

A Passion For Plastering

Lori Blomstrom, co-owner of Veneshe Master Venetian Plastering, uses Venetian plaster to artfully change rooms in any house, giving them an Old World feel

ONE DOESN'T HAVE TO BE 'UN TUR-ISTA' in Italy to enjoy Italian style and charm. The magical essence and uniqueness of Italian culture can be created right in your own home. Lori Blomstrom, co-owner of Veneshe Master Venetian Plastering, is a certified Italian plaster artisan who specializes in applying decorative Venetian plaster finishes for interior designers, decorators and homeowners. She has enthusiastically learned this art has roots going back to the Renaissance.

On this warm evening my husband and I take a leisurely drive to visit Lori and Donnamarie, co-owner of Veneshe located below Easton. We enjoy the countryside, passing over stone bridges and valleys. The sun peeks through shade trees and orange wildflowers salute the sky. We find the beautiful "Veneshe" mosaic sign and walk up the driveway. Suddenly we feel as if we entered another world, one reminiscent of old Italy. Towards our right is a magnificent European style home and on the left is a garage with an amazing studio overhead.

Lori and Donnamarie greet us as we climb the stone stairs to the studio. It's filled with bright light, products and sample boards; the magnificent arias of Andrea Bocelli surround us through speakers. The harmony of nature vs. realism doesn't escape us and, as both ladies say, their



work is 'green' and environmentally perfect.

Donnamarie does professional marketing communications with web design, and Lori is the artist extraordinaire. Together their graciousness is above and beyond, and as they offer us a fine wine, strawberries, crackers and



PASSION FOR PLASTERING: Opposite, Lori Blomstorm, the co-owner of Venetian Plastering and a certified Italian plaster artisan, in her studio. Top, Lori's work in this meditation room allows for a feeling of tranquility. Above, a room given an Old World feel. Left, artistic detail displayed in this room's plastering.

cheese—Italian style of course—we sit down to chat. As an Italian aficionado her distinctive style transports me to Tuscany, Chianti, Venice, Florence and Pisa.

“I’ve always lived in the Lehigh Valley and began as a house painter with my dad, Rudy Blomstrom,” Lori proud states. “He taught me amazing skills. In 2002, I took a trip to Tuscany and it ignited my passion for Italian artistry. That passion led to my specialized training. I literally learned from the masters, the elderly Italian men who only spoke Italian and used very few applications. I worked hard every day. In Italy they work in stone with light finishes. I learned how to apply two to eight layers of plaster and utilize their fine techniques. There are basically three types of plaster—course, medium and fine. I never use synthetic plasters, nor is a Venetian Plaster a faux finish. It’s authentic.”

Lori knew she had found utopia and was hooked. When she returned to the States she attended school in Atlanta GA, and Florida, and learned everything that she could about plastering. She experimented with Venetian plaster, an ancient building material comprised of lime and/or marble that’s applied in translucent layers by hand and hardens into a beautiful stone. She even put an addition on her house and experimented with different finishes. Because it’s a remarkable surface it can be used in any room because of its durability and gorgeous effect.

“When I attended the school in Atlanta, in about four days I started teaching,” she says, laughing at the memory. “They were asking me to instruct. For me, plastering in Italy is the ultimate experience for a decorative artist or for someone who wants to do it from home.”

She started Veneshe to bring the ancient beauty of authentic Venetian Plaster to clients here. In fact, one client called her and asked her to recreate her house as an Italian Villa. She also works with a decorative artist Holly Fields-Scott, from Bella Pintura, an architectural decoration studio in Allentown, a collaboration which enables them to bring classical deco-

orative techniques such as fresco, egglomise, gilding and faux bois, which complement their work with Italian plasters.

“I’m always trying to better myself and keep on learning,” she explains, showing us a selection of trowels and other implements used to create these magnificent designs and finishes. “Everything we use is shipped from Italy and in our all-day classes people leave with two-foot sample boards. I teach them to use a trowel that angles, as well as other techniques. In fact, we use different methods and apply depth to the plastered walls. We use drywall that’s cut from a four by eight piece. We plaster over stone block, or when I’m doing a home or business, I apply it directly on your wall. All of our Italian plasters are created from lime and natural aggregates, cured and processed in Italy and colored on-site with natural earth pigments.

“We can create translucent, high gloss polished plaster surfaces resembling marble, to rustic plaster surfaces that resemble ancient and worn stucco. Genuine Venetian plaster presents a unique wall reflecting my technique, vision and mastery of this art form. “

I glance around at the multiple shelves containing an array of buckets of plaster. Lori explains that everything she does is custom, including adding a liquid tint for colors, which she sells. She also became a dealer for these buckets of plaster and tints. Lori uses milk paint, which is environmentally friendly and can be mixed with pigment powders to create any color. Milk paint is non-toxic and was documented as being used in the early 16th century.

“We’ve had housewives, architects, decorative painters and more in one class,” she explains. “My classes are limited to five individuals so everyone receives personal attention. I also teach how to Sacrafitte by scratching a design. In April, my favorite time in Tuscany, I take a small number of students with us to Italy for a week-long immersion in art, Tuscany and Venetian plaster. We mix it with traditional food, wine and treasures of the Chianti regions for a unique and unforgettable art adven-

ture for both novices and professional Italian plaster applicators.”

Lori’s talent has enabled her to participate in many designer houses, including the 2012 Princeton and SOTA Design Show Houses, 2009 and 2010 Bucks County Designer Show House, where she designed the Personal Retreat Room, a restoration project in Tuscany, as well as many private and public homes. Examples of her decorative plaster finishes are also found in fine homes in Bucks, Delaware, and Lehigh Valleys, the Main Line, in PA, Hunterdon, Mercer Counties in NJ, and beyond.

“Sometimes I have to pinch myself,” Lori admits. “It’s great to get up and go to work, but it’s too much fun to be work. Because my work is all custom, two rooms are never the same. Plastering is my passion and I’m living my dream.” For more information on Veneshe visit www.veneshe.com or call 610-253-3539.

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