

SELOS ART

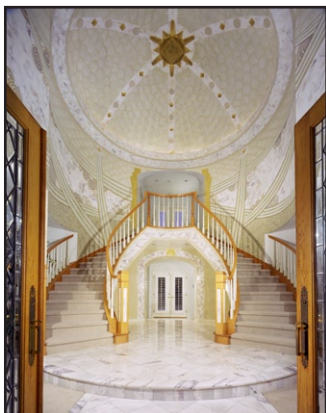
Selos Creative Finishes



ABOVE ALL, DISTINCTIVELY ORIGINAL

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Art takes time. Steve Selos spends countless hours meticulously determining each angle in this magnificent entryway. Each curve, each cut is done by hand so the light captures every nuance of this truly signature part of this home.

INTERIOR

Articles:
Walls & Ceilings
Las Vegas SUN
Bucks County Courier Times

Letters of Commendation

Steve Selos Biography

Photo Journal



Selos Creative Finishes

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Native European Crafting Eye-Catching Creations in California

By Mark Rutkowski & Robin Raymer

As a young man in England, Steve Selos came to a point in his life when he needed to decide how he was going to make a living. That decision made decades ago, coupled with years of hard work, time traveling across Europe and the choice to leave his native country and bring his craft to the United States, has resulted in breathtaking custom homes that today leave owners, architects and others admiring his craft. Selos is a plasterer, but to leave it at that would be like saying Van Gogh or Rembrandt dabbled in paints. Just as the masters started with a blank slate and brush in hand, Selos starts with many of the same tools as any plastering professional. What is created by the end of the process, though, is far from typical.

ROUGH BEGINNING

Selos admits that his intentions of becoming a plasterer were somewhat less than noble. As a youngster in England who was not pursuing “higher education,” Selos instead opted for trade school. Originally, his thoughts were to become a stonecutter, but for a very practical reason - the stonecutting trade school was farther from his home - he opted against his initial leaning. Instead, he decided to study the ancient art of plastering.

“I opted for a plastering apprenticeship because it was closer to home and seemed like a good money maker,” Selos says. “My brother was a carpenter and did pretty well financially. He used to let me help out after school and that’s how I got my first experiences.”

Like many apprentice plasterers, the beginning of the experience, and the results on the wall, were far from smooth. Though it’s been nearly 30 years since he started in the profession, he can still remember his first attempts at the craft.

“I can recall the first time working with mud on the hawk and trowel, it all ended up on my boots,” Selos says. “I also remember a teacher who used to say, ‘If you stroke that wall one more time, it’s going to follow you home!’ In England, teachers really work from the ‘cruel to be kind’ philosophy.”

As with everyone who ends up moving from apprentice to professional, the process got smoother, the work got better and things started to fall into place. For Selos, that also meant that he started to find his niche.

WEALTH OF EXPERIENCE

As an apprentice plasterer, Selos had the opportunity to do some maintenance work on Salisbury Cathedral, which was close to his hometown of Swindon, in Wiltshire, England. Because of the timing of his entering the profession, the bulk of his early work was spent rehabbing homes that had been part of the English landscape for generations.

“In the late 1970’s there was a fair amount of renovation being done on the estates and manor houses which were being handed down to the next generation in very poor condition. Often, the stables or barns were converted into comfortable living areas whilst the main home was being renovated. So I most definitely had my share of renovation work.”

The work was not limited to England, however. Over time, Selos traveled throughout much of Europe, from Belgium to Holland, France to Greece. Along the way, his experiences went far beyond new languages and new customs. He began to get involved in other types of building applications as well. He spent two years working in Germany and was involved with some of the earliest EIFS applications of the time. The same company contracted him to paint the Olympic Village in Munich. They were contracted to do many government buildings and large family housing projects for the military.

“I was fortunate to work with the multinational team that created the plastic Dryvit pin used to secure foam blocks to walls. This actually came about because we couldn’t get a secure fixture underneath the eaves on a four-story gable end because we were on the scaffold.”

COMING TO AMERICA

Despite the fact that he loved traveling through Europe and thoroughly enjoyed working with different techniques, Selos says he also recognized

that eventually, he needed new scenery and fresh inspirations to challenge him. Those challenges came on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean, and all the way to the coast of the Pacific, as he settled in California.

“I was under a lot of pressure to make a go of things. I had started off working in security and any free time and on weekends, I would drive around studying California construction tech-

niques and styles, whilst getting a sense of scale and techniques between tract and custom homes and I decided to introduce myself to workers at the custom level.”

Not long after he made that decision, Selos got what he describes as his first “big break” when he met an elderly general contractor who happened to be German. The GC let him use some drywall tools that were lying around and Selos did a couple

of very rudimentary patterns on an old piece of sheetrock. Because of the contractor’s European background, Selos says, the man appreciated his skills as being trained in traditional plastering. As a result, Selos was introduced to many of the GC’s clients and eventually designed all of the ceilings in what were seven-figure homes.

“I took advantage of that; I armed myself with some good sample boards, printed up some business cards and drove miles every weekend looking for custom home construction sites hoping to bump into owners who were out inspecting progress on their new homes. Very cheekily, I would approach them with my sample boards; it was as basic as that. I soon created a name for myself as the English guy who does fancy ceiling work.”

STYLE, REPUTATION GROW

While he may have started as the English guy who did fancy ceilings, Selos soon developed a reputation as much more. His work moved from ceilings to walls and the scope of his work moved from





decorative patterns to true works of art. He also continued to work in relief plastering, the centuries-old craft of plaster work that also incorporates sculpture and painting. The craft and Selos' expertise in doing it moved him from the realm of the tradesman to that of the artist.

Today, his work can range from patterns on a ceiling to an intricate, flowing piece of art created on walls and ceilings rather than canvas. One grand entryway that he considered his masterpiece took more than nine months to design and complete.

One of the challenges of developing this trade in the United States was the wide variety of architecture already in place and being built new at the time. These varying styles, matched to the varying tastes of the homeowners involved, meant that Selos had to develop a broad range of techniques and styles to match the diversity in the market. Despite the changes, though, and no matter the job at hand, the process can still be traced back centuries.

"The process of my work has evolved greatly over the years I've spent here in the U.S. However, the technical process is much the same as it was hundreds of years ago. You prepare (and sometimes

this means repair) the surface to accept the finish materials and that gives you enough time to be able to create the pattern/texture you are looking for. The magic is actually in the pre-design stage. That's when all the creative decisions are made; which surfaces to work on, what shape of design, where do I start the design, is there any architecture that I can use to emphasize the design?"

Using the interplay of textures, Selos controls the design that is sought, be it traditional or contemporary, freeform or anywhere in between. "It could include added elements of drama with long, sweeping arches, or strong, straight lines created with the flourish of the tools or the pressure I exert applying plaster to the surfaces to create the kind of impact that draws "ohhs and ahhs" from the clients."

SEEING IS BELIEVING

For Dr. Frank Finazzo, a Fontana, Calif.-based dentist, his first contact with Selos' art came at a neighbor's house, where Selos had done plaster relief work on several of the ceilings. Before that, Finazzo had seen some rudimentary examples of plaster relief work, but nothing like Selos' work.

"I thought, 'Wow, that was really cool,'" Finazzo said. At the time, he and his family were putting a new addition on their home, and he decided to bring in Selos to design the ceiling in the new room. He did, and from there Selos has done several other rooms within the Finazzo home, all with more of a modern feel.

While Selos said he likes to work with each home or business owner to get a feel for what exactly is sought on a particular project, Finazzo took a more trusting approach.

"I told him basically, you know what you're doing. Go for it," Finazzo said, adding Selos did show him examples of what he had in mind. "There was some amount of trust, but I'm a dentist, so I know that at some point, you just have to trust the

person who is doing the work."

The work at his home prompted Finazzo to bring in Selos to design an area at the office of his dental practice as well. A curved wall located directly behind the front desk was done with impregnated marble and uses gold leaf and other elements. While striking visually, it's perhaps the feel of the finished piece that garners the most attention.

"It honestly feels like glass," Finazzo said. "People will be standing by it and not really say anything, but when they feel it, you see them turn around very quickly because they've never experienced anything like it."

PASSING DOWN THE TROWEL

While Selos certainly likes to achieve the "wow factor" with his clients, it was Selos himself got quite a jolt not along ago. A little more than a year ago, Selos was diagnosed with diabetes, a disease that threatened not only his life, but also his livelihood. Since that time, he has given a lot of thought to moving from becoming more of a teacher, passing down the skill and knowledge he has gained over a lifetime of work. While not working one-on-one with apprentices on a day-to-day basis, Selos would like to create some form of teaching platform by which his skills and techniques are passed to a new generation of tradesmen.

"They must understand that there is a lot to learn; even after an apprenticeship, it will take time to perfect the hand skills, not to mention estimating projects and time management," Selos says of those who are just starting in the business. He also admits that his specific type of work may not be for everyone, and that's OK. Just as he did over a lifetime, anyone just starting in the trade needs to find that one element he or she has a passion for, and then work to develop that passion while developing these skills.

"I'd say find what you truly like in the trade, (whether it be) renovation/new construction, exterior work or patch work and then expand on that. You have to follow your passion. I did and I've been fortunate. I have traveled well and I've been able to take care of my family and myself. I truly believe that there will always be a need for the hand skills of the plastering trade in the future. There will always be domiciles being built and buildings to work in. The materials might change, but someone has to put it together; that's us, the plasterers."

Custom murals express owner's personality

By JIM WOODARD
COPLEY NEWS SERVICE

Homes are becoming more artistic. They are expressing the creative tastes of their owners in very distinct ways.

Wall murals, special materials and textures, art creations on garage floors and driveways - these are a few ways owners are turning their homes into custom-designed venues of art.

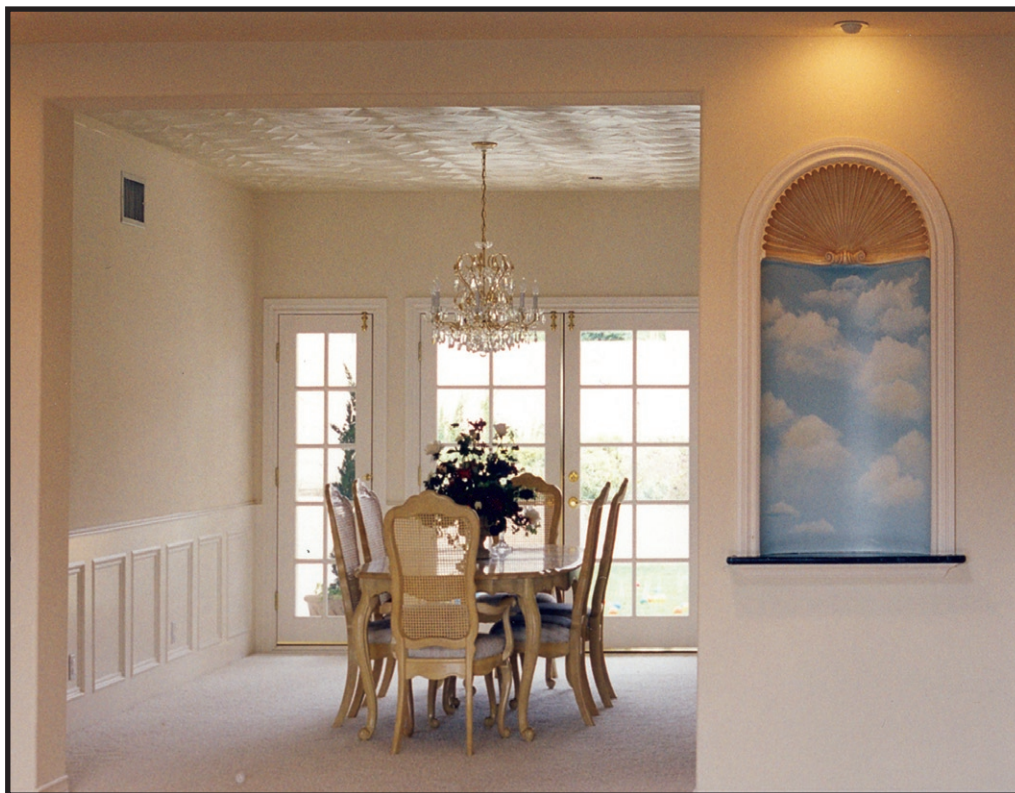
An increasing number of professional artisans throughout the country are finding a lucrative business niche in creating murals on walls of bedrooms, family rooms, dens. They are usually specifically designed for the homeowner's family, often incorporating personal elements such as a family pet or art that reflects a favorite hobby or activity.

Jim Katranis is one of those mural artists. He often goes to his clients' homes to paint murals. At other times, he completes his artistic work on cloth in his studio (in the garage of his home), then installs it at his client's property on the specified wall. The advantage of painting on cloth is that the client can take it with him when moving to a new home, Katranis pointed out. Some homeowners use high-end plastering and texturing techniques to walls and ceilings to add an artistic feel to their homes. Artist-craftsman Steve Selos specializes in this field.

"My process is much the same as that used by plaster craftsmen centuries ago," Selos said. "It's been developed and refined in recent years to meet the demands of contemporary designers and architects."

Selos' art can be applied to any solid smooth surface. His canvases are applied to interior walls and ceilings. He uses an interplay of textures to control the style. It can be traditional, contemporary, free-form or anywhere in between. He often adds natural or artificial light to enhance the effect. He sometimes incorporates long, sweeping arches or strong, straight lines to achieve the desired impact or emotion. Even a crowded and messy garage can be transformed into an artistic delight. There are now many firms that specialize in creating new and creative surfaces on garage floors and driveways.

One firm, Galileo Garage Floors, often gives floors the appearance of liquid granite. They offer a wide range of materials and effects, including glow-in-the-dark flakes, sparkles, glitter and fluorescent colors. Special logos or other design elements are often incorporated into the surface. "We would love to do more extraordinary color mixes and designs," said the firm's owner. "We like for our customers to be creative and bold. That makes it much more fun and challenging for us in creating that special surface." The cost for their surfaces varies, of course, with the size and type of surface desired, but typically it's



about \$4 per square foot (there are usually 500 to 600 square feet in an average home garage).

move one property over others. The lure of several thousand dollars as an added bonus is very tempting to many brokers.

SEARCH FOR YOUR SELF

Q: *Is there any risk in following the recommendations of real estate brokers when looking for a home?*

A: *When searching for a home to purchase, it's wise to do some homework on your own - not relying entirely on recommendations expressed by a real estate broker (whether seller's or buyer's broker).*

Fortunately, the Internet has made it easy to access information about home offerings, their values and local market, and many prospective home buyers are taking full advantage of it.

In today's buyers' market, finding a buyer and consummating a sale is difficult and usually takes much longer than it did a couple of years ago. Many home sellers try desperately to keep their asking price high, and they become frustrated with the lack of activity.

To expedite an offer, instead of lowering the price to a more realistic level, they agree to pay the broker a substantial bonus fee over and above their normal commission, if they will bring a buyer for their property.

There's nothing illegal about that practice, even though the seller-buyer principals may know nothing about it. But it's something buyers should keep in mind, particularly when a broker tries hard to pro-

SMALL IMPROVEMENTS REAP GREAT VALUE

Many homeowners launch home improvement or remodeling projects with the primary objective of increasing the value of the property. A recent study determined the projects that are least likely to enhance a home's value. Building large addition to a house, making it twice as big as other homes in the neighborhood could be counterproductive, it was noted. It pays to make improvements or additions consistent with other nearby homes.

Structural repairs, such as fixing cracked foundations, rewiring, replacing the roof and new plumbing, will also cost more than can be recouped when the home is sold. It would be more feasible to plan smaller, cosmetic projects, the study found.

"While upgrades and remodeling can add significant resale value to a home, there is a line that can be crossed," it was noted by a representative for House Doctors Handyman Services, the firm that sponsored the study. "Knocking out walls and altering floor plans is the type of project where costs fail to equal the payback."

Custom projects don't always add value to a home

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COPLEY NEWS SERVICE

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DON'T GO OVERBOARD

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Building a large addition to a house, making it twice as big as other homes in the neighborhood, could be counterproductive, it was noted. It pays to make improvements or additions consistent with other nearby homes.

An improvement that is specifically keyed to the owner's special interests could be a financial flop. Luxury features such as a spa or tennis court will probably cost more than they increase the home's value.

The addition of a pool is one of the worst investments. That can even reduce the value of a home.

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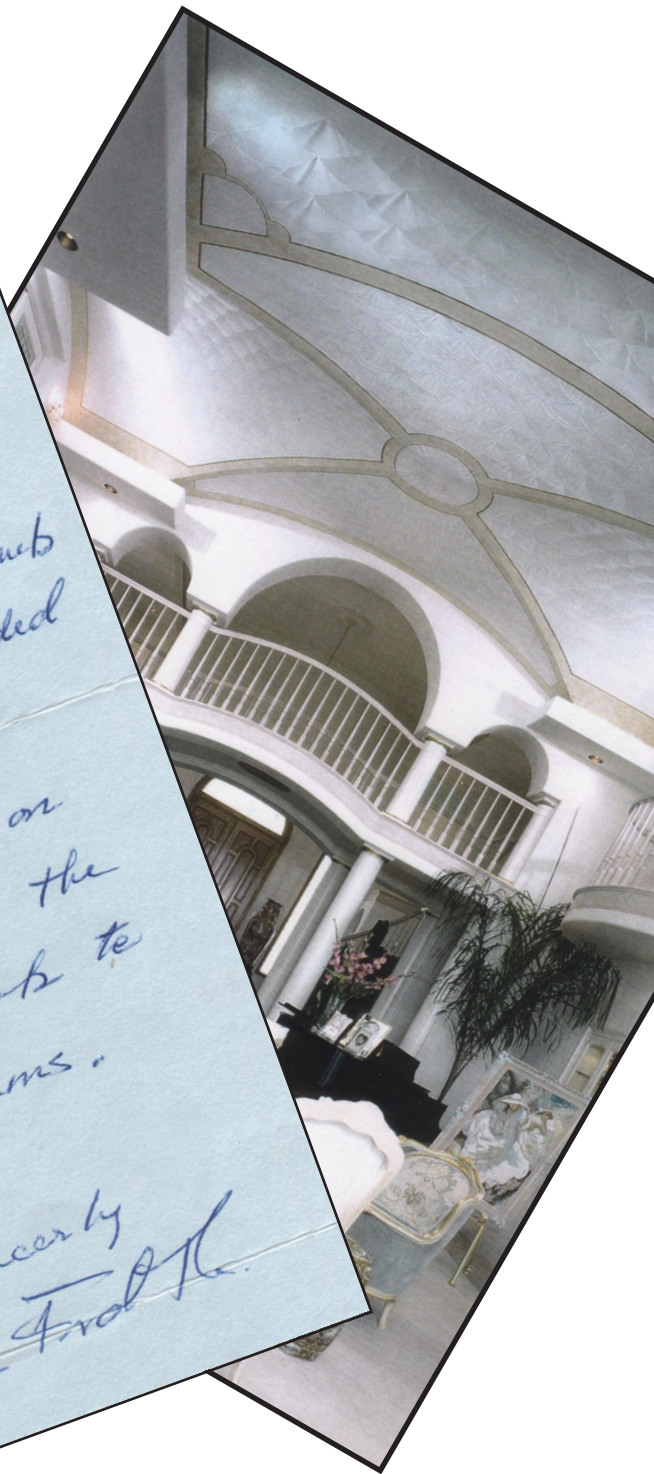
BENSON FORD, JR.
237 LAKE SHORE ROAD
GROSSE POINTE FARMS, MICHIGAN 48236

Feb 4, 1990

Dear Mr Selos,

My wife and I would like to thank you for the wonderful job you did on our living room ceiling. We have had many compliments on your work, we appreciate the time and effort you took to come to Grosse Pointe Farms.

Sincerely
Benson Ford Jr.



William K. Purves
2817 North Mountain Avenue
Claremont, California 91711

August 3, 1995

Mr. Steven M. Selos
7201 Haven Avenue, Suite 286E
Alta Loma, CA 81701

Dear Steve:

Thanks for making our house look so good! We appreciate your making the whole process so pleasant and easy. In view of our experience working with you, we'd like to offer some thoughts you might want to share with potential clients.

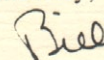
You succeed in bringing about changes of style, mood, and appearance that one might think could only be accomplished by moving walls and windows. And, of course, at a much lower cost. The power of ceiling work to enhance and change a room without moving walls came as a revelation to us. It was like remodeling, but without the pain, time, or expense.

The best part of working with you was the opportunity to work *together*. Neither you nor we came to this with closed minds. We found you extremely helpful—first in showing samples of your previous work, but much more importantly in helping *us* figure out what *we* wanted to do.

Most of what you showed in your portfolio is very impressive, to the point of being a bit frightening to the owner of a more modest home. Initially, we feared that we were going to end up with something overpowering. Of course, that didn't happen at all. One of us came up with an idea for a motif, based on an art book of ours. The three of us (you and we) spent time each day throwing out ideas, adapting the old and inventing the new until we knew we had captured it. We picked up on themes of yours, such as the beautiful "broken leather" texture we used in a couple of rooms, and you produced another, all new texture that captured an effect we wanted. We got ideas from you and, surprisingly, vice versa. The result was four different and very beautiful rooms.

You have enhanced the value of the house substantially, without making a single false statement. The changes were totally compatible with the rest of the house. It was a great pleasure working with you on this project.

Sincerely,



William K. Purves



Jean M. Purves

Mayo Koomon
1112 NO. Euclid
Ontario Calif.
91762

December 15,
1995

Dear Steve Selos,

A note to thank you for being so thoughtful and thorough. Your delightful personality, sensitivity and Talent not only gave us a beautiful lofty and visual facade to our ceiling, but you affected our hearts as well.

Thanks for listening to me. I had no idea what I wanted or needed. You took the time to teach me about all the possibilities of the different styles and techniques from "The Old School" and showed me many of the more modern aspects and effects of plastering. I loved our choice.

You were honest and diligent-attentive and careful. You were so consistent. It was a big ceiling! It was a pleasure having you in our house. We enjoyed watching nothing grow into something.

When it was completed — we watched you pack up your scaffold, buckets, cloths and tools — we were happy to know we had gained a work of art and a new friend.

Come visit. Your insight is always welcome.

Thank you.

Mayo and Family.



SELOS ART

Selos Creative Finishes

Steve Selos Biography





SELOS ART

Selos Creative Finishes

Photo Journal





SELOS CREATIVE FINISHES

A B O V E A L L , D I S T I N C T I V E L Y O R I G I N A L