



A New Leaf

Sometimes, a frame is just as labor-intensive and complex as the artwork inside. Richly carved and finished frames can take months to make, with only a few feet produced each day. The work often requires the talents of trained gilders, practitioners of the ancient craft of adhering precious metal to a surface—and do note that ancient is not used as hyperbole. Gilding as practiced by the likes of **APF Museum** has barely changed since the process was used in classical Greece and the pharaohs' Egypt. 212-308-6152, apfmuseum.com. **circle 409** ▶

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1. Hand tools such as gouges are used to carve and engrave the raw wood.
2. For consistency, carvers follow patterns, some of them designed over 300 years ago.
3. The carved wood is coated with gesso to conceal the grain, then sanded smooth.
4. The sanded surface receives a colored clay coating, which provides an undertone for the translucent metal leaf.
5. Water, applied to the clay, causes it to become adhesive.
6. Gold in 3-inch-square leaves is laid onto the wet surface in a process known as water-gilding.
7. The squares overlap by a tiny margin, creating seams that mark high-quality leafing.
8. An agate tool turns a white gold's shine into a velvety luster.
9. The burnishing tool gives yellow gold a matte appearance.
10. A finished frame's ornamentation exhibits the influences of 17th-century Spain.

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