

Distinctive Doors

with Karen Wilynski Carr

A door is a portal to your personal style, a statement about the space inside and the people who inhabit it. For award-winning designers and authors Joe Carr and Karen Wilynski Carr, that means doors should be hand-hewn and hand-picked. The couple showcase the best of Mexican design and hacienda furniture at Joe P. Carr Design in Austin, Texas, and at MexicanStyle.com. We talked to Karen about choosing distinctive Mexican doors.

Handcrafted doors add soul and character to new homes. Hand-hewn woods, textures, and character marks reveal the ingenuity of the hands that made them. These soulful pieces are a link to Mexico's rich history and heritage of traditional handcrafted techniques.

The patina of old wood is just beautiful. Wear marks from age and use seem to tell the story of previous owners. There are doors with hand-carved design details, layers of old colorful paint, and heavy wrought-iron hardware polished by decades of use. You'll often find whimsical details, like cattle brands or carved initials.

Portals are entrance gates: a door within a pair of doors. In paired doors, you'll see simple planks or hand-carved raised panels or spindles. Single doors — often shorter than 80 inches high, from storage buildings, for instance — are easily adapted to *almahu* (built-in wall cabinets) and coffee tables. Jail doors — most often crafted from mesquite for durability — make an interesting statement with their open lattice-work design and iron braces for reinforcement. There are doors with *amantitas*, or small windows, covered with iron grilles; doors from coastal regions often feature large *ventanas* for ventilation. Rustic gates that were often crafted on ranches/haciendas can be easily adapted

to garden gates and headboards.

So many of the old colonial doors are still available for refurbishing because they were so well-made, having been crafted of durable woods and allowed to dry naturally for long periods of time before being hand-dressed. It's a joy to find old weathered doors in Mexico and bring them back to life through thoughtful restoration and then to see them given new purpose in a new setting.



How To: Hacienda Doors

WHAT TO LOOK FOR Old Mexican doors

- Hand-hewn
- Durable woods: mesquite, *subino*/Mexican cypress, cedar, heart pine
- No warping or insect damage
- Wrought-iron hardware, *alcega* (hand-forged round nail heads), heavy latches, old hinges
- Newly crafted doors
- Hand-sanded surfaces
- Hand-forged decorative ironwork
- Kiln-dried woods

DOOR RESOURCES

Joe P. Carr Design carries unique antique colonial Mexican doors and architectural elements. It also has a line of new doors called the Hacienda Door collection, handcrafted in Mexico from hand-sanded, kiln-dried cedar. Visit the Joe P. Carr Design Gallery at 3601 Bee Caves Road, at Barton Springs Nursery, Austin, TX 78746. Contact: (512) 327-8284; www.mexicanstyle.com.

Craftsmen in Wood offers 30 years of expertise in Old World craftsmanship in both ready-made and custom doors. In Old Mesquite, Pueblo, and Rustic Knotty Alder collections lend themselves to fine Western and Spanish rustic decor. Visit the Arizona Showrooms and manufacturing plant at 3441 West Hadley St., Phoenix, AZ 85043. Contact: (602) 296-1050; www.craftsmeninwood.com.

