

## **Faux Finish Restoration**

**Faux finishing is a timely process. For best results, select compatible systems that allow you to make mistakes and easily wipe them off to start over again.**

**By DiAnna Tindell**

**Faux finish is a term used to describe a "false" or "fake" surface. Faux finished originated at a time when exotic surfaces -- such as elaborate marble, stone, malachite, lapis lazuli, metals and gold leaf -- were in short supply.**

**In ancient times, the Egyptian, Greek, Italian and Roman patrons would commission artisans to reproduce these fine finishes in their homes, temples and meeting places. It became fashionable for skilled artists to recreate these appearances, especially when the native material was scarce or too costly.**

**Today, faux finishes are expansive and can vary from Old World techniques to hi-tech contemporary super metallics. The equipment, tools and products used to get amazing results are extraordinary. Years of development have made available the knowledge and training for a broad range of simple to master level techniques.**

**The ideas are limited only to one's imagination. Special needs for various faux surface designs and textures of objects (i.e., frames) to match an existing room decor may not be easily obtained. Perhaps consideration could be given to creating a match or complementary look in a "do-it-yourself" faux finish project.**

**One faux technique is known as "combing". A comb comes in various sizes and shapes for special faux finish effects. The basic idea involves running the comb's teeth through a paint or glaze. Depending on the shape of the teeth and the consistency of the paint, the dragging motion of the comb can create wavy, straight and even crosshatching linear patterns.**

**The pressure applied by pulling the comb through the movable, newly applied top color of paint or glaze reveals the base coat underneath. It is advisable to practice on a test piece to get the desired effect prior to application on the original piece.**

**Another faux technique involves "stipples, speckles and spatters." One method to achieve this is by using a raking brush loaded with color and moving it over a mesh screen tool onto the base coats. There are many tools that can be used for variations of spattering, stippling and speckling.**

**Stippling can be done with a tool designed just for that process, or, by simply using the tip of a brush to apply small dots of color. Spattering is a method to create random, small dots as well, but they are larger and**



**Faux finish items such as feathers, scrunched clear wrap and dental picks can be used to create marble and veined type surfaces.**



**Varied faux dot and mottled patterns can be duplicated with use of different sponges, stippling tools and pouncing brushes.**

broader in pattern.

Speckling is just a smaller variation in dot size and pattern than the other two described. These techniques can be as simple as loading a small amount of paint onto a brush and flicking it towards the surface with your finger or thumb.

Many techniques -- such as combing, stippling, speckling and spattering -- require an additional fine tuning of various pouncing brushes. To make use of the "pounce" technique a clean, broad, soft or stiff-bristled brush can provide the final touch of application over the newly applied area(s), to flatten or spread out the manipulative surface.

Often, a dry brush will be used to "pounce off" a lot of the paint due to an overapplication of the faux finish effect. A smaller brush can be used to selectively remove just one small dot at a time to strategically position the area of stipple, speckle and/or spatter.

The art of painting to create a faux finish illusion of real materials -- like marble, granite, alabaster, quartz, soapstone and other stone-type surfaces -- can be quite a challenge. Often, the object to be restored is heavy and large, which only adds to the level of difficulty to manage.

Special materials are sometimes needed to duplicate the weight, strength and support required for the structure. Faux finish techniques may involve the use of odd tools, such as feathers, veinners, sponges and crunched materials.

A "test tile" can be used to experiment with faux techniques and materials for a match to various marble designs. To achieve some of the unique designs often found within a piece of marble, the use of a "feather" as a paint applicator can match the desired effect. Dip the feather(s) in the various color selections and stroke them through the surface area.

Scrunching is a fun faux technique that can produce very odd and/or random patterns with layering of various paint textures. Many materials can be used for scrunching, such as silks, paper products, plastics and more.

For instance, the simple use of clear Saran wrap scrunched up over the surface to move the newly applied top paint has advantages. It allows a visual look through the clear scrunch to manipulate the design with more control.

Sponge is another painting tool that can be used instead of brushes. Sponge comes in many different textures, sizes and densities. Once again, the application of paint is applied over the desired surface with the sponge. Sponges can give the surface a mottled, blotted, random and even texturized finish.

**Veining can be a little more complicated if it is required within the body of the piece. The use of most pointed tools, such as dental picks or needle files, provide a dragging motion of the paint into linear pulled designs to do the trick. The veins can be tiny or pulled through larger areas of paint for a more dramatic grouping of designs.**

**So how do the actions of various faux tools (such as combs, various stipple tools, pouncing brushes, feathers, scrunchies, sponge and veiners) apply additional coloration finishes without creating "mud"? It takes knowledge and experience to select the proper base paint products that will remain stable, sealed and separated from the faux finish paints to be layered right on top afterwards.**

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