

PAINTING

How to PREPARE AND PAINT your boat,.. AND get a PROFESSIONAL FINISH.

Hopefully you didn't get caught by buying a freshly painted boat, with the inherent problems so often included. On the other hand, you may have a gem of a bargain, albeit a little jaded, that simply needs some time and effort to revive its former glory.

In our harsh environment, the exterior of a boat takes considerable punishment and the protective coatings are not only cosmetic, but are the single defence against the ravages of the elements and water penetration that causes rot, corrosion and disintegration of the build material.

As always **QUALITY COUNTS**. A visit to your local hardware store will produce a range of inexpensive paints, but if you use them... **DON'T expect them, or your boat, to last too long.** The enemy of all paints is SALT, and whether you are planning on sailing around the world, or along the coast for the weekend, you have no choice but to float your boat in saltwater.

To a certain extent, another enemy of paint is the boat itself inasmuch that as it travels through the water... **it flexes**. It doesn't really matter from which material your boat is made, and you may not actually be able to see it happen but,... **if it doesn't flex, it will BREAK**. On a wood or steel vessel this will manifest itself by way of cracks, and on a fibreglass vessel, in the form of cracks, starring and crazing of the gelcoat, plus leaks at the hull/deck join and other places.

In heavy weather, super tankers and their like can be SEEN to twist and bend along their length, but they're deliberately designed this way, which now brings me to the reason I broach this subject.

If the BOAT FLEXES, so must the PAINT.

Many paints and fillers, such as those used in the auto industry are simply **not suitable for boats** due to, amongst other things, inflexibility. After all, an auto has suspension to cushion the impact of road bumps, whereas a boat can drop off the top of a wave with an alarming crash,... and will do so for much of its life. **If the paint is not up to the job... it will crack and soon start to flake,... with the possibility of MAJOR problems following close behind.** OK, so now you know what you're up against, let's move on.

You are going to need plenty of that great virtue... **PATIENCE**, without it you will be wasting your money. Actually applying the paint is the easy part, but **what takes the TIME and EFFORT is the PREPARATION.**

A lasting paint job demands quality materials, and to apply them the boat needs to be dry for the duration of the job, that means it must be hauled and stored in a yard. To be able to do the paintwork yourself you must ensure that the yard will let you do your own work, and use your own materials.

The reason why I again emphasise this point is, that should you decide to have your boat painted **by a yard**, expect to pay as much as US\$1,500... PER FT of length, and for the average cruiser such prices are untenable. **Believe me, there is no reason why you cannot do an equally good job yourself.**