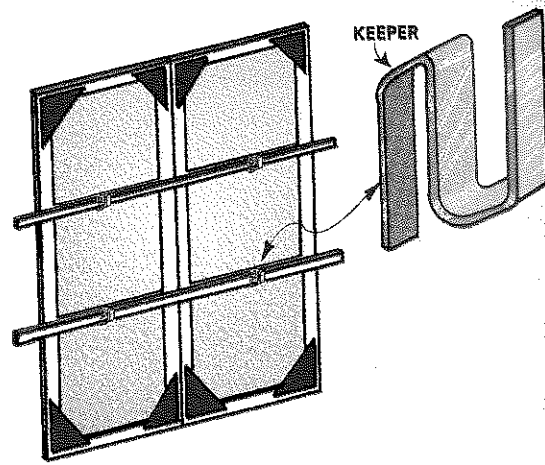


of hardware can be hooked over the top and toggle rails of each flat, and a stiffener board can be dropped into the notches, making the entire wall section one solid unit. Some technicians prefer hinged stiffeners, but keeper hooks are convenient, quick, and effective and can be made by any metal shop.



Once the set is assembled, apply the dutchman. A dutchman is a strip of muslin four to five inches wide used to cover the

cracks between flats. A dutchman is never used on a set that is to be shifted, except booked flats or screens. The dutchman is dipped in sizing, placed over the crack, and brushed down smoothly. If flats are perfectly matched, a strip of masking tape can be substituted for a dutchman.

Novice grips can have a difficult time trying to move flats, but there are some simple techniques that make the task far less awkward.

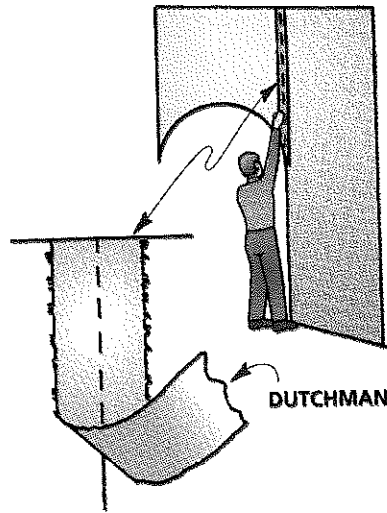
Edging One grip lifts a flat from the floor to a position for moving by edging, or getting the flat up on one side. Another grip grasps the stile and pulls the flat up.

Walking Walking a flat requires two or three grips. One grip puts a foot against the bottom rail to steady the flat, and one or two others lift the top rail, gradually raising the flat to an upright position by moving hand-over-hand on the stiles. With two grips, the one with his or her foot against the

bottom of the flat should also hold onto a stile to guide and steady the flat.

Floating The best and safest way to lower a flat is by floating. One grip simply places a foot against the back of the bottom rail, pushes the flat over, and allows it to fall or float to the floor face down.

Running Moving a flat is called running it. A grip grasps an upright flat with both hands on the stile on the side toward which the flat is to go, lifts that edge slightly, and slides the flat along without actually lifting or carrying it. A grip should not try to grasp both stiles and move the flat because the flat will act like a sail, pulling the grip forward or falling backward on him or her.



CUE

It is wise to wear goggles and a dust mask when floating a flat because dust will rise even from a clean floor.

Application ACTIVITY

Using a large piece of cardboard or a similar object, practice methods of handling a flat that are discussed on the previous page.

PAINTING SCENERY

Painting the set is certainly one of the important steps in the completion of a set, but it does not need to be the chore it often seems to be. One of the problems faced by a less-experienced production staff is choosing and handling scenic paints. There are certain paint qualities that are worth considering, as well as a few approaches that can be taken.

1. **vinyl, acrylic-base scenic paints** Colors are pure, and costs are fairly reasonable. These are generally recommended for stage settings. At least one manufacturer features a line of paint in a form designed for high school use.
2. **ready-to-use casein paints** Their cost is higher than that of vinyl acrylics, and fewer colors are available. Casein is more water repellent than dry color and can be used for scenery placed outside or in damp locations.
3. **latex paint** Readily available and inexpensive, latex covers well, will not bleed through, and cleans up easily with soap and water. A good paint or hardware store can mix almost any desired color. It might be less expensive, however, to start with a base, either an existing paint or a pastel base from a paint store, and add universal tinting colors, also available at paint stores. A disadvantage of latex, however, is that when it is painted heavily on muslin, the cloth absorbs the paint, causing the life of the cloth to be shortened and the paint to crack.

After the paint has been chosen, the next step is to apply the base coat. For best results, apply paint in random strokes or in figure eights. An uneven base coat is better than a smooth finish, which has a flat appearance and emphasizes all the flaws in the set. Some scenic painters **scumble** the base coat, which requires two or more brushes and two or more tones of the base color. Paint each tone on a small area and blend the tones together. The paint will set unless you work quickly.

After applying the base coat, highlight and shadow the set and then texture it. Highlights and shadows are essential if the scenery is to be

The texturing process is most important for a good paint job. The texture coat hides flaws, clutched, and patches from the audience.

The painter here works on a flat. Even though he is just a few feet away from the flat, he must imagine what his paint strokes will look like to an audience member in the last row.

convincing and alive. Before applying these realistic dimensional touches, the painter must consider the primary light source, that is, the direction and cause of the predominant light. Moldings, paneling, wainscoting, shingles, siding, bricks, and rocks must be carefully painted, even when they are built in three dimensions. You can create realistic bricks by applying a base coat of mortar color and using a rubber sponge block cut to brick size. Press the sponge, dipped in paint, onto the scenery. Use from two to four colors such as red, gray, dark yellow, and green. You can also cut three-dimensional bricks and rocks from Styrofoam™ and glue them to plywood. Cardboard works well for making shingles.



There are several methods of texturing, any one of which may work well for your particular sets.

Spattering is the most common method of texturing. Use at least two colors, one a shade darker and the other a tint lighter than the base color. You may also use the complementary color to blend and harmonize the colors in the set. Dip a four-inch brush into paint that has been diluted one-third to one-half, wipe it "dry" on the side of the pail, and shake the brush once onto an old flat or dropcloth. Then stand a short distance from the set and strike the handle of the brush against a board held by the other hand, causing drops of paint to spatter the flats. This is a difficult technique to master, so practice on an old flat first. The dark spattering coat should normally be heavier at the top of the walls to make them appear shadowed. Spattering can also be done by using a very thin paint in a plastic spray bottle.

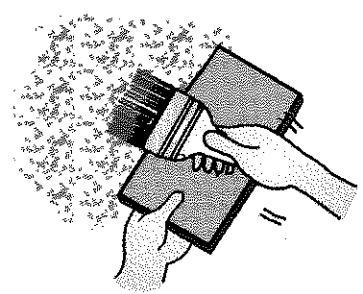
Rag rolling is a second method of texturing. Dip a rag or rolled-up piece of frayed burlap in paint, then roll it over the walls to make them look like rough plaster.

Stippling is a texturing method that involves gently touching the flat with a sponge, a crumpled rag, or the tip of a dry brush which leaves clusters of paint drops. Be sure to rotate the tool you are using to avoid creating an obvious pattern.

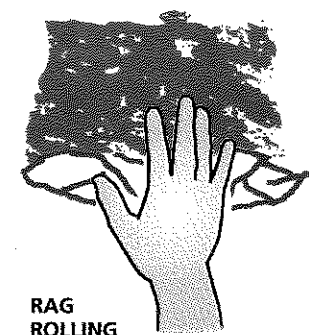
Featherdusting is another popular and quick texturing technique. Dip an inexpensive featherduster into the paint, shake it off over an old flat or dropcloth, and gently press it against the flat. By turning the handle slightly, you will get a different pattern each time the duster is applied. Featherdusting is especially good for foliage effects.

Dry brushing may be used for wall texturing or for simulating wood grain. For walls use a dry brush, stroke in one direction with a light color, and repeat with a dark color. For a woodgrain effect, use long, straight strokes with a dark color, and then repeat the process with a lighter color.

Scenery painting is an art that develops with time, experience, and experimentation. Watch what happens



SPATTERING



RAG ROLLING



SPONGING

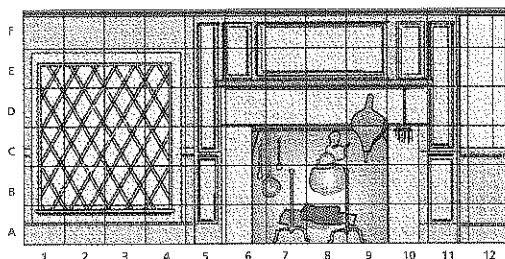
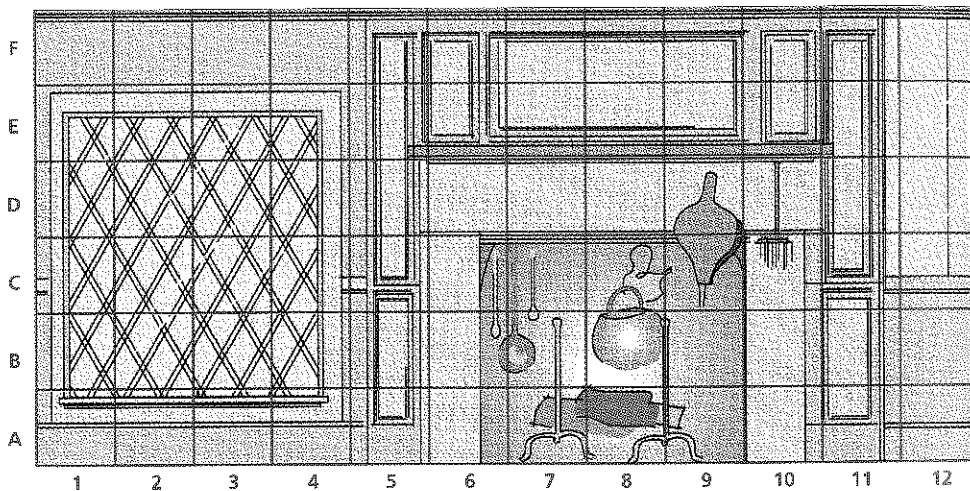


DRY BRUSHING

to colors and textures under various lighting effects and then consider how you would represent them scenically.

Profile scenery and drops are challenges to stage painters because such scenery almost always represents a three-dimensional object or a perspective scene. **Gridding** is the process used to make the enlarging from a sketch to a drop. Mark off the drop into one- or two-foot squares and scale the sketch proportionally, as shown. You may also transfer a drawing by using a projector. Most copy machines can copy the drawing onto a piece of clear plastic to produce a transparency. This can then be projected onto the drop and outlined. It is important, for either of these methods, that the drawing be a simple outline with clean lines.

One of the most challenging painting tasks for the inexperienced scenery painter is the painting of rock walls. These often end up looking like strange masses randomly placed in a large amount of gray mortar. On a real wall the rocks are laid in a layer of mortar, light causes highlights and shadows, and the texture and the color of the rocks give the viewer the feeling of bulk and weight. Such scenery should be painted using at least four colors with a wet-brush technique, which involves blending the colors while the paint is wet.



TRANSFERRING A BACKDROP DESIGN FROM THE SKETCH TO THE DROP THROUGH THE USE OF A SCALED GRID

Painted wallpaper patterns can be applied using stencils, carved blocks of rubber sponge or carpet padding, pattern rollers, and old paint rollers. Stencils can be cut out of plywood or out of stencil paper that is strengthened by a coat of acrylic, placed in a wooden frame, and reinforced with wires.

Application ACTIVITY

Try your skill at one of the methods of texturing, or design a wallpaper pattern by first making your own stencils. For the wallpaper you can use manila paper or any other paper to which paint will adhere.

SOLVING PROBLEMS

Because many plays and musicals require different scenery effects as well as scenery and set changes, ingenuity can be helpful when trying to achieve these effects and changes efficiently.

In addition to various methods of painting to achieve different scenery effects, there is also a repertory of materials that can be used to create three-dimensional props and scenery. Two materials seem to be the most frequently used: plastics and papier-mâché.

1. Plastics have many uses on the stage. Expandable plastics can be formed into rocks or almost anything for which a mold can be formed. Because Styrofoam™ can be cut, shaped, glued, or pressed so easily, it can be made into bricks, molding, statues, and trim. It can also be painted to replicate a variety of different textures.
2. Papier-mâché has long been a special-effects material for the stage. You need wheat paste or stage sizing, strips of newspaper or paper towels, and chicken wire, wire cloth, or cardboard. With these supplies, you can create small and large objects for the set.

Many problems might be encountered onstage. The complexity of the production might determine their number or severity. Proper planning should curtail many of them, however. Some common problems and their solutions appear on the following page.

CUE

Safety rules for handling plastics: Have adequate ventilation. Wear protective clothing and masks.