



THE RADAR HOME

BY KATIE BINDLEY
PHOTOGRAPHY BY ABBY GREENAWALT



Clockwise from left: Lenore Winters vamps in front of mirrored doors she antiqued by hand. The rustic look takes hold in McLean with a mustard finish on plastered walls. Faux wallpaper a la Winters gets a close-up. A painted vanity pumps up a bathroom's gothic feel.

PAINTED LADY

From Joan Collins' house to her own body, this in-demand artist's faux finished it all

The shutter-style doors outside Ray and Anne Ritchey's McLean house look a hundred and twenty years old. In fact, they are brand-new and are only one of many examples at the house of decorative painter Lenore Winters' spectacular trompe l'oeil work. The ice-blue master bedroom is floor to ceiling Venetian plaster. The powder room's damask patterned walls appear to be papered, but were actually painstakingly handpainted. Even the aged paint on the storage closet door seems like Winter's work. But *that* door really is a hundred and twenty years old. The look of the real old thing inside is simply indistinguishable from what Winters faked on the shutter doors.

Winters studied painting and fine art at the University of Michigan and eventually found herself doing installation work at the Smithsonian, where she "learned about mounting, camouflaging, making things disappear, hiding what you're doing." Such skills laid the foundation for the highly specialized work she does now: faux finishing walls and cabinets, gold leafing ceilings and columns, and custom painting nearly anything that will sit still. Her work inevitably says, "don't trust your eye," such as in a years-ago photo spread in *Regardie's* magazine when she was bodypainted—pre-Demi Moore's fabled *Vanity Fair* cover, she would have us know—to appear draped in a one-shouldered Greek tunic. "I was actually advertising my work on my own body ... you didn't realize that all I was really wearing was paint."

Though Winters has clients in Aspen, New York and Paris, most are here in DC. She recently finished work with interior designer Tom Pheasant

on a grand Middleburg estate where the kitchen's distressed milk paint finish emulates old weathered wood. In the home of Bill and Alison Paley, the great room floor she created suggests neither the paint nor the new planks it's made up of, but instead aged cedar. Winters' next project is an American primitive-themed mural to run along Donald and Mia Glickman's winding staircase to match the colonial feel of their Rockburn Farm. Says Winters, "Decorative painting is fabulous because you get to do a whole range: You get to paint any period, any style." Such as a project that had her re-creating Albrecht Durer's celestial map on a secretary, using real gold leaf for the stars.

One of Winters' few commercial projects netted one of her most high-profile clients. Her murals inspired by a villa outside of Pompeii at Italian restaurant I Ricchi commanded the attention of diner Joan Collins. Collins approached the restaurant's owner, Christianne Ricchi, to inquire about the mural's artist. Winters says it's a good thing Ricchi warned her beforehand that Collins would be calling: "If Joan Collins had just called me up, I would have said, 'Yea right, who is this?'" But it really was Collins on the phone, and soon Winters was with her in the South of France, painting a mural for her home's outdoor dining area. Next up for Winters is the opening of a new larger studio to allow display of her handpainted screens and furniture and samples of her faux finishes. Stop in. You won't believe your eyes. ■

Lenore Winters Studio, 4911 Cordell Ave., Bethesda, 301.654.6004.