

by Melanie Royals

Shining the Spotlight: Barb Skivington/Faux Works



Cabinetry Finishes from Barb Skivington and Faux Works.

There is a multitude of things that I have enjoyed throughout my many years in the decorative finishing business. By far, though, one of the most enjoyable aspects of this creative career path has been the shared experiences and artistic collaborations I've been able to have with special friends. One such special friend, and like-minded soul, is Barb Skivington.

In an industry full of self-promotion, Barb has quietly become one of the most respected and knowledgeable instructors of decorative art and cabinet finishing teaching today. Through her business, Faux Works, Barb shares the knowledge that she has learned over 25-plus years in the industry with a warm and sharing delivery, efficient teaching program, and an eye always focused



Barbara Skivington shows a finish from one of her classes.

on future trends and cutting edge creativity.

Humble Beginnings

Barb has spent much of her life pursuing her passion for artistic creations. She began her career in the decorative finishing field as a self-taught artist, thanks to the renovation of an 1837 Greek Revival farmhouse in rural western New York. In the midst of her renovations, she happened upon an issue of *House Beautiful* magazine. On the cover, on her hands and knees, was none other than Martha Stewart, stenciling the floor of her Connecticut farmhouse. Thinking "I can do that," Barb contacted the magazine, got the specifics, and ordered the same stencils. From that point on, she was hooked.

Barb soon began working as a decorative finisher, supplementing her income by

demonstrating various finishing techniques at local home improvement stores. The demos were wildly successful, sometimes attracting more than 100 onlookers and igniting Barb's passion for teaching. She says, "I realized that there are people who are very serious about learning to do this. And I discovered that I loved to teach and that I was good at it. Standing in front of a big crowd with a brush or trowel in my hand, I felt as though I'd found my place in the universe."

After taking a series of Extraordinary Stenciled Effects™ classes from me in my San Diego studio, Barb decided eventually to give up "wall work" and focus her business full time as a Faux Effects teaching studio. As she says, "Now I had access to products that allowed me to create effects that I'd never done before—sophisticated textural finishes, unique patterned effects, and so much more—and on a wide variety of surfaces."

Faux Case

In 2001, Barb developed the Faux-Case concept—the transformation of a suburban house through the creative use of paints, plasters and stencils. Designed as an on-site workshop, students transformed a home into a showcase for decorative painting techniques. The home was opened to



Melanie and Barb collaborated on this book, "Decorative Finishes Inspired by the South of France." At right: Barb, left, with Melanie.

both the design industry and the public to rave reviews, and the net proceeds from these events were donated to a local organization, which funds research into cures and prevention of breast cancer. The projects were featured extensively in *Better Homes and Gardens* publications at the time, including an elaborate spread in *Renovation Style* magazine.

Art of Living

In 2006, Barb and I partnered to expand the FauxCase concept into The Art of Living, a program designed to nurture creative lifestyles and livelihoods.

The idea gelled between us on a group painting trip that I took to the South of France in May 2005. It was there that we determined that we wanted to develop a project that elevated both our art and the participating artists. We wanted to focus on how the creation of beautiful environments has such a positive effect on both the viewer AND the artist. The Art of Living project involved two dozen decorative finishing students and took place over two ses-



The ornate glass doors at Faux Works are indicative of the great artistry to be seen once you enter.

sions in the summer of 2006 in the Brandywine area of Pennsylvania, the proceeds again benefitting a local cancer center.

Barb and I co-authored and self-published a step-by-step book on the French country finishes that were designed exclusively for the house, "Decorative Finishes Inspired by the South of France." It features elegant finishes for walls, ceilings, floors and glass.

Plans are now in the works to create a permanent, yet ever-evolving, Art of Living site near Barb's Faux Works studio in High Point, N.C. This will enable us to utilize her teaching studio for the class portion, as well as have an interior environment that can effectively showcase the application of decorative and architectural surface finishes to the press and interior design community



In her home, Barb follows the mantra of “modernize and simplify.”

when they flock to the city twice a year for the Spring and Fall Furniture Markets.

Cabinet Finishes: Quality Craftsmanship and Better Business

Barb’s main focus currently is in developing elegant, artisan cabinet and furniture finishes, which she teaches at her own studio and in studios throughout the country. Barb’s approach to creating truly professional finishes for both new and previously finished cabinetry and furniture is to “build” custom, hand-rendered finishes through a series of simple layers. The result is finishes with a depth, beauty and quality hand that transcend the typical stained or painted finish.

Many decorative finishers

are finding that advanced cabinet finishing (or refinishing) is an ideal niche in these economic times, and Barb’s classes have a special emphasis on both salability and profitability.

Barb has developed an enviable reputation for both the quality of her teaching and the excellence and of her finishes — so much so that her classes sometimes sell out within a matter of hours.

Barb at Home

At home Barb follows a “modernize and simplify” mantra, mixing existing furnishings with a sophisticated array of contempo-

rary classics, antique Asian furnishings, modern artwork, and African primitives, all against a backdrop of luxuriously waxed Venetian plasters, authentic Italian Marmorino, and other unique textural finishes. Her home, like her studio, is highly functional, focused, and elegant—the reflection of a trained eye and restrained hand!

Since her first class here, Barb has become someone that I can always count on for support and encouragement for my latest creative business endeavors. When I introduced the concept of Modello Designs Decorative Masking Patterns six years ago, Barb was one of only two people who came to the first class I offered—seeing their value long before they became a common staple for decorative finishers. She now features Modello patterns and techniques in all of her Faux Works workshops.

Likewise, when I began offering a new teaching method, online Virtual Workshops™ in the fall of 2009, Barb was one of the first people to sign up. Like most of you reading this, for me the encouragement of my peers hold special meaning. Thank you, Barb! TFF

Barb Skivington will be teaching her highly popular European Cabinet and Furniture Finishes class at the Modello studio in San Diego, Calif. March 3-5.



Barb was one of the first artists to see the value of Modello Designs. Shown here: A Modello studio wall.



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 and www.modello designs.com.