



REAL ESTATE

Ask Greta

The Alexandria Times offers expert practical information on common challenges homeowners may face in home design. Readers are encouraged to contact Greta at the email address provided at the end of her column.

Greta Gray Webel



Q: I hear terms, "decorative painting" and "faux painting" and don't know the difference. Can you please explain this and their applications?

A: Your question is fine tuned. Many laymen use the terms interchangeably, not realizing there is a difference. Decorative painting, in the shortest description, includes color washing, ragging, sponging, and other techniques. Using glossy vs. flat paint sheens, contrasted colors, and other techniques add drama to these.

Faux painting uses the French term referring to "false," to imitate. You may have seen faux wood grain on painted furniture to mimic real wood. Or, marble imitation on columns and/or floors. Stone blocks, or natural stone are other examples of faux painting.

These techniques offer ultimate customization and flexibility. You can't always find the right wall paper for exactly what you need, nor would you want to spend days searching. These finishes are more efficient in the long run if you are looking for something special. While some of these finishes remind you of Tuscan decor, old world, traditional approaches, they also can apply to contemporary decor. Allow any artist you consider to share his or her portfolio to illustrate this.

There are more specialty paint treatments, too. According to Ashley Spencer, Alexandria specialty paint artist, (www.ashley-spencer.com) mural painting, which is a completely different category, is another dramatic approach to special painting. And, Ashley explains, "Paint treatments don't only pertain to walls. Finishes can make a world of difference to floors, furniture, cabinets, floor cloths, ceilings and more."

For more information

If you are interested in seeing examples of faux "inlaid" wood on a stained parquet floor, faux stone and tumbled marble techniques over existing bath tile, iridescent plasters, new cement trowel-on products, faux "slate" right over linoleum, ornamentation steamed on to make "custom" cabinets and furniture, and techniques that make small rooms look larger and low ceilings appear taller, tour the Faux House in Arlington (www.FauxHouse.com) beginning in June. This will continue your education on the difference between decorative and faux painting, and introduce you to its many talented artists. This creative project is a fundraiser for Habitat for Humanity in New Orleans.

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