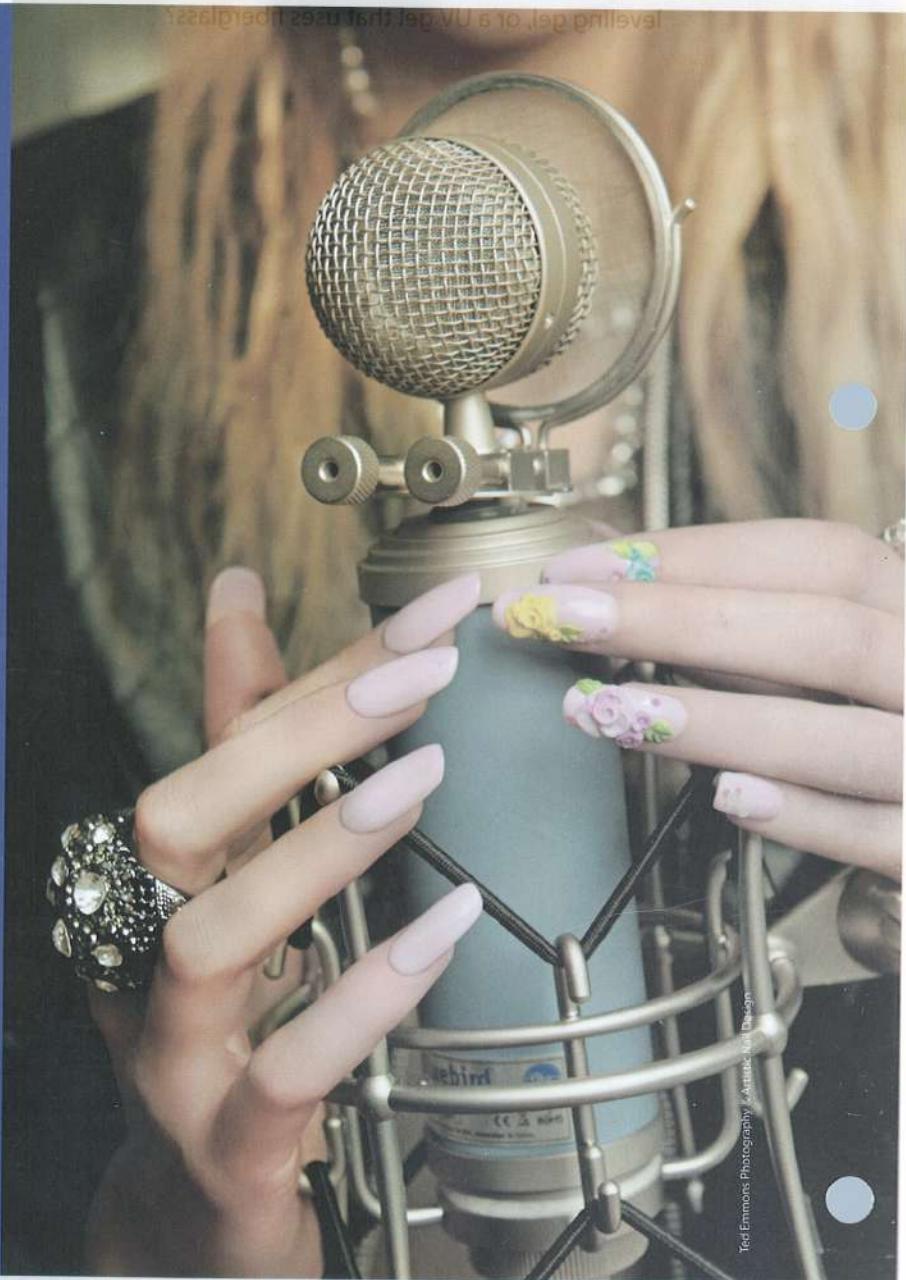


# 19

# The Creative Touch

## Chapter Outline

- Why Study Nail Art?
- Introducing Clients to Nail Art
- Color Theory
- Getting the Look: Art Mediums
- Polish
- Paint
- Monomer Liquid and Polymer Powder Nail Art
- UV Gel Nail Art
- Embellishments
- Airbrushing
- Nail Art Competitions
- Just the Beginning
- Procedures



Ted Emmons Photography & Artistic Nail Design

# Learning Objectives

After completing this chapter, you will be able to:

**✓ LO1**

Describe the most effective ways to introduce clients to nail art.

**✓ LO2**

List and describe the way color is classified on the color wheel.

**✓ LO3**

Explain how nail polish can be used in the creation of nail art.

**✓ LO4**

Describe nail art brushes and their uses.

**✓ LO5**

Discuss the basic techniques used in hand-painted nail art.

**✓ LO6**

Describe how to use monomer liquid and polymer powder to create 3-D nail art.

**✓ LO7**

Describe the use of UV gel in the creation of an inlaid nail art design.

**✓ LO8**

Explain what an embellishment is and when to use one.

**✓ LO9**

Describe how an airbrush machine is used to create nail art.

**✓ LO10**

Explain the benefits of nail art competition.

## Key Terms

Page number indicates where in the chapter the term is used.

**3-D art** / 403

**airbrush stencil** / 399

**analogous colors** / 390

**belly** / 392

**briefing** / 403

**color** / 389

**color blocking** / 391

**color fading** / 391

**color wheel** / 389

**competition kit** / 402

**complementary colors** / 390

**design sculpture** / 404

**fan brush** / 392

**fantasy art** / 404

**ferrule** / 392

**flash cure** / 395

**flat art** / 403

**flat brush** / 392

**French manicure** / 390

**French twist** / 404

**gravity fed** / 397

**heel** / 392

**inlaid designs** / 394

**liner brush** / 392

**marbleizing** / 391

**mixed media** / 404

**nail art competitions** / 400

**position** / 393

**pressure** / 392

**primary colors** / 390

**pull** / 393

**round brush** / 392

**rules and guidelines** / 400

**secondary colors** / 390

**sink** / 395

**smile line** / 391

**soak-off gel polish** / 391

**spotter brush (or detailer)** / 392

**striper brush** / 392

**stylus** / 391

**tertiary colors** / 390

**tip (or chisel edge)** / 392



**n**ail art has become the most popular add-on service in the nail salon today. It has become the main focus for increasing revenue and expanding the service menu in salons and spas across the globe. Many nail technicians even enter their work in nail art competitions for recognition, prestige, cash prizes, and the learning and networking opportunities associated with competing. With all the new techniques and art mediums introduced in the last 20 years, it's no wonder that nail art has lifted and expanded the nail industry and the imaginations of many!

Today, there are many nail art mediums with which you can choose to work, so no matter what your skill level or artistic preference, you can create an array of art on fingers and toes that clients will love.

Remember that most of the techniques shown in this chapter can be used with many different mediums or types of product. For example, you can create a French manicure look using monomer liquid and polymer powder, UV gel, polish, paint, crystals, or airbrushing. With just a little imagination and a lot of practice, you can create thousands of miniature works of art in minutes and create many opportunities for increasing your income.

## WHY STUDY NAIL ART?

Nail technicians should have a thorough understanding of nail art because:

- It can significantly increase your income in the salon.
- It can set you apart from the competition.
- It can assist in building a loyal clientele.
- It can help inspire creativity and keep your daily work fresh and exciting.

## INTRODUCING CLIENTS TO NAIL ART

Introducing clients to nail art has never been easier. There are many beautiful ways to display the art samples: on tips in a glass case or frame, in a photo gallery or portfolio, and of course on your own nails. Once the client sees the artwork, it becomes a topic of conversation that will open the door to your nail art services and art techniques.

If you have displayed an array of the nail art, and the client becomes interested, ask her to show you which examples she likes best so you can get an idea of the type or medium of art she is comfortable with. For example, she may only like flat or inlaid art, as she doesn't care for things raised or hanging off her nails. A conservative client might only be comfortable with French manicures or a soft color graduation, while others may expect a new design at each visit.

One thing remains true about nearly all clients: they will try something a little bolder on their toes than on their hands. So don't forget to offer art during pedicure services!

There are a few things to remember when introducing clients to nail art:

- Schedule ample time for these services and be sure to explain the time requirements. Some art services are relatively quick, while others can be time-consuming. This will keep you on schedule and give the client a realistic idea of the time and work required.
- Be sure that you have priced the nail art appropriately for the area and clientele. Always base the prices on the cost of materials, time investment, and the level of expertise. Be sure that the nail art services are priced competitively and be prepared to render artwork deserving of the fee.
- Have tools, implements, and supplies ready and easily accessible. Remember that nail art is usually an add-on service and can sometimes be a last-minute decision for a client. So be prepared: you may have to create the masterpiece in minutes! ■ **LO1**

## COLOR THEORY

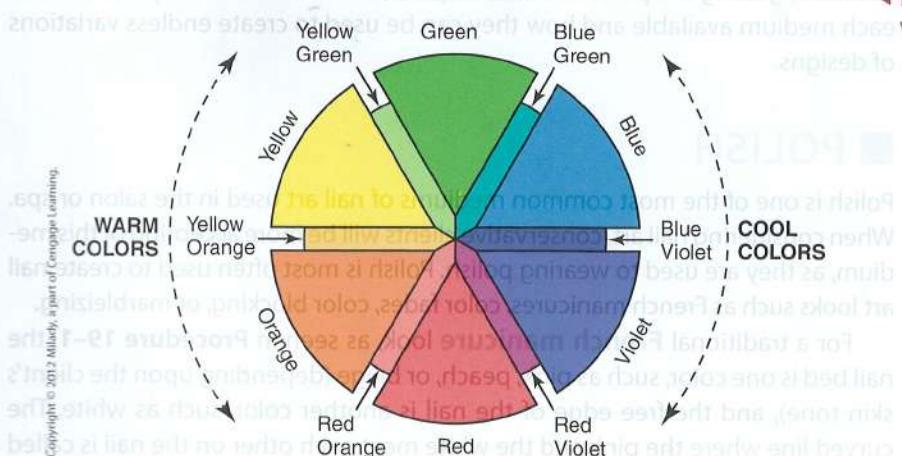
Before you can expect to successfully produce appealing nail art, it is imperative that you have a working knowledge of colors and how they relate, blend, clash, and complement one another. In many art supply stores, you can easily obtain a laminated color guide called a **color wheel** (Figure 19–1). The color wheel illustrates and identifies the primary, secondary, tertiary, and complementary colors.

The light we see reflected from a surface is called **color**. Red nail polish appears that way because red light is reflecting off of its surface. We see black

### BUSINESS TIP

In the salon or spa, it's important to make sure that your services are competitive and well-priced. It's also important to have a clear understanding of what you're offering and how it compares to other services in the area. By doing this, you'll be better prepared to attract clients and build a successful business.

◀ **Figure 19–1** Learning the color wheel will help you choose color combinations.





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when no color is reflecting from a surface. Black nail polish absorbs light that hits its surface and none is reflected back to our eyes. Nail polish looks white when all colors are reflected. The color that we actually see depends on which colors are reflected and which are absorbed. Knowing the classifications of color will aid you in selecting shades for the artwork that are pleasing to the eye.

**Primary colors** are pure pigment colors that cannot be obtained from mixing any other colors together. They are the pure colors from which all other colors are made and are often modified by adding varying amounts of black and white. Primary colors are red, yellow, and blue.

**Secondary colors** are the colors resulting from mixing equal parts of two primary colors together. They sit opposite the primary colors on the color wheel and are the complementary colors of the primary colors. Secondary colors are orange (1:1 red and yellow), green (1:1 yellow and blue), and violet (1:1 blue and red).

**Tertiary colors** are the colors directly resulting from mixing equal parts of one primary color and one of its nearest secondary colors. Tertiary colors are red-orange, red-violet, blue-violet, blue-green, yellow-green, and yellow-orange. Some also refer to tertiary colors as intermediate colors.

**Complementary colors** are those colors located directly opposite each other on the color wheel. When complementary colors are mixed together in equal parts, they produce a neutral, muddy brown; when mixed in unequal parts, they produce a neutral color dominated by the color of the greatest amount. When these colors are applied side by side, they enhance each other, making each other stand out or "pop" (for example, a yellow flower painted on a purple nail or a green leaf against a pink polish). Great color combinations are found by exploring, so go ahead and try many different variations of your designs with different colors. You will be surprised that the same design will appeal to many of your clients if you offer it in different color variations.

**Analogous colors** are colors that are located beside each other on the color wheel. These colors blend well together and are beautiful when one fades into another. **LO2**

## BUSINESS TIP

In the salon or spa, time is money! It's important to make beautiful art, in a reasonable amount of time. So practice, practice, practice! Practicing the art will not only help you create more consistent and beautiful designs, but it also will help you increase your speed.

## GETTING THE LOOK: ART MEDIUMS

Nail art has never been easier to create. With so many art supplies and mediums available, getting the perfect look is easy and fun. In this section, you will learn each medium available and how they can be used to create endless variations of designs.

### ■ POLISH

Polish is one of the most common mediums of nail art used in the salon or spa. When considering nail art, conservative clients will be more accepting of this medium, as they are used to wearing polish. Polish is most often used to create nail art looks such as French manicures, color fades, color blocking, or marbleizing.

For a traditional **French manicure** look, as seen in **Procedure 19-1**, the nail bed is one color, such as pink, peach, or beige (depending upon the client's skin tone), and the free edge of the nail is another color, such as white. The curved line where the pink and the white meet each other on the nail is called

the **smile line**. You can achieve limitless variations to this traditional look just by changing or fading the color.

With **color fading**, or color graduation, one color fades into the other, and the meeting point is a combination of the two. You can achieve this by applying the product more thickly and opaque and then using the product more thinly and translucently when meeting the other color (**Figure 19–2**). For example, if the top third of the nail is dark pink and the bottom third is light pink, then the middle third should be a combination of the two colors. There are multiple ways to achieve this look. Use a sponge or brush to blend colors at the meeting point.

**Color blocking** is just as it sounds: blocks or sections of color on the nail. Achieve this look by polishing the entire nail with a base color, such as black, and then creating stripes or blocks with another color such as silver (**Figure 19–3**).

**Marbleizing** is a swirled effect created when you combine two or more colors while wet and then mix them on the nail with a marbleizing tool known as a **stylus** (**Figure 19–4**). A **stylus** is a tool with a solid handle with a rounded ball tip on each end that can range in size. The rounded ball tips are excellent for swirling colors; dotting small circles of color; creating polka dots, eyes, bubbles; and much more. This marbleized effect can be applied over the entire nail or just on a part of the nail for a unique nail art creation.



▲ **Figure 19–5**  
Variations to the classic French manicure provide endless possibilities.

## The French Manicure

The French manicure is one of the most popular nail art procedures in the salon and spa today. You must master the technique and variations of it to stay competitive in the marketplace. Try various color combinations, fading techniques, and embellishments to create looks clients will want to try (**Figures 19–5, 19–6, 19–7, and 19–8**). A French manicure is always an upcharge in any salon or spa and an easy way to create additional income. □ **LO3**

Go to **Procedure 19–1 The French Manicure Using Polish** page 406

## Soak-Off Gel Polish

Recent technology has introduced **soak-off gel polish** to the nail industry. Soak-off gel polish is a pigmented, light-cured soak-off gel that has a thin enough consistency to be packaged in a nail polish bottle. You will notice that the bottles are not clear glass (like regular polish) because gel polish will cure or harden when exposed to light. With gel polish, you will need a UV or LED lamp, whichever the manufacturer recommends, to cure or harden each layer. Although the soak-off gel polish formulations vary from one manufacturer to

► **Figure 19–2** A color fade can be very subtle or bold.



► **Figure 19–3** Even simple nail art can give dramatic results.



◀ **Figure 19–4** Art tools can create elaborate designs.

## Application Tip:

To soften the traditional French manicure, apply the white polish onto the tip first and then apply the sheer pink over the entire nail. This will soften the dramatic white line and create a more subtle look.

► **Figure 19–6** Clean and classic with a little edge.



► **Figure 19–7** Bridal white with a hint of glamour.



► **Figure 19–8** Create more drama by adding embellishments.



another, they can all be used to create beautiful nail art with the same application techniques as regular nail polish. Learn more about soak-off gel polish in Chapter 18.

## PAINT

Hand painting is a very beautiful and often subtle art medium. You can create elaborate scenic views or just a tiny flower with paint and a brush. Hand painting is very versatile and can be beautiful alone or combined with another art medium.

## Brushes

A brush is the most commonly used tool when painting nail art. Brushes come in many sizes, shapes, and qualities. There are a variety of brush types, from very soft to very firm. Synthetic bristles are best used for water-based paints. Smaller-size brushes are usually the best choice for painting art on nails.

The very end of the bristles on a brush, farthest away from the handle, is referred to as the **tip or chisel edge**, depending on the style of the brush. Round brushes, for example, have pointed tips, while flat brushes have a chiseled edge. The mid-section of the bristles is called the **belly** of the brush. This is the area of the brush that retains the most paint. The **ferrule** is the metal band around the brush that helps to hold the bristles in place. The area in which the bristles meet the ferrule is called the **heel** of the brush.

Here is a list of the most common brushes used for flat nail art (**Figure 19–9**):

- A **round brush** is the most common and versatile style of brush and has a very good capacity for holding paint.
- A **liner brush** is a very good detail brush and is preferred for line work, outlining, and even lettering.
- A **flat brush** has a square tip with long bristles, which gives it added flexibility. This brush is useful for blending and shading.
- A **fan brush** is a flat brush with bristles or hairs spread out like a fan. This brush is most commonly used for blending and special effects.
- A **spotter brush or detailer** is a short, round brush with little belly and a very fine point at the tip. This brush offers maximum control for intricate, detailed work.
- A **striper brush** comes in various lengths. This brush is an extremely long, flat brush, having only a few fibers. It is incredibly efficient when creating long lines, striping effects, and animal prints. **LO4**

## Hand-Painted Art

Practicing brush strokes will help you master the art of free-hand painting. Brush strokes are accomplished in a variety of ways, but there are three basic techniques to master: pressure, pull, and position.

The **pressure** refers to the amount of force that an artist applies to the brush while stroking. The more pressure applied, the larger the coverage area and the wider the stroke. As the amount of pressure is decreased, the width of the stroke decreases. Alleviating the pressure gradually while pulling the brush



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▲ Figure 19–9 Some brushes used for nail art.



▲ Figure 19–10 Brush strokes to learn for hand painting nail art.

### Go to Procedure 19–2 Animal Print Design Using Paint page 408

## The Next Step

Once you master the zebra stripes in **Procedure 19–2**, try to create a tiger stripe by painting or polishing the nail with gold, bronze, or copper and then adding stripes with black paint. Other color variations are popular and fun during the spring and summer. Try any monochromatic paint scheme to create a fun and subtle look, such as a light pink on the entire nail and a darker shade of pink for the stripes. Or, try just stripping the nail with different colors (**Figure 19–11**) or nail edge for a “different” French manicure look!

You may want to take a hand painting class to get more tips and techniques for creating flowers and other more advanced designs (**Figure 19–12**).



▲ Figure 19–11 Stripes look great on toenails.



The more paint you put on the very tip of the brush, the wider the beginning of the stroke will be.



▲ Figure 19–12 Master control of your brush and paint.

## MONOMER LIQUID AND POLYMER POWDER NAIL ART

Monomer liquid and polymer powder can be used in a variety of ways to create unique nail art. This medium can be challenging to master, but it also has the most versatile results. Designs can be as simple as placing five small beads on a nail to create a three dimensional flower or fading six or seven colors as thin as paper to create a sunset backdrop for an inlaid design nail. **Inlaid designs**, designs inside a nail enhancement, are created when nail art is sandwiched between two layers of product while the nail enhancement is being formed.

Monomer liquid and polymer powder have come a long way from the traditional natural and clear polymer powders. There are a variety of colored and glittered powders to choose from on the market as well as colored liquid drops to change the color of the monomer liquid.

When using monomer liquid and polymer powder for art, there are many brushes and tools available to mold the product into the desired shape. When you are first beginning to work in this medium, use the same brush you currently use to apply the monomer liquid and polymer powder to nail tips and overlays.

### Practicing for Monomer Liquid and Polymer Powder Nail Art

Practice picking up beads of product; this will help you learn to control the product and determine drying time. When creating 3-D designs, where you want the design to stand up and have crisp, clear lines, you will use a very dry bead of monomer liquid and polymer powder. When you wish to fade colors together, you will use a very wet bead of monomer liquid and polymer powder.

To practice, pick up a tiny bead of monomer liquid and polymer powder and dab off excess liquid on to a lint-free towel. You do not want the liquid to continue to saturate the bead. The perfect bead should be smooth, round, and shiny (**Figure 19–13**). ■ **LO6**

Practice picking up beads and placing them on nail forms, thin monomer liquid and polymer powder sheets, and polished nail tips to learn product control on different surfaces. Practice on a very thin sheet of clear monomer liquid and polymer powder by applying a large bead of product to a nail form, piece of foil, or a sheet of wax paper. Press the bead out so it is very thin and allow a few minutes to dry. This platform provides a place for you to practice the art. It will give you some experience with how the product reacts when you place wet monomer liquid and polymer powder on top of dried monomer liquid and polymer powder nail enhancements. To learn product control and consistency, try picking up the exact same size bead 10 times and placing the beads beside each other (**Figure 19–14**).

Now try this same practice technique with different sizes of beads. Press them down with the brush until they are semi-flat. How large do they get? This exercise will help you to keep control over the size of the design and give you some experience with how the product behaves. Mastering this important step will help you to create very clean and crisp designs with monomer liquid and polymer powder.

Monomer liquid and polymer powder nail art can be used over polish or any other hardened nail enhancement surface. Monomer liquid and polymer



▲ **Figure 19–13** The perfect bead should be smooth, round, and shiny.

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▲ **Figure 19–14** Practice picking up the same size beads.

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powder art does not hold well on a clean natural nail unless you prep and prime the nail to receive this overlay.

When applying 3-D art over nail polish, you will want the polish to be dried for at least 3 minutes before applying the art. You can add a top coat to the polished nail before you add the art if you would like the art to look matte when complete. Or, you may also add the monomer liquid and polymer powder straight to the polish color and then seal the nail and art with a shiny top coat, leaving the entire nail and art with a glossy finish.

If you are working on a surface that can be easily ruined with acetone, be careful not to touch the surface of the nail with the monomer liquid and polymer powder brush too often or you may damage it. When working on top of a polished nail, you can ruin the polish if you stroke the surface too many times with a brush wet with monomer liquid.

**Go to** Procedure 19-3

### 3-D Flower Using Monomer Liquid and Polymer Powder page 410

## The Next Step

Keep practicing this simple flower design until you are able to complete it perfectly. The next step in working with monomer liquid and polymer powder is to add creative variations to your 3-D designs by adding several flowers on the same nail, adding embellishments, and even trying an inlaid design (**Figure 19-15** and **Figure 19-16**). Once you master the basic techniques, you are only limited by the imagination!

## UV GEL NAIL ART

UV gel can be used to create beautiful nail enhancements and can also be a very lucrative nail art medium. There are many colored UV gels on the market today, and by using some simple techniques, you can create an array of inlaid art that your clients will love. Inlaid art is art sandwiched between two layers of enhancement products. The finished art is inside the nail. The surface of the nail is smooth and the nail structure is not compromised by the art inside. It's also fun to add embellishments, such as glitter or confetti to clear UV gel. This technique can be used to overlay any nail enhancement. **LO7**

## Practicing for UV Gel Nail Art

At first, you might find working with UV gel to create nail art a bit difficult because it has a honey-like consistency and takes some practice to get used to. Practice by laying a long string of colored UV gel across a nail tip. Try to place it so that it is the same width and consistency from one edge to another. **Flash cure** the gel by putting it under the UV light for 5 to 10 seconds. The gel will begin to **sink** if the product remains uncured; this happens when the product settles and flattens out. If you try to get any thickness with UV gels, you must flash cure the product quickly after application. Try doing the same with small dots of product. Practice keeping the dots the same size and consistency and flash curing the product before it sinks.

▼ **Figure 19-15** Monomer liquid, colored polymer powders, and an electric file were used to create this look.



Photo courtesy of Cindy Davis, Studio 1632.



▲ **Figure 19-16** An intricate design sculpture with 3-D flowers.

fvi

When inlaying flowers in the nail, use the same technique as in the 3-D flower design except pick up smaller beads and flatten them out so that the size of the flower remains the same, but the flower design will be much thinner. This allows for a layer of clear monomer liquid and polymer powder to cover the design without the nail being too thick.



▲ **Figure 19-17** Gel toes are a great way to create more income.

Photo courtesy of LCN/Milde Cosmetics GmbH.

**Go to** Procedure 19-4 Confetti Inlaid Design Using UV Gel page 412

## The Next Step

When you feel comfortable working with UV gel art on hands, you can start practicing on toes! UV gel overlays on toes (**Figure 19-17**) are becoming a very popular service in the salon or spa. Use the same UV gel application techniques for toes as you would on the hands as demonstrated in Chapter 18, and charge the same, too! This technique is great, as the toenail surface and shape appear perfect after application, and the UV gel color and/or art last longer than traditional polish. It's also a great way to build loyalty—you now have a client coming every two to three weeks for her toe enhancement maintenance.

## ■ EMBELLISHMENTS

Embellishments are the easiest and fastest nail art medium. Embellishments consist of any element that can be applied to the nail as art. Crystals, rhinestones, stripping tape, foils, feathers, crushed shells, gems, confetti, stickers, decals, appliqués, beads, etc., are considered some common forms of embellishments used in the salon and spa today.

Embellishments can be used either inside a nail when creating an inlaid design or on top of the nail for a 3-D effect. When using most embellishments, there is no special preparation needed for the nail or for the surface they will be applied to. If applying on the surface of the nail, it's best to ensure that any other product, such as polish, is dry before applying the embellishment. You may use a resin, tip adhesive, or a top coat to secure the embellishment in place if it does not have its own adhesive backing. Use a wooden stick with a small dab of top coat on the end or a pair of tweezers to pick up the embellishment. Seal the nail with sealer or top coat if it is required, or if you prefer a shiny finish on the embellishment.

When using foil, leafing, or other metallic films for nail art, a special adhesive is sometimes needed. The adhesive is usually white and will need to turn clear before applying the foil or leafing. The foil is then applied to the tacky adhesive and gently pressed to the nail to secure it. There is no need to cut the foil or leafing, since it will only stick to the special adhesive and the rest will remain on the foil sheet. After the design is complete, seal the art with nail art or special foil sealer.

When using embellishments inside the nail, make sure the embellishments are very thin. These work best when they do not have adhesive. Apply the embellishment to the nail plate, tip extension, or sculpted extension with a small bead of the product you are using, such as monomer liquid and polymer powder or UV gel. Then overlay the embellishment with the same product, thus embedding the embellishment inside the nail. **LO8**

## The Next Step

Embellishments are too easy and fun not to experiment and play with! Try mixing them to create works of art on the nail and inside the nail. Adding embellishments to other art mediums creates a very elaborate design, while the time it takes to accomplish this type of nail art is kept to a minimum (**Figure 19-18**).

**Go to** Procedure 19-5 Crystal Art on Polish Using Embellishments page 414



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# Activity

Before you begin airbrushing, set up the brushes off to the side of the work area. This way, you will use this counter to a point of 10 to 15 minutes off of the side of the work area. This way, you will use this counter to a point of 10 to 15 minutes off of the side of the work area.

Try using beads or shells to accent a 3-D or inlaid design. This will save time when you are trying to make a simple design look amazing!

## AIRBRUSHING

Airbrushing gives a look all its own that is hard to duplicate with any other art medium. This unique form of painting allows for color combinations, color fading, and designs that create endless options for clients wanting flat art. However, the supplies needed for airbrushing are some of the most expensive investments in all the nail art categories.

All airbrushes work on the same principle: they combine air and paint to form an atomized spray, which releases extremely tiny droplets that are spray painted onto the nails. The ideal airbrush systems for nail art are designed for **gravity-fed** paint, which uses gravity to pull the paint into the airbrush. All airbrush machines consist of three basic parts: the handle, air hose, and compressor. It is common for these pieces to be sold separately.

The handle is where the paint is fed and released and what you will hold in your hand when working. The handle consists of the fluid nozzle, needle, cap, trigger, and paint well or cup. At the tip or end of the airbrush handle, there is a small, cone-shaped fluid nozzle that a tapered needle fits into. When the trigger is pressed and the needle is drawn back, the airbrush begins to release paint. The farther the needle is drawn back, the more paint is allowed to come through the opening. When you are not using the airbrush, you may want to use the cap to protect the needle.

This type of airbrush usually has a well or small color cup for holding the paint. The well, also called the reservoir, is a hole in the top of the airbrush where drops of paint are placed. If the airbrush has a color cup, it may be located on top of the airbrush or attached to the side of the airbrush to hold paint.

The air hose attaches to the handle and connects to the compressor. There may be a pressure gauge located on the compressor, or you may have to purchase this separately. Most nail professionals work at a pressure between 25 and 35 pounds per square inch (psi). When the compressed air reaches the air hose, moisture can accumulate. This moisture will form water droplets that can eventually be spit out from the airbrush. You may want to purchase a moisture trap to prevent this from happening.

## Did You Know?

Rhinestones are plastic with a foil backing; crystals are glass with a foil backing. When using crystals, it is best not to cover them with top coat, as it dulls the brilliance of their shine. However, rhinestones look the same when sealed with top coat or art sealers.

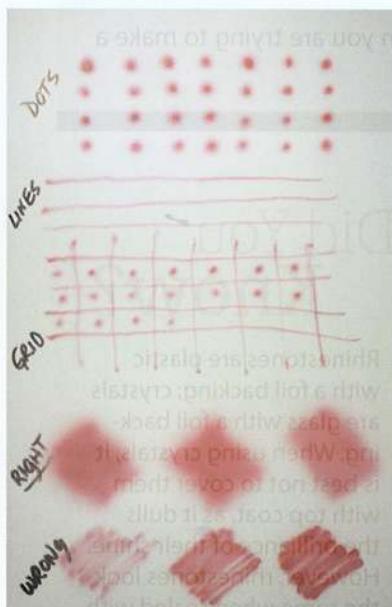
▼ **Figure 19–18** Designs get dramatic when embellishments are added.



Nail Art by Alisha Ríamundo Botero.

## Practicing with Airbrushing

▼ **Figure 19-19** Practice techniques on paper before moving on to nail tips.



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Before you begin airbrushing, set up the products and create a cleaning area for the airbrush off to the side of the work area. This may consist of a bowl or jar lined with absorbent material like paper towels. You will use this container to spray out leftover paint and clean the handle after each color is used. You will need many hours of practice before working on clients to get comfortable with the airbrush and how it works, but don't be discouraged. Airbrushing is fun and a very artistic form of nail art.

Begin practicing with the airbrush on absorbent paper or paper towels. Start spraying onto the paper at approximately 2 to 3" (5.08 to 7.62 cm) from the surface. Move your whole arm up and down, diagonally, and side to side in order to move the airbrush spray around on the surface. Develop even color with no lines by moving back and forth over the same area a few times. If you see streaks or lines on the paper instead of a smooth, even box of color, the airbrush is either too close to the paper or you are releasing too much paint at one time. Practice this technique until you can achieve an even coating of color on the paper with no streaks.

Next, try spraying a consistent row of dots. When the dot appears where you expect it to, you have learned how to properly aim the airbrush. Now try to draw lines. To draw crisp lines, you must have the airbrush nozzle very close to the paper. The farther you pull the airbrush away from the paper, the wider and softer the line will become.

After experimenting with dots and lines, draw a grid on the paper by drawing horizontal and vertical lines overlapping each other. This will create rows of boxes. Place a dot in each of the boxes (**Figure 19-19**). When you can master these techniques on a paper towel, you are ready to practice on nail tips.

### ☐ LO9

## Activity

Now that you are ready to try airbrushing on tips, you can really have some fun!

Follow these steps for practice:

- Use double-sided tape to attach five nail tips to a paper towel, keeping them about 2 to 3" (5.08 to 7.62 cm) apart.
- Apply base coat to the nail tips and let them dry.
- Load the airbrush with paint. Drop the paint color into the well or color cup and start spraying onto the surface next to the nails. When the airbrush paint is spraying correctly, direct the spray at the nail.
- Apply one dry, powdery layer of color to all five nail tips. Usually, three passes of the airbrush across each nail tip will build up a light color coating.
- Starting with the first nail tip, repeat the procedure on each nail tip until you have reached the desired airbrushed nail color.
- Apply an ample amount of top coat or sealer when the paint has dried. Float the brush across the surface; do not touch the nail with the bristles of the brush or it may scratch or smear the paint.

To clean the airbrush of paint, remove the color cup (if applicable) and finish spraying all the paint from the handle into the cleaning container. Once all the color is gone and only air is coming out of the tip, add a couple of drops of water or airbrush cleaner to the well and continue to spray until all of the water has come out and only air is coming out of the tip. You can now put the handle away or add another color.

When you have successfully applied the airbrushed nail color to 10 nail tips, you are ready to move on to practicing color fading or color graduations.

## Tips for Preparing the Nail for Art

Airbrushing can be done over most art mediums to accentuate or enhance other art. Airbrushing is commonly used alone or as the base for other nail art mediums such as embellishments or 3-D art. If airbrushing on top of another art medium, ensure that the other product is dry before starting. If you are using airbrush artwork directly on clean nails, make sure that they are free of any oils or other contaminants that may be left from the nail service. Always cover the working area with paper towels or other lint-free absorbent towels to catch the overspray.

Go to Procedure 19-6 Two-Color Fade or Color Graduation Using an Airbrush page 416

### Application Tip:

You can assist in drying the airbrush paint when needed by spraying clean air over the nail after the handle is free of paint.

## Did You Know?

The color fade or graduation is a popular nail art service and is easily achieved with an airbrush. With this technique, the colors you choose are the key to success. A conservative client might prefer subtle, soft hues of similar colors, while an outgoing client might choose bold colors that strongly contrast. This technique may be used as the background for another design or stand on its own as a unique, customized service.

### FOCUS ON...

#### Application

When they are first learning how to use an airbrush, most people are impatient and want to see the color right away. If you are too close to the nail tip or release paint too quickly on the nail surface, the paint will puddle and begin to run off the nail. When correctly applied, airbrush paint appears dull and has a powdery look. If the airbrush paint is shiny or appears as droplets, wipe the nail tip off with a water-dampened paper towel or cotton pad and try again. Focus on keeping the passes light and the color thin! Move on to the next nail. After 5 or 10 nails, go back to the first to darken the color instead of trying to get the achieved color or look all at once.

## The Next Step

After mastering the color fade, you may want to try fading three or more colors or creating distinct designs. To create designs or specific shapes when airbrushing, you can use a commercially prepared **airbrush stencil**, a precut sheet of clear, thin plastic with a sticky backing that is cut by a machine into various shapes or designs. You can also use any variety of paper, lace, mesh, fabric, or other materials as a stencil to create a unique look when airbrushing designs.

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▲ **Figure 19-20** Beautiful, faded airbrush design.

Photo courtesy of Noble Nails by Louise Callaway.

To achieve an airbrushed design with a precut stencil, remove the stencil from the sheet and the plastic shape from the inside. Place the sticky stencil on the nail and use the same spray techniques you have learned until the stencil shape is filled in. Remove the stencil once the image has dried to see the completed design (**Figure 19-20**).

There are hundreds of precut stencils available, or you can create a custom shape or design by cutting a sheet of uncut mask paper with a mask knife. For customizing stencils, place the mask paper on a glass plate or mat and carefully cut the design out with the mask knife. Use the full edge of the knife, not just the point of the blade, or you will have an uneven and jagged cut.

Airbrushing can be very fun and creative. There are so many amazing techniques and looks you can achieve using an airbrush for nail art. While the instructions given here are for the basics of using the airbrush machine, there are plenty of continuing education classes or videos available. If you are serious about mastering the art of airbrushing, you can contact a manufacturer that produces airbrush paints specifically for nails and ask about hands-on classes.

**WEB RESOURCES** Nail art competitions are held all over the world, mostly at beauty shows. Look at trade magazines and their Web sites to find listings of upcoming beauty shows and/or nail competitions. Look for information at:

**Nails Magazine:**  
<http://www.nailsmag.com>

**NailPro Magazine:**  
<http://www.nailpro.com>

**Scratch Magazine:**  
<http://www.scratchmagazine.co.uk>

**Beautytech.com (click on "Calendar"):**  
<http://www.beautytech.com>

## NAIL ART COMPETITIONS

Nail competitions are very popular and prestigious events in the nail industry. In these competitions, nail technicians from around the globe compete to prove their skills to the industry and themselves. Creating beautiful nail enhancements is an art form unto itself, but nail art competitions are an open forum where there are no limits on the imagination. **Nail art competitions** create opportunities for licensed professionals or nail students to compete in a specific category, where the art and theme of the nails are part of the judging criteria.

### About Competitions

The many competition **rules and guidelines** include specifics for time frames, models, presentation requirements, themes, products allowed, etc. You will need to know this information before deciding to enter. The rules and guidelines set forth what the competition allows and does not allow. You can request a copy of the rules and guidelines from the competition director or look for this information on the competition or show Web site.

Many competitions today include experience categories. There are novice and veteran competitions as well as student and professional categories; levels

of competition experience are sometimes a factor when a nail professional is entering a category. There are masters' competitions that are by invitation only or require a national championship or title in order to enter. In any instance, you will need to know what the levels of experience are and which you qualify for when entering.

After finding out the rules, guidelines, and location of the competition you want to enter, you will need to register and pay an entry fee. The registration form will be available on the Web site or included in the rules and guidelines package. Take into consideration all the costs associated with the competition—flights, hotels, meals, entry fees, model expenses, and supplies used and needed—before deciding to enter.

There are also online and photo competitions, which are a reasonably stress-free way to try your hand at competing. These types of competitions also have rules and guidelines that you will need to research. When researching these types of competitions, it is wise to find the winners and/or submissions from previous years to see what the judges are looking for.

## Why Compete?

Nail art competitions can provide an amazing opportunity for learning, traveling, attending trade shows, and networking. For example, competing in a nail art competition at a trade show gets you to a trade show! Trade shows are a vital part of the industry and an important platform through which nail professionals gain knowledge and continuing education. Nail manufacturers showcase the latest and greatest in product advancements at these events. Attending these shows is a commitment to your profession and clients.

While you will want to watch all the demonstrations and touch all the new products available, being involved in a competition will put you in a greater learning situation. Putting your nail art on display for your peers will give you invaluable feedback on where you need to improve and where you stand in comparison to the highest standards of the industry.

Talking to other competitors and seeing their work will inspire and motivate you to improve and try new techniques you have never even considered. Networking with peers will keep you on the cutting edge of trends and give you the tools and knowledge you need to keep excelling in the art and your business. New art and new techniques lead to developing new services on your menu. New services create new dollars. New dollars result in a long-lasting career!

While entering a competition is exciting and the experience invaluable, you are treated to even more rewards when you win. Winning not only gives you press coverage in the trade magazines, a trophy to display in the salon or spa, and usually a nice cash prize, it gives you credibility. Clients love to brag about their award-winning nail technician. Manufacturers and magazines also recruit competitors. Winning competitions can lead to other lucrative opportunities.

In the end, inspiration leads to motivation. Attending a show or competing in an event surrounded by other top talent will inspire you to try something new and become better. Being motivated in your career will ensure the drive toward success. **LO10**

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## Becoming a Competitor

As mentioned previously, there are rules and guidelines you must abide by when you have entered a competition. In some art competitions, the final look may be completed before the competition even begins. The rules and guidelines will explain whether it is to be presented in a box or other display case or on a model.

If the artwork is presented in a box, you have unlimited hours of creativity ahead! There will be rules and regulations about the size and dimensions of the nails and products allowed, but the amount of time spent to create the vision will be up to you.

If a model is required, you will usually have a scheduled amount of time to complete the art on the competition floor. In this case, the masterpiece is limited by the allotted time, so you must practice to increase your speed.

To prepare for this kind of competition, regardless of how the art is to be presented, begin by making a list of all the products you will need. Your **competition kit** will include every product you will or might use. You will need to think of everything, including lamps, bulbs, extension cords, etc. This kit might be a small backpack or a large wheeled suitcase, depending on the competition.

Regardless of which competition you enter or how the final look is presented, there will be endless hours of practice and creativity ahead. Practicing art is not only trying to create something spectacular and intricate, it is about the fastest way to create it! Use these steps to assist you in preparing for the competition.

- 1. Theme.** Sometimes there is a theme for the competition that must be reflected in the artwork. Be sure you know what the theme is and are comfortable with it.
- 2. Give yourself time to prepare.** You will need to save for expenses, book time off from work, and find a model who can be available for practice time and for the day of the competition. Give yourself weeks or even months to prepare!
- 3. Draw it out.** Always sketch out the idea for the finished nail art on paper and list the supplies and tools you will need.
- 4. Time yourself.** While you create the look or the main pieces of the look, keep track of the time it takes to complete the work. This is good practice and will give you an idea of the time it really takes!
- 5. Keep improving.** After the first rendering, create a new sketch and a new list of products you will need that will help you to create the art better and faster. Sometimes you will have to decrease the design because of time restraints or increase the design to create a more intricate look.
- 6. Be methodical.** If you are duplicating a piece of art on every nail, create those pieces all at once. For example, if you are making roses on all the nails, create them all at once before making the leaves. Produce the art like a factory worker. This will increase speed and, more importantly, consistency in the final look.
- 7. Practice with the model.** If the competition is timed on a model, practice on the model two or more times before the competition.
- 8. Keep practicing!** In any instance, you will need to perfect your artwork over and over again before you are ready to enter it in a competition. Plastic nail tips are always available for practicing.

- Pack everything you need.** When packing your competition kit, refer to the sketch and the supplies list to ensure that you have everything you will need.
- Get a good night's sleep before the competition.** Get a good, full night of sleep the evening before the competition so that you will be well rested and alert.
- Eat before the competition begins.** You may think you are too nervous for breakfast the morning of the competition, but you should have a nutritious meal before you enter the competition arena. Nutritious food will provide the fuel and the energy needed to carry you through the competition.
- Arrive early.** Give yourself ample time to find the venue, set up, relax, and focus before the competition **briefing**. The briefing usually occurs 15 to 30 minutes before the start of the competition. The competition director or head judge will review the rules and guidelines to ensure that everyone understands them and is able to comply. This is also the time when you may be told the criteria on which the nails will be judged. Listen and ask any questions you have.

## Categories of Nail Art Competition

**Flat art** is a nail art category that includes all free-hand painting techniques that are flat rather than raised (**Figure 19–21**). Embellishments and stencils are usually not allowed in this category. The art may be completed ahead of time and presented in a box, or created in a timed competition and displayed on a model wearing a full set of nail enhancements. Nails are usually judged on degree of difficulty, color, and precision of details.

**3-D art** describes any art that protrudes from the nail (**Figure 19–22**). These competitions allow most embellishments.

Photo courtesy of Nails Magazine.



▲ **Figure 19–21** Maps theme created for a nail art competition.

◀ **Figure 19–22** Native American themed 3-D art.

Photo courtesy of Viv Simmonds from Vivid Nail and Beauty.





Nails by Massimiliano Braga.

▲ **Figure 19-23** Design sculpture using monomer liquid and polymer powder.



Nails by Massimiliano Braga.

▲ **Figure 19-24** French twist created with white, glitter, pink, and clear monomer liquid and polymer powder.

Most other artwork is created from forming monomer liquid and polymer powder, as this medium is easiest to work with in making 3-D art. Rules usually state the limitations on the dimensions of the art protruding from the nail. This art may be completed ahead of time and displayed in a box, or created in a timed competition and presented on a model wearing a full set of nail enhancements. Nails are usually judged on degree of difficulty, color, and precision of details.

**Design sculpture** nails are sculptured nail enhancements that have inlaid designs. These nails are produced using either monomer liquid and polymer powder or UV gel products (**Figure 19-23**). This work is usually produced on the competition floor on a model with both hands free of product. The final look will have free-hand artwork inlaid in all 10 nails. All nails must be smooth and structurally correct. Nails are usually judged on theme, color, structure, and degree of artistic difficulty.

**French twist** is becoming a common art category (**Figure 19-24**). In this competition, you produce 10 nails on a model with both hands free of product in a timed competition. You can create the look with nail tips or by sculpting the product on nail forms. You may use pink, white, clear, and glittered products to produce a unique twist on the French look. Nails are usually judged on creativity, structure, and precision of detail.

Airbrushed art may be completed ahead of time and displayed in a box or created in a timed competition and presented on a model with a full set of nail enhancements (**Figure 19-25**). Nails are usually judged on degree of difficulty, color, and precision of details.

Mixed media is a category that allows many artistic freedoms (**Figure 19-26**). The term **mixed media** describes nail art in which more than one nail art medium is used to create a design. In most competitions, the final look is submitted in a box or display case. You can usually use any art medium to create the look. Sometimes the rules state that you must use at least three different art mediums or art techniques to enter. There are usually guidelines on the size of the artwork or the distance of art pieces from the nail. The nails are usually judged on degree of difficulty, theme, color, and precision of details. This tiny masterpiece can usually be submitted to more than one competition as long as it has not won first place in a previous show.

**Fantasy art** competitions allow the most artistic freedoms (**Figures 19-27 through 19-31**). All art mediums are allowed; the only limitation is one's imagination. Anything from running waterfalls in a forest of monomer liquid and polymer powder trees to tiny electric lanterns in a small monomer liquid and polymer powder village can be seen on the competition floor. The art is usually displayed on a model who is dressed from head to toe in the theme of the art. Most competitors spend between 50 and



Photo courtesy of Emilio's Airbrush Studio at <http://www.emilio-online.com>.

▲ **Figure 19-25** Airbrushed art masterpiece with precision details.

Photo courtesy of Catherine Wong, Escalence Nail Academy Singapore



▲ **Figure 19–27**  
Fantasy art #1.

Photo courtesy of Catherine Wong, Escalence Nail Academy Singapore



▲ **Figure 19–28**  
Fantasy art #2.

Photo courtesy of Catherine Wong, Escalence Nail Academy Singapore



▲ **Figure 19–29**  
Fantasy art #3.



Photo courtesy of Catherine Wong, Escalence Nail Academy Singapore

▲ **Figure 19–30**  
Fantasy art #4.

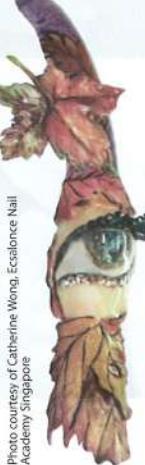


Photo courtesy of Catherine Wong, Escalence Nail Academy Singapore

▲ **Figure 19–31**  
Fantasy art #5.



▲ **Figure 19–26** Transport-themed nail art created for competition.

Photo courtesy of Viv Simmonds from Vivid Nail and Beaute.