What is an Ex Libris?



Ex-libris is a term that describes the release agent applied to a mold surface or the process of applying this substance to facilitate the demolding process in sculpture and ceramic arts. This term, of French origin, is used as a technical term in sculpture studios and the casting industry. Correct ex-libris application ensures that the mold is removed without damage and directly affects the surface quality of the work.

Types of Ex-libris Substances

Substances used for ex-libris purposes vary according to the type of mold and casting material. Soap water, petroleum jelly water, and special silicone-based release agents are used for plaster molds. In silicone rubber molds, additional ex-libris may not be required as the natural structure of the mold material often provides sufficient release properties. For polyester and epoxy castings, special chemical release sprays are preferred. If the choice of ex-libris substance is incorrect, stains, bubbles, or adhesion problems may occur on the casting surface.

Ex-libris Application Process

Ex-libris application is a critical step for sculpture production. The mold is first cleaned and dried. Then, the ex-libris substance is applied thinly and evenly to the entire inner surface of the mold with a brush or sponge. In some molds, multiple layers of ex-libris must be applied. After a certain waiting period is allowed for the substance to fully penetrate, the casting process begins. In casting performed without applying ex-libris, the mold and the work may stick together; this results in damage to both the mold and the work.

Importance of Ex-libris

Ex-libris is a small but extremely critical detail in sculpture production. Especially in repetitive castings—where multiple copies are produced from the same mold—ex-libris directly determines the life of the mold. While hundreds of smooth castings can be made from a mold with properly applied ex-libris, negligent application can lead to the mold's deterioration in the first few uses. In professional sculpture studios, the selection and application of ex-libris represent a body of knowledge shaped by experience and passed on with meticulous care.

Ex-libris Technology Today

Today, ex-libris products possess highly advanced technology. Various silicone-based, water-based, and solvent-based formulations are produced for different needs. Some modern ex-libris substances harden after being applied to the mold, forming a permanent protective film. These films protect the mold not only from sticking but also from moisture, heat, and chemical wear. Choosing the right ex-libris product in the sculpture and casting industry continues to be a decisive factor in terms of efficiency and quality.

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