23 Things You’ve Never Thought to Paint

Whether you’re concealing or customizing, a splash of color can change everything. By Kathryn O’Shea-Evans

1. HVAC Ducts
   “In this basement remodel, we would’ve had to spend a ton of money rerouting the HVAC air duct. Who wouldn’t go with ballet-slipper pink instead?” —Max Humphrey
2. Bare Stairs
“Do something groovy on the actual steps! The bolder you go, the bigger the smile when you see them.” —Fawn Galli

3. Laminate Counters
“After cleaning, sanding, and priming twice, we painted in stages and added a few coats of clear, high-gloss acrylic for protection.” —Shannon Kadwell, Anthony Wilder Design/Build

4. Concrete Surfaces
“My patio was poured using two different mixes, making it multicolored. So I had it painted, and I actually like it better now!” —Danielle Rollins

5. Vintage Appliances
“Send it for an overnight stay at an auto-body shop for a coat of high-gloss paint and it’ll be the centerpiece of a modern kitchen.” —Joseph Berkowitz, JAB Design Group

6. Electrical Outlets
“They are often too obvious and look out of place, so we paint them to match.” —Shannon Kadwell

7. Closet Interiors
“You’ll be happier when you open it.” —Stephanie Sabbe

8. Basic Tiles
“Replacing these tiles was not an option, budget-wise. So I created a stencil, painted them, then polyurethaned over it all!” —Jessica Davis, Nest Studio

9. Gilt Mirrors
“Paint it with a chalky white, then lightly wipe it down just before it dries, letting some of the gold show through.” —Danielle Rollins

10. Wicker Furniture

11. Grass-Cloth Walls
“We painted this mural to convey that these are people who want their guests to enjoy a rum drink and some laughs.” —Sara Gilbane

12. Book Spines
“Replacing these tiles was not an option, budget-wise. So I created a stencil, painted them, then polyurethaned over it all!” —Jessica Davis, Nest Studio

13. Exposed Brick
“A light aqua color is unexpected but soft enough that the brick won’t stand out.” —Katie Gibson

14. A Trough Sink
“Adding a pop of ocean blue created a fresh feel in this surfer family’s poolhouse. We used Sapphire by Sherwin-Williams—ask for the special formula for metal.” —Jul Johnson, Waterleaf Interiors

15. Metal Pendants
“Using Benjamin Moore’s Blue Lapis, we painted only the interior of this Urban Electric Co. pendant. It’s a subtle statement that gives the fixture an extra touch of personality.” —Amy Sklar

16. Old Radiators
“It wasn’t about making this cast-iron radiator disappear; its sculptural nature is what we liked!” —Tal Schori, GRT Architects

17. AC Vents
“I didn’t want a giant white grate sticking out, so I painted it the same hue as the walls.” —J.P. Horton

18. Lamp Shades
“A tip: After you apply the first coat, pop it back on the lamp to see any areas you might have missed.” —Pamela Harvey

“Paint new light fixtures with a flat, clear coat to give them a quiet patina.” —Kerry Joyce
19. Cheap Fixtures
“I powder-coated this midrange hardware to match the yellow Vola faucet. The right spray paint would also work in a pinch.”
—Amy Sklar

20. Faux Molding
“There was no ceiling molding and no molding around the doors in this apartment, so I added them with paint!”
—Aldous Bertram

21. Sisal Rugs
“I had a sisal rug hand-painted. It costs a fraction of having a custom rug woven, with all the durability of sisal.”
—Phillip Thomas

22. Outdoor Furniture
“Pieces found at everything-must-go clearance sales can become the talked-about new kids on the block.”
—Danielle Rollins

23. Faded Curtains
“I hand-dyed these window curtains, and then went in afterward and hand-painted them to create a beautiful, textured look that no one else has.”
—Maureen Stevens