

get a decoration the right size is to execute it in its place. To execute hand wrought plaster in the shop and then fix it is a very futile proceeding. In handwrought work we get the additional value which attaches to the unique. Though a good thing will stand repetition while a bad thing is none the better for



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being the only case in point, still it is nicer not to have the stereotyped ornament we know exists in the shop round the corner and in the house where we dined last night, right in our own parlor. Moreover in handwrought work balance takes the place of repetition and between the value of balance as an ornamental basis and repetition there is a great gulf.

Handwrought work can never be so perfect as cast work owing firstly to the speed with which it has to be modelled while the material is setting, and secondly to the impossibility of using wood tools or fingers. To the former the lime or cement adheres while the latter are burnt. The use of metal tools is the reason why one does not see modern handwrought plaster with a truly modelled surface; it looks like sketchy carving. The men of old time used to slake their lime for years and mix it with all manner of strange ingredients to render it plastic and slow, and we can only regret that this is not now commercially possible.

Now the dreary monotony of themes of plaster decoration depending on quantities of cast detail is patent to all who give the matter a thought, though for enrichments of the right sort and running repeats, etc., casting can never be dispensed with.

From the above we think it might be inferred that an ideal kind of floral plaster decoration would consist in having parts modelled in clay and cast and parts modelled in situ, thus ensuring a delicacy in the leaf, flower and fruit work while admitting of the utmost freedom of arrangement and stem modelling with regard to lighting and variation. Such a process we find in

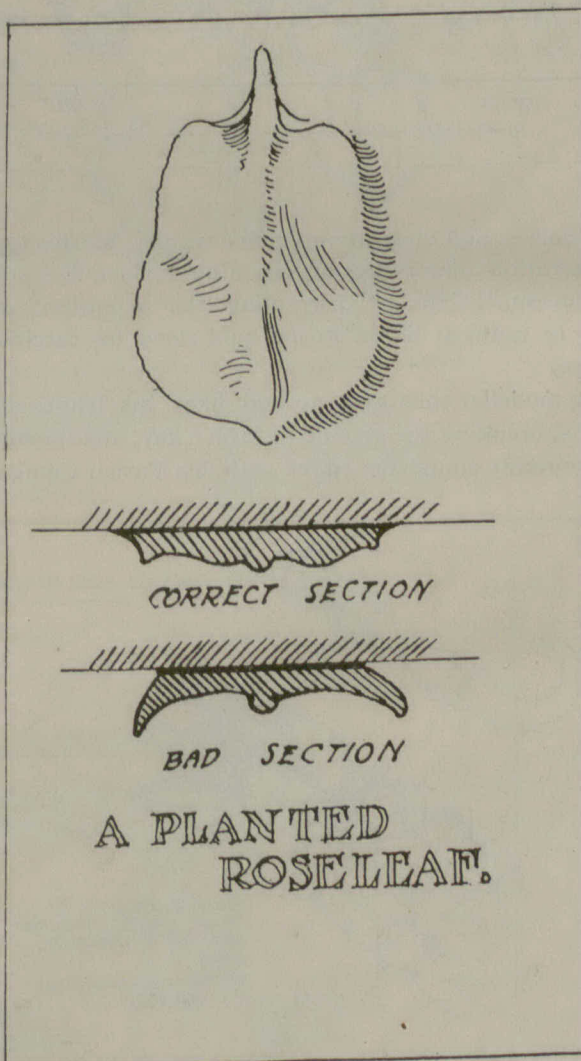
use in the latter half of the XVI century, and it seems quite to have fallen out of favor till some domestic architects at home by making measured drawings of old plaster work discovered that leaves and fruits supposed to be hand modelled were all of a pattern, a fact that would never be guessed from the ground, because each leaf taking its light at a different angle presents a different aspect. This little deception is the only "trick" in the particular branch of the trade.

This method lends itself particularly to the covering of large surfaces such as ceilings, coves or domes with a varied enrichment of surface, breadth being well assured by the family resemblance of the items modelled and cast, while any degree of richness can be attained by a closer or wider spacing of parts.

I have seen a vine treated happily enough with only one type of bunch and leaf, but in my own experience several types varied in size have been used.

It is worth while to note what the section of plaster leaves should be with regard to the surface of the ceiling or cove. The illustration shows this and I need only say that the section advocated will make the ornament look a part of the ceiling, not something to be knocked off.

Now to describe the process of doing a ceiling



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in this way. Let us suppose our types or items have been modelled, and the number of each that will be wanted having been calculated, they are cast and ready in baskets. They may be for vine, or rose, or lily, or oak, or maple; they may be stiffly conventional, severely correct to some recognized style or free to the verge of naturalism. In a word they may be as their designer