

Antiquing an Aluminum Mirror

By AngelGilding.com

Some commercial mirrors – often those made in China and India – are “silvered” with aluminum instead of silver. The glass is passed through a high heat vacuum chamber where the aluminum coating is evaporated onto the glass. Aluminum does not react to the same chemicals that you use to “antique” a silver mirror, but we have developed some techniques you can use to make these mirrors into your own artistic creations.

Is this mirror silver or aluminum?

The only sure way to tell is to remove some of the paint from the back and apply either Silver Remover or Aluminum Remover. Silver Remover does not dissolve aluminum and Aluminum Remover does not dissolve silver.

Antiquing is a chemical process; the following procedures are *important*.

- **Cleanliness:** For the chemicals to work, the metal surface must be free of grease, dust and fingerprints.
- **Concentration:** Arrange your time so you can work without interruption.
- **Water:** We recommend that you use distilled water although aluminum mirrors are less affected by the minerals in tap water than silver mirrors are.

SAFETY:

- **WEAR GLOVES.** Aluminum Remover will attack your skin and make it feel soapy. This is not a good sign. Wear rubber or latex gloves and wash your hands after using these chemicals.
- **Storage:** Store the chemicals in a cool, dark place away from children and pets.

You will need to provide:

- The mirrors you want to antique
- A supply of cotton balls and Q-tips
- A gallon of steam-distilled water
- Old newspaper to protect your work surface
- A clock with a second hand



Step 1: Remove the Backing Paint

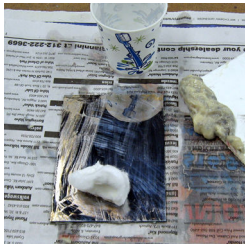
Apply a heavy layer of paint stripper to the back of the mirror using a plastic scraper. Give the stripper time to work. Our tests indicate it may take 8 to 10 hours for backing paint to soften enough that you can wipe it off without scratching the mirror.



Step 2: Scrape Off the Paint

Use a smooth, firm plastic or wooden scraper to remove the dissolved paint. Metal scrapers and razor blades will scratch the mirror. If you cannot push the paint off easily, dab the remover back on and give it more time to work.

You can safely put used Multi-Strip into your household trash.



Step 3: Wash Off the Remover

Use a cotton ball and water to wash off the last of the paint stripper. Multi-Strip Paint Remover is non-toxic and biodegradable.

Step 4: Antique the Mirror

Once the mirror is clean you can antique it using one or more of the techniques below. These techniques are just the basics – we're sure you'll invent techniques of your own.



Technique #1:

1. Pour a little Aluminum Remover into a glass or plastic container. Do **not** use a paper cup.
2. Dip an old toothbrush into the Remover and use your thumb to rub the bristles and spatter it onto the mirror.
3. Wait about 3 minutes.
4. Rinse the mirror well with distilled water.



Technique #2:

1. Measure out some Aluminum Remover into a glass or plastic container. Do **not** use a paper cup.
2. Add an equal amount of distilled water
3. Use our small misting bottle to mist the mix over the mirror.
4. Wait about 2 minutes.
5. Rinse the mirror well with distilled water.

Technique #3:



1. Rinse the mirror with water.
2. Use a cotton ball to rub the surface with our Wetting Agent (item #2140) so the Remover will flow smoothly.
3. Rinse off the Wetting Agent.
4. Dip a Q-tip into the Aluminum Remover and drag it lightly across the surface.
5. Rinse the mirror just as soon as the lines begin to show – you do not want to dissolve the entire mirror!

Technique #4:



1. Dampen a cotton ball with water.
2. Dip it into a jar of Pumice (item #2510)
3. Buff the mirror surface to thin and remove the mirror.

This is the easiest technique to control. Use it by itself or after you have used our other techniques.



Step 5: Re-Paint the Mirror

The final step is to paint the back of the mirror to protect it. Aluminum is much less reactive than silver so you can use any color paint you like. Of course, the color will show through where you have distressed or removed the reflective aluminum.



Step 6: Admire Your Handy Work

Now stand back and admire your handy-work. The process is simple but the result will always be unique. Practice on small mirrors to develop a range of techniques before you attempt your masterpiece. No one else will have a mirror just like yours!

AngelGilding.com