

Entrance Options

by Roseanne Minerva

The main entrance to a home is one of its most important features. A well-designed entry symbolically welcomes visitors and provides an early indication of what they can expect inside, making it a sort of transition zone between the exterior and interior of a house. In fact, the experience of

passing from the street to the pathway to the front door can be the most memorable part of a visit to any building.

Types of Entries

Like houses themselves, entries are infinitely variable. Generally speaking, though, there are three broad categories

to consider: flush, projected, and recessed (see Figure 1).

Flush entries lie flush with the plane of the surrounding exterior wall. They can be extremely plain, as was often the case in colonial times, or dressed up with the applied pediments, pilasters, and sidelights typical of today's colonial-style homes (Figure 2).

Projected entrances, on the other hand, are forms added to the main mass of the house. Perhaps the most common and versatile type of entry, projections can range from something as subtle as an awning or extended roof overhang over a stoop to a porch that reaches the length of the house. The diversity of projected entries makes them easily adaptable to just about any design

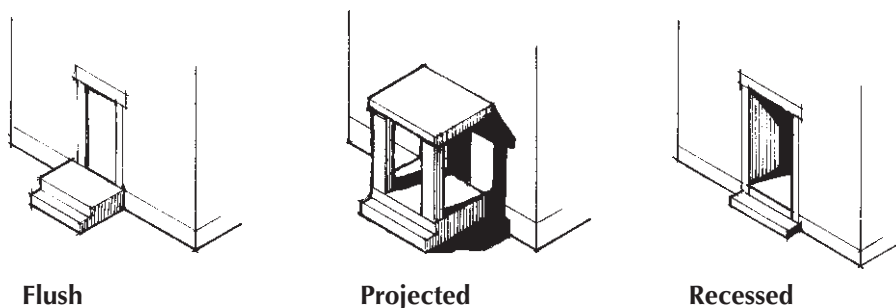


Figure 1. An unornamented flush entrance seems flat (left), while a projected entry extends the house into the surrounding landscape (center). A recessed entry relies on depth and shadow to draw the visitor in (right).

Flush Entry

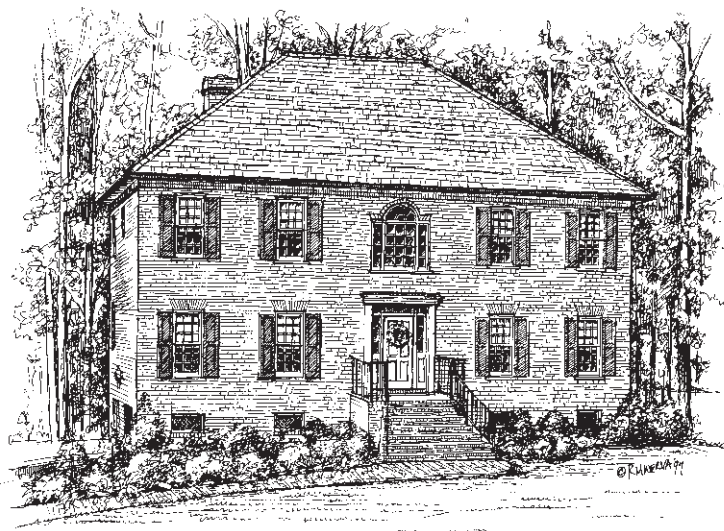
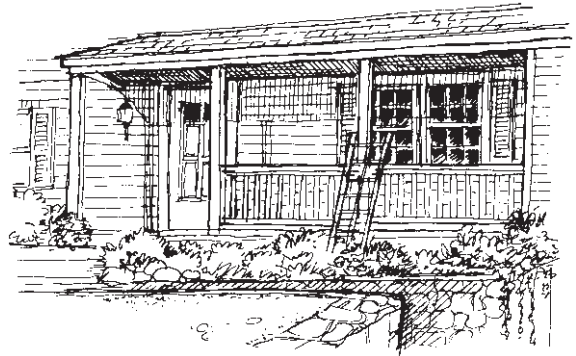


Figure 2. Traditional designs often use trim, sidelights, and other applied ornamentation to give a flush entrance a sense of formality and depth.

Projected Entries



Figure 3. Projected entries can be designed to suit almost any situation, from the ornate urban portico at left to the simple suburban portico at center and the large, informal porch below.



(Figure 3). Such an entry provides the opportunity to use design elements like columns, railings, planting areas, and roof forms that relate to the rest of the house. A projection is a good choice for dressing up an existing exterior, because it can be added to a flush or recessed entry without altering the rest of the house.

Recessed entrances, finally, can be thought of as negative spaces “carved out” of the main mass. The depth of a recess may vary from a foot or so to the length of a full staircase (Figure 4). Like a projected entry, a recessed entry has the thoroughly practical effect of providing shelter to the homeowner fumbling with a bunch of keys or the visitor waiting for someone to

answer the doorbell. Although some suburban homes — such as those from the federal period — feature recessed entries, they’re more characteristic of urban houses, where space is limited and projections such as porches are impractical. A recessed entry can be tightly integrated with the design of the rest of the home, employing details from the interior such as a barrel vault with its form reflected in an arched transom above the door, recessed or pendant lighting overhead, and recessed panels or wainscoting to decorate the side walls of the entry recess.

Recessed Entries

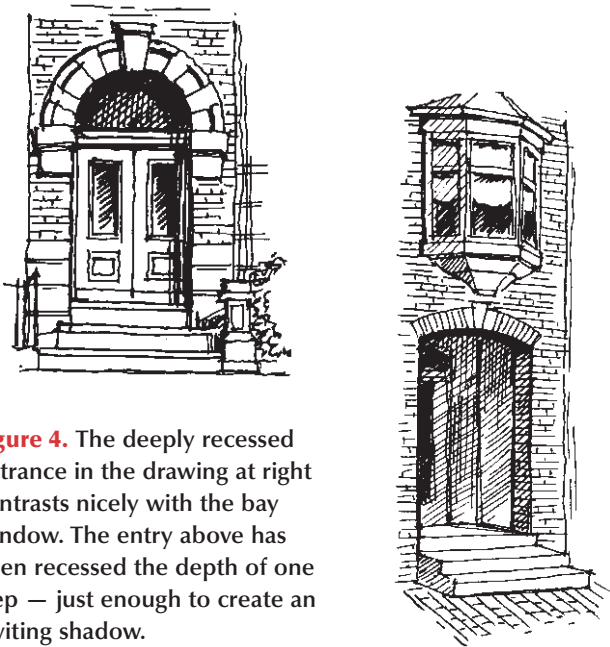


Figure 4. The deeply recessed entrance in the drawing at right contrasts nicely with the bay window. The entry above has been recessed the depth of one step — just enough to create an inviting shadow.

Beyond “Curb Appeal”

No rule says that an entry has to fit neatly into one of the above categories, and some successful designs fall somewhere between them. A flush entry door flanked by a pair of bay windows and sheltered by a shallow porch, for example, may feel more like a recessed entry. Contemporary designs sometimes shelter the main entry beneath a deep overhang, yielding a hybrid that’s not quite flush and not quite projected.

One often violated rule that should be followed, though, is that the entry should reflect the style and overall character of the house. There’s nothing wrong with making the main entry into a showpiece — to some extent, that’s what it’s for — but don’t overdo it. A million-dollar entry tacked on to the front of a modest house seems faintly ridiculous, like a top hat worn with blue jeans and a sport shirt.



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