

Painted furniture as art

If you think of painted furniture as a scraped-up old chair you pick up at the flea market to put in the laundry room, think again. Did you ever think of painted furniture as art? You need not be especially artistically gifted to successfully create a conversation starter as well as a true work of art.

For your first project, start with a thrift shop or flea market chair or small table. It doesn't matter if it's scraped up or if it's already painted and scratched up. A little sandpaper will take care of that.

Choose a base color, buy some acrylic paint in a can and a good brush. Get a set of small bottles of acrylic paint in several colors at a crafts store and an inexpensive set of little brushes. Paint your furniture item. Acrylic dries quickly, so you're ready to move on in half an hour.

When you're doing this type of painted furniture project, you can ad lib, painting an appealing shape wherever it pleases you. Maybe you'll then outline that shape in a contrasting color. Painted furniture can be a kind of pop-art creation. Perhaps you want to paint a vine that drapes gracefully across the chair seat or runs across the table like a runner. How about stripes on the rungs of the chair? Anything goes. A geometric pattern can look very attractive, a la Mondrian. Use any colors you fancy. Bright, primary colors are favorites with kids. For your teen daughter, various pastel shades may be just the ticket. If you've chosen a dark green as your base color, a burnt orange can provide a nice contrast.

There are some other tricks of the painted furniture trade you'll want to explore while creating your work of art. Acrylic paints can be diluted with water and layered over another color, a bit like a batik. A swath of light blue crossing over a purple area creates a new shade and added dimension. There are clear acrylic gels which you can use to dilute the color while retaining the same body of the full strength paint. Experiment. Have fun.

When you've completed this first project, consider the possibilities. New, unfinished furniture can be painted as well. Think what a terrific toy chest you can make as painted furniture for a youngster. That child will treasure it forever.

A painted furniture project is one you can put away and pick right back up when it's convenient to your schedule. I can almost guarantee you'll be eager to come back and work some more, because it's a therapeutic and satisfying activity.

Be forewarned. Painted furniture projects can be addicting, just for the

pleasure of creating a little work of art.