



Architectural Gilding with Genuine Silver Leaf

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Genuine silver leaf and white gold leaf create magnificent gilded surfaces. They can add an elegant accent as gilded trim, or by covering a ceiling or wall, the gilded surface can define the environment. When properly installed, the warmth, soft luster, delicate shades, subtle texture of 100% silver and white gold leaf can be appreciated for years.

A wide variety of leaf is available for architectural gilding and a skilled artisan will select the type of leaf best suited for the project. Often large flat areas such as walls and ceiling are efficiently covered with master rolls of ribbon gold leaf made from 4C inch square leaves assembled on a continuous roll of tissue paper. Long smooth moldings can be quickly gilded with custom cut widths of ribbon leaf. Patent gold leaf, 3d inch square leaves mounted on individual sheets of tissue paper, is often selected for gilding flat surface and small areas. Loose, or surface leaf, also 3d inch square, is required for intricate carved surfaces. Genuine silver leaf is available in 5½ inch wide rolls, and squares of loose and patent leaf.

Silver is a highly reactive metal and is often treated with chemicals to create a decorative patina. If left exposed to air, it will oxidize and tarnish. Pale shades of gold leaf contain increasing amounts of silver up to 62% in 9 karat white gold leaf. Due to the high silver content, only sealers that are free of elements that chemically react with silver must be used. The selection process should be based on recommendations from the sealer manufacturer and an experienced contractor.

A properly applied suitable top coat will maintain the appearance of the gilded surface and protect the surface from harm. Since silver must be sealed to provide a long lasting surface, design and evaluation must be based on samples incorporating all elements of the finish. The top coat will determine the final luster, quality, and shading of the gilded surface.

Many gilders use shellacs, lacquers, varnishes and other sealers in gloss, satin, or matte to seal and protect silver leaf. Application technique and product selection will determine the final appearance and the durability of the surface. Rolco Labs offers Acrylic Topcoat Clear, a mineral spirit based, water clear, protective coating. When applied at a coverage of 36 square feet per quart, producing a 2 mil thick layer of material, it has shown to protect silver from tarnishing. Always use a minimum of two coats of sealer to avoid thin spots and holidays.

The sealer will maintain the appearance of leaf as long as the integrity of the sealer is not compromised. Once discoloration begins, due to improper application or chemical reaction with the sealer, it can not be reversed. Experimentation on a test object of all steps involved is recommended before working on the project. Since Sepp Leaf Products, Inc. can not control the application of products, the user assumes all responsibility for the results obtained.