

Creative Kick

A New York Artist Rediscovered the Joy of Painting

After 20 successful years in the stencil and faux finish business, it was all beginning to get a little stale for decorative artist Joanie Valenti of Rochester, N.Y.

Joanie began with stenciling in 1984, covering every surface she



PROJECT A. Above: Joanie double-checks the alignment and layout for multiple design “tiles” for a large ceiling project. Below: Once the all-over center pattern has been painted in, the custom fit border pattern is installed. The border pattern was designed and sized to perfectly frame the center panel.



PROJECT B. A small panel design was greatly enlarged and repeated to create long, custom panels to run between wooden beams. Joanie’s assistant, Diane, demonstrates the grand scale of the pattern that was easily smoothed into place by two sets of hands. Once one end is secured in place, one artist pulls the Modello taught from the other end while the other smooths it into place from one end to the other.

could get her hands on and begging her large, extended family to let her “play” in their homes. After attending her first SALI convention in 1990 where she met many new friends and mentors, Joanie’s stenciling hobby



by **Melanie Royals**

blossomed into a small business. In the ensuing years, Joanie has completed well over 4,000 projects, mostly on walls, variously hiring her four sons, sister-in-laws, nieces, and nephews along the way.

Joanie's work has been published in nine national magazines, including *Paint Décor*, *Windows and Walls* and *Concrete Décor*. Her business at the height of success, she was feeling very comfortable—and bored! As an



PROJECT C. Here a panel design is installed in an entryway over a black basecoat. This photo shows the transfer tape being removed. This particular Modello is a “negative” or “resist” design that is used to create an inlaid pattern.



PROJECT C. After troweling several layers of Lusterstone, the Modello pattern is removed with the help of a “weeding tool” revealing the black base color beneath.

artist always looking for new painting adventures she felt unchallenged and “in a slump,” aching for something new.

Enter Modello Designs Decorative Masking Patterns. In the last year, Joanie has become a complete Modello convert, creating a dozen or so unique projects in upscale homes. Says Joanie, “Modello has completely changed my ‘stenciling’ business. I now look at every project I walk into and think ‘How can I use Modellos?’ Without a doubt, it has raised my imagination and creativity to a new, higher level and makes my work a step above



PROJECT B. With the Modello burnished in place, the Transfer Tape is pulled off to reveal the pattern that is now ready for embossing. Here, several colors of Lusterstone were “bladed” through the pattern on both the ceiling and companion soffit border.

others who aren't using it. I truly love working with this product!”

Jumping Right In

Working with a new medium can be a little intimidating. Joanie wondered where to start, how to sell it and

how to put it up. She says, “Like everything new in life, you need to practice, start slow and with each job come up with your own little ‘tricks.’ Think about the first time you stenciled or tried a new wall finish. Each time you do another or do more, it becomes more comfortable and easier.”

Joanie is so “comfortable” with Modellos now, she focuses most of her work on her favorite area to decorate—the ceiling—and her projects tend to be very large-scale and involve multiple patterns. As she says, “I love working on the ‘fifth,’ forgotten wall—the ceiling. Most clients don't even think about this area until I start talking to them about it and showing them what I can do.” Joanie finds working with



PROJECT C. The final result shows an intricately detailed pattern that is actually recessed in the Lusterstone surface-creating dramatic results.

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Modellos on ceilings to be much easier than traditional stencils, and with the help of her assistant, Diane Sundquist, she can complete a large application of Modellos on a ceiling very quickly—usually troweling on

several thin layers of a plaster such as Lusterstone with a technique, a speed and a clean edge not possible with stencils. She says, “Modellos are so nice because you don’t have to keep moving and repositioning,



PROJECT D. This ornate ceiling design was achieved with a combination of several motifs from the Modello line. Joanie worked closely with a Modello graphic artist, Elizabeth Hart, to come up with a custom design that fit the space perfectly. Below: The crowning touch! This embossed Lusterstone treatment turned the room’s ceiling into a work of art that adds warmth and pattern while creating a unifying effect for the whole room.





Joanie with her dog, "Buster."

cleaning or having the stencil continually fall on your head from the weight of the material you are troweling through it."

The Custom Connection

The clear advantage of Modellos is that they can be easily designed, sized and cut to accommodate the exact project needs. Because Joanie loves doing ceilings, she focuses her customer's attention on what grand things they can do with vaulted and recessed areas to capitalize on and accentuate the existing architecture. Many projects involve tweaking and combining existing designs from the Modello Design Library with the help of Modello graphic artist, Elizabeth Hart, who provides scaled mockups of Joanie's ideas to present to customers for approval. Says Joanie, "I found that once I started using Modellos in my wall, ceiling and floor projects that my level of clientele rose. Clients are willing to go for a design that is different from anything else they have seen. The custom factor is a big selling point."

An Easy Sell

It's not a hard process for Joanie to sell a Modello project to her customers. "I find I have no trouble selling Modellos. This 'bridgeless artwork' is simply beautiful. Clients are looking for the unique designs and finishes that you can only get with

Modello. I first sell myself, and then I sell my thoughts as for what I'd like to see for the project. The cost of the Modellos may be more than a traditional stencil, but the time-savings balances that out. Plus, you just can't get the same type of effects with a traditional, one-layer stencil. By far, this application has helped me to leap into a new world of design. I love it!" **TFF**



Melanie Royals is the creative force behind Royal Design Studio, an industry leader in the art of stenciling. Melanie continues to pursue the advancement of stenciling with the decorative painting industry by offering sophistication, inspiration and education to decorative paint professionals. For more information, call (800) 747-9767 or visit online at www.royaldesignstudio.com.

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