

Real Illusions

JO LE SOINE'S *REAL DEAL* by Victoria Charters



“Basically, if you can tell how it’s done, it’s not a good job,” Jo Le Soine explains of her hand-applied finishing process.



Left: The Real Jo Le Soine. Above: Her team hard at work. Below: Finishing done for the house of John Malkovich. Images courtesy Real Illusions.

This creative perfectionist is the driving force behind Real Illusions, a company renowned for its broad range of fine architectural finishes including Venetian plaster, painted finishes, gilding and *Trompe L’oeil*. According to Jo, Real Illusions’ standard is “no trace of a tool. No suggestion of the human touch. Only the illusion perfectly realized,” she reveals.

Notable Real Illusions projects include the residence of John Malkovich, offices of Larry Flynt Publications, exterior murals on Hollywood Wax Museum and the offices of the American Institute of Architects, to mention a few.

One masterful Real Illusions technique, *Negoro Nuri*, is an ancient Japanese method using about 12 layers of wet-sanded paint and varnish. “It’s very messy—you are working in a pool of water,” says Jo. At Hollywood’s Geisha House Restaurant, the red is sanded away, revealing the black behind and creating a stunning effect. Jo describes it as “an illusive process.”

Recently, one of Real Illusions’ most challenging projects was the Ahmanson Theatre in Los Angeles. As Jo explains, the chosen



technique of oil parchment required a high degree of precision. “The oil glaze application on this 75 foot high by 75 foot wide wall had to be applied in one continuous pass,” she details. “It required coordinating 12 artisans with speed and accuracy.”

The result is nothing short of real. ■

Real Illusions
1104 Palms Boulevard, Los Angeles.
310.452.0257. www.realillusionsinc.com.