

HOME ON THE WEB

Holly Ocasio Rizzo

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NORTHERN CALIFORNIA'S LARGEST NEWSPAPER

Get online and go with the faux



My dentist in Daly City has a special treat for those leaning back in the examination chair: stars on the ceiling. Since going there for teeth cleaning, I've made a point of looking up in rooms, seeking surprises.

There are no Sistine Chapel ceilings in the neighborhood so far. But there are oh-so-faux worn plaster, marble and texture over plain dry-wall.

Wouldn't it be interesting to transform an ordinary living room into an ancient grotto simply by using paint? You'd avoid the weight and expense of the real materials, and you could undo it all at the drop of a paint pail.

The challenge: To learn faux finishing for interior walls and ceilings.

Site: Faux Like a Pro, Allston, Mass.; www.fauxlikeapro.com.

Purpose: To sell faux-finishing materials and to offer online instructions for using them. A decorative painter and her husband founded the company in 1995.

Most households probably already own the basic materials, such as paint rollers, drop cloths and painter's tape (which is less sticky than masking tape, so it doesn't damage a finish when it's removed), but this site's finishing glazes and patterning tools are worth a look. However, I was most interested in the instructions for making walls appear to be what they're not.

The setup: The home page is composed of a welcome and introductions to materials for sale, faux-finishing tutorials, a list of sponsors and the "latest news" about the site. Click on Materials to access list of item categories and explanation of return policy.

Instructions require Macromedia Flash, which self-installs if it's not on your computer, to load images of the various finishes in rooms and on objects.

Ease of navigation: Clicks follow logically. Clean graphics make pages easy on the eyes. Pages look deceptively simple because of wide borders.

What you'll find: In the instructions section, progress through the step-by-step details by using the little arrow-and-box gauge at the lower left corner. The steps lead from preparation through tips. Click on Colors to see different color combinations used with the same technique.

A legal disclaimer notes that results may vary, and instructions assume a temperature of 22 degrees Celsius (72 degrees F.) and 55 percent relative humidity. Click on Classes for finishing lessons around the country; one was listed in Los Gatos when I visited.

A sample: "Color wash is a wet-on-wet technique in which transparent strokes of color blend together seamlessly. Dip tip of 4-inch latex brush into glaze A, then apply with long crisscross strokes, swinging your arm freely from the shoulder. Place strokes randomly, leaving portions of the base coat showing through. Work in 3-square-foot areas until each wall is complete. Do not stop in the middle of the wall."

The best parts: The instructions show several effects obtainable from using one set of base coat plus accent colors.

Thumbs-down: The Macromedia images can take a while to load, sometimes 30 seconds or more, which seems like an eternity when you want to see the faux technique pictured in use.

Surprise: A community area invites visitors to post comments and offer suggestions and tips on a variety of faux-finishing topics. The bulletin boards are moderated and are for registered users.

Registration, which is free, asks for preferences when logging on and posting messages. There's a live chat, too.



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