be easily removed or left to weather away.

Causes

New paint films are made up of a solid mixture of pigment, filler and binder but also contain water soluble additives such as surfactants and emulsifiers.

Once the film is fully cured, these water-soluble components will either have evaporated, been washed out by rainfall or be firmly bound into the dry film.

However, while the paint film is relatively new, water from heavy dew, rainfall, garden sprinklers or the like can draw some of these components to the surface, where they run down and then dry out, leaving the unsightly trail.

The trails tend to be sticky and can act as a dirt trap, making them even more visible.

Preventions and Remedies

Avoid painting in adverse weather conditions, particularly if rain is expected in the following 24 hours and avoid painting late in the day if cool, damp conditions are expected overnight.

If Snail Trails occur in the first few days after painting they can usually be washed off rather easily with a damp cloth, soap and water.

The problem may occur once or twice more before leachable material is completely removed.

More difficult or hard to access trails will normally weather away within the first 3-6 months or may be washed from the film after 2-3 rain events.

If the Snail Trails persist, repaint the affected wall sections taking care to match the weathered colour.

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