



FACTIVA®

RELIABLE ALERTING

9 INTERFACE LANGUAGES

EASILY DISSEMINATE INFO

COVERAGE FROM NEARLY EVERY COUNTRY

FLIP THROUGH YOUR FACTIVA ALERTS

Now Available on **Flipboard**

Learn more at factiva.co

DOW JON

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

This copy is for your personal, non-commercial use only. To order presentation-ready copies for distribution to your colleagues, clients or customers visit <http://www.djreprints.com>.

<http://www.wsj.com/articles/take-a-gamble-on-high-gloss-paint-1423850810>

Take a Gamble on High-Gloss Paint

For a sheen that's truly winning, get over the prejudice against high-shine paint and give a room or hallway light-reflecting sparkle and fresh glamour

By **ALEKSANDRA CRAPANZANO**

Feb. 13, 2015 1:06 p.m. ET



HIGH SHINE | Deep colors, like this high-gloss blue, can create a moody atmosphere. *PHOTO: THOMAS LOOF/TRUNK ARCHIVE*

WHY MUST WE always be subject to the laws of good taste? Need we really wear silk shoes to a black-tie affair when tall, heeled boots feel so much more empowering? Must Lady Mary of Downton Abbey ride sidesaddle, even with her hair newly chopped into a modern bob? And must walls always be painted a polite satin or eggshell finish?

This last “rule” came to mind recently as I stood in the very tall and all-too-dim stairwell of our Brooklyn brownstone, desperate to give it a sign of life and a bit of brightness that was not incandescent, halogen or LED. A mischievous thought occurred to me: Why not paint it in high gloss?

I felt myself shudder instinctively. Walls were to be painted in eggshell, the trim painted in semi-gloss, and that was that. High-gloss walls were the sort of thing you might find in a garish room at Graceland. “Tacky” seemed an apt description—both literally tacky to the touch and at odds with my sense of style.

In truth, the idea of using high-gloss paint didn’t appear out of the blue. Over the past year, I’d seen reflective, shiny walls popping up in a variety of elegant settings. I’d been in a Tribeca loft painted a milky, sparkling white that warmed up the modern space, ever-so-imperceptibly softening its hard, contemporary lines. I’d visited a friend’s study on the Upper East Side coated in a vivid yellow that conjured the feeling of being inside a beam of sunshine. I’d gone to a dinner party in a well-appointed dining room done up in a black gloss that glowed in candlelight, reflecting the silver, the crystal, and even the moon through the window. And on a recent trip to the new casually chic Manhattan restaurant Upland, I’d marveled at its ceiling, paneled in camp green; it felt at once Edwardian and utterly of the moment. In every case, the high sheen of the paint created energy, drama and vibrancy.

A turquoise stairwell bounces light. *PHOTO: WILLIAM WALDRON/THE INTERIOR ARC*

All of these examples had debunked my belief that high-gloss paint was inescapably tacky, but I still needed a nudge from someone I trusted. I remembered a sideboard painted in a high-gloss orange at The Crosby Street Hotel in New York, so I called Kit Kemp, its co-owner and designer. She’s known for deploying splashes of color and contrasting patterns while still adhering for the most part to a classic,



tailored elegance. I'd barely gotten the word "hallway" out before Ms. Kemp jumped in: "I think gloss is a fabulous idea in hallways, because when you come in, you see the light bouncing off it. After years of matte paint, it is so refreshing to come in somewhere that is invigorating and bright."

Designer Libby Cameron, a protégé of red-lacquer enthusiast Sister Parish, elaborated: "Flat walls kill the energy in a room," she said. "The higher the gloss, the higher the energy. It makes a much happier space." She would know: For a recent dining-room project, Ms. Cameron chose a dark-red glaze that offered a lively contrast to a rough-hewed antique wood table and chairs, and for a summer house in Maine, she slicked the floorboards with high-gloss white, a look as spic and span as a new yacht.

Persuaded to gamble on gloss, I pondered my next quandary: color. The prevailing design wisdom has always been to choose a dark, warm

color for hallways and stairwells; and it's true that paler colors too often turn cold or gray if natural light is in short supply. But by opting for a high-gloss finish over the traditional, prescribed eggshell one, I was able to use my shade of choice: Tallow, a warm, pale cream by Farrow & Ball, the U.K. luxury paint company.

The result was remarkable. A hallway that had felt cramped and transitory now felt airy, tall and inviting. The sheen of the walls, far from tacky, gently reflected light, enlarging the space and giving it a subtle glow. Instead of clashing with the house's original wood molding, the reflective finish accentuated its grain. "Gloss looks gorgeous with wood," Ms. Kemp pointed out. "Or any natural organic material, like brick. Although it's a completely different [texture], it's the interesting contrast that brings an interior alive."

'The rooms I saw had debunked my belief that high-gloss paint was inescapably tacky, but I still needed a nudge.'

My hallway looked so appealing that I began to fantasize about painting other parts of the house in high gloss. I called the New York-based colorist Donald Kaufman, whose custom-blended paints are the secret behind many a great decorator's rooms. When I confessed my new obsession with high-gloss paint, much to my surprise, he chimed in, saying that he had recently painted the ceiling of a client's library in a deep, high-gloss red. As the only color in an otherwise oak-paneled room, the finish created an optical illusion that nearly doubled the perceived height of the ceiling. "We would recommend [gloss] more often than not, but for the expense [it's a custom finish] and because people think it needs to be perfect and it doesn't," he said. I realized that, at 140 years old, my house was never going to be perfect.

Even though Mr. Kaufman told me that deeper shades create more of a feeling of atmosphere than lighter ones when it comes to gloss, he endorsed my desire to paint a ceiling a pale sky blue. Ms. Kemp suggested pairing such a ceiling with a neutral wall, to draw the eye upward. She also urged me to try painting the molding a transitional or contrasting color. A high-gloss ceiling, she told me, would double the luminosity of our existing chandelier while also diffusing its light, an effect that would be at once intimate and grand. Perfect, in other words, for a dining room.

The persistent knock on gloss has been that it draws attention to a surface's imperfections. But once you're inside a room, Mr. Kaufman said, those flaws aren't as noticeable as you'd think. "While gloss does show a surface's imperfections, it also scatters the light so much that it disguises them," he said. Like all the designers I spoke with, however, he strongly recommended employing a professional painter when investing in high-gloss paint. It requires a sure hand and a longer curing period between coats.

For my final high-gloss act, I painted the walls and ceiling of our tiny bathroom in Farrow & Ball Pink Ground. The color is not a plastic, baby-doll pink but rather a subtle, almost dusty hue. In gloss, the formerly nondescript room feels like an Art Deco jeweled box, perfect for a languorous candlelit bath.

High-gloss paint, I've come to realize, can transform a room, however small or large. Charlotte Cosby, the creative director of Farrow & Ball, told me that sales of high gloss are on the rise, which she attributes to our flat-screen-centric culture and a hunger for tactility. "I think we're so used to touching screens all day instead of holding a wooden pencil or something else with texture, that people are now more inclined to do stuff that creates texture, that creates light, that creates movement—something that's not flat," she said. You could even argue that gloss is the extrovert of the paint family. "It creates a load of movement and gives a room more life," Ms. Cosby continued. "So rather than being all subtle and chalky, it's just like 'Yes! Look at this!'"

For a hallway

Everyone needs a go-to warm cream that never seems to grow cold. This one is well-suited for spaces that call for more warmth than your typical pale shade provides. If you use the color by itself, it will still read as white, but pair it with milky white moldings, for example, and it looks truly creamy. Tallow 203 Full Gloss Paint, *\$105 for 1 gallon*, farrow-ball.com

For a dining room

A bold red with a strong flair for drama can be paired with white for a striking contrast, or next to wood for a more timeless appeal. It can work in any size room, but perhaps its best quality is that it doesn't need a lot of natural light to create a warm glow.

Rembrandt Red Enamel Paint in Hollandlac Brilliant, *\$145 for 2½ liters*, finepaintsofeurope.com

For ceilings

LIGHT BRIGHTS // Three Colors to Get Your Gloss On



From left: Tallow 203 Full Gloss Paint, Rembrandt Red Enamel Paint in Hollandlac Brilliant, Donald Kaufman Color 44 in Hollandlac Brilliant *PHOTO: F. MARTIN RAMIN/THE WALL STREET JOURNAL, STYLING BY ANNE CARDENAS*

This pale blue does, in fact, create the illusion of a sky overhead. Neither a baby-boy-pastel nor washed-out hue, it's a well-balanced shade that is ideal for bedrooms. You can pair it with just about any color, from chocolate brown to creamy white. Donald Kaufman Color 44 in Hollandlac Brilliant, *\$189 for 2½ liters, Color Factory, 201-568-2226*

MORE DESIGN & DECORATING

- [Three Lights That Bring the Woods Indoors \(http://www.wsj.com/articles/three-lights-that-bring-the-woods-indoors-1423767020?tesla=y\)](http://www.wsj.com/articles/three-lights-that-bring-the-woods-indoors-1423767020?tesla=y)
- [Find a Bar Cart to Suit Your Style \(http://www.wsj.com/articles/find-a-bar-cart-to-suit-your-style-1423260472?tesla=y\)](http://www.wsj.com/articles/find-a-bar-cart-to-suit-your-style-1423260472?tesla=y)
- [A Wing Chair That's...a Bed? \(http://www.wsj.com/articles/a-wing-chair-thats-a-bed-1423074944?tesla=y\)](http://www.wsj.com/articles/a-wing-chair-thats-a-bed-1423074944?tesla=y)

Copyright 2014 Dow Jones & Company, Inc. All Rights Reserved

This copy is for your personal, non-commercial use only. Distribution and use of this material are governed by our Subscriber Agreement and by copyright law. For non-personal use or to order multiple copies, please contact Dow Jones Reprints at 1-800-843-0008 or visit www.djreprints.com.