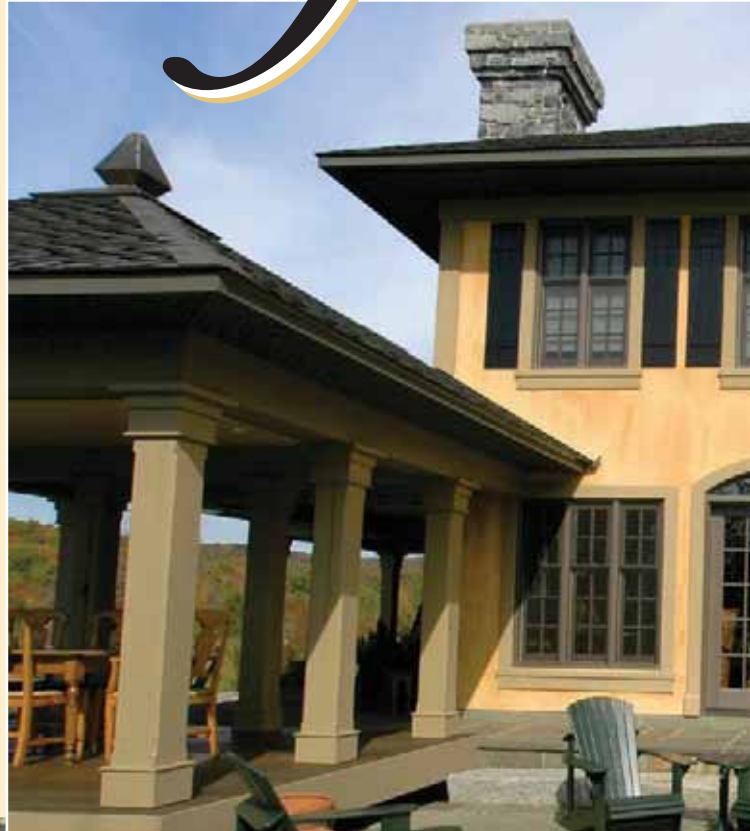


# Magic



## Magic Brush Painting


Rutland, Vt.  
Founded 1981  
35-40 employees

**BUSINESS MIX:**  
45% commercial  
25% institutional  
25% new residential  
5% residential repaint

**WEBSITE:**  
[magicbrushpainters.com](http://magicbrushpainters.com)

# Touch



*Ask a local about painters in Rutland, Vt., and there's a good chance the first company that comes to mind is Magic Brush Painting. For a quarter century, it's been the area's go-to firm for high quality commercial and residential painting. In recent years, though, owner Paul Gallo is earning an equally high reputation for his community work. *

## Natural talent

Gallo was born and raised in Rutland, a city of 17,000 in central Vermont. The state's second largest town, it was chartered in 1761. The discovery of high-quality marble deposits fueled the economy in the 1800s, attracting Italian immigrants like Gallo's ancestors to work in the quarries and other artisan fields.

"I come from a family with a long history of artistic qualities," he says. "My brother is a well-known canvas artist with shows around the world. So picking up a brush to paint houses came naturally to me."

He ran his first successful small paint company while earning a college degree in business. That real-world experience combined with what he was learning in school about marketing and management proved to be a winning combination. Upon starting Magic Brush in 1981, Gallo has

***We recognized a couple years ago that there would be a major slowdown in the housing market and planned accordingly.***

pursued a slow growth model, adding one to three employees to his staff every year. Depending on the season, the company now fields between 35 and 40 painters.

"So many contractors try to grow too fast with the showy trucks and equipment and think big when the sun is shining on these beautiful summer days," Gallo says. "We grew to protect ourselves on those rainy days and six months of cold weather in Vermont."

This prudent approach has paid off during less robust times.

"We recognized a couple years ago that there would be a major slowdown in the housing market and planned accordingly," Gallo says. "We aligned ourselves with institutional accounts that

have strong cash flow through any economic downturn. We also saw the need of older baby-boomers who want to downsize and move into smaller living spaces, customers who prefer brand new homes, condominiums or multi-level care facilities. We are now painting between 100 to 150 new housing units annually to meet those demographics."

Choosing a reliable, service-oriented paint supplier is another key ingredient in Gallo's recipe for success. He points to a recent collaboration on an extremely time-sensitive project as a prime example of the Sherwin-Williams Company's commitment to his business.



## PREFERRED PRODUCTS

**EXTERIORS:** Duration, SuperPaint. "We've used SuperPaint for years; it holds up well to New England weather. Duration is even better and gives us the coverage we need."

**INTERIORS:** ProGreen 200, Duration Home, Harmony Interior Latex. "ProGreen is a staple for us. When the client wants even more durability, we recommend Duration Home. Harmony's zero-VOC formula is a selling point for occupied spaces. The product info we leave with the client often sells the job."

"Sherwin-Williams provided a staff person to allow us the freedom to concentrate on painting the inside and outside of a new home in less than 46 hours without worries about the who, when or where of the paint materials."

### The best reward

Community involvement is the final component of the Magic Brush story.

"I have always felt it is the responsibility of a successful businessperson to give back to employees and the community that we live in," Gallo says. "It's important to me to provide health, dental, life and disability insurance, as well as a 401K plan with profit sharing." He rewards workers' commitment to him with year-end bonuses, and every four to five years, takes them and their families to Disney World to share business and employee benefit ideas with others.

"I know it's an unconventional business model to be so tightly associated with your employees and their families, but it's very rewarding to help people," he says.

"I also find it fulfilling to get involved in my community." Gallo serves on the boards of several local organizations and has helped raise funds for numerous arts and recreation projects.

"Five years ago I had a major battle with cancer," he explains. "As I spent five days a week in chemotherapy for four to five months, I realized the 65 to 75 hours of work I put in each week would have to change. Since my recovery I have committed 20 to 25 hours a week to the nonprofit commitments in the community."

With his competitive nature, it wasn't easy at first. Learning to trust his supervisors was the most important step in the transition. But now, he's found, it's improved his bottom line as well as giving a boost to the local economy.

"I want to see my daughter have a choice to stay in this area," Gallo says. "Your clients recognize hard work on jobsites and out in the community. That's what our country was built on." **PPC**

*Gallo Painting stays strong even in a down economy by maintaining a healthy mix of residential and commercial projects. Above left: Bold period hues from the Sherwin-Williams COLOR palette help Rutland's historic Paramount Theatre look its best.*

## Painter to Painter

### What's the best business advice you have received over the years?

I was always told to face all adversity and those tough customer calls. You cannot avoid the calls of customers with problems. As difficult as a customer is, right or wrong, you must address them and put the fire out. This exercise builds maturity and character, both personally and from a business standpoint.

### Any particularly challenging projects?

The Tree House in Killington, Vt. (pictured on page 7) was built with several species of wood, including standing maple right from the property. These logs were debarked, bleached and sanded before installation. Once installed and subject to a conventional heating system, they cracked and split. These logs required multiple coatings of Sherwin-Williams Clear Acrylic caulking on all splits and cracks. Since we used more than 300 tubes of caulk, price point was important. We also applied several layers of Sherwin-Williams Satin Acrylic Urethane.