

**THE ULTIMATE GUIDE
to
YOUR PERFECT
FRONT DOOR COLOR**



**Inspiration, Tips, and Tricks
from Your Color Coach**

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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
Chapter One - Your Welcome Beacon	3
How Do You Say Welcome?.....	3
Chapter 2 - How Your Eye Sees Colors	4
Colors Have Feelings Too!	5
Chapter 3 – Emotion and Color	6
What Do You Want Your House to Say?	7
Chapter 4 - Applying Your Knowledge	8
Occluded Doorways	9
Directional Light	9
Decorative Facades	9
City, Suburban or Rural	9
Distance From the Street	10
Neighbor Relations	10
Current House Color	10
Chapter 5 – Professional Tools for the Lay Person	11
The Value Scale	11
The Color Wheel	12
Outside The Box	13
Congratulations	13
Summary	14
Sample Paint Schemes with a Theme	15
Addendum:	
special violet colors	17
selecting paint sheen	18
about me.....	19

Introduction

One of the most often asked and fretted over questions my clients ask is what front door colors they should consider. Your front door is like the cherry on the top of an ice cream sundae. Front door color is the finishing touch and one which seems to define the entire paint project.

In this e-booklet you will find guidelines, pointers, sage advice and real color schemes designed for front door success. I can't wait to share my ideas and experience with you so....let's go!

Chapter One - Your Welcome Beacon

Your front door is the formal place where guests enter your home. For most folks, their friends, relatives and neighbors are used to coming "round back" to the kitchen or family space which is the hub of activity. But when you entertain the boss and his wife for dinner or hold a party, the front door is the place of entry.

It's not rocket science to figure out how to enter a building; we all know that doors are the way in! But there is symbolism at work here...Picture the front of your house, it's pretty large in relation to the door. Doors are usually 15-20 square feet in size; a house front can be 400 square feet or more. In relation to the size of the front of the house, the door is quite tiny. I see the front door as a bulls-eye on the house face. It is the focal point of the house because people enter there and people are more important than anything else...more than flower boxes, lawn ornaments or plantings. Therefore the door is like a welcome beacon gracing the front of your house. The way that you treat it gives a clue to the warmth and love that is found within. The appearance of the front door is a promise of things to come, it creates anticipation. In making buildings, architects and designers know that a sense of anticipation and mystery is important in spaces. It keeps people interested and engaged, it makes them want to see more and it makes them want to know more about you. Yes, your front door color can make someone think you must be the most fascinating person on the planet. Maybe your friends and visitors wouldn't know how to put a dynamite door/house combination together but they sure know one when they see it!

How Do You Say Welcome?

You don't need cotton candy colors or a color that looks like your grandma's sweater to say "welcome". It's less about the particular color and more about the relationship of the door color to the house, plantings, orientation to the sun, storm or screen doors, trim, etc.

In general, a house that is thoughtfully put together and shows pride of ownership is going to broadcast a welcoming message. Your door must stand out in order to be noticed. Remember that it occupies a small percentage of the overall square footage of the façade so its treatment needs to be a bit bolder than you might think. Bold doesn't mean screaming color but it does mean **balanced** color in relation to the rest of your house palette and the scale of your house. Next, some very important information which will enable you to apply the master's touch of color to your front door.

Chapter 2 - How Your Eye Sees Colors

You may think that this bit of information is unnecessary but it is important for you to understand how the eye sees so you can compensate for its weaknesses and choose your best color.

The "sixty foot rule" applies here. What does that mean? It means that you must understand that your door and house will be viewed from the street first. Your house may be right on the road or close to it but more than likely there will be some lawn or frontage. As you gain distance from a color, it becomes difficult to read it accurately and it "loses its punch" more and more as you move further away. Why does this happen? It has to do with your physiology. In your eye, you have two types of receptors, rods which see under low light conditions and mostly see pattern or contrast; and cones which see under high light levels and register colors. You have more rods in your eye than cones and believe it or not, the rods are more sensitive. So when you move away from a color, your eye's tendency is to register the contrast between the colors rather than the colors themselves. You still see the colors but not so well. Here's a fun game you can play to illustrate this:

If you know the color of your front door, go to the paint store and get that color chip. Whatever color that is, get some more chips that are close to it but not exactly it. Now take these back to your house and stand at the street. Have the paint chips in your hand. I will bet you dollars to donuts that you cannot accurately tell which one of the paint chips is the one on your front door...no cheating now! You already know the answer to the question but I think you'll be amazed at this demonstration.

Want to make sure you see your front door color and that it doesn't look like just a dark blob on your house? Choose a color that is not significantly darker or lighter than your body color. I have a great tool to help get this right every time; it's called a **value scale** (more on this tool later!).

Relationships, relationships, that is my mantra for working with color. As no man is an island, no color stands alone. Colors look differently when they are placed next to other colors. Designers use this knowledge to “tweak” your perceptions all the time. For instance, your color consultant is working with a red color and wants to use a complimentary (that means opposite on the color wheel) color scheme but he/she doesn’t want to use a green because the combination of those two will make instant Christmas! <lol>. So using his/her knowledge of how color is relative, a gray will be chosen because the designer knows that the gray when placed next to the red will assume a “greenish” hue. This way the designer achieves his/her complimentary color scheme on a subtle level without resorting to a red/green combination which would be objectionable.

Colors also have “weight”. An example of this would be what I call the “eye candy factor”. Eye candy is a small, intense, controlled bit of color that is so concentrated, you only need a little bit to do the job. Let’s say you have a two story colonial 20’ high by 24’ wide...it’s painted a medium gray. Your front door occupies about 15-20 square feet of that house, not very much at all in the entire scheme of things. But if we paint it a bright red, that red door “weighs” just as much as the entire gray house. It’s about creating balance, the gray is a laid back color, muted, it tends to fade into the background. It is a law of optics that bright colors move forward in space and muted colors recede. Light colors move forward, dark colors recede. This is law and I didn’t make it up! So, your bright red door commands attention and even though it is small, it “weighs” as much as the entire gray-ness of the house. The “weight” of a color is a designer’s term which you will hear frequently. It explains the attention getting power of a color and is not absolute but dependent upon its context.

Colors Have Feelings Too!

There’s no doubt that certain colors evoke certain emotions...and there are certain combinations that evoke imagery. The famous Dr. Spock has said that there were no bad children, just bad behaviors. Well, I say that there are no bad colors, just colors badly used. I usually don’t like to place restrictions on color combinations used but in this instance, I just have to say “no” to these:



Orange/Black



Yellow/Purple



Red/Green

Can you figure out why? These are color combinations evocative of holiday themes, Halloween, Easter and Christmas. I love holidays just about as much as

anyone but I only love them when they are supposed to occur. I do not want to be reminded of Christmas 365 days a year. Trust me on this, these combinations are very powerful and will get on your nerves in short time. You will have the house in the neighborhood everyone calls the “(fill in the blank)” house!

The most abused and mis-used door color is purple/lavender/lilac or some variant. It is usually overstated and sickly sweet. Purple is an emotional color which has traditionally graced royalty and is associated with spirituality. Pastel or bright versions of this are associated with children or nursery themes; they are juvenile colors not befitting the dignity of a house. There are some excellent purples, lavenders and lilacs which can be used with remarkable success; I'll be calling some of these out further along in this e-booklet.

Chapter 3 – Emotion and Color

Below are some broad statements about the connotations we bring to colors. For some colors there are a wide range of emotions attached to them depending on the vibrancy and depth of the color's version. Some of these associations are cultural, some are physiological. Some feelings we may associate with certain colors are:

- Red** – drama, warmth, sophistication
- Orange** – action, excitement, danger, warmth, harvest time
- Yellow** – happiness, sunshine
- Green** – nature, gentleness
- Purple** – royalty, spirituality, playfulness, spontaneity
- Brown** - warmth, naturalness, sincerity
- Blue** – crispness, nautical, peace, rest, expansiveness
- Black** – formality, elegance, tradition

Yes, colors are energy just like radio waves, microwaves, and x-rays. They just happen to be at wavelengths which our receptors (eyes) can read. The colors in the visible spectrum (or what we refer to as the rainbow) each have their unique wavelengths. With those wavelengths they transmit a unique quality of energy which affects our physical and psychological selves. It's real!

As discussed above, certain color combinations can make us think of holidays, other combinations can make us think of periods in time. Remember that pink and gray 1955 Ford Fairlane your pop had? Pink and gray, there's a 1950's combo if there ever was one. Another is turquoise and pink. The 1970's favorite combo was orange and brown. Blue and white make us think of the seaside, crisp and nautical.

One of my favorite color palettes I created was for a fellow on Cape Cod. He had rehabilitated an older home, Inside, we used all of the colors that were part of the locale...

Soft grays – evocative of the salt weathered shingles on many Cape homes

Robin's Egg Blues - sky, water

Sandy beiges – the beach

Warm whites – sea foam

We brought the outside to the interior, all of the things that people love about Cape Cod was internalized so the owners could have a total Cape experience. Often there is a real mingling between the outdoors and interior. This is especially true if the house is a vacation home or one where the setting is a big part of the house.

Our language is rich and we express feelings and perceptions about color every day. Here are some common phrases:

Red with rage

Green with envy

Red faced

Blue mood

Purple passion

Blue skies ahead

Golden girl/boy

You're reading this booklet so I know you recognize and appreciate the power of color. This strong power can be intimidating if you don't know how to control it so now that you see how colors can tell a story it will become easier for you to master them. It's really just a matter of bringing all this to your conscious attention!

What Do You Want Your House to Say?

I sincerely doubt that you want your house to look like that 1955 Ford but if you want to get that retro look, now you know how to do it! More likely, you will want your house to look; country, dignified, formal, cottage-y, gingerbread-y, historic, etc.

Whichever look you choose, it also must be appropriate to the style of your home and its setting. You can stretch it pretty far though. For instance, let's say you have a standard two story, center entry colonial and you wish it to look like a cottage...a bit of a stretch but I think we can pull it off. There are thousands of color combinations I could come up with but to keep it simple here we can assume you are going to paint your house white...choose a warmer white, not the standard "white trim" white but something with an ivory undertone. Remove your shutters, paint the trim the same color as the body and then paint your door a soft color...one which looks conceivably as if it had once been a stronger color but had faded over time...a soft and muted blue, or blue-green would give you that cottage-y look. Perhaps you could add some window boxes. This is a generic solution and certainly everyone's situation is unique but hopefully this kind of conversation can open your eyes and mind up for new possibilities.

Historic homes bear color palettes specific to their styles and time periods. Colonial period homes were often clapboard only on the front and shingled on the sides. White was common but so were deeper and richer earth-derived colors, maroons, ochres, browns, mineral blues. Trim and body were often the same with the door being the only unique color on the house. Try a brownish-red with a rich ochre for a traditional but eye-catching scheme.

Classic Revivals were usually very formal, white body, black or dark green shutters and doors. The front door got its "kick" from the applied use of brass kick plates and door knockers. Sometimes bright red was used.

Victorian Homes run the gamut from earthy palettes to polychromed madness. Your community will set the standards for color.

Chapter 4 - Applying Your Knowledge

Designing with so many variables can be daunting. With thousands of colors to choose from, how do you begin? It's simple...use the scientific approach, after all, color is part of the science of optics.

I like to create a check list which brings to mind all of the physical realities that exist and can't or won't be changed, then we can begin to deal with color choices....ask yourself these questions:

- 1) Is the door behind a screen or storm door?
- 2) Is the door under a portico or overhang?
- 3) Which direction does the door face?
- 4) Is there any adjacent brick or stone?

- 5) Is the house in a rural, suburban or urban setting?
- 6) How far from the street is the door, more than 25 feet or less?
- 7) What are neighbors' choices for color?
- 8) What is the body color of your house?
- 9) What is the feeling or look you are trying to evoke?

Occluded Doorways

If the door is hidden behind a screen or storm door or under a portico or overhang, you will have difficulty seeing the color unless you pump it up, make it a bit brighter and/or lighter. A beautiful dark green will read like a black if in shadow.

Directional Light

Exposure to the sun will also temper your perception of the color. Morning light (east light) tends to be yellowish, Southern exposure is the brightest, afternoon light (west light) is orange-y red, and doors which are northern exposures never see direct light. The light cast upon them is cool, aloof and detached. This is a case where you may want to use a warm color to counteract the nature of the light that exists. Understanding the color of the light that is cast upon your door enables you to work with it to achieve your goals. Now that you know what your handicap is, you can adjust your color to compensate for it.

Decorative Facades

If there is brick or stone surrounding the door, that's a strong decorative element on the face of the house which can be used to your advantage. You can make that 15-20 square feet of door seem more important and larger by keying it to the color of the brick or stone. In unifying the building materials and the door you are giving importance to the entryway. When you decide to do this, don't obsess about all the little colors in the brick or stone. Don't use your logical mind to "pull out" one of the colors in the brick or stone. Your mind thinks like that but your eye doesn't see that way. Instead get some distance from the house, at least 12-15 feet. Suddenly all those little colors that your mind thought about have disappeared and instead you have an optical blend of all those little colors which make up a larger color field. It is this larger color field which you will want to base your door color on because this is how your eye is reading the color. You can't go wrong if you proceed in this way.

City, Suburban or Rural

Houses in the city can take more vibrant color as accents than those in the burbs. The reason is simple, houses in rural or suburban settings are surrounded by vast expanses of plantings. The colors surrounding them are softer, there is the dappled light provided by trees, the whole thing is just a field of green texture

which asks for a more natural approach. In the city, there's lots of gray stone and concrete, contrasts are sharper, the pace is faster, and it's a more dramatic environment. The lipstick red door which looks so great on a city house can look like the door to Santa's Workshop in the suburbs. You can use rich color in a suburban or rural setting, but it should be muted (toned down) and not primary (pure) in nature. I'll have more about this in my palette combinations later.

Distance From the Street

Are you back off the road? If so, pump up the color so it reads from the street. Dark door colors, especially if they are paired with light house colors will tend to look like black from the street. Remember how your eye loves contrast more than it loves color, extremes between dark and light will always minimize the colors.

Neighbor Relations

While imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, you really don't want to have the same door as your neighbor, do you?

Current House Color

"Which colors go together?" "Do these two colors go together (match)?" I hear these two questions most often. There are no absolutes except to say that I will put just about any two colors together, you really only have to justify the "why" of what you did.. Sometimes, you just love a color for itself...let's say you have an ochre or yellowish beige house with warm white trim. You paint your door a teal blue...

WHAT!!!??? That might seem off the nut to you but if the value relationship (how light or dark) between the two colors is accurate, this scheme comes off with flying colors (bad pun, sorry). The reason is that it is a complimentary color scheme on a very subtle level. Compliments are opposites on the color wheel and they always look great together. The color wheel is a great tool to help you organize your color relationships.

It is possible to help you include your favorite color or a variation on it with your existing house color. You may have to include some decorative objects to make it balance but most often, you can have what you want. Choose some of your favorite colors and see if they can meet the stress test of the questions on my check list. Out of ideas? You might need to be outside the box.

When thinking about a color to put in combination with your house body, it is important to consider all of the points on my checklist. You will, after running through the list, eliminate many and a few good ones will bubble up to the surface.

Chapter 5 – Professional Tools for the Lay Person

Two of the tools that can be very helpful are the color wheel and the value scale. Most of us have heard of or have used a color wheel but almost no one except for artists and graphic designers use a value scale. You say you don't have an artistic bone in your body? Don't fret, these are easy to understand and easy to use tools...I'll walk you through them. Let's start with the value scale.

The Value Scale

Color professionals need to have a uniform language and a quantifiable method of communicating to one another. Lay people will talk about color in terms such as; "light beige-y", "blue-y green", "darkish red". Can you see why these terms are just about unusable? What is "darkish" to one person may not be to the next. Color pros have several different scientific ways of rating color so that a person in California can talk to another in New York on the phone and each will know exactly which color they are talking about. One of the most important ways of looking at color is the element of value. Most lay people think of color only as the hue (red, green, brown, etc.) but color pros know also that the correct value is probably more important than anything. What is value? Value is how light or dark a color is. It is not a relative judgment but rather a number which can be assigned to every color and remains constant no matter what color combinations are used.

I know that this is a bit dense but I will make it easy to understand. Picture the entire world being a black and white photograph. Every color then would be some sort of shade of gray. Color pros divide this black and white world of grays into steps numbered 1 through 10. The number "1" represents white and the number "10" represents black. Along the path from 1 to 10 are successive shades of gray in equal steps from light to dark. It's a bit like a telephone pole where white is at the top and black at the bottom, all the way down are the gray steps.



A value scale is a calibrated piece of heavy paper upon which all these “values” from white to black are printed in order. To determine what value a color is, you

place the value scale next to the color you are evaluating. When you find the gray which blends easiest into the color, you have figured out the value. You would be looking for the least amount of contrast between the scale and the color or the place where the distinction between gray and color is blurry. You can easily see this if you squint hard while making your evaluation.

Once you get this down, you will understand that the color you choose now has a numbered value assigned to it. This number is constant and doesn't change no matter which other color is paired against it.

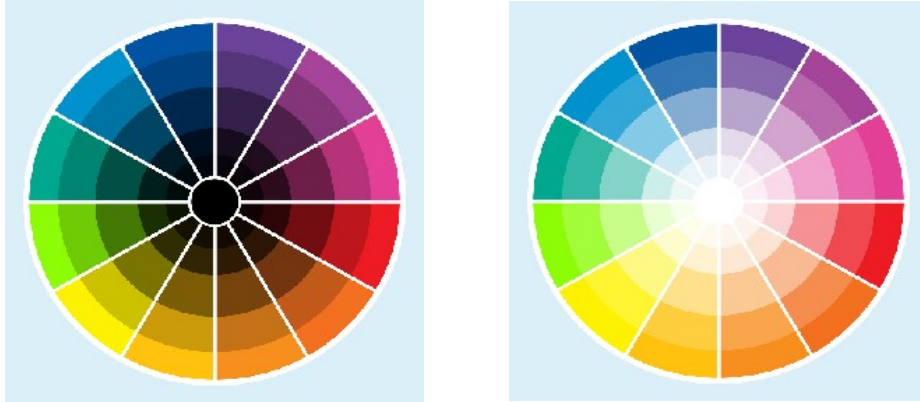
Why is this information important? Let's say you pick a blue for your new house color. You love love love this color! So you get a can of it to sample...you take it home, paint a large piece of cardboard and put it up against your light house. WOW! Suddenly the color you fell in love with looks too dark and scares you half to death. What has happened is that your new blue color **appears** to be dark only because you have compared it against the current light color of your house. This is what we call a “false note”, your eyes are playing tricks on you...not nice! If you then take your value scale over to your new blue color and determine that it is a value 3, you now know that it is not even half way to being dark. It is only the comparison with the lighter color which skewed your perception.

<<Value trumps perception always!>> Understanding values and assigning values to your colors will enable you to predict with accuracy your final results. Until you are an experienced color specifier with umpteen years under your belt, the use of a value scale is the most reliable way to pick color. Value scales are available from any art supply store. It is your new best friend. ☺

The Color Wheel

The color wheel is more familiar to us. It is a circular representation of a rainbow or in more scientific terms, the visible spectrum. As mentioned earlier, all colors are energy and have frequency from red at the low end of the scale to violet at the upper end. There are other colors which we as humans cannot see. For instance, bees see into the ultraviolet range. Infra-red waves are used to heal muscle injuries. For our purposes however we are only concerned with the visible range of color. At the top of the color wheel is yellow, followed by orange, red, violet, blue, green and back to yellow. Colors which are opposite on the color wheel are called compliments. Colors which are next to each other are called analogous. A color wheel is a blueprint for success. It is proven that certain relationships on the wheel evoke definite results;

- Complimentary color schemes are the most dynamic, they are lively
- Analogous schemes are easy on the eyes



- Monochromatic schemes are the most restful
- Triadic schemes are solid

How can you figure out which is which? Easy...compliments are directly or near directly opposite on the wheel. Analogous colors are located to the left and right of the selected color. Monochromatic colors are light and dark (or a value range) of the same color. Triadic schemes are colors which would be connected by drawing an equilateral triangle between three colors on the wheel; example, red, blue and gold (yellow). There are more variations on these themes but for basic use, these are the most commonplace. Depending on the result or the feeling you wish to communicate, you now know how you can use the wheel to steer you to the right place! Color wheels like value scales, are available at any art supply store.

Outside The Box

By the time you're reading this, hopefully you've reviewed the list and have discovered a few good color candidates, if it's not clear don't panic, I am going to help you expand your list of possibilities...just hang in there, there's more tidbits of information to follow!

Congratulations!

You've taken a great step towards creating the most beautiful and distinctive home in your neighborhood.

You purchased this e-book because you needed some help with choosing your front door color .Maybe you wanted some new ideas...the same old choices just seemed unappealing or "not enough".

There are the standard old colors, you know the ones I mean, you can buy matching vinyl shutter colors at the local big box store...dark green, black, maroon. These colors can be just fine but they have been done many, many times. Then there is the cliché red door, also done and overdone.

One of the nicest things you can do is to work a bolder color against a neutral. For instance your house body color is gray-green, putty, beige, gray or off-white. Some very traditional colors but some which have fallen out of favor until recently are ochres, teals, dusty purples and rich browns with red undertones.

If working with a monochromatic color scheme (different tones of the same color), make the door color a darker and purer version of the dominant tone. If possible try to make your door color unique to the house, that is, resist the urge to match shutters to door color. The door is special, it is symbolic. Matching shutters to doors creates a marching field of the same color in many spots creating visual confusion. You need a focal point.

I will say this again because it is super important;

***your house must have a focal point
otherwise the house becomes “busy”***

A house is like Diana Ross and The Supremes, there's only one Diana Ross (your door) and she's in the spotlight. Everyone else (shutters, body, trim, roof) is in the background swaying to the beat and supporting the star..

A general good rule of thumb is to stay away from primary and secondary colors in their pure forms. These are yellow, blue, red, as primaries and green, purple, and orange (secondaries) as mixed from their primaries. They are just too powerful for most applications. A contemporary home that is made of concrete might do well with a bold splash of color as would a city townhouse door but those are the exceptions and not the rule.

Summary

The world of color is a complicated one. Color specifiers understand not only color (the actual hue, red, blue, etc.) is important but also value (how light or dark a color is), and intensity (how muted or pure a color is). Hue, value and intensity are three very different characteristics which define color. Each one must be in balance for the color choice to be right. A medium beige might be called for but a darker or lighter version of it won't work because of its relationship to the other colors on the house. Color is relative and no color works independently. A balance is necessary for success. Below are some carefully thought out color

schemes drawn from two of the larger paint companies. Please feel free to use them on your house...tweaking them may “break” the delicate balance, ouch!

Here are some designer driven color schemes I've developed based on a few of the most prominent paint company colors:

***all colors shown can not be guaranteed for accuracy due to the individual nature of computer monitors and their calibrations and also to the differences between pixels and pigments. Please consult actual manufacturer's color chips for validation.*

Sherwin Williams Palettes



Cape Cod Essence

body	7642 - Pavestone
trim	7541 - Grecian Ivory
accent	6369 - Tassel



Suburban Colonial

body	6165 - Connected Gray
trim	7029 - Agreeable Gray
accent	6209 - Ripe Olive



Bungalow Perfection

body	6146 - Umber
trim	7532 - Urban Putty
accent	6754 - Ionian



Quintessential Yellow Cottage

body	6646 – Orange Blast
trim	6385 – Dover White
accent	6320 – Bravado Red



Brick House Complimentary

body	7546 – Prairie Grass
trim	7711 – Pueblo
accent #1	7569 - Stucco
accent #2	2929 – Garden Path

Benjamin Moore Palettes



Yankee Doodle Dandy

body	HC-66 – Garrison Red
trim	Black
accent	1658 – Lakeside Cabin



Subtle Sophistication

body	991 - Grège Avenue
trim	White
accent	2114-20 – Mississippi Mud



American Classic

body	2135-40 – Province Blue
trim	HC-174 – Lancaster Whitewash
accent	HC-7 – Bryant Gold

Addendum

Here are some of those usable purples, lilacs, and lavenders I promised you earlier in this ebook:

Benjamin Moore

2114-40 – Wet Concrete



2116-40 – Hazy Lilac



2118-40 – Sea Life



1441 – Amethyst Shadow



1455 – Vintage Charm



Pittsburgh Paints

445-5 – Violet Verbena



540-6 – Cracked Slate



Sherwin Williams

6243 – Distance



7602 – Indigo Batik



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Selecting Paint Sheen

While there are a variety of paint sheens available, the two most commonly used are a soft gloss (equivalent to an interior semi-gloss) and a low lustre (somewhere in between an interior satin and an eggshell). Outside this range are high gloss and flat sheens.

Some generalities...

- The higher the gloss, the more durable against abrasion and exposure to the elements.
- The higher the gloss, the more surface imperfections will show (a high gloss paint demands a perfect substrate)
- High gloss paints lend an air of formality, flatter finishes are less formal

So, if you have a “country” style house, then you would not want to have a glossy front door. On the contrary, a city townhouse asks for nothing less!

Now that you know what is appropriate to style and function, choose confidently!

About Me

Hello, my name is Beverly Ferguson and I am the creator and designer behind window-treatment-ideas.com. I have spent two decades providing expert color services for the color challenged amongst us...and there are a lot of you out there!

I am a designer by day and a designer by night...basically my life has been dedicated to helping people find happiness and fulfillment through the use of

expertly applied color. I have the best job in the entire universe because I help people.

I help people every day to create the kinds of images and looks they desire. I'm not about fostering my tastes on others, it is my job as a professional to meet my **client's needs** within the context of a good, solid, workable design solution.

My formal education is in interior design, I hold a degree in The Applied Science of Interior Design and I teach color theory and the principles of interior design to continuing education students at The Rhode Island School of Design. I also am an accomplished fine artist having studied with some of the best contemporary painters today such as Wolf Kahn and Daniel Greene. I understand what happens when you mix pigments, I understand what happens when you juxtapose them, I know how to apply them tastefully on buildings, outside and in, to create drama, anticipation, mystery, elegance, repose, excitement, etc. In short, I am an expert in both theory and application...which I believe is a dynamite combination!

My deepest thanks for purchasing and reading my e-book. Should you require a personalized color plan beyond the scope of this e-book, I am always available for .consultation. Email me for details: beverly@reflectivedesigner.com