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# Brookline

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THE ART  
FORM OF  
FAUX FINISH

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MARBLE



## The Pros of Faux By Morgan Bettes *Designing, teaching an art form*

**BROOKLINE RESIDENTS MARK AND SANDRA KISS LONDON ARE GIVING MARTHA STEWART A RUN FOR HER MONEY.**

As consultants to the faux finish industry and owners of a design firm based in Allston, the Londons have transformed do-it-yourself home design with their company, Faux Like A Pro. Offering high quality products and an array of classes, they have brought the art form of faux finish to the Boston community, and beyond.

Faux Like A Pro is the only company in New England dedicated to faux finish, the process of adding texture to a surface. Faux finish is not paint. It is a specialized use of plaster, glaze and other ingredients. Whereas a painted or wallpapered surface remains two-dimensional and static, the surface of a faux finished wall is three-dimensional and provides infinite possibilities for adding custom color, depth and texture.

"Faux finish is all about transforming space," Kiss London said. Perhaps more satisfying than the end result is the process of creating faux finish, which Kiss London described as methodical, meditative and relaxing.

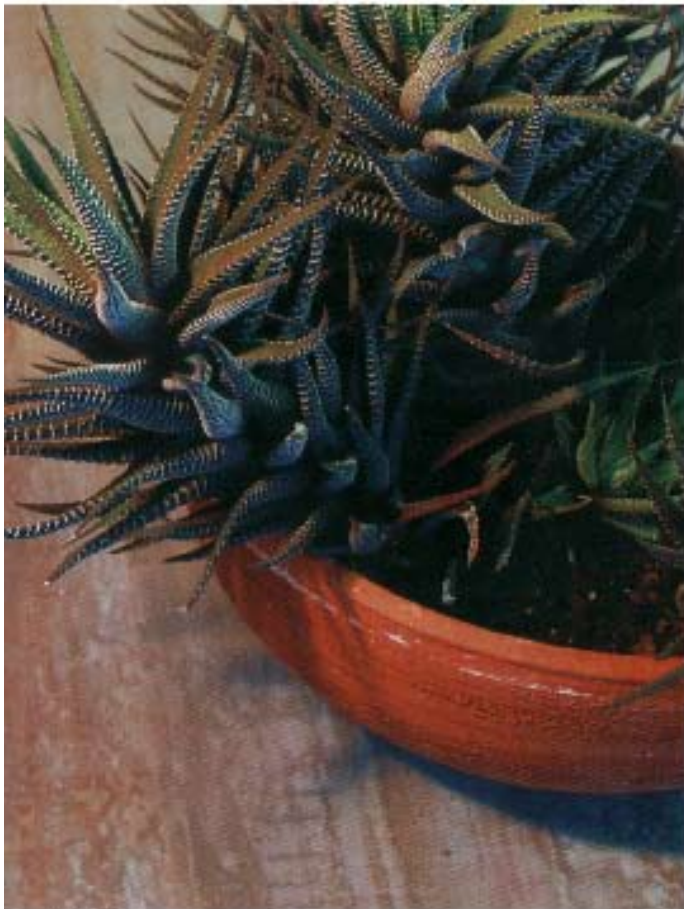
Kiss London has been creating faux finishes for 13 years. "I've always had a natural fetish for unusual texture," she explained. "I see the beauty in different textures and seek to recreate this onto walls." She cited inspiration from sources as diverse as copper pennies and tree bark.

What began as a hobby quickly transformed into an obsession, and Kiss London began working for architects and designers in high-end homes. After moving to Boston from California, the Londons created their own faux finish business and worked on hundreds of projects in private residences, churches, restaurants and salons.

In 1994 the Londons entered the emerging internet market by developing their own interactive website dedicated to the art of faux finishing. Before long, the website generated thousands of hits per day that extended beyond merely exchanging tips. "People were interested in buying products; they wanted how-tos and finished samples," recalled Kiss London. The Londons decided to brand themselves and enter the world of manufacturing. They spent over a year researching the industry, developing their product, designing labels and working with a Polish chemist to create the product line they now sell online and in 30-40 independent retailers nationwide.

After entering the digital and manufacturing realms, the next logical step for Faux Like A Pro was training. The Londons began offering accelerated courses in glazing, plaster, wood graining and marbleizing and have developed a curriculum that expands each year to follow students' interests and industry trends.

According to Kiss London, the classes at the Institute of Surface Design, located in their spacious Allston studio, operate under a "no attitude" mantra. Anyone is welcome to attend the two-day courses, and students range from professionals and contractors to divorcees, grandmothers and couples. Some are interior designers, others have no artistic background. Half the students come from out of state. Her most eager students are women between the ages of 35-55; many have quit their high-powered jobs in pursuit of creative endeavors. Programs have grown so popular that roughly 25 to 35 students from the Rhode Island School of Design take courses at the Institute of Surface Design annually.



POLISHED

DESIGN CONSULTANTS MARK AND SANDRA KISS LONDON HAVE BROUGHT THE ART FORM OF FAUX FINISH TO THE BOSTON COMMUNITY AND BEYOND. FAUX FINISH IS NOT PAINT, IT IS "BEAUTY IN TEXTURES."



## De-mystifying industry

"WE ARE TRYING TO DE-MYSTIFY FAUX FINISH," explained Kiss London. "Whereas stores like Home Depot and Lowe's have belittled faux finish, we want to maintain it as an art form." According to the Londons, too many mega-chain stores sell low-quality faux finish products and fail to offer any instruction in how to recreate the designs people see on television or in a restaurant.

Without any insight into how simple yet effective faux finish can be, people often assume it is too difficult to replicate. The interactive website and upcoming "recipe cards" designed by Kiss London are so user-friendly that it would be difficult for an amateur to botch a project. "We're trying to reach this audience and make a difference," Kiss London said. "The stores and television shows—they don't give you the know-how or a foundation in faux finish. We will." The products and services of faux Like A Pro combine the ease of do-it-yourself techniques made popular by Martha Stewart and home design television shows with the sophistication and high-quality elements found in million-dollar homes.

The Londons plan to develop faux finish schools in California and the South. They would also like to offer lifestyle courses in haute cuisine, window treatments and duvet covers.

Faux Like A Pro: [www.fauxlikeapro.com](http://www.fauxlikeapro.com) or  
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