

More Learning = More Earning

Faux Bringing Certain Changes to Merchandise Mix

An important trend is emerging, which is something that independent paint dealers need to realize and respond to in 2009: The residential paint contractors who shop their stores are increasingly becoming talented decorative artists. Grizzled veterans, union painters and new apprentices are learning faux techniques in growing numbers.

The transformation is undeniable, and one may reasonably surmise the trend will only accelerate as skilled painters seek to expand their earnings in these tight times. This is highly relevant to retailers, who risk losing a growing chunk of their core audience's expenditures if they fail to stock the tools and materials needed to create today's most popular faux effects.

How did I get so smart about faux? For one thing, I was rather active in last year's launch of the Symphony by Purdy faux-finishing tool line by Paint Sundry Brands. This involvement greatly expanded my knowledge and appreciation for the craft. Recently, I also had the honor of participating in a class organized by the Finishing Trades Institute (FTI, www.finishingtradesinstitute.org), in Hanover, Md. Ten instructors from across North America gathered at the FTI training center to take a new Train the Trainer course in the Decorative Arts.

With the evolution of the materials available to create decorative art finishes, the future of this category within the painting trade has greatly expanded. New products, new applicators and new techniques have made this aspect of the trade much more accessible to a properly trained painter/decorator.

In the old days when I was serving

my apprenticeship, there was a mystique that went along with faux finishers. Only the old European craftsmen, with a grizzled look and a never-ending string of Pall Mall cigarettes, had the knowledge and skill to grain, marblize and create awe-inspiring effects. Almost all of the materials were solvent-based, (which made this young apprentice a little nervous where smoking was involved), and great care was needed when mixing pigments and glazes together. Thankfully, those days are long gone. Today's modern products have greatly improved the variety of finishes available, and the opportunities for painters and paint dealers to profit are vast.

The class was held over a five-day period and covered 30 different decorative techniques. The instructors where Mike Krawiec, from the FTI fa-

cility in Berkeley, Ill., and Sheri Zeman, owner of Faux Design Studios (www.fauxdesignstudio.com), in Addison, Ill. We used new materials, including glazes, paints, pigments and plasters from Faux Effects International (www.fauxfx.com), out of Vero Beach, Fla. Ray Sandor, owner and president of Faux Effects has developed a series of products that turn the decorative arts segment of our trade into what he describes as "straightforward finishing with exotic products."

Using a tool selection developed by Sheri and Mike that included block stipples, stria brushes, sea sponges, plaster trowels, squeegees, glazing brushes, Japanese scrapers, (which were manufactured in Germany—go figure) and regular brushes and rollers, we trained in a total of 30 lessons. I was taught leather effects using glazes and tissue, patina effects using pigments and water to achieve the color of aging copper, stria effects to mimic grass cloth, high-build plasters to create Modellos, and I also learned new stenciled effects. I believe the favorite of all of the instructors was the ability to imbed variations into the plasters for eye-catching effects with unique



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differences of sheen, smoothness and colors.

These new modern finishes include varying textures, metallics, plasters and glazes. Mike and Sheri also stressed that doing these kinds of finishes are almost always unique to the individual. However, when working in the field on large projects, there will typically be a “conductor” working with the craftspeople to ensure uniformity throughout the project by moving the individuals around the surface to keep the final effect from being blocky where each individual’s unique technique would run up against another’s.

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cate you; or worse, for you to remain clueless while your customers steadily disappear to other retailers who better cater to their changing needs.

After all, as the FTI’s Mike Krawiec points out to painters at FTI training courses, “The question isn’t why should you take the time do this? The question is why shouldn’t you? You are already on the jobsite.”

Perhaps the most wonderful thing about this relevant trend is that every-

one wins. Skilled painters become increasingly in demand as they expand their expertise. Homeowners and building managers have a plethora of new options available to them, which will seemingly spur the remodeling business to an ever-greater degree as existing home sales rebound. Obviously the big winners are the retailers who understand the trend and best capitalize on this major opportunity to expand their revenues and customer base.

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- 🌿 Each applicant must submit a 500-word essay, describing how he or she will use the scholarship and why he or she feels deserving of the award.
- 🌿 Scholarship applications must be received at PDRA offices by March 20, 2009.

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