

# Faux-finish business allows for art, freedom

**S**ue Kauffman started her company, The Artistic Advantage!, because she wanted to combine her artistic interest in faux finishing and surface design with her desire to be self-employed.

The company adds finishes and designs to walls, floors, furniture, ceilings and fabric.

Kauffman's services and techniques include color consultation, dimensional stenciling, murals, Venetian plaster, marbling, textiles and inlays. She designs everything from bathrooms to showrooms for homes and businesses. The average project takes about a week to complete, including application and drying times.

Kauffman charges anywhere from \$900 to \$6,000 per room. The cost depends on the size of the room, complexity of the technique and cost of the materials.

"It's not a cheap expenditure," Kauffman acknowledged. "People are usually shocked initially by the cost."

Bobby White, owner of Bob's Intowne Spas Inc. in York, hired Kauffman to redo his showroom walls. "You get what you pay for; it was well worth it," White said. He said the new look is a more warm, rich-looking finish. It gives the room character, he said.

**Sue Kauffman, owner of The Artistic Advantage!, stands in a room she is working on at a Thomas J. Carricato & Sons Inc. model home in Linglestown. Kauffman has a portfolio of between 100 and 150 samples of her faux-finishing techniques.**



PHOTO/RICHARD CHRISTOFF

Kauffman seals her work as well, so all surfaces are washable. Depending upon the finish, Kauffman said some homeowners may be able to make touch-ups themselves for long-term maintenance.

"It's really quite durable, much more than paint, which can chip, or wallpaper that can tear," she said.

Kauffman has a portfolio of between 100 and 150 samples of her techniques that she shows to customers. Initial consultations are free. She suggests ideas in a proposed price range for people who

are working within a budget.

Other faux-finishing artists offer similar designs, but while the finished products may appear similar, the materials and techniques vary, affecting the time, price and quality. "It's hard to compare designers because it's not necessarily apples to apples," Kauffman said.

Debbie Huether handles the interior design selections in homes built by Thomas J. Carricato & Sons Inc. in Harrisburg. She first saw Kauffman's work at a home builders show last year and has since been recommending Kauff-

man's company to her clients.

"I feel very comfortable with my clients working with her. She's very professional, a good person to work with, her standards are very high and her work is breathtaking," Huether said.

Kauffman's gross income was about \$75,000 last year, but she said the costs of starting her own business have been significant. She didn't share other figures, saying the success of the company is not reflected by its numbers.

Kauffman continues to take classes to stay ahead of the trends.

## EYE on small business

**COMPANY:**  
The Artistic Advantage!

**LOCATION:**  
445 S. Middlesex Road,  
Carlisle, Cumberland County

**EMPLOYEES:**  
1

**ANNUAL REVENUE:**  
\$75,000 (gross income in 2002)

### WHAT IS THE HARDEST PART ABOUT BEING SELF-EMPLOYED?

"Marketing is always the biggest challenge. I love doing it, but it's actually the face-to-face marketing that's difficult; I have a hard time tooting my own horn."

In November she is planning to go to California for a class and is also planning trips to Colorado and Texas.

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Rebecca Oberholtzer is a contributing writer for the Business Journal.