

Elegant Reflections

Beautiful patinated mirrors provide a potential new market for decorative artists

Patination, a technique that chemically changes the surface of an object to produce an alternate finish is nothing new to decorative artists. We use it regularly to speed up the aging process on metal leaf and paint.

Other finishes that are commonly referred to as “patinas” are techniques that simulate the effects of time and gentle wear on wood, furniture and even wall finishes. These types of finishes are commonly used to add subtlety, additional interest and character to newly painted or manufactured surfaces.

A highly classic and sought-after effect of patination in interior design is the elegant look of antique mirrors, whose silver has slowly darkened and pitted over the centuries. Like all great antiques, beautiful patinated mirrors are expensive and elusive for the average person.

A relatively easy-to-use product on the market now makes this finish accessible for decorative artisans to create and for their customers to enjoy. Antique Patina Mirror Solutions™ offers a simple three-step process that enables you to:

- Remove the protective latex mirror backing.



Patinated mirror panels by Timothy Poe.

- Treat the exposed surface to a chemical process that “ages” the mirror.
- Reseal the mirror.

The Basic Process

All mirrors made today have a protective backing of a special latex paint that is easily removed by the Citri-Strip Metal Stripper™ only available

from Antique Patina Mirror Solutions. This should be used according to manufacturer’s instructions in a well-ventilated area. It is important to note that most mirrors are made from plate glass that can be easily nicked if bumped against a hard surface or other pieces of glass, so care should be taken throughout the entire patination process.

The patina concentrate is created by simply adding hot tap water to the provided plastic jug that contains a capsule full of the patinating materials.

The mixed concentrate can then be used in varying strengths to create different levels of distressing through its reaction with the exposed electroplated (generally aluminum) surface. For example, full-strength concentrate left to sit on the surface for several hours will completely remove the electroplating to expose the clear glass, while concentrate that is mixed with two parts water and sprayed on for a short amount of time will result in just a light patination.

Once the desired effect is achieved, the surface can be resealed and protected with good quality paint.



Tamise leaf flakes are applied to the design area following removal of the electroplated surface.



This illustrates flash gilding with mica powders in an area that has received medium patination.

Decorative Effects

Besides simple patination, a wide variety of decorative effects can be created through the use of both pre-cut stencils and Modello Designs Decorative Masking Patterns™. Due to their inherent adhesive quality and ability to be created to accommodate any size and shape pattern, Modellos provide the easiest use and widest range of options.

The Modello will mask off a design area and allow you to distress or remove the electroplated surface to the desired level and then reapply color to that area in the form of paint, metallic paint, spray paint, metal leaf or mica powders to create numerous different decorative effects. Because the effects are created on the reverse



This custom Modello was created for The House That Faux Built project. Artist and designer: Amy Ketteran

Decorative mirrors, of course, can be used in numerous expected, and unexpected places.

side of the glass, they will be viewed through the glass (just like the mirror), providing added depth to the finish. The “How did they do that?” factor is also very strong!

Endless Applications

Decorative mirrors, of course, can be used in numerous expected, and unexpected, places.

For walls, they can be traditional-



Timothy Poe created this patinated custom tabletop with a Modello Designs border.

ly framed and hung, or permanently mounted with mirror mastic. They can be mounted with mirror clips, or interesting alternatives such as drawer pulls or other substitute clipping devices.

They can be mounted flush to doors or panel insets or even affixed from the back in the case of “framed” cabinet doors.

Small mirror tiles can be used as backsplashes, as contemporary wall groupings or simply placed on a small display easel as “art.”

Furniture options are wide-ranging as well. Mirrors can be mounted to fully cover a piece of furniture, used as insets or very simply as table toppers. You can have mirrors made to any size, thickness and shape through

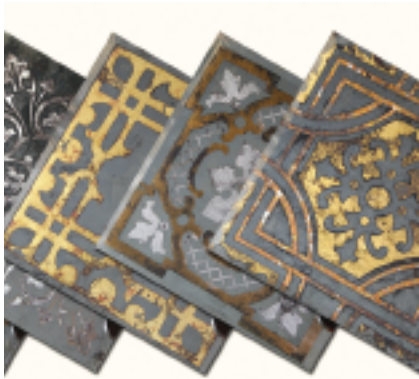
a local glass and mirror supplier.

On ceilings, they can be used in the center of coffers or to create a one-of-a-kind ceiling medallion that sets off and reflects an elegant chandelier below.

Practice and Pricing

Any type of chemical process may vary with environmental conditions and individual application techniques. It is not an exact science, of course, and you can’t expect to repeat the exact same finish in the same way twice!

Tim Poe, the inventor of the Antique Mirror Patina Solutions™ products and processes, tries to maintain as much consistency as possible in his shop when applying patination to mirrored surfaces: Same di-



Here's a selection of tile samples created with Modello Decorative Masking Patterns.

lution strength, same temperature, same spray pattern, same time, etc. to achieve a somewhat consistent look.

I recommend that you purchase a six-pack or two of beveled mirror tiles at your local home hardware store and set aside a couple of days for experimenting and sample-making, if you are interested in pursuing this decorative option for your port-



Modello Designs carries a full line of Antique Mirror Patina Solutions product and project kits. Also available: A specially selected set of tile patterns for creating mirror tile samples and an eight-page instruction booklet. Call (800) 663-3860 or visit www.modello-designs.com.

folio. Take notes and try different levels of dilution and "cooking" times. Use spray adhesive to apply thick felt to the back of your finished

mirror tiles and you would have some nice display samples.

As mentioned earlier in this article, true antique patinated mirrors are expensive and hard to come by. According to Tim Poe, square foot charges for new patination to create "old" mirrors start at around \$50. For the addition of design and color work with stencils or Modellos, pricing can start in the \$75 to \$100 range, making this a potentially valuable addition to your decorative finishing repertoire. **TFF**



Melanie Royals is the President/Creative Director of Royal Design Studio and Modello Designs. A renowned artist and educator, Melanie helps to lead and expand the industry with the

constant creation of new designs, products, techniques and applications for decorative finishers. Visit online at www.royaldesignstudio.com, www.modello-designs.com or www.designamour.com

Create antiqued mirror with

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Antique Mirror Patina Solution is a water based alkaline that effectively simulates the tarnish and distress of an antique mirror on any new mirror.

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