

HOME IMPROVEMENT: HARDWOOD FLOOR STENCILING

by Sheri Hoeger

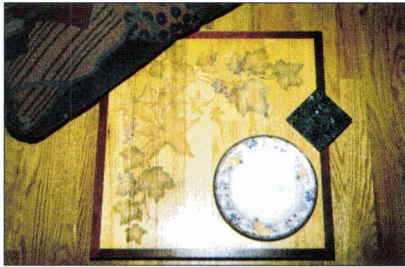
I became interested in airbrushing when I worked as a manicurist for several years. I had done some hand-painted nail art during that time, and airbrushing fingernails was just gaining attention when I left that profession. When I later began wall stenciling as a part-time business, I began experimenting with the airbrush instead of traditional stencil brushes. I was dubbed the "Mad Stencilist" by my son, Justin, who said I was "like a mad scientist, only with stenciling."

I love the dimensional effects I can achieve with the airbrush, and my design technique has been greatly influenced by its use. Using the airbrush also allows me to paint on surfaces with many different textures. I have always had a strong interest in arts and crafts and interior design. Most of my work enhances interior walls, but I also work on fabric such as window and table coverings, hardwood floors, ceramic tile, and accessories. I have been working in this field for about six years and have recently produced *Embellishments*, a line of selected original designs available in precut form.

As with this project, I am often called on to design a stencil or set of stencils to complement a client's existing decorative features such as fabric or a favorite accessory or to help incorporate a theme into the design scheme. I was asked by this client to design a leafy pattern to grace the breakfast nook area of the hardwood floor that was being installed in their new home. The clients had moved to California from New England and wanted the artwork to reflect the feeling of autumn back east. I brought back to my studio for use as reference materials a cushion from the sofa, a sample of the stoneware, and a sample of the granite that was being used on the kitchen countertops. The client's sister in New Jersey even collected and sent a box of "authentic" leaves, and I collected a few of my own as well!

I draw my designs on tracing paper that is taped to 1-inch grid paper. I like the erasability of tracing paper, and I can cut and paste sections at different angles





before making a final decision. The grid paper makes it easy for me to stay within my size constraints. I designed a corner piece and a coordinating leafy garland, then cut them in duplicate so that I could get a mirror image and still use repositional adhesive. You can cut two layers at a time with a stencil burner using Badger's No-Tack Stencil Film. The layers must be carefully peeled apart so that they don't tear. I also designed two smaller random branches—one oak and one olive—as well as several single leaves that would appear to have "blown off"

and marking out my painting area, I worked around the rectangle with the first overlays of the main pieces so that I could easily check for consistency and color balance. The second overlays were then placed, followed by the smaller branches. The bands of color encasing the leaves were put in last using a "sliding stencil" to accommodate the differing lengths between the boughs. With the stenciling completed, two additional coats of polyurethane were applied to the floor to protect the paint and the wood from wear.

Stenciling can be used in conjunction with any decorative style from traditional to contemporary. Though it has been most often associated with a traditional colonial setting, the design potential and versatility are limitless. Stenciling combined with faux finishes and other painted decorative techniques on walls or furniture gives a room a custom look and enables the client to truly personalize a home. In addition to the wood floor in this home, I painted a smaller-scale design on the ceramic tile backsplash in the kitchen, and matching random leaves



the main design and landed several feet away in the kitchen.

The design was tested first on paper to work out any bugs and to make sure that the colors were a good match. It was also tested on a sample of wood flooring, finished as the floor would be. The paint was applied after the floor had been stained and the first coat of polyurethane had dried and been lightly sanded. I use Badger 100LG and 150 airbrushes for most of my work. On this occasion, I alternated three airbrushes, blending my three colors as I painted. After measuring

For my stencils, I use Badger No-Tack Stencil Film, which is strong and flexible and takes pencil well for registration marks. I prepare the stencils with Shiver's Repositional Stencil Adhesive and cut them with an Air Nouveau stencil burner. I use JoSonja's Acrylic Gouache reduced to airbrushing viscosity with JoSonja's Flow Medium. If I am painting coordinating fabric, I can add JoSonja's Textile Medium directly to the paint I've used on the walls and then heat-set it. I use a Campbell-Housfeld 3/4-hp compressor with a 7 1/2-gallon tank.

were sandblasted into the glass of the pantry door to achieve a fully coordinated design scheme.

An excellent source of information about stenciling and related decorative painting techniques is the Stencil Artisans League, Inc., an organization dedicated to the promotion, excellence, and education of stenciling. It has been my pleasure to teach airbrushing classes at its annual conventions. To request membership information, contact the Stencil Artisans League, Inc., at P.O. Box 920190, Norcross, GA 30092.

