

# A strong finish

Artist Candice Simpson's business offers 'green' options for walls and furniture to create a healthier indoor environment.

As a child, Candice Simpson mixed model paint with Elmer's glue and applied it to the landscape rocks in her yard.

"It was my first glaze, and I didn't even know it," Simpson says.

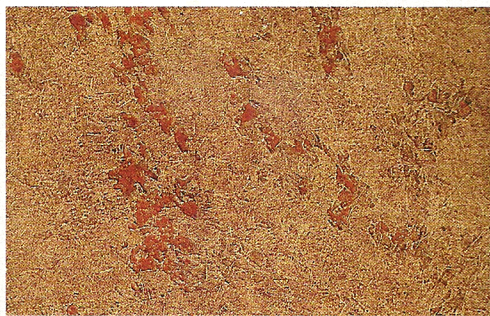
The artist returned to her beginnings in 2000, when she began training to become a decorative painter. Now, she calls herself a "texture artist," and her mediums include glazes and plaster as well as acrylics and watercolors. This shift eventually led to another professional metamorphosis.

"A few years ago, a chiropractic clinic only wanted finishes that were 'low-VOC' (volatile organic compounds)," Simpson says. "That's when I started digging for eco-friendly products, which weren't readily available at the time. Since then, it has become a passion of mine."

Her business, Textural Hues LLC, which operates out of her Northeast Minneapolis art studio, offers several "green" options for specialty decorative finishes for walls and furniture, as well as green fine art.

**Q > Many consumers are familiar with eco-friendly paint. What's the benefit of having eco-friendly plaster?** **A >** Regular plaster is just like regular paint; it can have volatile organic compounds. So, if you use base coats and plaster that are low or no VOCs, you are creating a healthier indoor air environment. As a finisher who is breathing this stuff all the time, it's a personal interest of mine.

**Q > Are there more "green" finishes available now, and are they more costly than the traditional products?** **A >** There's



"Copper Kyoto," above, and "Embossed Pataan" are Candice Simpson's most popular "green" wall finishes.



a whole new generation of eco-friendly decorative finishes out there and they are amazing and beautiful. There is no "compromise" anymore, no "sacrifice." Most of the lines cost similar to finishes that aren't green.

**Q > How are the finishes environmentally friendly?** **A >** One example is the Shizen series from Modern Masters, a line of eco-friendly decorative textures imported from Japan. They are water-based, low-VOC products that use materials like seashells, cork and recycled straw fibers.

**Q > Where does "art" enter into the process?** **A >** In the end, it's a bucket of plaster that you can do endless things with.

The images on my Web site, TexturalHues.com, are examples of the custom finishes I created using the plaster.

**Q > What finishes are popular right now?** **A >** People in Minnesota still like a lot of earth tones. If they choose a warmer color, it's more in the spicy range. Also, just like shoes and purses, metallics are big right now on walls. Copper Kyoto is very popular; the low-VOC plaster is a spicy amber-brown, with an embossed metallic copper that comes through here and there. People love the shimmer and the texture.

**Q > Is there really a demand for custom finishes in this economy?** **A >** I just got back from a St. Paul client's place in Hinckley; they wanted to update their old oak cabinets, but they didn't want to put in all new. So we painted the cabinets an off-white and then distressed them with an antiquing glaze. Now, it looks updated — not in a bright and shiny way, but in more of that vintage look that is hot right now. Decorative finishes are a hand-done, artistic, custom process, but still less expensive than purchasing new cabinets.

**Q > How does green inspire your work?** **A >** Being in nature is as vital to me as breathing. It's so grounding, centering and healing. Watching how light shimmers on a leaf is a simple joy that can belong to all of us, no matter what. That feeling is what I try to share with others through my work. ■

**View Candice Simpson's eco-friendly finishes in "online swatches" at Texturalhues.com. See her fine art at CandiceSimpson.com.**

BY MOLLY GUTHREY PHOTOS COURTESY CANDICE SIMPSON



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