

This Old Door

A vintage portal gets a 21st-century finish thanks to local finishing expert Jody Finglas.

Ossining finishing expert Jody Finglas, who's seen a door or two, knew that this was no ordinary portal. Once the pine door that is almost a century old was gently removed from its hinges, its original lock was sent to London for restoration.

Uncoupled from its past, it had to be stripped, but doors of this vintage are delicate creatures, often dovetailed not nailed. Multiple generations of paint intermingled. Finglas' solution? "Lay it down, strip it, and determine what product to use," he says. "You have to be considerate of the door."

Finglas' team applied a custom mixture of vinegar and other solvents to strip and excise the old paint from the wood; expansion during hot weather would otherwise cause all sorts of havoc.

Then, prime time. Critical choices are made at this juncture: a red-painted door, for example, could nicely reflect a black primer — at the opposite end of the color scheme.

A skim coat of Swedish putty filled cracks and mended deep holes resulting from old hardware.

Next came the finishing touches. Finglas turned to Fine Paints of Europe, a Vermont-based importer of Dutch paints. Like Drogheda-born Finglas, FPE founder John Lahey was an Irish import, and son John III carries on the family tradition.

Three coats of paint and sanding followed, beginning with 250-grit German sandpaper — fine enough for a Parisian pedicure — and graduating to 400-grit at the end. The oil paint was cut by 10 percent with mineral spirits from FPE.

The end result was a raspberry-black door that shows off just the hint of red, an accent like that of a fine wine, appreciated by the connoisseur: Dutch paint, German sandpaper, and an Irish painter combining on an all-American entryway.



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