

Written by Scott Burt

Located in Jericho, Vermont, Burt couldn't find a contractor review of the new Aura paint, so he took it upon himself to write one and submitted it to ProFiles® Magazine. Burt can be reached at topcoatvt@aol.com and his work can be seen www.topcoatfinishes.com.



A Contractor Reviews Aura® Paint

Oak Straw (AF-340) was applied on the top half of the walls and Dinner Party (AF-300) on the bottom was applied over off white in the dining room/kitchen. The living room was a light blue and we covered it with Jicama (AF-315) on the top and Jojoba (AF-460) underneath the chair rail.



AS PAINTERS, MANY OF THE PRODUCTS WE USE on a daily basis are ones that we have been using for a long time. We tend to find what works well and stick with it. In our company, Benjamin Moore's Regal® line has been our wall paint for years. Whether flat, matte or eggshell, we have built our wall prep, wall paint application, touch-up and warranty protocols around our confidence in this line.

Lately there has been a lot of talk about Benjamin Moore's new Aura® paint's low VOC, fast drying, self-priming, guaranteed to cover in two coats even with dark colors — everything painters ever wanted in paint but could never find. My Benjamin Moore® retailer, Vermont Paint Company, recently stocked the Aura line and had been encouraging us to try it.

We recently found ourselves on a job where the homeowner had chosen Affinity™ colors, only available in the Aura line. The project was to repaint walls in a kitchen, dining room, and living room. The existing walls were a bluish gray and the new colors were a creamy beige, dark green, straw, and red. It would be the perfect opportunity to see what Aura had for us.

We completed this project, a kitchen, dining room and living room in two days. The living room was done on the first day with two coats applied. The kitchen and dining room were completed on the second day, also with two coats on all walls. It was a win-win situation — the painters were really happy with the working qualities of the paint and the homeowners were thrilled with the results. Aura paint should evolve into a valuable resource for contractors and do-it-yourselfers for many years to come. Now, if they could just make deep base exterior paint with these same working properties...



SCOTT SAYS...

With Aura paint, it's really important to make sure to keep your brushes and rollers wetter than usual. If you take a lunch break without leaving the brush soaking in paint, you will come back to a brush with a thick film of dry paint on it. Keep your rollers full at all times, as well.

We put the product through a range of scenarios. How would it dry if we applied it heavily? How would it cover if we applied it thin? We found that with heavy application it still dried in about an hour. In the interest of conserving materials whenever possible, I recommend applying Aura paint on the thin side regardless of the color. You can be assured that you will get solid second-coat coverage and only be applying the necessary amount of paint.

With Aura paint, it is important to spread it and leave it alone. Whether cutting with a brush or spreading with a roller, do not rework an area that you painted just a few minutes ago. The paint very quickly begins to "skin" over as the fast drying process takes place. It is possible to break the coating or cause it to "pull" significantly.

Be aware that this product requires more frequent stirring than most to maintain color consistency.

WHAT WE LIKED:

Low odor

We couldn't ventilate much because it was a chilly, rainy April day. After hours of open time with the product, there was no odor. It's a good feeling to know that the product you are spreading is not having a negative impact on the air quality of the home you are working in.

Color intensity

Before we started the second coat, it seemed like it was not going to be entirely necessary. To the untrained eye, our first coat would have seemed satisfactory. However, as we applied the second coat and saw it drying, it was clear that the depth of each color intensified.

Cost

Aura paint is significantly more expensive than the traditional premium lines, but we painted in two coats what would have

been a challenge to do in three with other conventional lines. Every professional painter has a horror story about trying to get red or orange to cover other colors. The additional cost per gallon of Aura paint was offset by the savings in labor and materials that a third coat would have cost. Also, it is a good feeling to know that we are generating fewer empty paint cans and emitting far lower VOCs into the homeowner's living space and the planet as a whole.

Coverage and leveling

Over the years, we have found that our brush cut lines typically end up thinner in coverage than the roller bands we bring into them. With Aura paint, not only was the cut line as thick as the roller band, but the paint leveled so well it was difficult on the first coat to see where exactly the two merged.

Dry time

Aura paint was ready to recoat in one hour. Not just recoat, but lightly sand and recoat. This may be the part that I liked the best. Painters are funny, we want a product that will stay wet and spread well for as long as we are working with it. As soon as we are done, we want it to dry instantly so that it won't get contaminated by dust or other airborne particles. Benjamin Moore has found that perfect balance with the Aura line.

Self-priming

During our prep process on this job, we did some minor filling and skimming with both spackle and mud. We applied Aura to these areas without primer in order to test its self-priming characteristics. In all of these areas, there was no "low flash" that a conventional paint would show.