

Education Corner: All About Building Walls

Wednesday, 29 April 2009

Last Updated Thursday, 30 April 2009

Walls define spaces and your home is made up of walls that will either add value to that space or detract from it. It is therefore important that attention is paid to the materials and construction of the walls of your home.

Your architect should be paying attention to the aesthetic and artistic value that the combination of a number of different building materials that are available on the market would add to the design of your home. Walls generally constitute less than 10% of your total building cost but the choices you make could add huge value to your home. Your architect should seek to advise and guide you through the various options and combinations that are available to you relative to the design that you have chosen. The vast majority of noticeable problems in buildings occur where walls are involved so it is an important element to consider.Â

There are many alternative wall types and combinations to choose from and it is a good thing to know what those choices are. In most cases the cost differences between various wall types are not that significant but the effects and value that they add to your home could be enormous. Choosing a good architect or interior designer is therefore an important consideration because it could make the difference between ending up with a design that is ordinary or a design that is stunning.

I will be presenting articles on walls under the following headings over the next few weeks.

Standard walls
 Clay brick walls
 Cement brick walls
 Cement block walls
 Dry pack cement block walls
 Stone walls
 Dry walls. (Used for timber frame and light steel frame construction)
 Concrete walls
 Glass walls

Alternative construction walls
 Rammed earth construction
 Sandbag construction
 Straw bale construction
 Cob building

Clay Brick Walls

Baked Clay Bricks are probably the most common materials used in most buildings. Your choice ranges from a variety of top quality face bricks to stock bricks which can either be plastered, or selected with the best face exposed for bagging or painting. There are many artistic combinations and patterns both inside and outside a building that can be achieved with clay bricks and your architect should be able to guide you to make the best choices in this regard.

There is also a hidden cost consideration when choosing to use baked stock bricks (standard or maxi) for plastering as opposed to the facebrick option. The cost of plastering (including the time factor) and the cost of painting using a good quality paint every 5 or so years must be considered. You may decide that the price difference is worth the expense. If you are considering the plastering option then clay maxi bricks can also be used with a cost saving over the price of standard brickwork which can be quite significant.Â This is something that any good architect would be able to advise you on.

There is also a difference regarding the quality of bricks that can be purchased and it is always advisable to use reputable suppliers. Your architect should specify the exact bricks that are to be used on your project and check on what is delivered to avoid problems developing later. The cheaper your cheap bricks, the lower the quality. Letting your builder source your bricks will mostly favour his pocket at the expense of quality so be aware and consider your options.

With any brick wall it is important that attention is paid to the correct application of damp proofing [see Damp proofing your home] and to insulation. [Watch out for an informative article on insulation that we will be published soon].Â

Your choice of builder, if you are considering the face brick option, is also important as good bricklayers with experience and training are required if you want a quality product.

The next article features the construction of walls using cement bricks.

Article by Les Abbott
 L A Design Studio