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uch like the enchanting journey of Alice when she stepped through the looking glass, so it was for faux and fine artist Allison Perley-Harter when she stepped into the great halls of Villa Bellagio, a residence of epic proportions destined to become a modern-day masterpiece. Though Allison may not have met up with the Mad Hatter, the Queen of Hearts or the Cheshire Cat, she was indeed put to the test when asked to replicate the grandeur of an era when opulence and illusion reigned.

Where does one begin with a canvas of over 18,000 square feet? How could such a task not have taken the decades it would have taken a Michelangelo or other masters of his time? Fortunately for Allison, a successful actress-turned-artist, she had access to a modern-day company whose state-of-the-art technology blends perfectly with the old-world art of faux and decorative painting. The innovative products conceived and created by the Vero Beach company allowed Allison to wield her brushes, feathers and other tools of the trade with great flair and precision.

Throughout this magnificent home we see masterful interpretations that could only be achieved with a discerning eye for color and proportion combined with materials that allow for quick and sure application. From the disappearing murals and marbleized walls in the dining room and the pearlized gold finish of great room's Venetian plaster to the master suites gilded furniture and the trompe l'oeil tapestries blanketing the powder room, Allison was able to create a wonderland rarely seen.

In the great room, Allison Perley-Harter gilded the tray ceilings which also showcase hand-painted frescos. The walls are Venetian plaster with a pearlized gold finish.



(Left) The powder exudes an exotic feel with Moroccan painted cabinetry offset by trompe l'oeil tapestries on all four walls and a gilded mirror. *(Right)* This hallway not only showcases some of the many classic faux techniques Perley-Harter implemented, such as a Plaster Tex finish with glazing and veining, faux stones, marbled accessories and distinctive cabinet finishes, but it also exemplifies the client's innate talent for interior design.

"Not having the luxury of unlimited time and resources, I needed quick results and reliable materials. Faux Effects gave me what I needed to ensure that the project would be completed on time and within budget," Allison explained. "At the risk of sounding cliché, Faux Effects mixes science with art and provides quicker, easier solutions to challenges that faced artists for centuries."

One example of art and science coming together in fine fashion can be seen in the grand foyer.

"It was two weeks before my clients' daughter's wedding ceremony was schedule to take place in the grand foyer, and the carpenters had just finished construction of that portion of the home. With Faux Effects' Art Imprints, Venetian Gem, Dutch metals and Plaster Tex, and the help of two local house painters ("Brush and Roll") and one of my clients' domestic helpers, we were able to implement our desire goals in a very timely manner. The result was a highly ornate, palatial foyer statement complete with Venetians, glimmering Venetian plaster walls and faux marble arch-

ways. I was actually able to create two, imposing two-story framed gilded mirrors in time for the ceremony."

To replicate the intricate Chippendale carving details in the frames, Allison applied Plaster Tex with a pastry bag. Adding yet another layer to the last minute, pre-nuptial frenzy, the bride arrived with a very special reception table in desperate need of refurbishing. Allison retreated to her bag of Faux Effects tricks and it was done on the spot. In fact, everything was completed before the bride's maids arrived. Yet, although it was barely dry in time for the festivities, no one was the wiser.

Allison summed it up by saying, "It would have taken the 'old masters' a decade to complete such a monumental task, not to mention the untold 'coins of the realm' with which the King would have had to part. There's much to be said for a company that helps save time and money, not to mention the sanity of an exhausted artist."

The overall interior design of Villa Bellagio was conceived and implemented by the lady of the house, the client.

According to Allison, it was one of those rare, magical opportunities to combine the talents of the designer and the artist to create a working environment much like that when the palaces of Venice and France were built. What's more, the man of the manor was the contractor. It was indeed a hands-on family affair. Artists and craftsmen were on site daily, creating an amazing synergy.

"Everyone involved became a Renaissance man doing whatever was necessary for the sake of the home's beauty," Allison recalled. "If something arrived marred, it was repaired and the gold leaf was matched. If a 6-foot trompe l'oeil painting was needed to fill a space, we could create exactly what was wanted in the appropriate colors and proportions. Even the owners' dogs contributed to the effort by barking out approvals of their likeness painted into a powder room mural. And every medium imaginable was used – gilding, leafing, old-world plasters, tissue paper effects, faux leather on walls and furniture, paintings on glass, metal, faux stones and marble, faux onyx columns, the list goes on and on!" Allison continued, "A favorite of the homeowners and guests is the walls of the grand hallways, done with subtle murals on Luster Stone covered with a misty gold finish. Another was a whimsical touch of trompe l'oeil trellises and vines in the cabana bath, replete with tiny winged insects, so lifelike, unsuspecting visitors actually swat at them. But again, none of this could have been accomplished were it not for Faux Effects. It would seem that it would have been like trying to make a jeweled crown without the Crown Jewels."

The mirrored wall not only doubles the perceived size of the master suite, it reflects the extraordinary faux finishes, hand-painted panels in multi-layered shades and contrasting trims.





Exquisite furnishings and finishes, along with a six-foot painting, define this intimate seating area.

At the helm of Faux Effects is Jane Kohler. Not only does the 12-year-old company manufacture all the necessary materials for great works of art, it and its 60 affiliates have trained many of the country's most respected decorative painters and faux finishers who work with designers

specializing in world-class projects such as Villa Bellagio.

"We take a very special pride in being able to provide that which allows artists to create such extraordinary surroundings. In addition to paints and supplies, we also create custom canvas murals and art imprints with which artwork is actually embedded into a substance leaving no raised edges. This is especially popular among interior designers for use on furniture. I'm proud to say that we have become recognized around the world as the finest source for faux and decorative finishing materials and instruction in the art of their application.

"What Allison did at Villa Bellagio is testimony to what one can do with exceptional talent and the right materials. We are proud to have such a monument steeped in the heart and soul of what we create." •

Source List

Foyer/Living

Table: *Catherine Memi, Paris, France*
 Sofas: *The Toby Collection*
 Lounge Chairs: *Christain Liagre at Holly Hunt Miami, Miami Florida*
 Side Tables: *The Toby Collection*

Dining Area

Table: *Catherine Memi, Paris, France*
 Sofas: *The Toby Collection*
 Lounge Chairs: *Christain Liagre at Holly Hunt Miami, Miami Florida*

Side Tables: *The Toby Collection*

Master Suite

Table: *Catherine Memi, Paris, France*
 Sofas: *The Toby Collection*
 Lounge Chairs: *Christain Liagre at Holly Hunt Miami, Miami Florida*
 Side Tables: *The Toby Collection*

Throughout

Table: *Catherine Memi, Paris, France*
 Sofas: *The Toby Collection*
 Lounge Chairs: *Christain Liagre at Holly*