



painting by Howard Russell Baker- Eclipse 1925

## august inspiration...are you afraid of the dark?

On August 22, 2017, a solar eclipse passed over the width of the continental US. It was the first time a total solar eclipse occurred since 1918, so understandably, it was a much anticipated event. For many weeks prior to the actual phenomena, there were numerous articles, photos, and discussions centering around the eclipse and the word "dark" was on the minds and lips of many of us. I find all of this recent fascination about the dark/light phenomena amusing, as, mention the idea of designing a dark room to a client and there can often be a lot of pushback. It seems that many of us are *afraid of the dark*.

It is true that the word *dark* most times conjures up negative connotations. Metaphorically, the word *dark* represents the unknown, the sinister and the macabre. So, is it any wonder that when we suggest designing a dark room to clients, it often times sends shivers down their spines, and a quick "NO" follows suit? Usually it takes a bit of convincing before we get a "yes", but when we do, I can honestly say, the room in question usually becomes a favorite in the house.



Brave clients select Farrow & Ball paint - Down Pipe 26 for the living room entrance and dining area.

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Our perceptions of light and dark and how we spend time in our homes sometimes isn't accurate. Typically, when it comes to our homes, we can't seem to get enough "light". For some rooms, more light is better. In rooms that have more daytime activity, taking advantage of the most daylight possible is understandable. Its okay, you can let the sun shine through. But, when you want to hunker down with a good book, listen to music or have an intimate dining experience, don't rule out the moody, rich, sultry vibes of dark paint and wall coverings.



Nantucket dining room was inspired by a 'Story Sea at Midnight'.



We added yellow and teal tartan in this library to contrast the cobalt blue walls.

We recently designed a beautiful dining room in a newly constructed home at the New Jersey shore. All of the rooms were designed to play up the natural light, but in the dining room where light was minimal; we selected a darker tones for the walls, rugs and fabrics. Our client was concerned the dining room would appear too dark, but after I pointed out that the majority of time the dining room would be used would be in the evening, she understood and embraced the concept. In the evening you want to feel warm and intimate, not open and sunny.



Farrow & Ball paint, Brinjal 222 with teal stria and a luminous gold toned fabric.

There is definitely some trepidation about working with dark colors. The fear of creating a dreary or depressive vibe might be a bit "off putting" for many. It is true that dark colors can be a bit trickier to work with than pale or light tones. Designers know that dark rooms require lots of contrast both in fabrics, finishes and lighting. If walls are dark, contrasting them with luminous finishes, textural fabrics and good lighting is important. The darker the room, the more it will absorb the light, so having appropriate lighting is key.

One misconception about dark rooms is that dark walls and floors will make a small room appear smaller. Not true. A small room will always be a small room, but dark walls will not only add drama and a bit of joie de vie, but the walls will appear to recede. Throw in some bright fabrics and rugs with oversized patterns to create lots of contrast, and the eye is tricked to believe there is more depth than what actually exists. Libraries, entrance halls and dining rooms are rooms where you can comfortably bring in some "dark" to balance "light". These are rooms that are appropriate for dark spaces, so don't be afraid to take the leap.

Balance is one of the most important rules in Interior Design. Balance of color is just as important as balance of furniture placement. As we observe balance in nature, we need tonal balance too. The way that night turns to day and day turns to night should be reflected in our homes. Contrast is an important component of our feelings of wellbeing. Besides, it's not nice to fool Mother Nature!

*Good night and good luck,*

*Debra*

**President**

Debra Blair Design  
[dblair@blairdesignnyc.com](mailto:dblair@blairdesignnyc.com)  
917-717-5020

