

Working Wonders

The right exterior color scheme can transform a home-based business.

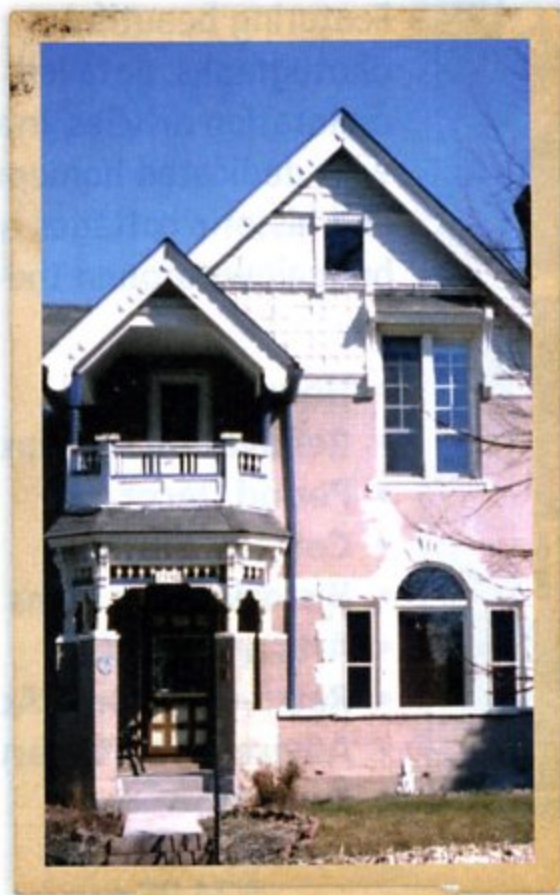
BY JAMES MARTIN AND MEGAN SCHLEGEL

Denver, Colorado's historic Whittier neighborhood—named in honor of John Greenleaf Whittier, the famed 19th-century abolitionist and poet—was developed as an integrated neighborhood and has remained so since the 1890s. The neighborhood was home to many craftsmen, which is evident in many of the houses in the area, including the one currently owned by

Mary Kay Christian. Built in 1891, this Victorian boasts ornate fretwork, limestone details and a wonderful hexagonal two-story porch that supports a second-story gable. There are many variations on this Queen Anne style of home in the neighborhood. Its high Victorian style with spindles and pre-cut details grew popular because it readily became available with the expansion of the railroads. In fact, the house directly next door to Christian's is almost identical, with the exception that the neighboring home still has the original wooden porch.

When Christian approached us to design a color scheme for her home, she wanted it to stand apart and be an inspiration to other homeowners. She hoped it would set an example for good design in a neighborhood experiencing a renewed interest in restoration.

An acupuncturist with a home-based business, Christian expressed concern that the exterior felt dull and tired—not the impression she wanted, and it was in direct opposition of the interior. It wasn't showing her company in its best light or reflecting the personal care she took with



Before

each client. The home's interior had rich, natural woods and walls painted in warm colors. Creating a beautiful sanctuary for herself and her clients, both inside and out, was of great importance to her. However, she did not want to highlight every architectural feature on the home, as there is a great amount of detail in the gables that could look fussy or busy if not careful. She hoped we could devise a color scheme that would effectively use paint to highlight some of the pertinent details without the painstaking task of hand-cutting each one. Further, as the front porch was obviously rebuilt sometime in the early 20th century, she wanted to minimize the newer brick columns that stand in stark contrast to the elaborate Victorian detailing. The trick was to still have the columns feel like an integral part of the home. The house has beautiful architecture and bones, and was just waiting for a fresh color scheme to bring it back to life.

We started by choosing a rich bronzed gold for the main body color to warm up the feel of the home and create a comfortable segue between the exterior and interior. We erased the existing disconnect by bringing some of the colors from the interior to the outside, particularly the rich warmth of the oak. To complement this rich gold we used a sunny yellow in the gables as well as on the bargeboard panels and the rusticated limestone detailing surrounding the first-floor window. Using this secondary body color on the panel detailing of the porches creates balance and harmony within the color design. The same lighter color on the gable ends allows the darker lower color to make the house feel solidly grounded.

We then used a radiant cream for the main trim—including the second-story columns, window frames and sashes and porch ceiling—to soften the entire look and feel of the home. It is important to note that we used the main body color on the brick columns of the front porch instead of the trim color because this would have drawn too much attention to this unfortunate remodel. Blending in the brick columns with the brick on the rest of the house allows the more attractive details, such as the balustrade and fretwork, to be easily noticed. Using the creamy color as the main trim created a soft backdrop upon which we could highlight some of the exquisite woodwork—including the bargeboards, brackets and spindle details—with two shades of succulent green.

Instead of trying to highlight every detail, we focused our attention on the delicate brackets and moldings on the porches and allowed the light color of the other details to shadow, and thus show off, their uniqueness without the cost of painting them individually.

One of the luxuries of repainting is that you can use your paint in a way that accents certain details—those you want people to notice—while taking the eye away from things you do not want them to see, perhaps missing moldings, broken pieces of wood trim or a “remuddled” front porch.

The last color in this scheme is a resplendent merlot we chose for the front door. While the door is original to the house, it had been painted previously, and we chose to paint it rather than strip it. Painting it in a high-gloss finish makes it look elegant and rich. The added splash of color beckons friends, neighbors and clients to come and enjoy their time at Christian's house and business. ✨

Megan and James are colorists with The Color People and have been designing color schemes for historic buildings for more than 25 years. They can be reached at www.colorpeople.com. To submit your home for consideration in the column, please send your contact information, along with high-resolution jpegs of your home, to: editorial@victorianbomesmag.com.

Please put “Color Workshop” in the subject line.

After

