

A Fall Facelift cabinet refinishing made easy

by Scott Burt

In recent years much of the focus of the construction market has shifted from “new builds” to remodeling. People are improving what they have instead of selling and starting over; with this come important decisions that visually and financially impact your project. Kitchen and bathroom remodels are popular because they are important functional spaces. They also rank among the top improvements for return on investment. An important common denominator with these two spaces is the cabinetry.

In remodeling a kitchen or bathroom, one of the first things to decide is what will stay and what will go. New custom built cabinetry is ideal, but often the existing cabinets can continue to fit the character of



the home. If the existing cabinets are solid, functional and acceptable in style, refinishing can be a wise alternative to investing in new ones.

Once the decision is made to keep the cabinets, the fun begins: paint colors and product must be chosen. In recent years paint technology has evolved to the point where pretty much whatever is on your cabinets currently, can be refinished using a waterborne or latex product that is relatively low voc and ultra-premium in quality.

For instance, let's say that your cabinets are 20 years old and have a painted finish on them that appears to have been sprayed on when they were built. With the proper process, they can be refinished. The process is simple, but must be followed carefully:

1. Remove all doors and drawers and label them
2. Remove all hinges, knobs, and pulls
3. Clean everything really well with a slightly damp sponge
4. Lightly sand all painted surfaces to “scuff the finish” (just enough to remove the sheen)



5. Vacuum with a dust attachment and tack cloth wipe all surfaces

Thorough preparation is essential to the quality of the finished product. Cabinets often dictate the color for the rest of the trim in a room. It is important to explore colors carefully before choosing; they don't always have to be white. Carefully chosen colors can lead to dramatic transformations. A good interior design professional can assist with trim and wall color selection and thoughtfully coordinate them with the rest of the décor.

When painting cabinets, it is critical to

make sure that all brush strokes go in the direction of the wood grain. Vertical pieces on door and cabinet pieces receive "with the grain" soft, vertical strokes, while horizontal pieces are brushed horizontally. Never cross the grain. It takes a good eye to be sure that there is no crossover at the joints where vertical and horizontal pieces intersect. When all surfaces are first coated, follow the paint manufacturer's instructions for dry time, repeat steps 4 and 5 as above and then apply a second coat.

When the second coat is dry, visual inspection determines if the coverage and finish are sufficient. The result should be

solid and smooth. With proper preparation and a quality paint product, two coats will often suffice. At this point, choosing new cabinet hardware is a fun part of the transformation. This is a small detail that can tie in nicely with the rest of the décor in the room. The final step is to install the new hardware and reinstall the doors and drawers.

Cabinet finishing can take place in a number of formats: in a cabinet shop spray booth, in a residential remodel, or in a simple weekend makeover project done by any homeowner. Whatever the case, product selection and the process used are the critical elements. For this article, we focused on repainting cabinets in residential remodeling. Remember that a gallon of paint goes a long way in cabinet finishing. Think of all the money saved by refinishing the cabinets. It is then perfectly justifiable to spend \$50-60/gallon for an ultra-premium product like Benjamin Moore Aura Semi Gloss, which is available at Vermont Paint Company in Williston. This is an ideal product for a cabinet painting project because it has outstanding coverage, low odor, and fast dry times. A good product facilitates the process, makes for a more rewarding experience, and yields a result that you will be happy to live with for many more years.

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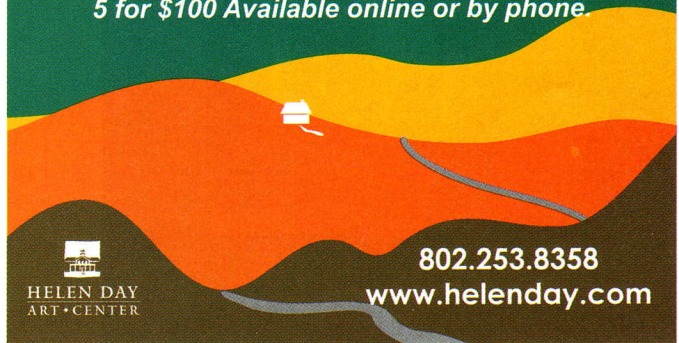
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