

Decorative medallions give ceilings dressy look

BY JAMES AND MORRIS CAREY
FOR AP WEEKLY FEATURES

If you regularly read our column you know that we are third-generation contractors.

You also might recall that we grew up in a home built by our grandfather at the turn of the 20th century. The home was Mediterranean-style construction, plaster in and out, with spacious rooms and high ceilings.

Not only were the ceilings high, in some rooms they were coved at the perimeter and had decorative cornice or picture mold.

Other rooms, such as the living room and dining room, had intricate plaster moldings that bordered the ceiling and ornate ceiling medallions used as foci for chandeliers.

Artisans have been affixing plaster decorations to walls and ceilings for centuries — mostly in imitation of Greek and Roman bas-relief. In modern times, the practice peaked in the early 19th century when Greek Revival archite-

ture reawakened an interest in classical ornamentation.

Today, plaster moldings again are popular — either to give authenticity to a restoration or just add interest to otherwise flat wall or ceiling. The designs offered range from borders to ceiling medallions.

Although plaster ornamentation still can be had — during a recent trip to Europe we witnessed local artisans create it on site — wood and plastic alternatives now can be readily found at lumber yards, home centers and hardware stores.

We prefer the plastic material because it is lightweight and easy to work with. They are constructed of a foam or urethane core and vinyl-like finish that takes paint beautifully. When finished, the plastic medallion can't be distinguished from the real thing.

For dressing up a ceiling, decorative medallions are very popular. We believe this is because they are reasonably priced, easy to install and are so attrac-

tive.

Ceiling medallions come in various shapes and sizes. They are round, square, oval, rectangular and triangular. You can have a hexagon, octagon or even a star.

And although a decorative ceiling medallion is often used as a "rossette" or foil for a chandelier, it is equally popular as a focal point of a room's ceiling.

In either case, you will be amazed at just how easy it is to install one.

When installing a ceiling medallion where a light fixture exists, the fixture must be removed and reinstalled after the medallion installation is completed.

Begin by turning off the power to the light fixture at the breaker panel or fuse box. Don't rely on the light switch since the power for lights might originate at the fixture rather than the switch. We learned that lesson the hard way.

With the power off, carefully remove the light fixture — usually held into place with a couple of screws and/or a nut on a short length of threaded tubing.

Lower the fixture canopy and carefully disconnect the wires. Use the opportunity while the fixture is down to give it a good cleaning and polishing.

Place the ceiling medallion upside down and cut a hole in the center, using a drill or fine-tooth saw. The hole should be large enough to allow wiring and one or more threaded bolts to pass through, yet small enough to be completely covered by the fixture canopy.

Next, apply a minimum of a one-half-inch bead of adhesive along the outside edge on the underside of the ceiling medallion.

Place the medallion into position on the ceiling immediately after applying adhesive. Use four 1-5/8 inch paneling nails equally spaced on the medallion to hold it in place while the adhesive sets up.

Later, countersink the nails using a nail punch, and conceal the nail heads with spackle.

Instead of paneling nails, the medallion can be fastened to the ceiling using construction screws. As you would with

paneling nails, countersink the construction screws and conceal with a patching compound.

Apply a bead of caulk at the perimeter of the medallion and smooth, using your finger or a damp sponge.

Once the caulk has dried, the medallion is ready for paint. For best results, prime the medallion with an oil-based primer and finish with one or more coats of latex in the color of your choice. Complete the job by reinstalling the light fixture.

Reverse the steps used to remove it. Due to the added ceiling thickness, longer screws and/or threaded tubing might be needed to properly anchor the light fixture.

Reconnect the wires using approved wire connectors, reinstall the canopy and turn on the power.

Step back, admire your work, and ponder what room you next will enhance with a ceiling medallion.

For more home improvement tips and information visit our Web site at www.onthehouse.com

Painting provides colorful new life

BY CAROL MCGARVEY
FOR AP WEEKLY FEATURES

Besides providing an expressive outlet, paint projects can be downright fun.

You can create gifts, try new techniques or add bright spots of pizzazz to your new home on furniture, glass, wood, found objects and fabrics.

Flea market finds — from garage or tag sales, attics or basements, or secondhand stores — deserve a new life. Sometimes it takes just the right combination of colorful paint to do that.

Look for items that are in good structural shape and have a use, such as a table or chair. While it might be a fun project to paint, it's an even better find if it's functional, too.

One tip from the pros — always plan a purpose in mind for what you buy. Otherwise, it

will end up in your next garage sale.

Keep an eye out for unusual pieces that would come alive with paint. But look at them closely. You don't want to spend hours of preparation time getting them ready to paint. It's

easy to bring a display cabinet to a colorful new incarnation with some bright paint and whimsical details. Remove any hardware from the cabinet with a screwdriver.

Sand all surfaces of the cabinet, and wipe off dust with a tack cloth.

Before painting, mask off glass areas and any area you don't wish to paint. Use wide masking tape and tape tightly along edges. Tape newspapers over large areas.

In a well-ventilated work area, spread newspapers on the floor. Spray a coat of primer on the cabinet and let dry. It

might take several coats until the surface is almost covered. Let dry between coats. Don't remove tape. Paint largest areas first. Paint the main areas using at least a 2-inch-wide flat brush. You can overlap into areas that will be painted other colors later.

Use a small flat brush for painting in colored areas. Use grooves, sections and detail shapes as guidelines for breaking up blocks of color. Paint in largest sections first, overlapping into other areas as needed.

For making thin stripes, use a fine liner paint brush.

Make checks with a narrow flat brush. For dots, dip the handle of a paintbrush in paint and apply dots. Let paint dry.

When finished, remove masking tape and clean the glass. Put doors and hardware back in place.

Home repairs no longer a guy thing

FOR AP WEEKLY FEATURES

Day-to-day maintenance in that newer home isn't gender-specific. Nowhere is it written that leaking faucets are a "guy thing" or wallpaper is "women's work."

Nowhere is this truer than among a fast-growing segment of homeownership: Single women. As women find out all too quickly when something goes wrong at home, their options are to hire the work out or do it themselves.

Many opt to roll up their sleeves and dive in.

"We talk to a lot more women who want to know how to do their own repairs and projects around their house," says Beth Boyd, a marketing manager for Lowe's Home Improvement Warehouse. "They want the tools, they want the know-how, and they want a degree of self-sufficiency."

The learning curve for how-to skills is shorter than you might think, says Boyd. She advises first-timers to try their hand at routine tasks before

inevitable repairs or emergencies arise.

This may be as simple as tightening screws on cabinet doors, hammering in exposed deck nails, filling nail holes in walls with spackle or oiling squeaky hinges.

As skills and can-do confidence grow, the decisions about personally making repairs or hiring professionals can be made on a case-by-case basis.

"Unless it's something that needs immediate attention, take the time to see if it matches your skill-sets and abilities," says Boyd.

True emergencies, such as electrical, heating and cooling breakdowns are best left to specialists.

For most single homeowners, it all starts with basic tools for basic tasks. Boyd's short list of equipment for women includes:

- Tape measure
- Cordless rechargeable screw-

driver (with Phillips and flat heads)

- Extension cord and work light
- Hammer
- Filers, plain and locking type
- Cordless drill and assorted drill bits
- Work gloves
- C-clamps in various sizes

The best advice, however, might be that, when in doubt, ask for help.

Boyd says women should check their quilts and migitags at the door the moment they walk into a home-improvement store. She says that the mindset of stores now is that there are no questions that are too basic.

There are plenty of store associates to answer questions and how-to brochures, books, and instant help available. "There's no embarrassment in asking for help," she says.

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