

Rhapsody in glue



Decoupage is hip again in the hands of designer and author Jonathan Fong. Learn his special technique.

projects **JONATHAN FONG** words **JENNIFER WILSON** styling **ANDREA CAUGHEY** photographs **ED GOHLICH**

OPPOSITE: Decoupage conjures images of wrinkly Little League plaques, but designer Jonathan Fong has perfected a sleek, durable technique that transforms plain furniture into room showpieces. "It's back and better than ever," says Fong, whose first decoupage project was covering bland kitchen cabinets with vibrant Andy Warhol prints.





Prints should have a large enough image to cover the entire surface you want to decoupage. “One dramatic image is a cooler look than a lot of little ones,” Fong says. “The new decoupage is bold and graphic.” It can be tricky finding images that flatter your furniture piece—this cabinet needed a design that still looked good cut in half. Try browsing museum stores, shops such as World Market, or online sources. Fong finds favorites at www.allposters.com.

Simple, sleek furniture styles are easiest to decoupage.



THIS PHOTO: Using one large image rather than several smaller ones creates a contemporary look that fits today's homes. For a pop-art vibe in this Cape Cod, Fong embellished a drop-leaf table with appropriate artwork—vintage travel posters with sea themes. ABOVE: The old, lumpy decoupage look is out—a fitted and sleek look is in. Fong says the key is working with furniture that has flat planes, though he's even decoupage toilet-seat lids, fitting small paper pieces to work around the curves.



do it: decoupage furniture

Here's designer Jonathan Fong's easy method for decorating your furniture with decoupage. To see more great projects and interiors by Fong, visit his Web site: www.jonathanfongstyle.com.

This poster design suits the shape of the chair.

Tools + Materials

- furniture piece
- cleaner
- plain paper for template
- pencil
- art print or poster
- scissors
- glue or decoupage medium
- foam brushes
- water source
- sponge
- brayer
- polyurethane

TIP #1

If the paper tears during the smoothing process, fix it as best as you can and then touch up with a marker before applying polyurethane sealer.

TIP #2

For a clean edge, trim any overlaps with a very sharp crafts knife when the paper is dry and stiff with glue.

TIP #3

Avoid decoupage with thin paper, such as newsprint or rice paper, because it wrinkles. If you have a design you love that's on thin paper, take it to the copy store for laser printing (ink-jet copies run in water).



1. PREPARE THE FURNITURE. Clean the furniture item with a spray cleaner. (If needed, fill in chips or nicks with spackling compound.) On a plain piece of paper (such as butcher paper), trace the shape of the furniture piece as a template.



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2. PLAN THE DESIGN. Move the template around the image to find the section you want to cover the furniture piece. Using a pencil, lightly trace the shape of the template over the image. Fong prefers fine-art prints on thick paper for durability.



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3. CUT OUT THE IMAGE. Be sure to use sharp scissors. It's better to err on the side of having too much image—overlap is easily trimmed. If the image is too small, cut off a little piece of the print as a patch.



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4. ADD ADHESIVE. Paint household glue (such as Elmer's) over the entire surface of the furniture item using a foam brush.



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5. RELAX THE PRINT IN A TUB OF WATER. “This step scares people because they think paper shouldn't get wet,” Fong says. “But water makes paper more maneuverable.”



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6. POSITION THE IMAGE. Align the paper with the furniture edges. Keep your hands wet or the paper tears. Use a wet sponge and wet brayer to work out excess glue, water, and air bubbles. Work hands and tools outward from the center to flatten the surface. Dry overnight, checking frequently to smooth late-forming air bubbles with wet fingers.



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7. SEAL THE SURFACE. Apply three to five coats (one per hour) of acrylic polyurethane with a foam brush. Fong recommends Benjamin Moore Stays Clear Acrylic Polyurethane Low Luster.