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The Mahogany Library

JANUARY 21, 2013 BY A

JANUARY 21, 2013 BY ANNEMARIE JOHNSON IN FEATURED / 11 COMMENTS.

CONTACT ANNEMARIE JOHNSON BY EMAIL OR VISIT ANNEMARIE'S WEB SITE, HTTP://ANNEMARIEJOHNSON.CA

Annemarie Johnson learned faux Wood grain and marbling from Mike MacNeil, and also took classes at Faux Design Studio, Chicago, Illinois. She started Trompe L'oeil Studios 14 years ago in Halifax, Nova Scotia, when she began painting murals for residential clients. As the business began to grow, commercial projects became more frequent. Trompe L'oeil Studios has employed/contracted about 20 talented artists on projects in the past. Today Annemarie specializes in



SIGN

ADV

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murals, decorative finishes, wood grain and marble, and Italian Plaster.

Phil Wiebe is a Canadian Red Seal journey man painter with 22 years of onsite painting experience that has studied with Mike MacNeil and Cait Whitson for wood graining and marbling techniques. He has also taken numerous decorative painting courses from Faux Effects International Florida, Faux Design Studio in Chicago and a Icoat concrete overlay course. Continuing education and constant practice enables him to efficiently decorate various substrates in many different finishes.

The Mahogany Library

The Call



I was at the end of my dreams, I loved my work painting murals, applying smooth Italian plaster to walls and ceilings, creating rust and patina finishes, but there seemed to be no work, no need for my services. I was imagining life without painting, no murals no wall finishes, no Italian plaster. This is where I was when I got the call from a local contractor that I had met a few years ago when I had worked on a mural project at the condominium model suite he was building at the time.



He had visited the Carolinas and had seen a mahogany paneled room that had inspired him and he knew that he had to make his dream a reality.

As the contractor and I stood looking over the white walled room that was to be paneled in MDF, I imagined the hours upon hours of work that would be needed to <u>complete</u> this room look like mahogany. He said, "Now, Annemarie, I

want *you* to do the work, I know you can do it. I trust you and believe in you. You can make this room amazing. You have the talent and capability."

What a great thing for someone to have such trust and belief in you. I thought to myself, what a great challenge. I will definitely need some help with this... who could I hire to work with me?

Ordering an Assistant

As I sat at my kitchen table in Halifax, Nova Scotia, I was making an order over the phone across the country to Wiebe Painting in Steinbach, Winnipeg. Phil Wiebe

was very helpful and knowledgeable in the "Faux Effects" line of products. Phil was more than helpful, as an experienced wood grain and marble artist, he had many helpful tips and suggestions. As we were finalizing the order, I



randomly said out of my thoughts, "I am really going to need some help with this job." As soon as the words were out, Phil said, "I'll come out to give you a hand." I never dreamed that Phil would be interested in traveling East to work on a project with me. I was surprised and delighted at the thought of working with another artist who was seasoned and experienced. Although I had learned a few wood graining techniques, I certainly needed more practice to achieve the skills that would be needed for a project such as this one. Phil and I and Jonathan Johnson, a local established fine artist worked on this project together for the week Phil was in Halifax.

Fun

I am a believer in working with experienced artists, this saves valuable time and learn some valuable lessons along the way. Instead of fumbling around to figure it out on your own. As artists we guard our intellectually property, what we know and who we will share it with. I have learned from others who have taught me trade secrets, that sharing is what made our friendship grow. And working together with other artists can



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be very rewarding. Working together makes it fun!

I was not intimidated by the idea of working with Phil, although at times I didn't want to appear/ seen as unknowledgeable, (a professional artist in my own right, I had been in business just over 10 years) as I was learning how to wood grain on a large scale.

Challenges

We had some interesting challenges going into the project. Neither Phil nor I had ever wood grained an entire room. This was one thing we both had in common. This was not an obstacle, but a great opportunity to face the challenge and accomplish something great as a team.

The walls were not as paint ready as expected. And the panels were installed in squares. This presented a problem as Mahogany was typically installed in narrow long panels, and we had to decide how to make this believable, realistic, and in a time period when mahogany was cherished and special.



Believability

When Phil and his wife Brenda arrived in Halifax I could hardly believe how everything had come together. Phil, Brenda I started working right away. We were searching the internet, magazines, the Faux Effects catalogues, anywhere we could get inspiration and direction. Our minds were thinking together and ideas were beginning to flow. It took a little while before we found it! We found the picture in a home decorating magazine, it was a single photo of an armoire with old style doors, diamond style, with an "X" in the middle. This design style can be seen at the Bombay Company, a British Colonial style furniture store. Mahogany veneers came in small pieces back then – time period, old style – victorian era – We were searching for the Cigar Lounge, Smoke Room, Parlour, Tea Room look. And we couldn't begin the project without a plan.

The Plan

Once we established our plan for the square panels, the

rest came quickly, and easily. The squares were done in a "Book matching" straight grain mahogany, with flogging in a large diamond design. Ribbon grain was used on the window wall with insets and on the side panels beside the

fireplace wall. Pub or Cafe style grain on the rails and styles – brushed out and then come back with flogger. This is known as "Cafe" style grain (French) or "Pub" style grain (English)



Temptation: Less is more

The temptation is to have more crotch grain and heart grain. These are the fancy pretty ones that make everyone say "Wow" and "Ooooh" and "Ahhh." It was important that the style of grain be strategically placed to create a believable wall. Too much grain in the wrong place can instantly take away the illusion. Sparce on



heart grain, heart grain in the center feature panel above fireplace and in the inset side panels of the mantle.

Products

The products we used for this project were pretty straight forward. Faux Effects – "Faux Creme" with "Antique Mahogany Stain and Seal" and "Walnut Stain and Seal".



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11 COMMENTS



Julie Stonehouse

21 JAN 2013 01:01 PM

Great job Annemarie! That would have been intimidating, but it looks stunning. Thanks for sharing.

Reply

Annemarie Johnson

21 JAN 2013 09:01 PM

Thanks for the encouragement Julie! Sometimes, I think you have to be a bit crazy to love doing what you do. Stepping out on a limb and trying something new is always a bit intimidating, but boy is it worth it in the end!!!

Kind Regards,

Annemarie

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Mike Macneil

t Machen

You guys did a wonderful job there Congratz!!! Very realistic Grains and colouring right on:)

Reply

Annemarie Johnson

28 JAN 2013 10:01 AM

21 JAN 2013 08:01 PM

Thanks Mike! You inspired us! Thanks for the time you spent here in Halifax, it was great working with you!



Janie

23 JAN 2013 01:01 PM

Annemarie, What a wonderful story of shared experience creating a beautifully wood grained room. The final outcome is stunning.

Reply



24 JAN 2013 11:01 PM



Phillip Wiebe

The project was really enjoyable and good experience. Thank you for your nice comments

Reply

Annemarie Johnson

28 JAN 2013 10:01 AM

It was a pleasure working with you Phil. Looking forward to the next project!



Annemarie Johnson

25 JAN 2013 09:01 AM

Thanks Janie! I think that if I had looked at the project being only dependent on my talents I would have lost out on the great experience of working with Phil and also how much we have learned from each other in may other ways over the years of corresponding following the project we did together. It is great to have friends in the profession who you can collaborate with. This is a gift!

Reply



Janie

29 JAN 2013 12:01 PM

You couldn't have said it better Annemarie, 'This is a gift!'

Reply



John Learnard

07 FEB 2013 07:02 PM

Nice job I am one of Mikes students also Bill holgate mikes teacher .john

Reply

Annemarie Johnson

07 FEB 2013 08:02 PM

Thanks John, you too have gotten the wood grain and marbling fever? I've heard that Bill Holgate was quite an accomplished man.

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