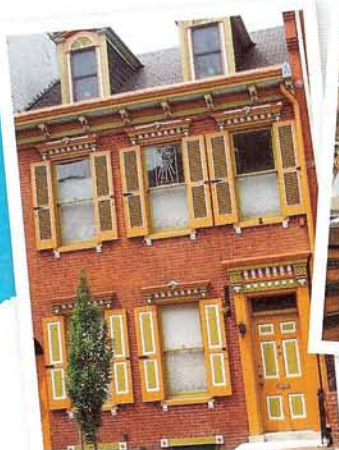


the
POWER
of
PAINT

A FAST, FRESH FINISH TO FIT ANY BUDGET

by Stephanie Anderson Witmer



EACH YEAR,

Americans spend billions renovating, redecorating and redesigning our living spaces in an attempt to add more life to where we live. The good news is you don't need to spend a ton of time or money to revamp a room.

One fast and affordable fix? A fresh coat of paint. Painting is a great option for the most frugal of homeowners, with appeal to everyone from the indecisive to frequently updating trendsetters. Don't like it? Repaint it!

PATTERNS, COLORS & SURFACES

Surface selection—whether it be the wall, a piece of furniture, or even the floor—is the place to start. Painting a floor can really pack a visual punch that is often overlooked. The important thing to keep in mind is that wear and tear will present a challenge. Mike Ausherman of Mike Ausherman Painting Inc. in York (www.aushermanpainting.com; 717-843-4605) says that floors must be cleaned very well first so that dirt and debris don't get trapped. Choose products that are made to handle the high volume of traffic a floor will endure, particularly in foyers and hallways. Though Ausherman says he would not paint ceramic tile or vinyl, many other types of flooring can be painted. Blue painter's tape can be used to make checkerboard, diamond or other patterns. There are even toned acid stains to create a colorwashed concrete garage floor.

After you've decided what to paint, the second order of business is deciding what color to paint it. Even if you know you want your powder room to be blue, which shade of blue do you choose? How do you know it will look right

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and evoke the feeling you're trying to achieve?

Seth Cluley, owner of Beau Soleil Decorative Painting in Camp Hill (717-413-1376), says to look to the smaller parts of your home for bigger ideas. "Easy clues for choosing a color are furniture and decoration," Cluley says. "You can search for inspiration in what you see in the room."

Take a closer look at that painting on the wall or the tchotchke on the mantel—there's a reason you like it enough to display it—and chances are, color may have something to do with it. Plus, when you've finished painting the room, the accessories will already match—an added cost-saving benefit.

Cluley suggests that people starting with an empty room pick their color for the largest area first. "Stay with colors that are the same height in the fan deck, or one up or one down," he says. The result will be a balanced



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color palette. "It looks unbalanced when you have a light color next to a deep or rich color," Cluley advises.

And don't be afraid of color. There are certainly lots more options than white, off-white and beige. Ausherman says browns, greens and muted Southwest shades are trendy choices.

Most major paint manufacturers sell sample jars so you can try out a color before committing to it. Many of their websites allow you to "test" colors in virtual rooms to get an idea of how they will look first.

"GREEN" PAINTING

While painting is a cheap, quick way to update the look of your home, it doesn't come without a cost—an environmental one. Luckily, there are many more eco-friendly paints on the market than there were even a couple years ago.

The biggest environmental hazard paint presents is in the form of volatile organic compounds, or VOCs. VOCs can include formaldehyde, benzene, ethanol and other nasty toxins that are released into our homes—and into the air we breathe. VOCs react with sun-



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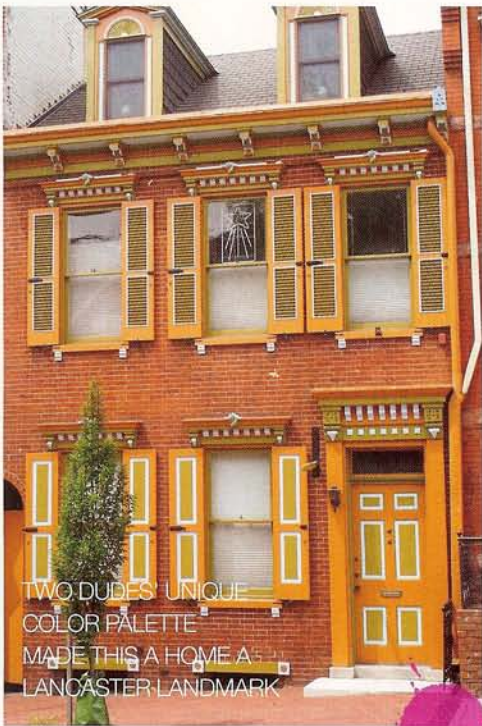
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DON'T BE AFRAID OF COLOR. AFTER ALL, IT'S ONLY PAINT.

light to form ground-level ozone, one of the primary components of smog. VOCs have even been linked to some cancers.

Cluley says, "The off-gassing doesn't just end when the new-paint smell wears off. Up to 50 percent of the toxic gasses and carcinogens from traditional paints leak into your home up to six years after it dries on your wall."

Choosing a non-toxic, low-odor, zero-VOC paint helps prevent the emission of these toxins. These paints come in a wide variety of shades and provide the same coverage as regular paint. Some notable brands include Benjamin Moore's Aura line. When shopping for eco-friendly paints, look for the Green Seal Standard mark on the can.

Be mindful of how you dispose of paint, too. Unused paint can be donated to a local Habitat for Humanity chapter. If there's just a small amount of paint left in the can, Cluley suggests filling the can with cat litter to solidify it before throwing it away.

FAUX FINISHES

"Faux finishing" is an umbrella term describing a slew of decorative painting techniques, many

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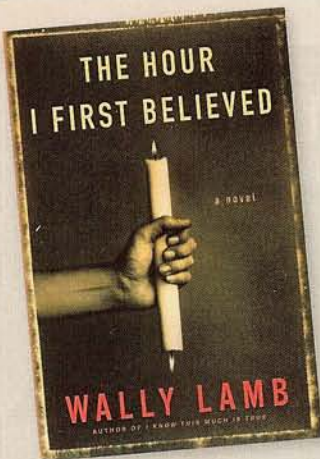
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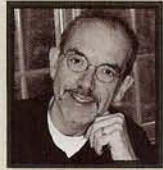




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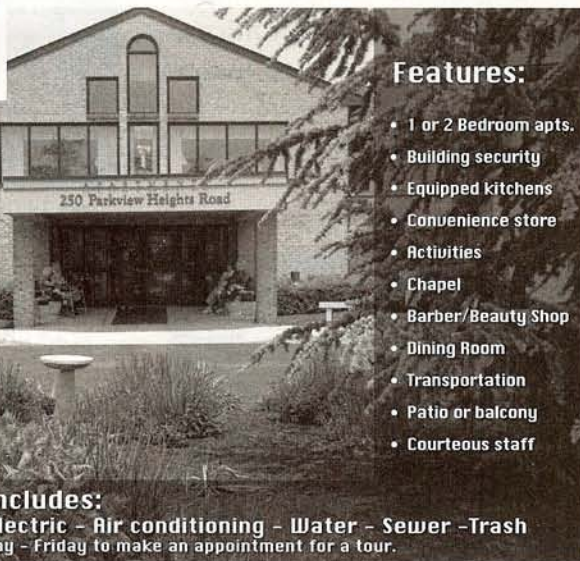
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of which have been used for centuries. (It's also referred to as trompe l'oeil, which means "trick the eye" in French.) Faux finishes use paints, glazes, plaster or metallics to mimic the look of stone, wood, marble and other natural materials.

Other finishing options, often called "fantasy finishes" because they don't simulate something else, include stippling, sponging, colorwashing and rag rolling. These finishes are highly customizable and often turn out best when executed by an experienced professional.

Peter Barber, co-owner of Lancaster-based Two Dudes Painting Company (www.twodudes.com; 717-396-1207), says, "Because these looks are so varied, they can appropriately fit into just about any style of home. Even some of the most primitive early American architecture utilized faux finishes to add certain decorative elements to their basic structure."

Cluley says, "If you like the country look, add a white plaster finish to make your home more authentic. If your furniture is wild or bold, a simple glaze will accent it."

If you want to attempt faux finishing in your home, Cluley urges homeowners to choose the right products. For example, he says, latex-based wall glazes dry too quickly. And only layer a flat color on top of another flat color, he suggests. Acrylic-based products, however, stay workable longer and are translucent to allow the color you're glazing to come through.



PREPARED TO PAINT?

Regardless of your painting project, planning and preparation are key. Paint lots of samples before making a commitment. Think holistically about how the new look will fit with the rest of your home. Be realistic about what you can do yourself and what you should hire a professional to do. Look for inspiration everywhere—flowers and plants, artwork, clothing, design magazines, friends’ homes and other places you enjoy visiting. Don’t be afraid of color or pattern, and let your personality shine through. After all, it’s only paint.

“If you don’t like the color or grow tired of it after a while, it is simple just to paint over it,” Barber says. “The fashion and style of a room can be completely changed in just a couple of hours and a gallon or two of paint.” **SS**

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