

# HOW TO ANTIQUE A COMMERCIAL MIRROR

## BACKING PAINT

When you distress or 'antique' a commercial factory-made mirror you do not have to silver the glass, but you do have to remove the backing paint. Some backing paints are more difficult to remove than others. We tell you how to do this below.

One quart of Multi-Strip covers approximately 17 square feet. Coverage for other products depends on the rate of use.

## GALVANIC COPPER BACKING

Almost all commercial silver mirrors have a thin layer of copper (usually a pale gold color) between the silver and the backing paint. This is a sacrificial metal that traps and neutralizes contaminants before they can tarnish the silver.

We used Copper Remover to remove the copper on one side of each sample to show the different effects you can get on each surface. By removing the copper in a pattern, you can create an entirely new range of effects and designs.

## ALUMINUM MIRRORS

Some commercial mirrors are made with aluminum rather than silver. To test your mirror, remove a small area of backing paint. If the metal underneath is pale gold or pale copper, you have a silver mirror. If the metal is bright silver, you may have an aluminum mirror.

The definitive test is to apply one of our removers. Silver Remover does not dissolve aluminum and Aluminum Remover does not dissolve silver. We have a kit and instructions for antiquing aluminum mirrors in the Antique Mirrors section of our website.

## EACH MIRROR IS DIFFERENT

Antiquing is an organic process that can be affected by a number of factors including time, temperature and air flow. No two mirrors are ever the same. It is this that gives them their charm.

## PRACTICE

We strongly suggest that you use small sheets of glass, maybe 6 inches square, to practice these techniques. The skills you gain by practicing will be reflected in the beauty of your finished work.

## WORK RULES

If you would like to use more than one technique on a single mirror, follow these rules.

- Examine the front of the mirror after each technique. *What you see on the silver side of the mirror is not what you will see on the glass side of the mirror.*
- Use only one chemical – one technique – at a time and work in layers Use the most aggressive technique first (for example PFC Crystals – Dissolved) and then refine the result with a less aggressive technique (for example buffing with Pumice.)
- Do NOT mix chemicals together At the worst you will create a potentially dangerous unidentifiable mess. At best you will remove all of the silver and end up with clear glass.

*AngelGilding.com disavows any responsibility for anything that might happen if you disregard this notice.*

## PART 1 - REMOVE THE BACKING PAINT

### STEP 1 - APPLY MULTI-STRIP PAINT REMOVER



1. Place the mirror, painted side up, on several sheets of newspaper.
2. Use the paint scraper to apply a thick layer of Multi-Strip. You should not be able to see the paint.
3. Allow time for the Multi-Strip to work. It can take anywhere from 15 minutes to several hours depending on the paint formulation. Multi-Strip works faster in a warm damp environment.

### STEP 2 – PEEL OFF THE SOFTENED PAINT



1. Use the paint scraper to gently push the Multi-Strip back from one corner of the mirror.
2. If the paint lifts off easily, gently push it off the rest of the mirror.
3. If you cannot push it off easily, pat down the test area and allow more time for the stripper to work. Hard scraping could scratch the silver and/or the glass

### STEP 3 – WASH OFF THE MULTI-STRIP RESIDUE



1. Use cotton balls and distilled water to gently clean the exposed mirror. Any residue remaining on the mirror will interfere with the action of our antiquing chemicals.
2. Multi-Strip is non-toxic and bio-degradable. You can safely throw the used Multi-Strip into your household trash.

### STEP 4 – REMOVE THE COPPER (OPTIONAL)



1. Drip Copper Remover onto a cotton ball and wipe off the pale gold copper layer to expose the bright silver below.
2. The dissolved copper on your cotton ball will be blue.
3. Wash the exposed silver with distilled water.

## PART 2 - EXAMPLES OF POSSIBLE EFFECTS

These samples are only meant to show you what is possible with each of our antiquing compounds. The amount of compound you apply, the amount of water you mist on the powders, the amount of time you let the compound sit on the silver and the temperature of your workspace will all affect your results.

These 6" x 6" samples show the glass side of the mirror – the mirror face – not the side with the chemicals applied. Remember to write down exactly what you did for each sample you create. Nothing is more frustrating than creating the perfect effect and not remembering how you achieved it.

BASO Powder is almost insoluble. Silver tarnished with BASO Powder has a faint purple/brown color BASO Powder has a strong odor of sulfur – *Use in a well ventilated area.*

### BASO POWDER – 20 MINUTES



Copper No Copper

1. Wet the silver and sprinkle it with BASO Powder.
2. Mist the powder with distilled water.
3. Let the misted powder sit on the mirror for 20 minutes.
4. Rinse the mirror well with distilled water.

*Results vary dramatically depending on the amount of powder you use, how much you mist it and how long you leave it on the silver. More misting creates a more blurred effect. More time creates a heavier tarnish.*

Silver tarnished with **LS Gel** is amber or dark purple-blue. LS Gel Concentrate must be diluted before use. LS Gel has a very strong odor of sulfur. *Use in a well-ventilated area.*

### LS GEL – 5 MINUTES



Copper    No Copper

1. Dissolve 30 ml of LS Gel in 720 ml of distilled water.
2. Spray a heavy mist of the mix onto the silver.
3. Allow the mix to sit on the silver for 5 minutes.
4. Rinse the mirror well with distilled water.

### LS GEL – 10 MINUTES



Copper    No Copper

1. Dissolve 30 ml of LS Gel in 720 ml of distilled water.
2. Spray a heavy mist of the mix onto the silver.
3. Allow the mix to sit on the silver for 10 minutes.
4. Rinse the mirror well with distilled water.

*The colors in this photo are fairly accurate. Areas of the copper- covered silver turned dark steel blue while the bare silver turned a dark rust. It is possible that these colors will change over time.*

**PFC Crystals** dissolve easily. Silver tarnished with PFC Crystals is gray-blue. PFC crystals are odorless.

### PFC – DRY CRYSTALS



Copper    No Copper

1. Wet the silver and sprinkle it with PFC Crystals.
2. Mist the crystals with distilled water.
3. Let the misted crystals sit on the mirror for 15 minutes.
4. Rinse the mirror well with distilled water.

## PFC – DISSOLVED IN DISTILLED WATER



Copper No Copper

5. Dissolve 2 grams (2 level spoonfuls) of PFC Crystals in 30 ml (1 fluid ounce) of distilled water.
6. Pour the mix onto the mirror.
7. Let it sit on the mirror for 30 minutes.
8. Rinse the mirror well with distilled water.

*Notice that the copper-covered silver remained almost perfect.*

**PUMICE** is a fine abrasive used to thin or remove the silver by buffing.



Copper No Copper

1. Make a paste of pumice and water.
2. Dip a cotton ball in the paste and buff the mirror in a random pattern to thin or remove the silver
3. Turn the mirror over to check that you are not buffing off more silver than you want.
4. Rinse the mirror well with distilled water.

## COMPOUNDS NOT INCLUDED IN THIS KIT

We do not include SNC Crystals or THR Crystals in our kit because they do not have a dramatic effect on stripped commercial mirrors, but we want to show them to you anyway. Clearly, they have more effect if you do NOT remove the copper backing first!

### SNC CRYSTALS – 10 MINUTES



Copper No Copper

1. Sprinkle the wet surface with SNC Crystals.
2. Mist the crystals with distilled water.
3. Let the misted crystals sit on the mirror for 30 minutes.
4. Rinse the mirror well with distilled water.

## THR CRYSTALS – 45 MINUTES



Copper    No Copper

1. Sprinkle the wet surface with THR Crystals.
2. Mist the crystals with distilled water.
3. Let the misted crystals sit on the mirror for 45 minutes.
4. Rinse the mirror well with distilled water

## PART 3 - RE-PAINT THE MIRROR



1. Check the front of the mirror to see your results. What you see on the silver side is NOT what you will see on the front glass side.
2. Rinse the glass well with distilled water to remove all antiquing compounds.
3. Dry the mirror completely before painting it.
4. Clean the mirror face with a commercial glass cleaner.

## STAND BACK AND ADMIRE YOUR HANDIWORK!



Antiquing is an organic process. Each mirror is unique. The more you practice, the more techniques you will discover and the more you will be able to control your results.

It is the organic and sometimes unexpected results that make antique silver mirrors so charming.

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