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PORTRAIT: KEVIN ALLEN. OPPOSITE: GALERIE DES COTELLES © JIM MANAI.

Jeff Schardt, pictured in his Manassas showroom, describes his work as "exhilarating, creative and resourceful; I couldn't imagine doing anything else with such passion." *Opposite:* Schardt draws inspiration from the decorative work of great European palaces such as Versailles.

While many artists create artwork to adorn walls, Jeff Schardt focuses on ceilings, windows, doorways, and fireplaces. The founder of Ornamental Plaster Works in Manassas is one of few artisans today practicing an old architectural craft, sculpting molds for all periods of plaster trim and applications. "I was putting myself through art school by renovating row houses in Baltimore that needed plaster restoration, and I realized there were very few people doing that kind of work," Schardt says. He taught himself to make molds through trial and error, and honed his skills designing his own line of architectural accents. Though his forte lies in classical 17th- through 19th-century styles, clients lately have been asking for "cleaner, more transitional looks," Schardt says. His patrons come from all over the Eastern Seaboard and abroad, but he's still looking for that dream job: A 40,000-square-foot home with 12-foot-high ceilings. "Barry Dixon would be the designer," he says, "and with my lead sculptor, Jeff Hall, we'd create the most magnificent residence Washington, D.C., has seen in 100 years." *opwonline.com; 703.367.9799*

A closeup detail from an ornately faux-finished coffered ceiling that Schardt and his team designed for a billiard room in a Potomac home.



CROWNING DETAILS

JEFF SCHARDT



I LOVE WHAT I DO BECAUSE...

I appreciate what interior moldings can do for a room. I enjoy seeing that our work enhances how one feels in the space.

WHAT'S INSPIRING YOU NOW?

I can never get enough of Versailles or the Louvre—or almost any little street or square in Paris.

GREATEST INFLUENCES:

My parents—my father for his honesty and moral strength, and my mom for the artistic ability that I have.

CURRENT PROJECTS:

A three-story library in Great Falls decorated in the 18th-century classical style; we're also starting a 20,000-square-foot, highly ornamented home in the same area.

TOOLS OF THE TRADE:

My CAD program for creating designs; the mixing blade we use for our plaster at the studio; and the stainless-steel sculpting tools we employ to finish our work.

WORDS OF WISDOM:

From my father, who said: "If you always do a good job, you won't have to worry; the rest will come."