

# EAST

A woman with long brown hair in a braid, wearing a mustard yellow shirt and a light-colored apron, is smiling and looking down at a small glass bowl she is holding. She is in a rustic kitchen setting. To her left is a large wicker basket filled with pumpkins and gourds. In front of her on a wooden table are several glass jars filled with preserved vegetables: green beans, cherry tomatoes, and small red items. A large, dark metal lantern hangs from the ceiling on the left. The background is dark and out of focus, showing some kitchen items on shelves.

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# *the* Comeback Kid *of* Design

TODAY'S WALLPAPERS AREN'T JUST FOR WALLS

by Linda White **POSSIBILITIES ARE ENDLESS**

It could be called the 'comeback kid of design' but if you still associate wallpaper with the bold prints of the '60s and '70s or the floral patterns of the '80s, you might be overlooking its resurgence.

"Wall coverings have made a resounding comeback from their heyday in the early 20th century, when technological advances made way for wallpapers with greater durability, longer-lasting dyes, and easier application and removal," says Diana Rose, principal and creative director of Diana Rose Design, which serves Durham Region.

"Today's options are an ever farther cry from those retro motifs and have expanded beyond just paper to include a range of fabrics and textiles in natural and synthetic options. I love incorporating this versatile wall treatment in my design projects."

There are several reasons why demand for wallpaper bottomed out, including the desire for simpler, more minimalist interior designs and the reputation wallpaper had as something difficult to put up and even more difficult to remove. Today, many homeowners are choosing to wallpaper at least one room of their house and are also getting bolder with colours, patterns and use.

Designers on home improvement shows have been incorporating wallpaper into their projects and are helping drive its comeback. At the same time, the younger generation is discovering wallpaper for the first time on social media. With no preconceived notions of its past iterations and how much more difficult it was to remove or install, they're embracing it as a design feature.

But that's not the only thing behind its newfound popularity. "The resurgence of the maximalist trend in interiors and fashion coupled with the desire for personalization have all rekindled the love for wallpaper," says Sharon Grech, Benjamin Moore's colour and design expert. "I think the pandemic spurred it on even more as we were desperately seeking ways to bring joy to every corner of our interior surroundings and freely applying pattern, colour and texture is a sure way to achieve that."

Frankie Castro, creative director of Square Footage, a kitchen and bathroom renovation company based in Ajax, says new block print technology is also boosting the popularity of wallpaper. "The possibilities are endless," she explains. "There are so many different textures and styles for you to select from. Beautiful prints and intriguing →



Wallpaper creates welcome drama when applied to an accent wall. Photo courtesy of Square Footage, Ajax.



The wallpaper in this kitchen complements the cabinets, painted in Blue Macaw 784, a dazzling sapphire blue. Photo courtesy of Benjamin Moore.



Wallpaper adds texture and colour to this bedroom. Photo courtesy of Square Footage, Ajax.



Discover the many ways wallpaper can add personality to your home. Photo courtesy of Square Footage, Ajax.

→ textures can significantly impact a room at a relatively low cost.”

Wallpaper adds another layer to an interior. “It can set the mood and instantly elevate a space,” says Rose. Modern interior designs have seen an influx of natural elements with plenty of texture – a trend that has translated to wall coverings, too. “I love the gentle aesthetic of watercolour effects, clean geometric lines and grass cloth,” she says.

“While botanicals and large dramatic florals are still trending, abstract art and hand-painted sketch inspired motifs feel new for 2023,” Grech says. “Custom stencils, painted murals and layered colour blocks are other ways we are seeing people add pattern to walls, while plaster finishes are enjoying another moment in the spotlight with a renewed love for textured wall surfaces.”

### LARGER PATTERNS

Peel-and-stick wallpapers are popular among DIYers, Castro reports. Her favourite trends include murals and grass cloth, which adds interest and texture for an elegant look. While raised or 3D papers are also trending, high-impact larger patterns are the most popular, she notes.

Should you commit to wallpapering an entire room? “Consider using a bold wallpaper in a small room where you want to make a big impression, but where you don’t spend too much time, such as a guest powder room, an entranceway or an accent wall or ceiling,” says Rose.

“For spaces where you spend more time, such as the dining room or bedroom, opt for subtlety. These rooms likely already have a lot going in terms of furnishings, accessories, drapery and lighting, so look to a simpler wall treatment.”

Textured weaves such as grass cloth and other natural weaves are easy to live with longer term, so they’re an ideal choice to install on all walls in a room, Grech assures. “Wallpaper was traditionally a method to cover up wall plaster imperfections and this is still the case in many homes.

However, if traditional patterned wallpa- →



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– Frankie Castro

Creative Director of Square Footage, Ajax.

# Tips for Choosing Wallpaper



*Designer  
Diana Rose  
offers several tips  
for choosing the  
right wallpaper  
for your space:*

■ Consider the scale of the pattern and how often it repeats. “The sample may appeal to you online or in the showroom, but it may quickly become busy and overwhelming on your wall. If you’re looking for more interesting motifs such as foliage, consider mural papers that magnify the design to a larger scale, which will look proportionate to your space.”

■ If you’re working with wallpaper in a dark deep hue, white trim and baseboard might look disjointed and harsh. “To avoid this, I usually choose the main base colour that’s present in the wallpaper and find a paint colour to match and complement it.”

■ Pay attention to texture. Paper-based wall coverings can be flat and cheap-looking, extremely difficult to install and virtually impossible to remove. Avoid foil wallpaper because it shows imperfections on the walls. Natural or nature-inspired products, such as silk, may have some organic textural imperfections. That’s fine if you want a raw, organic look but not if you prefer a more-refined aesthetic.



The stunning black-and-white wallpaper adds whimsy to this laundry room, which features cabinets painted in Black HC-190, a dark anchoring neutral. Photo courtesy of Benjamin Moore.

→ per doesn’t suit your style, there are many paintable wallpapers with interesting, embossed textures available, such as anaglypta.” (Anaglypta is a range of paintable textured wallcoverings made from paper or vinyl.)

There are lots of ways to use wallpaper today. “A bespoke approach is to choose an accent wall with a large-scale design to create drama. Seldom considered is your ceiling and it offers an alternative point of view,” Castro suggests.

Large-scale patterns on the wall – whether oversized florals, botanicals or geometric patterns – add impact to a room and make wonderful feature walls and even unexpected ceiling accents, Grech adds. “A pretty

garden-inspired wallpaper surrounding a window with a garden view is a fun way to visually open up the view even more. For a striking contrast, pair wallpaper with painted trim, cabinets or furniture in a coordinating colour.”

Installing wallpaper inside panelling or panels is an easy DIY project and a great way to incorporate expensive wallpaper on a limited budget. You can expect many years of use from your wallpaper. “Wallpaper is highly durable,” Castro assures. “So long as you choose quality wallpaper and look after it properly, you can expect it to last for a long time. All you need is a little bit of water and a sponge if cleaning is required.” 