

Glitsa American supports professional craftsmen by providing the most beautiful Swedish finish systems. Wholesale market leader Glitsa American contractors with superior products, tests, and continuing education.

# the Swedish edition

Glitsa American's newsletter for flooring professionals

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## Glitsa Gold Seal System The Diamond of Floor Coatings (Part One of Two – The Wet Look)

by Duane Bartel, President of Glitsa American, Inc.

Gemology is the science of precious stones. It is a science that values and measures optical properties that explain why gems exude such beauty and appeal. In a similar way, wood used in the home has an allure that touches the same aesthetic senses, whether used in furniture, trim or in hardwood floors. Both gems and wood species can astound us with the marvels of the natural world. Their appeal is long lasting and treasured. They are both associated with class, prosperity, even celebrity. Far more than sharing beauty secrets with gems, however, wood has the added benefit of having a practical usefulness and a durable service.

Gems have a timeless beauty. Likewise, educated choices in finish selection and proper floor maintenance and care can assure similar behavior from a hardwood floor providing many years of service and aesthetic enjoyment.

**Do You Have a Hidden Gem in Your Floor? A Diamond in the Rough?** A gemstone in its natural state is not dazzling or beautiful. Instead, they are typically dull and lifeless when discovered. They must be meticulously cut, ground and polished to bring out their character and beauty to the fullest extent possible. Unfortunately, a gem's potential character and beauty may not be fully revealed if these steps are not properly and skillfully performed.

Continued on page 2

See our next newsletter for "Part Two – Aging Gracefully".



**Glitsa Gold Seal System continued from page 1**

Likewise, a properly prepared and coated hardwood floor can “bring out the diamond” in the wood being used. But an improperly prepared and coated floor, particularly if using a poor coating choice, will result in a floor that is dull and lifeless. The difference between blah and masterpiece can be as simple as the coating choice that is made.

**Glitsa’s Gold Seal Swedish Finish System Brings Out the Diamond in Your Floor** Just as a skillfully performed sequence of steps can transform a rough looking stone to reveal the beautiful gem within, the same is true of hardwood floors.

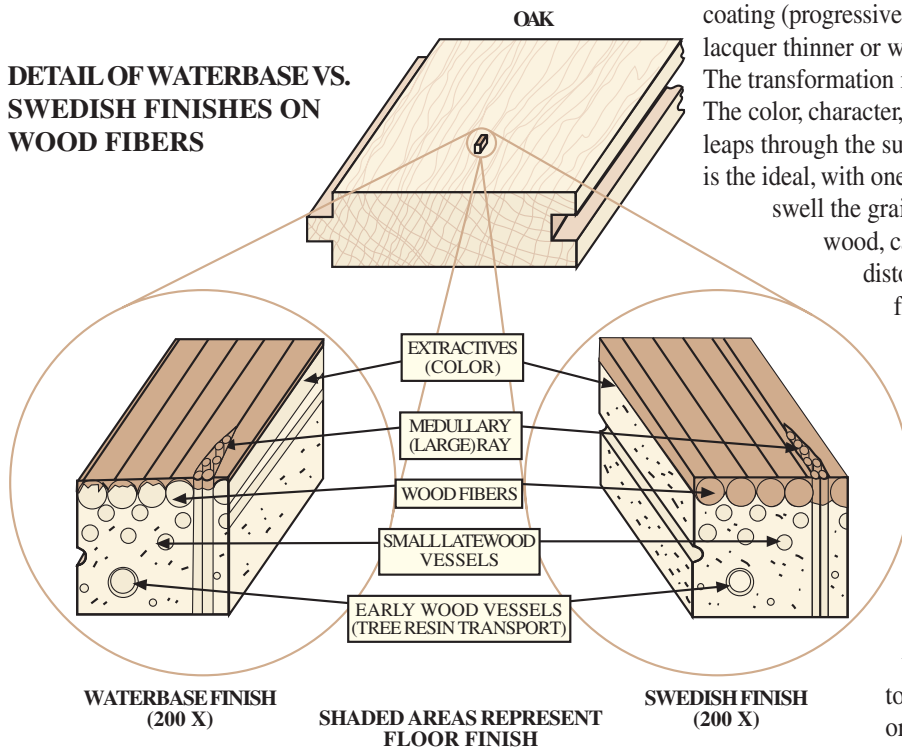
A rough piece of wood can appear dull and lifeless. Its colors will be muted and hazy, its features lacking definition. But mill it properly and it will start to transform. Sand it properly and it will begin to be beautiful. But, without the proper coating choice, it cannot show off its true gem-like characteristics of color, clarity, depth, and brilliance that fully bring the wood to life. For rough wood, the dull image we perceive is the result of highly diffused

light. The rough surface causes light to reflect at many angles and frequencies. The result is a dull, pale, flat, two-dimensional appearance.

A richer sensory experience would be to actually see into the wood fibers, creating a 3-D image. This is an image with depth. Light must have both optimum transmission into and reflection from wood fibers internal and external surfaces to create maximum appeal. It is this 3-D play of light that hits the viewer’s eye and creates the richest possible visual experience.

Diamonds or other gemstones allow us 3-D views of their internal structure, revealing rich optical characteristics of depth, clarity, transparency and reflectivity. Likewise, in order to see and appreciate similar qualities in wood we need to be able to see directly through the surface fibers and into the actual wood cells. Glitsa’s Gold Seal system accomplishes this. The current state of waterbase coatings technology does not achieve this to the extent that solvent-based systems can.

**A Simple Test: The Wet Look** The simplest way to illustrate the potential look of a species of wood is to use a small milled section of wood and sand it to a level appropriate for coating (progressive 40, 60, and 100 grits). Dampen a rag with lacquer thinner or water and wipe the surface of the wood. The transformation in appearance is dramatic and immediate. The color, character, life and brilliance of the wood species leaps through the surface. This is called “the wet look”, and is the ideal, with one exception. Water, if used in this test, will swell the grain and the internal cell structure of the wood, causing grain raise, grain popping and distortion of the internal structure of the wood fiber cells. The cells are essentially bloated and swollen from the water. The surface fibers stand up, creating a ragged surface that reflects light at many angles and frequencies. This creates a flatter, duller, paler, out-of-focus look that negatively impacts clarity, color and brilliance of the wood’s appearance. Solvents don’t have this problem. They easily transfer through wood fibers without distorting them. **But wait, there’s more to this test.** Continue to observe the wood sample as the water or lacquer thinner dries and you will see that when the surface has dried fully, the wood will have transformed back to its old



REFERENCES:  
 1. *The Encyclopedia of Wood*, by Aidan Walker, A Quatro book, 2005.  
 2. *Understanding Wood*, by R. Bruce Hoadley, The Taunton Press, 2000.

dull self. Cinderella has left the castle.

**The Optics of the Wet Look** Why does wetting the surface have such an amazing effect on the beauty of the wood? Wood fibers, which are cellulose, are tubular cellular structures arranged in a honeycomb pattern. They are for the most part empty and serve in life as transport vehicles for water, minerals and, in some cases, sap or to provide support for surrounding fibers. Nature has designed them to easily transport water, natural solvents, and dissolved minerals through their walls.

Flooding the wood surface with water or solvent causes a rapid reaction from the wood cells. Like sponges, they readily wick the liquid into the surface cell structure and fill their cell interiors fully. An interesting optical quality of cellulose, at the cellular level, is that it can become translucent upon saturation with water or solvents. This is why a white cotton t-shirt will become translucent when it gets drenched with water. Cotton, like wood, is composed of cellulose. The liquid becomes an optical bridge through the cell walls, allowing light that would normally simply reflect back from the wood's surface to actually penetrate the wood surface into the cell structure of the wood, then reflect back to the viewer's eye. This adds depth to the image, creating a richer visual effect because it is a 3-D image. Additionally, the optical bridging allows the viewer to see the internal cell structures and colors, which are entrapped tannins and minerals in the cell fibers. Some wood species demonstrate this more than others due to wide variations in wood fiber cell sizes.

Unfortunately, as the water or solvent used in this test evaporates, the optical bridge is lost. For this same reason, many water based floor coatings will typically look great while being applied, only to become flat and dull looking as the coating dries. The optical bridge into the cells is largely lost as the water evaporates out of the wood. In contrast, because of its chemistry, Glitsa's Gold Seal system maintains the optical bridge into the wood fibers throughout the cure, making the wet look permanent.

### **Glitsa's Swedish Finish Keeps Its Wet Look**

How does Glitsa's Gold Seal system keep its beautiful wet look even after cure? All floor coatings are made from a combination of unique resins, solvents and additives. The really significant difference, chemically, between waterbase coatings and solvent-based coatings is waterbase coatings are dispersions while solvent-based coatings are solutions. Water, while having many wonderful qualities, performs poorly as a solvent. Therefore, instead of being able to dissolve resins into water, the resin must be dispersed in what amounts to clumps of large resin molecules (mycelles) suspended in water and co-solvents. While the water in the coating

### ***Waterbase coatings are dispersions while solvent-based coatings are solutions.***

is free to easily penetrate and fill the wood fiber cells, the clumps of resin molecules are too large to penetrate the cell walls. Instead, they solidify during cure primarily on the wood surface instead of through the wood surface into the cells. Co-solvents in the coating permit partial solubility of the resin, which does create some partial bridging. That is why a typical waterbase coating will look better than no coating at all, but cannot fully retain the wet look. The resin molecules must be able to penetrate and cure through the cell walls in order to permanently maintain the optical bridge.

In contrast, because solvent based coatings use solvents that easily and fully dissolve their resins, the resin molecules in the coating transport easily through the wood cells, just as water easily carries mineral nutrients into wood cells in a living tree because those minerals are fully dissolved.

The difference between a solvent based coating and a typical current-technology waterbase coating's ability to penetrate the wood cell's wall to create a permanent optical bridge is like the difference between sifting minestrone soup and salt water through a coffee filter. The soup won't make it through.

Hardwood floors represent a serious investment for the homeowner and a serious commitment in time and effort for the floor contractor. Select wood species and millings are chosen for their beauty and character, often at a premium, to blend with the beauty of the home. When the floor finish can make the difference between blah and masterpiece due to the superior optical properties of it's chemistry, why compromise on great looks and performance? Use Glitsa's Swedish Finish System to create floors that are gems.

**Aging Gracefully** Gems have a quality of ageless beauty. Glitsa's Gold Seal system is unique among floor coatings in sharing this quality. The reasons for this are uniquely tied to Glitsa's chemistry. This will be the subject of the next newsletter article. ♦

# WANTED

## There's a New Waterborne Sealer in Town



Not only did January 1, 2007 mark the start of a new year, but it also marked the release of Glitsa's newest addition to their waterborne line. **Quality Seal** is a one-component waterborne sealer. It was designed for use over bare wood or Glitsa Gold Seal Stains and provides a smooth uniform coat under **all** of Glitsa's waterborne finishes.

Quality Seal's non-yellowing formula boasts the most natural color available from a waterborne. It seals and locks in the color of the wood in one simple step. For an unbeatable combination, try easy-to-use Quality Seal under HP or Infinity II for a natural, beautiful floor like you have never seen from a waterborne! Quality Seal - what else would you expect from the maker of fine Swedish and waterborne finishes for over 50 years! ♦

Ask your local distributor for Quality Seal.

*A special thank you to all of the test contractors for the field-testing and feedback on our new product, Quality Seal. Glitsa is committed to continuously improving our lines in order to provide the superior products your customers demand.*

## Quality Seal - The talk of the town

Read what field-testers are saying about Quality Seal:

*"I am more likely to use Quality Seal because I am not experiencing the problems usually faced with other waterborne sealers." - Blake Howell, Olde English Hardwoods, Inc., Seattle, WA*

*"People are looking for a more modern look. A modern look is more of the crisp, clear, natural floor like you get with Quality Seal." - James Atwood, Fine Floors, Lexington, SC*

# American Hardwood Floors Living the American Dream

Five minutes with Garry Craig of American Hardwood Floors is all you need before his enthusiasm and knowledge of the hardwood flooring industry becomes apparent. There must be some truth to the saying, “Do what you love for a living and you will be successful.” Garry’s enthusiasm for the industry is contagious.

Now the sole owner, Garry started working for American Hardwood Floors in high school, proving himself a worthy craftsman. He blends “old school” professionalism with a willingness to learn. In the Seattle area his excellent reputation has won him recognition by homeowners and peers alike. He relies almost solely on referrals for his business and his stellar reputation as a craftsman has kept him in business for over 24 years.

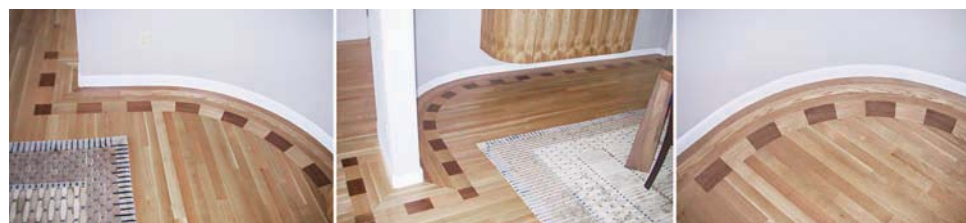
Garry feels that today’s contractors are really a carpenter and a finisher. He takes pride in both the installation and the finishing of a floor, realizing that good installation is the base for the whole project. He takes just as much care in the finishing of a floor. “Don’t miss the details!” is American Hardwood Floors philosophy.

Meticulous work and craftsmanship may define the job, but “a professional makes it look easy,” states Garry. Whenever they run across new problems or issues, they feel that “part of being a professional is learning how to deal with it. Don’t be in a rush. Look at it from different angles to figure it out,” Garry advises. He tells of one job when they were perplexed by why after one week the finish wasn’t hardening. The Northwest has moisture problems, but he had never had a problem with Glitsa finishes. After questioning the homeowners, a leaking furnace was deemed to be the culprit. The furnace was repaired and the floor was resanded and refinished.

At American Hardwood Floors they know that craftsmanship and quality products make the job. Garry prefers Glitsa because of its consistency and proven track record, noting that Glitsa backs up their product with excellent customer service. Garry’s customers (97% residential) want Glitsa finishes too. “It’s a product that refers itself,” adds Garry. They use Glitsa 90% of the time, only making exceptions when the homeowner insists on another product.

Their preferred system is Glitsa Sealer + Lite Scent. Garry uses 2 coats (1 sealcoat + 1 topcoat) or 3 coats (2 sealcoats + 1 topcoat), depending on the job. He recommends a 2-coat system for harder woods like Brazilian Cherry and Maple, but prefers a 3-coat system for softer woods and over stains. He also recommends a 3-coat system for kitchens and households with pets.

American Hardwood Floors specializes in quality remodel jobs. Garry states, “remodels are a good start for people new to the trade – a good learning experience.” Whether it is a high-profile job or low-end job, a small project or a large one, Garry says, “Each job is the same to me. We treat every floor like it is our own house.” ♦



*The length of the Walnut was adjusted slightly throughout to fit the layout of the room.*

## AWARDS:

Aside from several high-profile homes, American Hardwood Floors has had two Seattle Street of Dreams Homes.

## TIPS OF THE TRADE FROM GARRY CRAIG:

- Choose your crew carefully. “You need a worker that cares about what they are doing. If they don’t care, you can’t teach them. **I trust my own workers.**”
- **“NEVER thin the finish.** Trying to save 10 cents can cost you hundreds of dollars.”
- **Shut off the breaker to the refrigerator** before starting a job. He notes, “You just need a couple of hours and then you can turn it back on. That way food doesn’t go bad, but the fan doesn’t kick on when you are coating next to the refrigerator.”
- An often-overlooked problem: **don’t forget to empty the bottom pan of the refrigerator.**
- **“Cross ventilation is VERY important!”** How Garry obtains this depends on the house. Old houses tend to be draftier and have some natural cross-ventilation whereas newer houses tend to be sealed up tighter.



# Tech Tip: Know Your Conditions

by Cameron DeMar, Technical Representative, Glitsa American, Inc.



We all love that beautiful job where everything worked out in our favor. The install was great, the sand was impeccable and your finish looks flawless. However, sometimes you can run into problems and not know what went wrong. You need to do everything you can to minimize possible problems and get the best result for your customers. At Glitsa, we tend to hear more from our customers when the seasons are changing. Knowing your conditions can help avoid unnecessary time out to call for assistance and get you back to working on that beautiful floor you strive for.

Temperatures and humidity change throughout the year. This has an affect on your wood and the finish that you are working with. For example, during high humidity days finish will need extended dry times on coats. On hot, dry days you need to stay moving because your finish will set up on you fast and your open time is greatly reduced. Every condition will vary on how things react. You need to have a good idea of what the environmental conditions are so you have the best chance for that perfect job.

There are inexpensive and easy ways to monitor your conditions with such things as **hygrometers** and **thermometers**. Many monitors are small and can be easily carried on-site with you. *Check the moisture content of your wood with a moisture meter and measure temperature and relative humidity with a thermometer and Hygrometer* when you get to the job and before you begin applying coats of finish.

Throughout the job you can continually monitor the conditions by keeping your meter on a shelf or windowsill. Knowing this, you have a good idea of how long to wait between coats and will know how your finish will apply and abrade. As you strive for the best floor, dry times become very important. *The last stage of the floor is not a time to rush things.* If you get on a coat too soon your pads or screens can load up from the finish that wasn't ready to abrade. In the months that have high humidity you need to allow more dry time between coats. Knowing your conditions is the first step to getting that beautiful floor you strive for. ♦

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