



## Is Decorative Painting “Faux” You?

Belmonte Builders' 2006 Showcase home's music room.

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**T**here are many ways to transform a space, but none as customizable and dramatic as decorative painting. There are numerous finishes, techniques and artistic touches to explore from exciting and new, to classic tried and true. When using a decorative painter, you are inviting an artist to create a one-of-a-kind decorative element for your space that will be enjoyed for years to come.

**The “new”:** Rosemary Prock of *The Sow's Ear Studio* says decorative ceiling painting is more popular than ever before. With the rise in popularity of more architectural ceilings, including the use of multiple moldings and varying heights and shapes, it is natural to want to highlight these upgrades. Whether it is adding a faux finish to the center (such as a wash of color in a tray ceiling or faux leather in a coffered ceiling) or representational artwork that mirrors the pattern of a fabric used in

the room, the possibilities are endless. Adding color and pattern to the ceiling is often an unexpected touch that truly transforms a room.

Rosemary has also seen a surge in the use of metallic finishes. The range of possibilities spans from a subtle pearlized sheen to gold leafing. With the rise in popularity of contemporary and eclectic decor comes the need for decorative elements that are striking and “wow.” Metallic finishes are the perfect ingredient. These are especially popular in smaller spaces such as powder bathrooms, where the homeowner feels more freedom to “go bold” or be fanciful. Metallics are not only for the contemporary. There is a renewed interest in the ancient practice of gold leafing, which is being used in the most traditional of homes to add a special touch and transform a look from ordinary to extraordinary.

Finally, there is also a huge trend in making the old new again.

*The Sow's Ear Studio* does a beautiful job of recreating family heirlooms. Many clients are choosing to update and make special furniture pieces that have been in the family or home for years. This is especially true for children's furniture. Adding beloved fairy tale characters to an old children's rocking chair makes it the perfect piece to hand down to a new family member to love for years to come. Updating "Grandma's furniture" can be as simple as highlighting the carving in a wood piece with color or as dramatic as painting stripes on an old chest or hall table for use in the foyer or other focal point.

**The "tried and true":** One of the most popular reasons decorative painting is stronger than ever, is the ability to add durable, classic finishes to the walls that enhance a room with subtle luxury. These finishes have been around for hundreds of years. Meta Rappaport of *Meta's Painting* reports continued popularity in Venetian Plaster. This beautiful and tactile technique is elegant, durable and repairable. It is sure to add value to your home for years to come.

Getting the most for your money is a common request, as good value is always in style. To accommodate this, there is a huge return to the use of neutral colors and finishes that will compliment the decor of many styles, so looking "dated" is never a concern. One such technique is the Two or Three-Tone "wet blend" technique that washes the walls with subtle changes in color. It can be soft and cloudy or dramatic and classic like the background of an oil painting.

Meta is also getting many requests for custom murals and "feature walls" where a bold finish is done to one accent wall in a room, and the remaining walls are painted a solid complimentary color. This is also a great way to add impact without breaking the budget!

**Making it your own:** The best way to select a decorative painting technique for your own home or business is to work with your interior designer. A collaboration of design professionals will give you a

space that speaks to you in exactly the language you are hoping for. Designers are trained in the art of coordinating color palettes and complimentary pattern combinations, and have the whole room's details in mind when making suggestions. The inspiration can be as grand as wanting to recreate the feeling of your favorite vacation spot, or as specific as mirroring the pattern and colors of a fabric or rug in the room. Either way, you are giving your space the distinction of being uniquely your own!

It is also helpful to see and feel the finish you are considering first hand. This year's Saratoga Builder's Association Showcase of Homes is a great way to do this. The Belmonte Builder's entry, for example, will feature Venetian Plaster in the dining



Belmonte Builders' 2008 Showcase home's masterbedroom.

room, a Three-Tone wet blend finish in the Master Bedroom, and a mural-like tree and leaf motif using subtle metallic finishes in the mudroom (all by Meta Rapaport). Using an inspiration space to work from is an excellent starting point.

Finally, after hiring a decorative painter and signing the contract, always ask for sample boards done specifically for your project so you can approve the proposed work. This will ensure the only surprises at the end are pleasant ones!