

House Beautiful

What It Actually Takes to Lacquer Your Walls

Designer Phillip Thomas explains how (and why) to employ the glossy look.

BY KAITLIN MENZA MAR 20, 2019



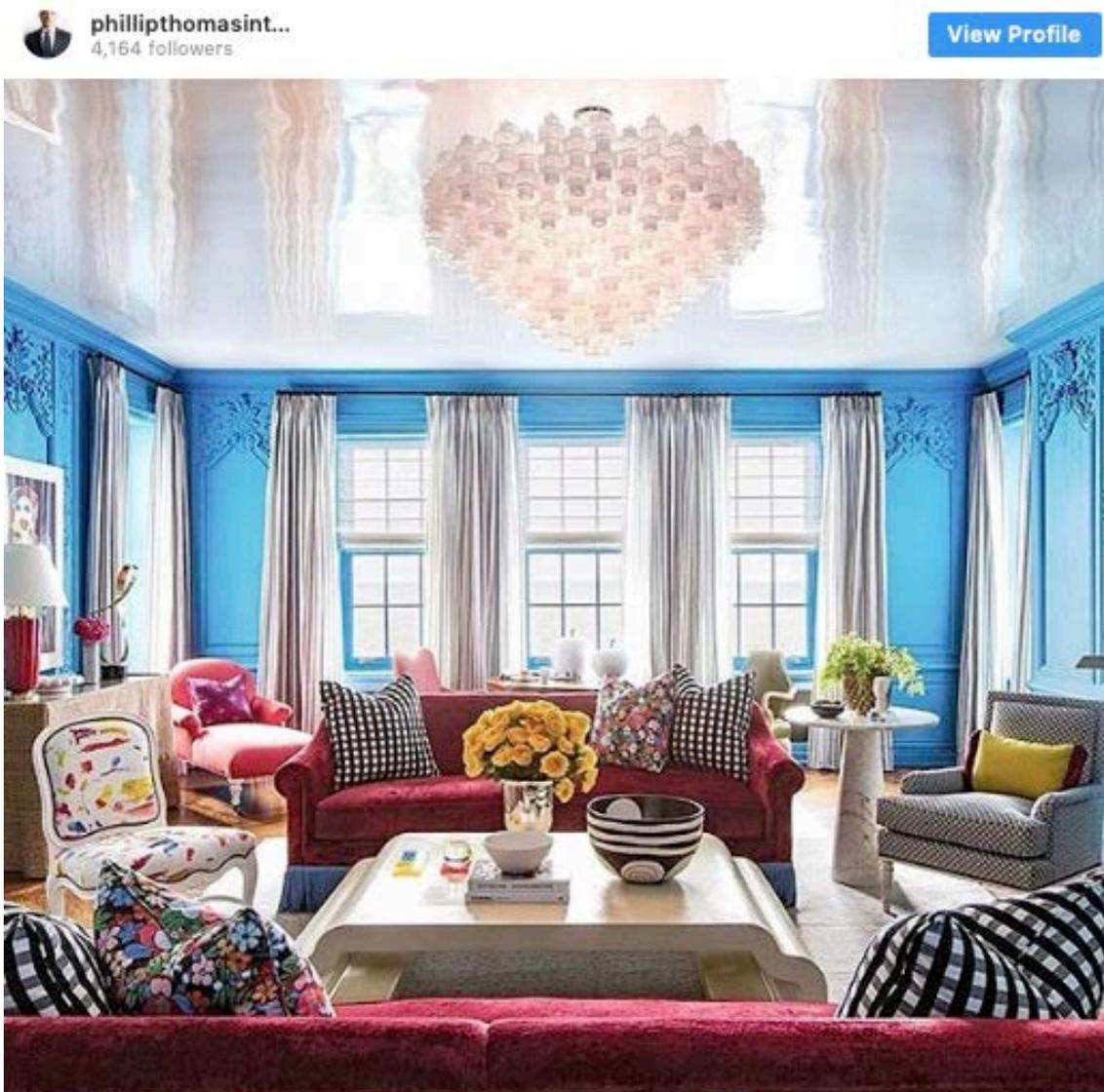
THOMAS LOOF

What makes the room above so special? Is it the rich red paint color on the walls, the funky zebra art, the piles of patterns, the fantasy of having a library in your own home? Truthfully, it's all those things – but a key aspect is the incredible glossy walls, which just exude sophistication.

A coat of lacquer paint is the secret for creating this lustrous look, and the product is perfect for creating depth, interest, and extra light in a room; sunlight, candles, and lamps bounce beautifully off the shine. Designer Phillip Thomas created the room above, which was featured in the March issue of *House Beautiful*, so he was the perfect person to explain how to figure out if the lacquered look is right for you.

First, is lacquer actually what you want?

"Lacquer is an age-old technique that requires multiple coats of paint, 7- 12 coats, where you apply, polish, apply, polish to create this incredible shell on the walls," Thomas explains. "That kind of lacquer *doesn't* mean high-gloss." True lacquer is solvent-based, and acts almost like a coating on walls or furniture, such as shellac – it makes furniture more durable while also imparting some luxury. But for the look above, he actually used high-gloss paint (Benjamin Moore's Ladybug Red, to be precise).



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"People think lacquer is always high-gloss, but it can be satin or even duller than that," he continues. "There are amazing paints, which I consider a more economic style of that lacquer concept." If you want lustrous walls, high-gloss paint is likely the product you're looking for.

What are some solid brands?

Thomas is partial to three lines for their high-gloss products: Benjamin Moore, Fine Paints of Europe ("They have a beautiful paint called ['Hollandlac'](#), which you can get in multiple sheens," he notes), and Farrow and Ball's "Porch Paint."



How do you know if it's right for your space?

"High-gloss is quite an indestructible material," Thomas says. "You can take a cloth to it, a mild detergent to it." But that doesn't mean it's low maintenance, per se. "The thing about paint is that the higher the sheen, the less forgiving the walls. As you get higher and higher in sheens, you notice more defect in your walls," he warns. "You have to consider the condition of you walls."

There is something to be said for layering high-gloss paint onto older, shabbier walls – it can look sort of ramshackle in a charming way – but if your vibe is sleeker, walls will be need to be sanded down. "If you think of old doors in London, they have years of paint on them, and you see all the layers and brush strokes," Thomas says. "If you're trying to achieve a minimalist environment, cracks and dimples are not what you want."

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It's all about the wall color in this living room! Thank you @benjaminmoore for sharing a glimpse of this cheerful and vibrant room that we completed for an equally cheerful and vibrant family. Love the color Margarita (2026-20)! It's beautiful both day and night! #ptinc #interiordesign #architecture #design #interiors #color #benjaminmoore #paint #quality #glow #margarita #cheerful #dayandnight #newyorkliving Repost from @benjaminmoore using @RepostRegramApp - The invigorating shade of Margarita 2026-20 was used by interior designer @phillipthomasinteriors in his client's living room to create an elegant yet functional space for an energetic young family. Photography credit - Peter Murdoch

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Where does it look best?

Now, the most fun question of all. "I do not discriminate on the space," Thomas says. "I just did a kitchen in an all-white high-gloss. In the case of this project [above], we did it in the entry gallery where there's no direct sunlight. We wanted to create the illusion of natural light."

Simply, any room or even hallway that needs a touch of drama, of light, of specialness, would benefit from a coat (or many) of high-gloss paint.