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by Michael Austin, managing editor

paint & **COATINGS**



the Finest Faux Trends

Metallics, Venetian plasters and a move away from DIYers to professionals are the latest trends in the faux market

Professional finishes, like these two done with the Studio Finishes line from Benjamin Moore & Co., are becoming more common.

Images courtesy of Benjamin Moore & Co.

If you haven't noticed the impact of faux finishes on paint sales in independent stores throughout the course of the last decade, you probably don't own a paint store and picked up the wrong magazine.

Faux finishes have evolved to a more sophisticated look in recent years, but the demand for these products in the marketplace is just as strong. However, as trends change, retailers need to know what's hot in the faux market right now. So, instead of making you wait until *Paint & Decorating Retailer* magazine's all-faux issue in January, we're giving you a sneak peak into what's hot in faux as we enter the fall season.

Metallics Are A Mainstay

While it's hard to come to a consensus as to what is the one trend affecting the faux market today, it's safe to say that metallics are about as hot as

it gets right now.

"This year, we find that some of the most popular finishes include some form of metallic," said Marco Corrente of Adicolor Inc. "It's hip, it's funky, it's trendy and it's gorgeous. Now we are seeing some of the most classic-looking finishes, like a simple Venetian plaster, include a metallic to it, whether it is a metallic plaster or a topcoat."

Adicolor offers three products to address the metallic trend—Oro Stone, Veli e Velutti and Metal Series Metallic Gels. Oro Stone is a single-component architectural water-based decorative metallic plaster. Once applied over a properly prepared surface, Oro Stone leaves patterns of reflective metallic. Corrente said this product allows the user to burnish with very little effort, so it can be used in a variety of finishes from dull and satin to brilliant sheens.



Veli e Velutti is a water-based decorative finish that is applied with a very simple application but still allows the surface to look brilliant, said Corrente. "The two bases—one gold, one silver—will make your walls dazzle with the effect and the feel of soft velvet," he added. Adicolor's third product, Metal Series Metallic Gels, enriches a faux finish by providing metallics based in a gel form. These gels are water-based coatings that add metallic effects. They are available in metallic lusters, pearls and iridescent. Corrente said another value in this product is its thick consistency, which makes it ideal for vertical applications.

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At Crescent Bronze Powder Co., products provide a way for architects and designers to fulfill their "quest for color." Typically, that quest leads them to metallics. "Designers and artisans are constantly pushing the envelope by coming up with innovative applicators and new ways to blend metallics, such as gold, silver and bronze with taupes and other popular colors," said Doris Westbrook, vice president of sales and market-



● Crescent Bronze products were used to create this fauxed ceiling.

ing for Crescent Bronze. The company's Cres-Lite® custom-made powders are popular today as they provide a way to mix clears and paints in metallic, fluorescent, pearlescent and phosphorescent pigments in 111 different colors. "We are no longer limited to plain white or light blue walls with a single accent tone," Westbrook continued. "Consumers are going for a look that is an extension of their personality and character. Designers are responding to their customers' request for something distinctive by blending a hint of Chromatone®

metallic gold or silver with oranges, browns and reds to really bring out distinctive textures and create truly unique, one-of-a-kind spaces."

Dealers carrying Crescent Bronze products agree that metallics are the way to go right now. Paul Muto, owner of Star Scenic Supply in Orlando, Fla., serves a distinguished clientele including scenic artists, set painters, muralists, faux finishers, decorative painters, gilders and wood finishes. "Metallic powders and paints are some of our best-selling items with professional faux finish-

ers who are using them to create striking, multi-layered walls, ceilings and molding," Muto said. Joshua Goldmeier, general manager of Hi-Grade/Sapponos Decorating Centers in Chicago said "shimmering" is one of the most asked-for effects of customers coming into his stores. "Faux artists are discovering they can mix a small amount of Chromatone® powdered metallic pigment into glazes, which then can be layered

over Venetian plaster, woodwork, moldings or even furniture to create a shimmering effect that is subtle, yet dramatic. Pale gold, silver, copper and bronze powders can be used individually or intermixed to create truly one-of-a-kind designer tones."

Sepp Leaf Products also is experiencing a high demand for metallic products. The company's Jennifer Longworth said customers are looking for a broader spectrum of color in gold leaf. "Traditionally content to allow leaf to provide a gold or silver background, painting contractors are

Remain Competitive With Faux

Independent retailers always are looking for a way to have a leg up on the competition (see page 23). Selling and promoting faux-finishing products definitely is one way to gain a competitive advantage.

Several companies with faux-finishing offerings took this opportunity to let retailers know why it's still so important to stock, sell and promote faux products.

Mark London, president and founder, Faux Like a Pro—Faux-finishing products have had the tendency to be viewed as a difficult sell. With so many coatings, tools and techniques available, learning a new product line

and choosing designs for customers can be confusing and even overwhelming for retailers. We recognize that an independent paint and decorating store is a hectic, frenzied sales environment and that selling faux-finishing products can become time-consuming and overwhelming. That's why Faux Like a Pro created Sandra's Recipe Cards™ (6-by-9 inch, full-bleed, high-resolution sample of a designer faux finish with step-by-step instructions and a shopping list of products to purchase to achieve the look (see page 52). We believe the cards will help expedite the sales process and up-sell the customer. Faux Like a Pro's simple, yet versatile line of products, coupled with our new

recipe card system, is creating the buzz that the faux industry and our customers have been craving.

Marco Corrente, Adicolor Inc.—I truly believe that the independent retailer is the most profitable for faux products. It is much easier to sell a product when the customer sees how it is done. Hands-on workshops help sell product. The difference between a big-box store and an independent retailer is education. A trained staff member will sell more product than a 17-year-old part-timer. If a customer is looking for a high-end finish, they will go to a high-end store where they can have some one-on-one customer service.



● Metallic Waxes from Faux Like a Pro are part of the faux industry trend toward metallic finishes.

searching for unusual or exciting colors in leaf to complement commercial and residential settings. They are also widening the scope of color used in Venetian plasters." Sepp Leaf's newest product—Tamisé flakes—is helping contractors in their search for something different. These small confetti-sized flakes from Italy provide a

luminous colors afford a mood-elevating palette, in units of 100 and 500 leaves," said Longworth.

Faux Like a Pro's Vice President and co-founder, Sandra Kiss London, said in the part of the country where the faux finishing business has a stronghold, like in Miami, Los Angeles, Houston and Atlanta, the Old

glittering rainbow of colors for the artist's palette in 10 new color combinations, said Longworth. The flakes are packaged in clear boxes with the familiar Sepp Leaf Gilding Workshop label on the front, as well as instructions for use on the back. Sepp Leaf also offers Schaibin, Tamisé's larger flake cousin, in clear-topped boxes as well.

Also from Sepp Leaf is a new crop of Colored Genuine Silver Leaf, which has been gathered from Japan. This is a series of eight new hand-dyed leaves ranging from shimmering moonbeam, sunny yellow, orange, pink and purple, to refreshing blue and green. "These

World and distressed finishes are giving way to bold, modern, graphical colors and patterns. This led to the company developing a new line called Metallic Waxes, which will be available in late October. They come in eight colors including 24-Karat Gold, Antique Gold, Pure Copper, Sterling Silver, Luminescent Pearl, Aluminum, Iridescent Blue and Iridescent Ruby. London said the waxes can be applied with a spatula or trowel or even can be used to create metallic stenciling effects. "We believe that products such as this one will help maintain the integrity level of Venetian plaster, proving that the finish can remain classic yet fresh," London said. "Whether you're looking to make a bold or subtle statement, the Metallic Waxes add sparkle and pizzazz to any Venetian plaster finish."

Betsy Litton of Ralph Lauren Paint also mentioned the sparkle of metallics as a reason why they are so popular right now. "Metallic finishes are more popular now than ever. Customers are attracted to a little extra sparkle to set themselves apart," Litton said. "Homeowners are seeking the perfect application to personalize their environments

Barry Steinhorn, director of sales, Polyvine Inc.—The faux market is still growing and is still profitable—it just has shifted. Those retailers that have a large contractor market and can offer product knowledge, training and a progressive line of products are still making money and bringing in new customers. It's just the face of the customer that has changed.

Leo Chippy, Pratt & Lambert Paints—The faux-finish category is a critical point of distinction for independent paint dealers. The effectiveness and creativity consumers draw from a dealer's faux finish affects the entire store. The helpfulness of the design tools combined with comprehensive product selection and technique coaching grows paint, sundry and tool sales.

Barbara Wurden, Faux Fun Inc.—As long as people continue to paint and decorate their homes, the category should remain a core part of the retailer's product mix. That said, it comes down to a merchant's ability to educate the customers with instructional products that help them best accomplish the project. When they project that image and provide the tools that teach, it becomes very profitable. Not only will they sell the paint and sundries for the current project, they will receive the benefit of repeat business for the many other projects the do-it-yourselfer will take on.

Jennifer Longworth, Sepp Leaf Products—Top-level painting contractors and designers count on independent retailers for solid advice and

a range of products that can't be found elsewhere. The level of education and personal service they provide is invaluable to those seeking elegant and unique custom finishes for their clients.

Kurt Denman, product manager, Benjamin Moore & Co.—Many retailers think the volume associated with specialty finish products doesn't warrant the cost of inventory and creating space within their store. Nothing could be further from the truth. While specialty finishes are a niche offering, the products can deliver a strong margin. Additionally, virtually all techniques require some combination of primers, base coats and clear protective finishes. This part of the business can deliver substantial volume.

and faux applications are an excellent way to achieve a one-on-a-kind look.”

Ralph Lauren has responded to the metallic trend by recently launching Ralph Lauren Regent Metallics, a collection of luminous paints that add a shimmering richness to luxurious classic color, said Litton. “Inspired by military and heraldic trim, these burnished bronzes and coppers, antiqued golds and patinated silvers, as well as glistening silvered blues, greens and purples introduce a new level of luxury and custom detail to a room,” she added.

Modern Masters Inc., also is involved in metallic products with its latest product launch called ShimmerStone™. ShimmerStone™ is a versatile, water-based coating that creates decorative finishes like layered stone, dimensional lace, linen, raw silk and raised ornament with shimmering effects and luminous undertones. The product is a single tint base and can be used as is or tinted to a variety of colors using ShimmerStone™ Color Concentrates. These concentrates are available in 15 designer colors and can be used to create more than 90 shimmering hues. ShimmerStone™ also can be tinted with Universal Tint Colorants or paints from the Modern Masters® Metallic Paint Collection™.

Faux Fun Inc., a company that teaches faux-painting techniques, doesn’t align itself with products but does notice some of the latest trends in the industry. “Following trends is dependent upon your customer. The more educated a person is or if you’re dealing with a design professional, they will be searching for the latest techniques and specialty finishes with regard to faux painting,” said Barbara Wurden of Faux Fun. “I see those types (of people) utilizing finishes with bolder color and more defined texture and pattern. The use of metallic paint in faux finishes is strong and still gaining popularity.”

Faux Fun’s latest instructional DVD is entitled “Metallic Finishes & Venetian Plaster,” which shows that metallics still are hot today, as well as Venetian plasters (the next trend explored in this arti-

● **Tamisé flakes (below) are the latest offering from Sepp Leaf Products. These are confetti-sized flakes from Italy. Schaibin (right) is a larger flake cousin of the Tamisé flakes.**



cle). The DVD provides instruction for creating textured finishes with metallic paint and also gives details on how to effectively create a polished Venetian plaster wall finish.

Venetian Plaster Still Popular

Along with metallics, companies involved with faux-finishing products



● **ShimmerStone™ is Modern Masters’ offering for users wanting a metallic finish.**



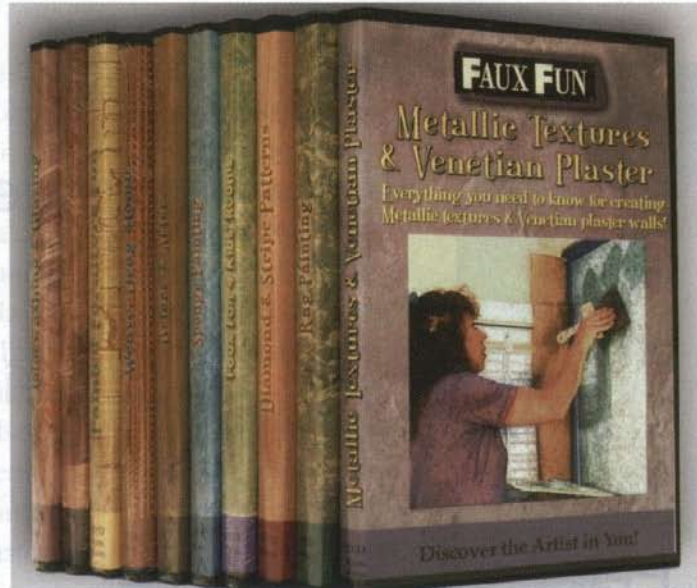
could not stop talking about Venetian plasters. As the faux marketplace turns toward more sophisticated looks, Venetian plaster should remain a popular finish.

“We’ve seen Venetian plaster emerge as one of today’s most desirable finishes, particularly in market where faux finishing only recently became part of the sweeping trend toward interior design and home fashion—markets such as New England, for example,” said London of Faux Like a Pro. “Designers in these markets are specifying highly sophisticated plaster finishes for clients because the medium evokes a wonderful tactile quality that lends itself to a broad spectrum of design styles from Old World to Modern.”

Faux Like a Pro owns and operates the Institute of Surface Design, which pulls in homeowners and professional decorative painters. London said many of these students are expressing an increasing interest in learning how to apply Venetian plaster. So, the institute has responded by expanding its course offering to include a Designer Plasters class. Plus, Faux Like a Pro offers a versatile line of faux finishing products featuring three grades of plaster—Polished, Washed and Weathered—offering infinite possibilities for texture and sheen, according to London. “What makes our Faux Like a Pro Venetian plaster unique is that while other brands are pre-tinted, we’ve developed four bases: white, neutral, red and black, which enable the product to be tinted by the retailer to match any paint color,” said London. “This ensures that our

retailers are not stocking colors that are obsolete or out of style and enables customers to purchase Venetian plaster colors that are as fresh as the latest paint hues on the market. Customers also can tint our plaster themselves by using universal tints or artists' acrylics."

Cat Faust, marketing/technical specialist for Faux Effects International Inc., sees Venetian plaster becoming popular once again, especially for true lime-based and synthetic plasters because of their durability, translucency, elegant appearance and incredible shine. The company offers the lime-based Olde World Marmorino product in this segment. It allows moisture to enter, then escape the surface without jeopardizing the integrity of the finish so it can be used in exterior applications, said Faust. Also, Faux Effects International (FEI) recently developed Venetian Gem Bellis-



● The latest instructional DVD from Faux Fun highlights two of the major trends in faux finishing right now—metallics and Venetian plaster.

simo, which is an addition to the company's Venetian Gem synthetic plaster line. "It is an ultra-creamy marble plaster that burnishes up to a very high shine quite easily and also can be combined with many other FEI products for a multitude of unique effects," said Faust. "With a wide variety of intermixable colors to choose from and a

tint base, keeping up with the latest color trends has never been easier." Faust added that the color trends for Venetian plaster finishes this year include more vibrant tones such as chartreuse green, cobalt blue and cranberry red whereas last year featured softer and more muted colors such as ochre yellow and sienna.

Professionals instead of Do-It-Yourselfer

Most of the faux trends already discussed revolve around higher-end finishes and more sophisticated looks. That's why some companies are pushing quality over ease-of-use with their products, as most professionals already know how to use the products.

"The DIY end of the industry has been decreasing steadily as most people that were adventuresome have realized that faux finishing takes time, knowledge and most of all artistic talent. Even

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the most determined DIYer has trouble with the artistic end of the application," said Barry Steinhorn, director of sales for Polyvine Inc. "So, we are seeing a lot of professional, high-end uses for decorative and faux products. The untrained applicators or the person who just took a class and began selling their services has disappeared, and we now have a more professional, better-trained contractor offering their services at a very high cost."

Steinhorn also mentioned professionals using more natural woods and fibers in their design, so Polyvine has enlarged its offering of Varnishing Wax and has added its Saman Water-based Stain Division to its line of Clear Protective Finishes.

Kurt Denman, product manager for Benjamin Moore & Co., agreed that there has been a shift toward professionals in the faux marketplace. "Trends continue toward more complex techniques and furthermore those with a natural 'elemental' focus," he said.



● Faux Effects International Inc. products were used to create the vibrant finish pictured. The company's Cat Faust said vibrant colors dominant this year over muted, Old World colors.

"Techniques that imitate leather, sand, stone, marble and, of course, metallics (with and without patinas)." Benjamin

Moore's Studio Finishes product line is geared toward professional finishes due to its extensive color offering that

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● **Sophisticated looks are trendy today, according to Betsy Litton of Ralph Lauren Paint.**

allows an individual almost unlimited finishes and effects.

Time-Savers

No matter if it's a professional painter or a DIYer, everyone needs to save time but doesn't want to skimp on quality. "Consumers are looking for techniques that are sophisticated

and unique but simple to do and fool-proof," said Peggy Van Allen of Pratt & Lambert Paints. "They don't have as much time to dedicate to a project, but they will dedicate the time if they feel that the end result will be a finish that they can be proud of. Those who are experienced faux painters understand the importance of color selection, so any program that helps with that process is going to be successful."

Addressing both of Van Allen's points is Pratt & Lambert's Ovation line of paint and products. "Ovation products enable consumers to make their sophisticated and unique visions a reality by enabling consumers to master unique designer finishes and trends," said Pratt & Lambert's Leo Chippy. "These products are specifically designed to meet past, current and future color styles to go along with continually innovating and searching for new techniques to give consumers more options in creating their own unique style."

Daich Coatings Corp. offers Vertistone, a line of textured interior wall finishes that allow users to achieve faux-type effects in a fraction of the time, according to the company's Paul Meredith. "At the same time, they will be able to add more depth and texture to their work and the finished product will be more durable than any paint available to them today," he said. "This opens up faux-finishing type effects to high-traffic, commercial areas."

The Woolie Inc. deals with the tools needed to create faux finishes, rather than the paint. The company offers a pair of products perfect for faux finishers who need to save time while maintaining a sophisticated look. The Milano Plaster Tool and the Glaze Donut are easy to use and reduce the amount of time needed to complete a finish. The Milano Plaster Tool helps create an actual textured surface in a fraction of the time that it takes to complete a Venetian plaster look. The Glaze Donut is easy enough for beginners to

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● Sandra's Recipe Cards™ help speed up the sales process while also up-selling the customer on more faux products. They are from Faux Like a Pro.

use when applying a finish to the wall and it does not need to be repositioned due to its donut shape. It's made from 100 percent natural chamois and is washable, as well as reusable.

Don't Forget the Floor

The walls may get the majority of the publicity but Rudd Co. doesn't

want retailers or consumers to forget about faux finishes for the floor.

Rudd Co. offers SkimStone®, which is a decorative finish for concrete floors and allows professionals and DIYers to create a one-of-a-kind design on their floor, according to Laurel Jamison, president and COO.

“The look of stone marble or other organic flooring materials can be achieved by layering different intensities of a single color or using a variety of colors,” Jamison explained. “It's easy to accent a SkimStone® floor with a simple border, medallion or random tile design.”

Jamison added that decorative artists also have been using SkimStone® with Modello™ Carpet Designs to create faux area rugs, which



● The Woolie, Inc., offers products to help faux finishers complete the job in less time. Pictured is the Milano Tool for creating texture.

can look like any number of patterns, including like a worn antique Persian rug or a bold, contemporary accent piece. ■

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