

# Wallpaper Trends are Transforming the Medium

DECOR | jill simpson | AUGUST 25, 2016



True Metals Basketweave Copper. image: maya romanoff

WALLPAPER IS LOSING its stuffy reputation and undergoing a modern renaissance of late. New technology allows for an amazing range of materials and digital printing capabilities, while the inverse—artistic, illustrated and hand-painted designs—are also experiencing a resurgence. There are so many options it can be overwhelming, but a few trends and creative applications are wowing the interior design industry.

Designer [Jess Green of Deepdale House in Locust Valley](#) often turns to wallcoverings to help rooms look more finished and polished. “It’s cozy, warmer and sound-dampening. In design circles, we’ve always used wallpaper, but now with retailers like Serena and Lily and Anthropologie offering wallpaper lines, it feels more accessible to young families; they can purchase it without using a decorator.”

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Selecting a wall covering depends in part on the location where it will be used. For a family room or other space that sees constant use, Green recommended using “a subtler, more calming pattern, because the space already has the ‘noise’ of everyday life. Though a larger scale might make it feel more modern and fresh.” Whereas in a smaller space, such as a powder room, hallway or pantry, she said “it’s fun to go bolder.” One of her favorite less-expected places to adorn with wallpaper is the ceiling. “It warms up a space and draws the eye up, a good trick when you have eight-foot ceilings.” Green recently used grasscloth on the ceiling of a dining room with painted walls. “It has a slight sheen to it, so the light from the chandelier dances around.”

Designer [Lisa Hershman of Abaca Interiors in Sands Point](#) is also on board with wallpapering targeted spots like the ceiling for maximum impact, especially in children’s rooms. “It’s unexpected and it’s fun for them to lie in bed and look up at it. It’s also practical—they can’t touch it!” She sees wallpaper as a targeted tool in her design arsenal, using it in unconventional applications, such as in a closet or as a single statement wall. “Very rarely do I do all four walls. I use it more as an accent than a centerpiece. I’ll use it as a texture or to draw the eye in. In a bedroom, it might be the backdrop for a headboard.”



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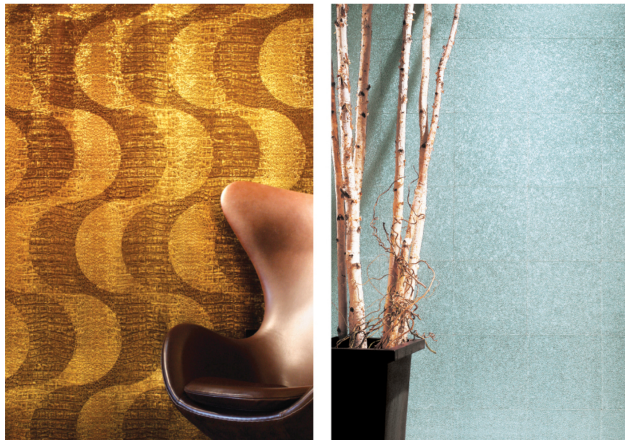
*Mother of Pearl on the Half Shell. image: maya romanoff*

Hershman said she's inspired by the variety of innovative choices on the market. Advancements in technology mean wall coverings can be made from alternative materials like metal, shell, cork or wood veneer. "Now we're seeing them cut into shapes and marquetry patterns with the use of CNC machines. These wallcoverings are so different from what we typically associate with wallpaper, they're helping shed its stodgy image." Green has also observed more textures like embroidery, painted grasscloth, silk, wool and even nailheads on wallpapers from inventive companies such as Phillip Jeffries. In addition, fabric companies like Kravet are offering a paper-backing service for their fabrics, further expanding the selection of prints and textures.

Digital printing is revolutionizing the trend as well, making custom-sized and colored-work more accessible and affordable. It even allows designers and clients to use photography or their own designs to produce one-of-a-kind installations. "Before you'd need a really high-end company or a decorative painter to create a mural for a specific installation. Now with digital printing, it's much easier for companies to scale things to size and the images are getting so lifelike," Hershman said. At the other end of the spectrum, she noted a growth in wallpapers that look handmade and painterly, whether hand-printed or digitized. Such treatments can even take the place of artwork, especially in small applications where wall space it at a premium. "Wallpaper can be treated like art," Hershman said. "In closets, pantries and laundry rooms it brings a smile. We use those spaces every day but they're often overlooked. You can just let go in those spaces and do whatever makes you happy."

#### THE NEWEST TRENDS IN WALLCOVERINGS

- Distinctive materials such as mother-of-pearl, flexible glass beads, metals like aluminum and copper and wood veneer in marquetry patterns
- Fabrics such as felted and woven wool, silk and linen
- Traditional patterns like florals or toile are updated with a bold scale or unusual colorways
- Dark or black backgrounds; black-and-white patterns
- The look of hand-drawn illustrations
- Atmospheric or painterly patterns
- Photorealistic wallpapers
- Kaleidoscopic images and patterns
- Murals that cover a large area
- Temporary or removable wallpapers and decals, perfect for renters
- Metallic patterns, particularly geometrics or touches on florals



*Flavor Paper, Rio Crocodile / Maya Romanoff, Beadazzled Bauble-Bluebell*

#### PRO TIPS

Always make sure to order a sample (as large as possible) before ordering wallpaper, Green said, but to get a sense of how it might look in a room overall, search for the name of the wallpaper online and look for images that show it installed. "See how it looks in different rooms and around window and door

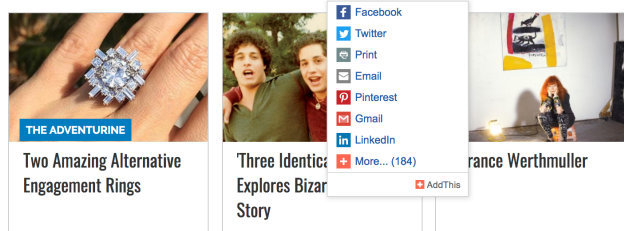
openings. That will really give you a better sense of the scale and how it looks installed.”

Green recommended vinyl papers for kitchens, baths and any area that gets heavy use. She cited Phillip Jeffries’ Belgian Linen as a good choice. It also works well on ceilings that are prone to cracking. “It hides everything and has a bit of stretch and give. It makes an imperfect ceiling look amazing.”

Have your wallpaper hanger come in before you order, Hershman advised. He can calculate exactly how many rolls you’ll need and tell you how to order it. “It can be very tricky to calculate—it’s not just a matter of square footage,” Hershman said. It can vary with the scale of the repeat and whether it comes in European or double or single rolls. Plus, papers such as grasscloth need to be hung differently. “It can be very easy to over-order, and if you under-order, the dye lots may not match if you order more later.” If it’s an unusual material, it’s also a good idea to ask for instructions.

The most important consideration in hanging paper in bathrooms and rooms with moisture is good ventilation, Hershman said, especially behind the sink. If not using vinyl, consider installing a tile backsplash or a clear glass splashguard.

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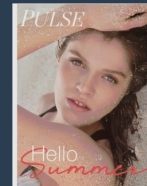
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