


The faux-finishing market offers potential in every type of economy

FAUX OPPORTUNITIES:

Ripe for the Picking



No matter what the economy, opportunities in the faux-finishing market abound. Walls, ceilings, floors, countertops, furniture—even exterior surfaces—are all potential candidates for a faux or decorative painted finish. The economy can even work in your favor when it comes to selling the advantages of these finishes, since faux marble is less expensive than real marble, faux wood is less costly than real wood, and so on. And consider the fact

that popular Venetian plasters and metallic paints add a touch of sophistication and richness that both professional applicators and do-it-yourselfers can access.

In this annual “ALL-FAUX” issue, *PDR* takes a look at the products, techniques, markets and opportunities that you as a paint retailer can explore in order to improve your overall sales picture. In this article, we talk about popular trends, products and techniques. Then, we follow with an article exploring markets and opportuni-



● Aureum from DecoFinish, LLC has a rich-looking appearance that draws the eye.

ties, and finally a third article discusses the eco-friendly direction of faux.

Market Trends: Plasters

Let's start by considering the trends in the marketplace and the products that support them. Time and time again, manufacturers mention two main trends that are still going strong in this market: plasters and metallic paints. Marco Corrente of Adicolor Inc. reported that these two trends support a movement toward simpler, cleaner finishes. "People are looking for something more contemporary," he said. "Faux is not just Old World looks. It also can be high-gloss Venetian plasters used in front of super-modern furniture, which is a beautiful look."

Corrente pointed to Mizaar, a lime-based plaster, as an Adicolor product supporting this trend.

The Venetian plaster look seems to be the one that is burgeoning even in a downturn market. Elias Benalloun of DecoFinish, LLC sees plasters as the prevailing trend in the faux and decorative finishes market. "The main trend continues to be plasters," Benalloun said. "We see Venetian Plasters, Marmorinos and plasters in general."

DecoFinish has been addressing this trend with new and existing products under its OIKOS® line of water-based, solvent-free decorative systems. "We have a new product that was the most innovative and most popular that we showed at the IDAL (International Decorative Artisans League) Show and Convention," Benalloun reported. "It is Aureum, a 24-karat Venetian Plaster."

Aureum has a rich-looking appearance that truly draws the eye. "It catches attention immediately and provides a shimmer," Benalloun said. "This material has great appeal to the higher-end market. When selling faux-finishing products, it's best to concentrate on the segment of customers who can afford it."

Targeting the high-end market has been a positive for DecoFinish, which is posting positive



● Anvil Professional Venetian Plaster 2400 offers unlimited dealer mixed colors.



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● Stephanie Gabel, owner of Roux Design Chicago, Ill., used Crescent Bronze products to create a “wow” factor for this Chicago penthouse.

numbers when the rest of the industry is mostly down. “We have an 8-percent year-to-date increase through November of 2008,” Benalloun stated. “We were able to do that in a down market, so we were very happy with that.”

DecoFinish launches a couple new products each year. This helps generate new excitement to the category. However, the best-seller in the OIKOS line is a long-standing one: Raffaello Venetian plaster. “It’s been our best-seller since we came to the United States six years ago,” Benalloun said. “It’s considered one of the best Venetian plasters on the market.”

Again, the shimmer is the key, since Raffaello Mother of Pearl has a beautiful shimmery, pearlescent

finish. “It’s a Venetian plaster—not a wax,” Benalloun said. “Waxes can yellow. This won’t yellow, and it’s low in VOCs.”

Don Filarski, general manager at Atova International, likewise pointed to the popularity of Venetian plasters, noting that they are being used to support a trend toward linear looks. “We



● Nahir by Atova International Inc. is in keeping with a trend toward use of linear designs.



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● The Faux Effects International Inc. line of products includes Stucolux.

are seeing the use of both vertical lines and horizontal lines, which is a more contemporary look,” Filarski stated. “A lot of white polished Venetian plasters are being used in conjunction with these looks.”

Nahir is a new Atova product that fits very nicely into this linear trend. The product is a Venetian plaster containing acrylic polymers. “Thanks to the acrylic, you can apply it thicker, and it will not crack,” said Filarski, explaining that it comes with a special tool for applying it properly and creating the lines that are seen in the final finish.

The look achieved with Nahir is being used in commercial applications more so than residential. “We’re seeing it in hospitality/hotels where a very modern, contemporary look with clean lines is desired,” Filarski said.

In addition to Nahir, Filarski reported that Atova is seeing a lot of interest in stone effects that can be achieved with the company’s Coccio Pesto and Traventino. “These are natural lime plasters that represent stone,” Filarski said. “All of them are low in VOCs.”

Glenn Roth, Executive Vice President of Anvil Paints and Coatings, likewise sees the importance of plasters in this market. One of the company’s up-and-coming products is Anvil’s Professional Venetian Plaster 2400, which allows the painting contractor to replicate the elegant appearance of traditional Venetian Plaster at a

fraction of the cost, training and application time. Anvil 2400 is an easy-to-install product that delivers the high-end decorating possibilities of Venetian Plaster finishes or the look of Old World Plaster. This formula contains ground marble with translucent properties that replicates the beauty, depth and elegance of polished marble.

“New technology has led to the introduction of products that replicate the elegant appearance of traditional Venetian plaster at a fraction of the cost, training and application time,” Roth said. “The art of faux finishing doesn’t require the years of training that traditional artisans must endure. These new professional formulas are developed for



● Adicolor Inc.’s products work well in the simpler, more contemporary looks that are favored today.

speed production, use universal colorants to match thousands of colors, and only require a three-coat process with optional burnishing or sanding between coats. They have a stable shelf life and clean with warm, soapy water. All of which translate into higher profitability for the painting contractor.”

Anvil Professional Venetian Plaster 2400 offers unlimited dealer mixed colors and can be used in more than 10 different application techniques. It is the perfect choice for the modern painting contractor who does large and small residential or commercial projects.

Similarly, Faux Effects International Inc. is finding great success with plasters. “Our customers tell us they love our new authentic, mineral-based plaster StucoLux,” reported the Faux Effects team. “It has less drag and weight than is customary, covers in two passes, dries quickly, burnishes with absolute ease and is easily repaired. The 21 pre-tinted colors, 10 metallics and five highlights simplify the application and enhance productivity.”

An added benefit is that StucoLux has zero VOCs. “We are bringing back a previously underutilized product that will expand the options and satisfy today’s trend for a durable, ‘green’ deep high-polish shine for countertops and other applications,” Faux Effects reported.

The Faux Effects team overall sees a market for minimalist, lightly textured finishes that accent the overall design theme, cabinets and countertops refinished at a fraction of the cost and hassle of removal and replacement. Earth tones and soft subtle glows are trending positively, they added, and the individual character achieved will transform and personalize a room.

Market Trend: Metallic Coatings

The other key market trend continues to be metallic coatings. This is an



● Modern Masters’ Venetian plaster was used to add drama to this entranceway.

area in which Roman Decorating Products has been focusing much of its innovative resources, as evidenced by the recent development and launch of the industry’s only one-coat metallic paint.

Ed Mattingly of Roman Decorating Products reported that ArmorMetallix™ 100% Pure Metallic Coatings have quickly become a favorite among decorative artists. “For those of you familiar with the usual multiple coats re-

quired when using an ordinary metallic, you can immediately see why Armor Metallix has become a destination product for so many professionals nationwide,” Mattingly said. “Along with enhanced coverage, ArmorMetallix coatings also have enhanced light reflectivity due to the use of pure metal pigments in the formulas. Decorative artists frequently comment on the ‘shimmer’ and the ‘rich, amazing coverage’ of the product. In a recent blind survey, ArmorMetallix was favored by 97 percent of faux finishers and artisans versus a leading brand.”

Mattingly believes that Roman Decorating has tapped into one of the hottest trends in the faux-finish market—the use of metallics—with the introduction of this product. “A wall finished with ArmorMetallix can take color to another dimension by adding drama and glowing effects to a room,” he said. “Take that same idea and add a layer of our ArmorFaux™ Glaze & Varnish over the metallic coating and you can create a subdued shimmering effect with the metallic popping out from underneath. You can also use ArmorFaux™ Decorative Acrylic Texture Coatings as a base and top coat to create popular Tuscan, Striae, Travertine and Fresco effects and then make



● Benjamin Moore Metallic Glaze, used for this ceiling, is part of the Benjamin Moore® Studio Finishes® line of decorative products.

the finish pop by adding ArmorMetalix to ArmorFaux Glaze to create an elegant metallic effect over the finish. These finishes are quick, easy and extremely popular.”

Crescent Bronze Inc. is in a perfect position to accommodate the trend toward metallic looks with its line of products that fit that bill. The company’s products encompass seven different resin systems: conventional lacquers; zero-VOC lacquers; modified alkyds; medium-oil alkyds; long-old alkyds; latexes; and two-component epoxies. The company’s most expansive product line is Cres-Lite®, which features 127 color choices in the metallic, fluorescent, pearlescent and phosphorescent product types. Colors range from pale golds and rich golds to copper and aluminum. There are also several designer tones such as mauve, salmon and steel gray.

Another popular Crescent Bronze offering is the Chromatone® line of water-based metallic coatings, currently available in eight ready-mixed colors, including Oyster Pearl, Silver, Pale Gold, Rich Gold, Copper and Roman Gold, Wine and Bronzestone.

Speaking on behalf of Crescent Bronze, Stephanie Gabel, owner of Roux Design in Chicago, Ill., has seen just how popular metallics have become in her role as a professional faux finisher. “My clients love them, and they are wonderfully versatile to work with,” Gabel said. “Crescent Bronze has a wide variety of metallics to choose from, so I am able to offer my clients a broad spectrum of options.”

Gabel added that these finishes are hot and are not going to go away. “Metallics can transform anything from a powder room to crown molding; they can make something old look new, or something new look old—the possibilities are virtually endless,” she said.

Modern Masters Inc. has



● Roman’s ArmorMetalix™ 100% Pure Metallic Coating was used to create this finish in Galleria Gold.

products that fill the desire for metallic and/or shimmery looks, including the company’s Metal Effects reactive metallic paints, Shimmerstone and Metallic Paint Collection.

“Both our Metallic Paint Collection and our Shimmerstone allow for the most up-to-date sophisticated clean line design techniques and finishes,” said Kelly S. King, Modern Masters’

director of education and product development. “They are both low in VOCs, which make them ‘green’ and ‘environmentally friendly.’ Our Metallic Paint Collection is a great example of a product that can be used in both residential and commercial settings. The Metallic Paint Collection can be used interior and exterior and can be used alone as a paint giving an elegant metallic shimmer or washed over other finishes to give a beautiful luminous sheen and depth. Shimmerstone allows you to create metallic layers with soft textural nuances for a more dimensional effect.”

King reported on new additions to the Metallic Paint Collection. “Recently we introduced 10 new amazing ‘In-Demand’ colors to our Metallic Paint Collection,” he said. “Black Pearl and Snowflake White are two of the 10 and can be added to any of the other 48 colors in various mixtures to create the most amazing combination of hundreds of new colors of metallic paints.”

DecoFinish addresses the trend toward metallic coatings with another new product, Imperium, a pure metallic paint with a high concentration of pigment. This gives the wall or ceiling a bright metallic look. “It offers high coverage and is easy to blend,” Benalloun said.



● Ralph Lauren addressed the metallic trend with Regent Metallics, a collection of luminous paint that brings timeless luxury to walls, trim and architectural elements.

Faux Opportunities

Imperium has a color chart that allows for the creation of a wide range of colors using four different ready-made bases—gold, silver, copper and a clear/translucent. “You can use pre-mixed colors or use the OIKOS color chart,” stated Benalloun, who added that the product is very durable. “Once you apply it, you can scratch it and never get inside.”

Corrente agreed that metallics con-

tinues to be a prevalent trend in the faux market and points to the popularity of Adicolor’s Veli e Velluti as indicative of this. The product features two bases—one gold, one silver—and gives walls the look and feel of soft velvet.

Ralph Lauren addressed the metallic trend with Regent Metallics, a collection of luminous paint that brings timeless luxury to walls, trim and architectural elements. The palette includes 76

colors, including bronzes, golds and silvered blues, greens and purples.

“Regent Metallics can be used anywhere in the home, as well as in upscale restaurants, hotels and retail environments,” reported Catherine Wahl, senior brand manager for Ralph Lauren. “Once dry, the finish is as durable as a semi-gloss, perfect for a distinctive statement on a backsplash or powder room. Tinted at the paint counter, there is no boxing or mixing either at home or on the jobsite, offering consistent results with each gallon.”

Overall, Wahl sees this trend toward metallics as one that will continue to gain momentum. “We continue to see a growing interest in the look of metallics in design both for residential and commercial applications. These trends emanate from a variety of areas. Our need for surfaces that are touched with sophistication and speak to a hint of the exotic are desired for the ambience they create. Metallics have a touch of glamour associated with film and theater. The glitzy sparkle of today’s fashion and accessories invites people to emulate this feeling in their own homes.”

Regent Metallics supports this trend well. “When applied with the Ralph Lauren Paint Regent Metallics roller covers, a subtle texture akin to hammered metal is achieved,” Wahl said. “In addition, Regent Metallics lend themselves beautifully to faux finish treatments such as ragging, strie, stippling and stripes.”

Wahl added that these products are among Ralph Lauren Paint’s best sellers. “They borrow metallic influences from the runway and bringing them into the home. The easy-to-apply two-coat technique is designed for DIYer and professional alike. Professional faux finishers often experiment and layer Regent Metallics over other wall treatments creating shimmering depth and sophistication.”

Benjamin Moore & Co. also has seen great popularity with metallics. “Metallic finishes continue to be popular in both residential and commercial spaces,” said Jim Rayball, Benjamin

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Moore Studio Finishes Product Manager. “These finishes deliver a look of opulence and luxury that can be either understated or dramatic. Color and shimmer combine for a one-of-a-kind finish.”

A product that makes this popular finish both attainable and affordable is Benjamin Moore Metallic Glaze, part of the Benjamin Moore® Studio Finishes® line of decorative products. “This semi-sheer product captures light while adding a delicate wash of shimmering color over a painted base coat,” Rayball reported. “This acrylic-based glaze uses high-quality mica specially coated with pigments to produce glimmer and reflectance.”

Rayball explained that this technology allows professionals and homeowners to use these products in a multitude of ways, as a system, through the addition of Benjamin Moore® paints, colorants or latex glaze. “As a water-based product, Benjamin Moore® Metallic Glaze delivers easy cleanup and low-odor application,” he added.

In the spring of this year, Benjamin Moore will introduce new, updated colors as part of the palette of 35 colors available in the Metallic Glaze product line. “Additionally, a new retail brochure coupled with an expanded set of how-to pages online at www.benjaminmoore.com will help homeowners, professionals and specifiers continue to be inspired and motivated by Benjamin Moore® Metallic Glaze and the entire Studio Finishes® line,” Rayball stated.

Market Trend: Wall Glazing

While the dramatic looks of plasters and metallics draw a lot of attention, don’t overlook the fact that tried-and-true wall glazing is still very popular. This is borne out by the experience of Barbara Wurden of Faux Fun Inc., who noted that her No. 1 selling instructional video is “Colorwashing and Glazing.”

“And as someone who also does faux finishes, wall glazing has been the most requested paint technique,” Wurden added. “So, for popularity, the finish requested is, without a doubt, wall glazing.

I think people like this finish because it is simply a mood-altering backdrop. And instead of a look that overpowers the room and says ‘Look at me, I’m a faux finish on the wall,’ glazing just gives character and softness to solid color.”

However, Wurden affirmed what others have said about the popularity of Italian plasters. This is based on a dichotomy of personal preferences. “They either want a heavy pattern or a

simple and subtle faux finish as a backdrop,” she said.

Regardless of the look, Wurden noted that faux finishing does so much to change the interior of a home or business. “Even if you want a solid color look it is so much more pleasurable and interesting if you have a super-subtle tone on tone faux finish. Done well, a good faux finish will upgrade and give a classy look to any solid color.” ■

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