



## IS YOUR PAINT CRACKING?

A common customer complaint is that their new paint layer cracked after it was applied to a surface. While it is true that we don't always know the history of a piece or much about the environment in which it is being painted, most experts agree that the main reasons for paint failure after application are the applicator and improper treatment of the surface. Application defects can be attributed to:

**Peeling/Blistering** Most commonly due to improper surface treatment before application (i.e., cleaning with harsh cleaners; failure to rinse thoroughly) and inherent moisture/dampness being present in the substrate and/or the environment.

**Cracking** Cracks forming in the paint film are due to the unequal expansion or contraction of paint coats. It usually happens when coats of paint are not allowed to dry completely before the next coat is applied, or the surface of the paint is exposed to strong sunshine or the drying process is accelerated with the use of a high heat source (such as a blow dryer) or close exposure to an operating heat vent.

There are still more reasons why cracks can form. A common cause is the surface was previously cleaned with a spray furniture polish that contains dimethicone, a silicone which can cause cracks to appear in the paint layers, especially along edges. Yet another reason is the surface was sealed with shellac that was either past its shelf life or applied too thickly. Care should always be taken to use the freshest shellac and to apply it in thin layers; too thick layers can cause subsequent paint layers to crack or even peel away.

Regardless of the reason, the solution remains the same in all cases. Sand the affected areas with medium or fine grit sandpaper. Then seal the surface, including the remaining paint, by wiping on one or two coats of shellac with a cloth pad. Once the shellac is dry, reapply your paint.

Share the following advice and practical tips with your customers to help them to paint and gain the confidence to achieve quality finishes in their own homes:

- Make sure your surface is clean and dry. Avoid using caustic cleaners, such as TSP. Use an eco-TSP substitute or grease-cutting soap and warm water. A Scotch Brite pad can make the job go easier and also scuffs the surface, making it ready for a new paint coat. Be sure to rinse well with warm water (don't skip this very important step) and then let the piece dry completely.
- Enjoy your painting but take your time. Allow each paint layer to dry completely before applying the next.
- Avoid painting in directly sunlight or near an operating heat vent, and don't rush the drying process by using a blow dryer.
- Always use the freshest shellac and apply it in thin layers.