

PERFECT PARTNERSHIPS

Darren Franks Pairs with Designers For That Finishing Touch

BY KATHY BRYANT

“WE HELP OUR CLIENTS fulfill their vision,” says Darren Franks of Darren Franks & Associates in Santa Monica. “We’re not hired as designers, but we, instead, offer an array of solutions for the designers. My job is to help the designer look good.”

To that end, Darren Franks leads his paint contracting firm of over 20 artisans to collaborate with designers, builders and architects on the design and installation of decorative finishes and murals. “The whole process is a bit like choreography. We come in at the end of each area and install the finishes needed. Our murals are typically painted on muslin fabric in our studio and then installed like wallpaper. We work hard to get the work completed as quickly as possible, although what we do is time-consuming and labor intensive.”

Franks, born and raised in London, grew up in a family of artists and has been involved in art his whole life. “I also worked in the graphic arts field, but decided I preferred working with actual paint and gold leaf. It’s great to work on a massive canvas.”



ABOVE This office features a jet-black Venetian plaster of tray ceiling. Photograph by Meghan Beierle-O'Brien.
LEFT Darren Franks in his Santa Monica studio. Photograph by Mariane Lozano.



ABOVE For this loggia, Darren Franks & Associates created an Italian grotesque painting on the groin vault. Photograph by Meghan Beierle-O'Brien. **RIGHT** This cubist head was gilded in 22-karat gold.

One of his most recent ventures is working with Interior Designer Kelly Wearstler on a line of exclusive artwork that’s available at her boutique, at Bergdorf Goodman in NYC and online. “We’ve been working with Kelly Wearstler for 10 years and we’ve learned to speak in her voice for both these products and for the custom finishes she desires for her projects,” he says.

Although most of his clients demand secrecy, he says that he is currently working on a 60,000 sq ft house in Orange County and a 90-room hotel in Los Angeles, among other projects.

Besides Wearstler, he works with many designers, treating each project like a work of fine art. Whether it’s a gallery of faux marble and gilded columns, a high-gloss automotive finish on the walls and ceilings of a loggia or an extensive installation of a glaze finish throughout a home, he works to interpret the client’s design. “We are always coming up with innovations,” he says. “And we do everything from a gilded box to a monumental art work. We have installed very contemporary looks as well as classical designs. Anything the client desires.” **CH**



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