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ABSTRACT:

Choosing wood doors for their natural beauty can significantly enhance a building's aesthetics. Ignoring or misunderstanding a single facet of door veneer selection can easily produce unacceptable results with no easy correction. Know what considerations must be specified and what options are available to be sure to achieve the intended result.

FILING:

UniFormat™
C1030 - Interior Doors

MasterFormat®
08 14 00 - Wood Doors

KEYWORDS:

Wood door, door face, veneer, natural, select white, select red

REFERENCES:

AWI, AWAC, and WI - Architectural Woodwork Standards

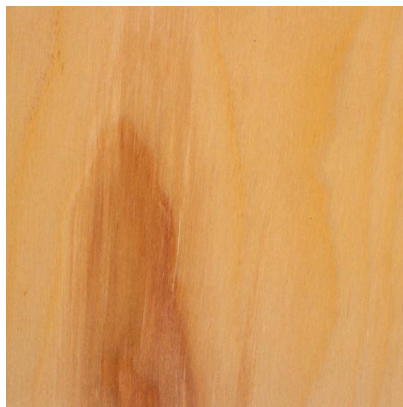
WDMA - A Specifier's Guide to Door Face Veneers

Quarter and Rift Wood Cuts

By David Stutzman, AIA, CSI, CCS, SCIP, LEED AP

Background

You selected wood doors because of the rich look and because they complement the interior design aesthetic. You requested finish samples to select the veneer and transparent finish to use for the project. The submitted samples were printed charts representing the color and appearance for the door faces. You made the selection and specified the finish by the name and color shown on the sample.



Natural birch color sample

Here is the selected sample (above). It was labeled as Natural Birch with a clear finish. The manufacturer's website shows choices for finishes and colors. The colors are shown for six different wood types including natural birch.

What Could Go Wrong?

Check the photo (right) of what was installed. The plastic covering makes the true beauty of the door hard to appreciate. Now, the owner is not happy with the color variation and is demanding the doors be replaced. The door supplier refuses to replace the doors because she supplied what

was ordered. The contractor is stuck in the middle between the owner and supplier wondering how to resolve the issue.

Fortunately for the architect, he is not directly involved because the veneer and finish selections were made without his input. But the architect is trying to help. Now he is the expert inserted between the owner and contractor offering his professional opinion about what went wrong and what the fix may be.

Beware! The opinion the architect offers may be extending his services beyond what he agreed to provide. This could produce an unexpected liability simply by trying to be the nice guy by helping both the owner and the architect.



Installed natural birch veneer door Door Veneer Face Considerations

There are many considerations for selecting wood door faces to ensure you get what you want. Below is a checklist of the items that will affect

the appearance of wood door faces. Wood species and veneer finish have many options available that can have dramatic cost impacts. The other considerations are shown with potential selections starting with most expensive and ending with least expensive. The veneer grades are shown with the default quality associated with each of the door grades. Note: economy grade is not available for wood doors.

- Door grade: premium, custom
- Wood species
- Veneer grade: AA (premium), A (custom)
- Veneer cut: rift, quarter, plain, rotary
- Veneer leaf match: book, slip, random
- Veneer face match: balance and center, balance, running
- Veneer finish

Each consideration is described in detail in the Architectural Woodwork Standards. For a short video presentation, download the free WDMA continuing education presentation "A Specifier's Guide to Door Face Veneers." Yes credit is available when you successfully complete the on-line quiz.

Three common species - birch maple, and ash - are available in forms called natural, select white, and select red. These designations indicate what portion of the tree will be included within the veneer.

- Natural: Includes any amount of both sapwood and heartwood.
- Select White: Includes light colored sapwood, only.
- Select Red: Includes dark colored heartwood, only.

Natural veneers can exhibit wide variations in color (shown below) that are often considered undesirable. The photo of the installed door is a great example. Is it any wonder why



the owner may be objecting? Natural birch color range extremes The approved color sample hinted at what may be expected. It did show both heartwood and sapwood. But it gave no clue about the extreme variation that may be possible and the ultimate appearance of the door faces.

The manufacturer's full finish catalog does discuss and shows examples of natural birch veneer. The catalog, however, does not show the full range of extreme color variation in natural veneers shown in the WDMA video. There is no way to predict the look of a door face laid up with natural veneer. It may be nearly all white or nearly all red. Often, the combination of white and red will produce dramatic color variation and distinctive pattern for each door face.

What Can Be Done?

There may be several choices.

- The owner can accept the doors.
- The owner can pay the contractor to replace the doors.
- The owner can pay the contractor to paint the doors.

In any case the owner will not be happy. In all cases, the owner will not remember the contractor - and possibly the architect - fondly. And if the owner chooses to paint the doors, the aesthetic of the building will not be as intended.

Conclusion

Know the standards that apply to wood doors and how to use them to specify what is really intended. Know what to expect from the selected

wood species and finish. Be sure to request a complete veneer and finish description from the door manufacturer. Do not rely on a color name only.

Be sure to request physical samples showing the full range of color variation to be expected within the door faces. Follow the checklist above to make all the selections needed to specify the door faces. Leaving out any one item may lead to unintended, unacceptable results.

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