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# The forgotten art of sculpting



Although sculpting is not offered in nail salons that often anymore, it is still one of the most effective ways of enhancing any nail shape. **Sonette van Rensburg** discusses this art form and the endless possibilities it presents.

Once sculpting has been mastered, it can be very rewarding, as it saves time, eliminates the use of extra products, such as tips, and almost any nail type can be sculpted, in particular hooked or bitten nails. It is ideal for clients who would like to enhance or add a little extra length to their own natural nails; and those who have broken a natural nail and just want it to be repaired. Clients with a high C Curve or a long, natural nail bed are also ideal candidates for sculpting, as the sculpted enhancement can flow with the natural compound curves of the client's nails.

With sculpting, there is no need to shorten the clients' natural nail, allowing them the freedom to grow their own nails under the sculpted enhancement. Also, when the free edge or corner of a sculpted nail is broken, it can easily be sculpted on again without having to remove it.

The most effective system to use when sculpting is a liquid and powder system, although one can still achieve successful results with UV gel, as long as a few considerations are taken into account.

**STRUCTURAL POINTS**

A sculptured nail which is well-structured should have the same characteristics as one which has had a tip applied with a product overlay if not better, as a more beautiful high C Curve can be achieved with a sculpting form than with a tip. However, the result will vary depending on the condition, shape and form of the client's original natural nail.

There are certain nail types that are not suitable for sculpting. These include:

- Bitten nails: although bitten nails are more challenging to sculpt due



Pic courtesy: LCN

to being able to fit the form over the end part of the finger, known as the bulbous tip, they can still be sculpted successfully to create a longer-looking nail bed and plate.

- Ski jump nails: a tip application is rather recommended to correct the shape and create an upper arch to make the nail appear as if it has a natural arch.
- Very flat nails: a sculpted nail will result in a very broad flat nail, tip application is best to create a shape and form with an upper arch and apex.
- Nail plates which are thin or in a bad condition: these will not hold a sculpted nail very well.
- Crooked nails and missing sidewalls: these are best suited to a tip application to create more support for the product before it is applied.



**TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES**

For a new nail technician sculpting can be quite a daunting and difficult technique to grasp. It acquires a combination of different elements which have to come together, such as knowledge, skill and technical ability, not only with the application of the product, but, most importantly, how to place and fit the sculpting form. It is also vital to know how to create a well-engineered enhancement with all the structural points in place to create a shape and form that will complement the client's hands and nails.

• **Sculpting forms**

To create a beautifully sculpted set of enhancements, a sculpting form is used to extend the product beyond the free edge of the natural nail to any length the client desires.

There are various different types of sculpting forms available from suppliers these days, to achieve a perfectly well sculptured and engineered enhancement with all the →



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## NAILS



Pic courtesy: LCN

structural points in the correct place. There are metal forms, plastic forms, foil forms, Teflon-coated forms and paper forms. Choose a nail form to suit your sculpting needs, and one that will provide excellent results for sculpting perfect free edges. The sculpting forms can also be cut and customised to fit all nail shapes.

### • Form Fit

Make sure that the form you choose to sculpt with fits perfectly under the free edge of the natural nail and that it conforms to the compound curves of the nail. Fitting a form perfectly can be quite challenging, but, at the same time, quite easy if you know how and follow the instructions carefully. Remember practice makes perfect. The following guidelines will assist you with fitting the sculpting form properly and correctly:

1. Conduct a thorough consultation to evaluate and determine your clients' needs.
2. One first needs to create a C Curve in the sculpting form. One can do this by holding the sides of the form with your two thumbs, and then gently pushing them towards each other while rolling and bending the form into a C Curve. Angle the form with the cut out area facing upwards, and gently insert the edge of the form under the free edge of the natural nail, lining up the side walls with the demarcations on the form.
3. Make sure the form is securely pressed up against the underside of the free edge; and check that there are no gaps that will cause product to seep under the free edge. This will create an uncomfortable ledge, which the client could possibly pick at.
4. Use an orange wood stick to check that the form is fitting securely under the free edge.
5. For a form with tabs, make sure the tabs are pressed together evenly. This will ensure that the form is fitting properly and securely.
6. With your pointer finger and thumb, squeeze the form and tabs together underneath the finger and pull towards the free edge to ensure a tight fit.
7. Make sure the form is pressed flat just below the first joint of the finger and fits securely.
8. Check the form one final time to ensure a tight secure fit before applying product to the form.

**TECHNICAL TIP:** To create a more secure and bendable form, remove the centre cut out from the sculpting form; and place it behind the free edge of the sculpting form with the point facing downwards. This will create a more stable free edge to work on.

**TO CREATE A HIGH C CURVE:** As you press the form and squeeze it together at the base, shape it into a point to create a high C Curve. Once your product has been applied, C Curve sticks or the back of your brush can be used to create a perfectly symmetrical high C Curve.



**CUSTOM COLOUR**

When we talk sculpting, we also usually talk about combining custom colour enhancements and coatings, which offer stylists the opportunity to experiment, explore their creativity and achieve just about any look that will set their nail services aside from the rest.

Although custom colour nail enhancements and coatings have been around for a while, it is only recently that nail stylists have really started exploring the endless possibilities which can be achieved. Technologically advanced pigmented powders can be mixed with a liquid monomer or UV gel to construct an enhancement, overlay or coating that is applied to the nails.

This revolution in nail applications is more than just about creating a colourful nail enhancement or coating incorporating a variety of colours. They can also be any →



*Pic courtesy: Sam Biddle, info@sambiddle.co.uk*



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shape or length, and can use a variety of techniques to create different effects, designs and patterns, which can be encapsulated within the coating for longevity. Brightly coloured polymer powders, gels, pigments, glitters, paints and nail wraps are among some of the products, which can be used to create the most incredibly beautiful, unique and spectacular looks - it's like haute couture but for nails.

The techniques used to create custom-coloured enhancements can go from being very basic to exceptionally intricate and creative. Some of these techniques are very skilful and require experience, plenty of time and patience. Some internationally renowned nail stylists who have mastered the skill include: David Fowler, Michelle Sproat and Sam Biddle, a very talented nail stylist from the UK whose work is featured in this article. These top professionals also conduct workshops showcasing their work on a regular basis in order to educate nail stylists on the latest techniques and skills required to achieve this type of application. Once you start conducting some research on this topic, you will be amazed to see the awesome works of art being produced by some exceptionally talented nail stylists.

"Custom Blending has always been a very integral part of education at the CND Academy," says Jo-D Stroh, CND education ambassador. She explains why it is so important to be able to offer this type of service as part of your enhancement menu:



Pic courtesy: Sam Biddle. info@sambiddle.co.uk

**NAIL STYLISTS CAN MIX AND BLEND COLOURS USING PIGMENTED POWDERS TO CREATE A PERFECTLY NATURAL LOOKING NAIL ENHANCEMENT, COMPLEMENT SKIN TONE OR MATCH A LIP OR DRESS COLOUR.**

"Custom Blending is not just about creating colourful coatings, it is a professional technique by which nail stylists can mix and blend colours using pigmented powders to create a perfectly natural looking nail enhancement, complement skin tone or match a lip or dress colour.

"Coloured powders can also be custom-blended to match the colour of your natural nail bed, and a separate powder created to match the free edge," she adds. "With this latest and up-to-date technique, nail stylists are able to create the illusion of longer, more graceful nail beds, which is very much the trend on the International catwalks at the moment. It can also assist in masking flaws in a client's own natural nail plate, such as ski-jump nails, yellowing and ridges."

A custom-blended manicure means endurance and impeccable grooming all of the time with minimal effort, and no drying time. This is a manicure that will protect the natural nail so well that women with naturally weak nails will be able to grow long, strong nails.

A palette of colours is available, and these can be blended together to create a multitude of shades from the light and naturally toned and soft pastels to bright summery colours or

multi-dimensional metallic varieties. They can be matte or shiny, glimmery, sheer or opaque; all according to the client's personal choice or preference.

Custom nail designs were hot on the fashion catwalks this season. There were some eye-blinding brights, inspired by the '60s, and plenty of colour blocking for all to see. As with every season, the tasteful, barely there, nude nails also proved to still be ever popular.

In line with this ever-growing and popular professional nail coating trend, Minx Nails has recently introduced an innovation first: offering a metallic base coat in combination with translucent Minx templates, which presents a myriad of designs possibilities. One can layer the translucent design options either over a shiny metallic base coat, like gold or silver, or go for something a little less flashy, like a gel polish as the base. My absolute favourite for toes at the moment is Shellac "City Scapes" a soft pistachio colour or Shellac "Romantique" a soft opaque pink layered with Minx Naja-Johnny. I just love the contrast of the soft pastel colour showing through the black lacy transparent design, offering a very unique classic look. **PB**



Pic courtesy: Sam Biddle. info@sambiddle.co.uk