

Creating a Faux

By Gloria Applegate and Tom Sandler

Editor's Note: This framed "Birth of Venus" was created by Gloria Applegate and Tom Sandler, head framer and owner of The Frame Station in San Diego, California. As the second place grand prize winner of Larson-Juhl's Creative Classic Contest, it impressed judges not only with its shadowbox frame construction but also with a wood liner painted with a faux marble finish. And no, the framed statue is not marble — it's covered with the same faux finish as the liner.

For our competition piece, we used a 2 1/2" wood liner which had to be primed with gesso before it could be painted. The liner was sanded and then covered with a layer of gesso, and this two step process was repeated until the wood grain was completely disguised. Several coats of gesso are sometimes required on wood, but the statue needed only one coat of gesso to seal the porous nature of the plaster.

We then chose to use a beige faux marble that would require three colors of latex paint to create. The first color we used was a taupe. This color was painted on in one small area at a time (about 4" square) using a regular 3" brush. The paint was then "ragged off" using a wadded up damp cotton cloth. Next, a slightly damp brush was used to feather the painted area; this creates a slightly blurred effect. These steps were repeated until each 4" section of the liner had been painted.

The second color used was an eggshell — this was a lighter color than the taupe. It was applied with a stippling technique using the same 3" brush and dabbing the paint into small areas. This paint was also ragged off and feathered to blend the colors. The final color used was a light reddish brown. This was again applied by stippling and feathering.

During the painting process, it is important to set up

a pattern with the second and third colors. This will determine where you will later add the veining to the marbled surface. Because real marble is formed in a liquid state, the different elements would have flowed together. It is this effect which you will want to re-create. It is helpful to study real pieces of marble to capture the different patterns and forms.

The veining is done using acrylic paints. For this piece we used a raw sienna blended with a little of the taupe latex paint. We applied the paint with a thin watercolor brush and a somewhat "shaky" hand, working in 2" sections. Then we used a small flat brush, dipped in water, and pushed this up against the vein to back off the paint. This creates a thin vein with a shadow of color. This was then dabbed with a damp cloth to make the vein flat and smooth.

Some veins can be backed up with a white accent to simulate the effect of a crack in the marble. The veins are most effective when they follow the areas created by the reddish brown color.

Once the marbled surface was complete, a coat of urethane was applied with a three inch brush, feathering so as to eliminate the brush strokes.

Using custom faux finishes in our framing has been fun for us. It allows us to add a new dimension to our designs and framing. To have it recognized in the industry is really special. □



Mouldings were stacked to create a deep space for the statue; the faux liner adds interest and contrasts with the rich black interior of the frame.

Marble Liner



Photo (here and on cover) by Gary Ballard, photographer.)