



Dowlie Etter surveys her floral stairway

No 'canvas' too odd for free-hand artist

By ROSE WEBER

Necessity may be the mother of invention but for Dowlie Etter, it also fostered the birth of a new hobby.

"I have always painted conventional things, like oil paintings. But I didn't see why you couldn't paint directly on something instead of just canvas," she said.

So to brighten up a friend's kitchen, she painted a gaudy fruit design over the sink. That led to a window shade and the new hobby was in full bloom.

Furniture was added to the list of unlikely "canvases."

"I antiqued a breakfast for a

friend and then painted a design in pale blue on drawers and doors. I also refinished an old hutch of mine the same way," she explained.

BUT THE idea of painting on walls really intrigued Mrs. Etter. When they moved into their Troy home she decided to try the theory on a bathroom that was too small for conventional wallpaper.

So with paints in hand, she copied the wildflower design from the bedspread over the entire wall from floor to ceiling.

"I don't sketch first because that seems like a terrible waste of time and flowers are so easy. But there are tricks to painting a wall as I learned the hard way," she said.

A decorator that she met at a Village Players rehearsal commissioned her to do a modernistic style mural on some model condominium rooms.

Some people who came in to look at the condominiums were not exactly complimentary about her designs and said so, not realizing that the woman in the apartment was the artist.

Mrs. Etter also discovered the hard way not to use masking tape on painted walls to lay out the straight lines of her design.

"I WAS making a huge design like the letter 'm' on one wall and then continued a straight line across the baseboard on other walls. But when I removed the tape, the paint came with it and I had to repaint the wall."

"After that I just gritted my teeth and hoped my hand wouldn't shake," she said.

But the experience didn't stop the wall painting. She is busy at work in her spare time decorating the walls of her basement stairway with huge free-form flowers.

"It is fun to do my own home because I just start mixing colors on the palette and take off," she said. Although her time is limited because she works full time Mrs. Etter is interested in doing walls for other people.

"So far I have just painted for friends and you can't charge them, although they did surprise me

with some lovely gifts. I would like to get more jobs from decorators," she said.

She thinks of herself as a problem solver for decorators. "I try to fit the design to the problem to come up with an attractive solution. Most painters don't do that."

Mrs. Etter is convinced that there is no area too difficult to decorate that her paint tubes and ingenuity can't solve.



Flowers for a bathroom wall

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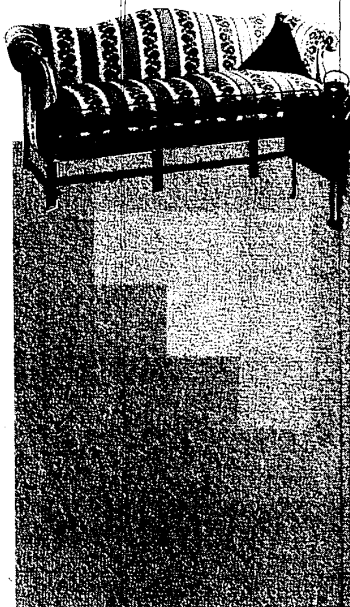
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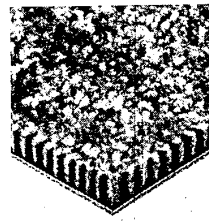


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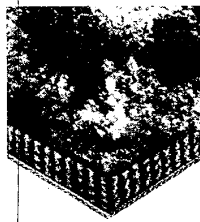
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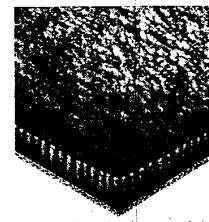
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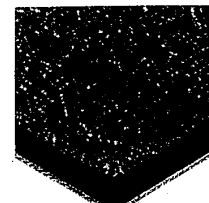
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