

Achievable paint effects

Paint effects specialist, **Vanessa Webb**, tries some simple techniques for transforming your woodwork and coving.

When scanning the shelves in your local DIY store, many products look interesting and creative.

You may have the inspiration, you may even have the tools to help you, however you may also have scant knowledge of the products available or the techniques employed to make the task easier.

I decided to explore and share with you some of the exciting, creative and individual results you can achieve on wood, plaster and cast iron using traditional products and techniques and I have produced some samples to illustrate my ideas.

Yes, some effects require specialist brushes and tools, a dragging brush for instance. However, it will be worth every penny if it makes your job easier and creates the look you require, rather than trying to use an old wallpaper brush instead!

A dragging brush or 'flogger' has coarse bristles approximately six inches long which are flexible and floppy. Certainly I would recommend buying specialist brushes particularly if you want to cover a decent sized area.

Water based products can be used to create wood-grain effects, but I still prefer to use oil based ones. I am certainly no master woodgrainer, as to emulate wood perfectly you need years of experience, but in spite of this it is possible to achieve a convincing 'wood' look, with a good brush and correct products.

I have a job coming up in a Gothic Revival property, which has many features including

ornate decorative plaster ceilings, carved stone masonry and trefoil designs above the bay windows. The downstairs rooms require more than just an eggshell paint finish to the windows, skirtings and doors, so my clients and I have decided to use faux medium oak wood grain to give more weight to the room and

furnishings. Pine was often used in Victorian and Georgian houses as an inexpensive base for wood graining. In this case the pine had already been stripped, so the bare

wood will be primed and then painted with the appropriate undercoat in order to achieve the required base tone.

J H Ratcliffe provide a shade card of oil scumbles to help you choose the wood you wish to emulate. Each scumble has a suitable undercoat to achieve the correct wood colour. Do not be alarmed by some of these when you open the tin, Undercoat 2 for medium oak is acid yellow! Have faith, Ratcliffes have years of experience in this area. Scumble is a medium in which colour is suspended giving it an 'open' or working time, unlike paint which is designed to dry quickly.

A 250ml tin of scumble goes a long way, as it requires thinning with white spirit by 20 - 30%. Decant some of the thick liquid into a paint kettle, add white spirit and stir. Apply the scumble evenly to the dry undercoat with a thin brush of suitable size for the job. 'Drag' the dry dragging brush across the surface and



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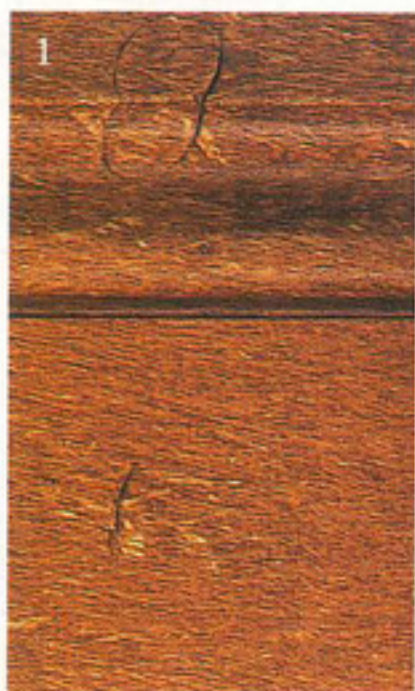


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1. The **badger softener** is used to soften and blend coloured glazes on walls and larger areas.
 2. The **flogger brush** is widely used for graining and distressing. Long floppy bristles, when struck against the glaze, produce a random but related pattern similar to that on woodgrain.
 3. The **dragger brush** is also used to create different textures.
 4. The **stippler brush** is often used to disguise brush marks before another layer is added. Strike the wet glaze quite hard with the flat head of the brush. Take care not to produce smudge marks.
- LEFT** A sample skirting board that has been dragged and then flogged to achieve an 'oak' effect using Ratcliffe's undercoat and scumble.
- BELOW 1** This skirting board has been dragged then sample 2 has been flogged to show the different effect. Ratcliffe's undercoat 10 and antique oak were used.



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then hit the surface with the floppy bristles, using the whole length of the brush. This is the 'flogging' bit! In effect you are making a 'design' in the scumble and also removing any flecks of glaze from the surface, creating the pores characteristic of woodgrain. It looks even better if knots in the base wood show through, as this creates even more authenticity with no effort at all.

Treat each section such as panels and frames separately. It is important to 'drag' in the direction of the natural grain. For example, on a wooden door, drag vertically for inner panels and vertical frames and horizontally for the top, middle and bottom frame. This creates a neat join where a tenon joint would be

situated on a panelled door: so start with horizontals and finish with verticals. Skirtings, doors and frames are not difficult to do but you have to be systematic with the sequence in which areas are completed.

Remember to clean the dragging brush regularly with clean, lint free rags to remove excess scumble, or you will be applying more than you take off. You can varnish the woodgraining using one of Craig & Roses Extra Pale oilbased varnishes. These are designed to cut down on the yellowing effect that linseed oil has on conventional polyurethane varnishes.

Another traditional effect for the decoration of woodwork and furniture is dragging without the flogging. (In effect, ▶



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LEFT Liberon have a wide range of products which can restore, repair and renovate.

BELOW 1 Rubbing different shades of gilt cream over the same base (here *Gardenia* emulsion from Dulux) will provide an attractive choice of finishes. **1** *Chantilly* **2** *Trianon* **3** *Versailles* **4** *Compeigne*

BOTTOM This tongue and dart cornice has been painted with Liberon's *Black Fontenay Base* and rubbed with *Scaux* and *St Germain* gilt creams. The silvery effect brings the detail to life.

you need to 'drag' in order to create the first stage of oak woodgrain). It is really easy to do. You can make up your own oil or water based dragging colour using scumble and then tinting it with oils or acrylics, which ever is appropriate to the scumble. However, I used Crown Decorative Effect products which are ready made for you!

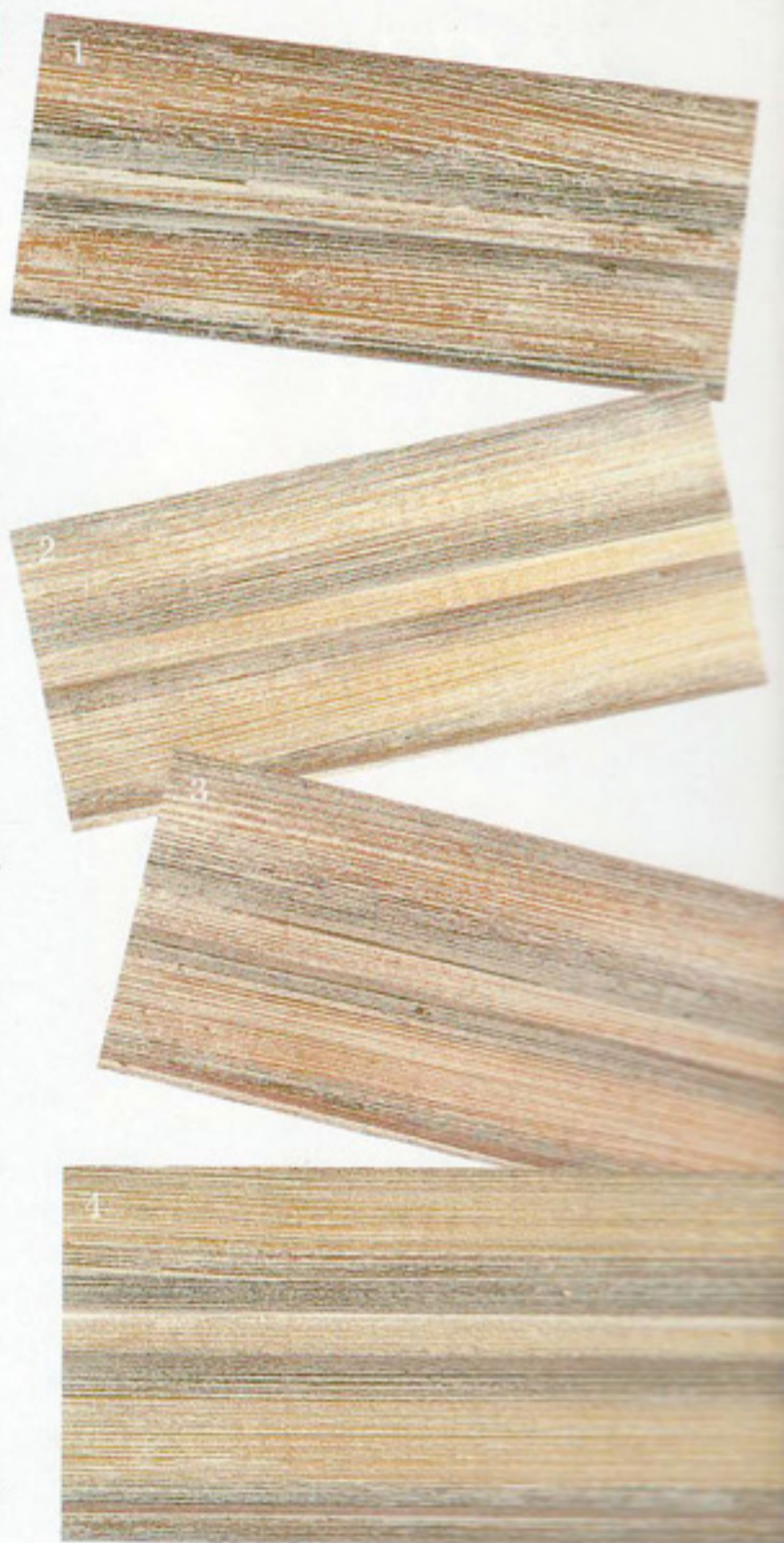
These products have been specially formulated to provide a translucent finish over any Crown silk emulsion. Their brochure provides you with step-by-step instructions on how to create effects such as dragging and ragging and tester pots are available so you can try before you buy. With oil scumble you would use an eggshell undercoat, however with these Crown products I used their *Dawn Mist* and *Soft Linen* silk emulsion, dragged with *Honey Mist* colour effects.

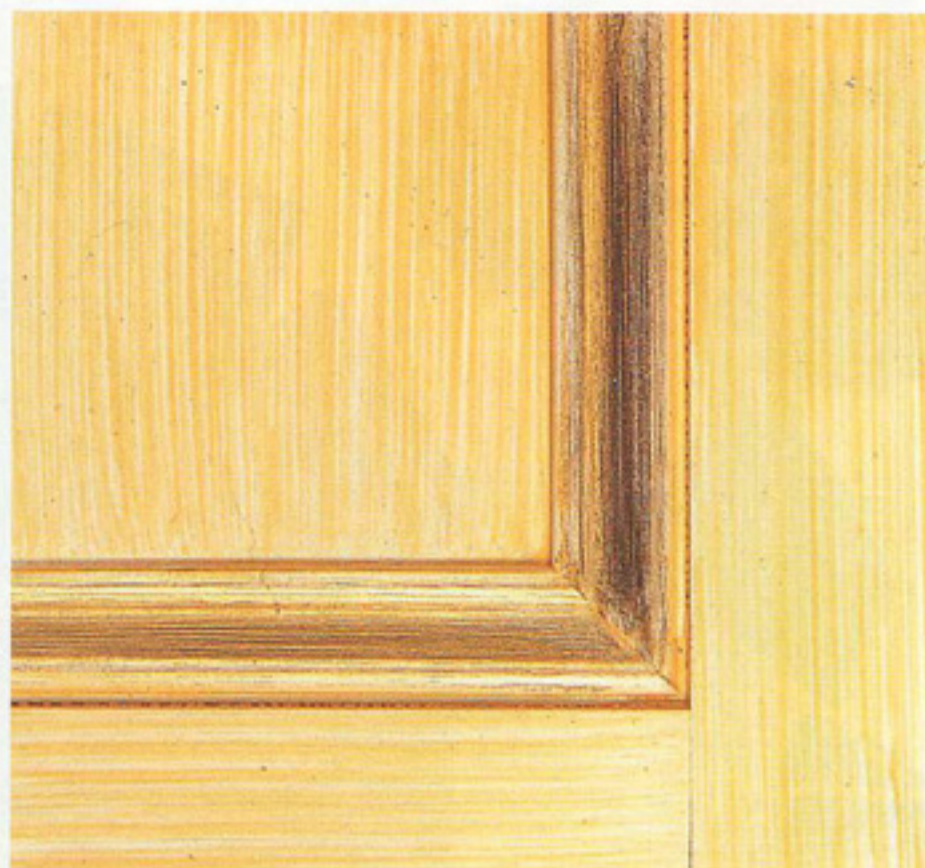
Two coats of silk emulsion were applied to the piece of wood, then allowed to dry and the *Honey Mist* was applied with a suitable brush and then dragged through, thus pulling the bristles through the wet glaze in a series of parallel motions to produce a subtle

uniformly striped finish. This is especially effective on skirtings, frames and fitted or free-standing furniture. As with most paint effects, it looks best if the contrast between the base colour and the top coat is not too dramatic. Always 'drag' a piece of furniture or painted wood in the direction of the natural woodgrain, and ask manufacturers if their products should be sealed with varnish to protect the effect.

Liberon are some of my favourite and much used products for that extra special finish. I really enjoy using their gilt creams which I think were originally designed to repair damage to gilded items. There are eight colours, ranging from the silver/pewter tones of *Scaux* and *St Germain* which are designed for use over their black *Fontenay* base. Red *Fontenay* base is designed for use under the rich tones of *Rambouillet* and *Fontainbleu*.

A yellow base has been designed for *Compeigne*, *Trianon*, *Chantilly* and *Versailles*. The *Fontenay* base seals the surface and provides a suitable undertone, however, I have used a dark red and also a





ABOVE An example of dragging using a Crown *Soft Linen* emulsion base dragged with *Honey Mist* colour effects. The highlight to the beading is created using *Trianon* gilt cream.

LEFT The decorative plaster cornice has been painted with Dulux *Gardenia* silk emulsion and then when dry, rubbed with Liberon's *Trianon* gilt cream then buffed to a shine.

BELOW A selection of scumbles from Ratcliffes range.



black silk emulsion paint as a base, it seems to work just as well, as does *Gardenia* as an alternative ivory base, especially on larger areas where a larger amount of paint is required.

The creams feel waxy and smooth and are really easy to apply using a soft cloth. When the creams are allowed to dry and harden a bit, buff with a cloth to a dull shine, this also removes any excess wax. They are less gaudy than gilding and add a touch of 'faded elegance' to pieces of painted or dragged furniture.

If you feel that too much gilt cream has been applied, use a small amount of fine wire wool to take a bit off, causing a look which is 'slightly distraught' rather than 'extremely distressed!'

I use *Trianon* as a means of lifting the blackness of reproduction or original cast iron grates, applying small amounts

to selected areas of the raised moulding. This works especially well in bedrooms, where black grates can be slightly oppressive.

Also, if a plaster ceiling rose or cornice is not too exquisite, I paint it with Dulux *Gardenia* silk emulsion (a cornice does not have to be white) and apply *Trianon* gilt cream to selected areas, but not heavily. This looks fabulous when lit with uplighters at night. A subtle but stunning effect of faded gilt. Cornices are quite often overlooked as are ceilings generally in my opinion.

Always keep brushes clean after use. And remember that waterbased products should be cleaned in cold water and oilbased products in white spirit and then rinsed using a mild soap. I occasionally treat my specialist brushes to some of my own hair conditioner - because they are mostly made from

USEFUL CONTACTS

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Craig & Rose, Tel: 01383 740066.

Liberon, Tel: 01797 361136.