Wallpaper: In or Out?

Wallcoverings can change the look of a room in an instant

York Floral Trail Lattice in the Pantone Color of the Year, Honeysuckle, coordinates with the solid-colored lattice paper in the hallway and the honeysuckle chairs and wicker table in the sitting room.

By Sandra Meineke

As the real estate market continues to be sluggish across the country, homeowners who might have downsized or up-sized are choosing instead to stay where they are and just give their homes a fresh look. One of the most effective and least expensive ways to do that is to change the walls. But, in what way? Paint? Fabric? Artwork? Wallpaper? Murals? Actually, today's wallcoverings can give the illusion of just about any of those options.

For the past 15 years or so, new home builders and remodelers have steered clear of wallpaper — so much so that wallpaper became almost anathema. But, decorators have seen that trend turn around in 2011. The pendulum has swung, and part of the revival of ornamentation is the re-emergence of wallpaper. Consumer behavior patterns, style trends and economic factors all contribute to homeowners embracing wallpaper again. And, with good reason.

New technology allows wallpaper designers to unleash their creativity with all kinds of two-dimensional techniques including glass beads on wallpaper; wallpaper enhanced with sand, suede, raised inks, textural damasks, and yes, even flocking.

But, this is not your grandma's wallpaper. Flocking is back, but those velvety-textured coverings come in many different colors with both simple and ornate patterns. Manufacturers are pairing them with what the industry calls the "grounds," paper that matches the background upon which the flocks are laid. You can put "grounds" on the ceiling and lay the flocked paper on all four walls or do three walls in the plain grounds and one with flocking as an accent wall.

"We all remember the wallpaper growing up that we learned to hate," said Paul Montgomery, owner of Paul Montgomery Studios, maker of hand-painted wallcoverings. "But now, there are a lot of patterns that do enhance an interior. Wallcoverings can uplift and inspire and bring a sense of peace and tranquility to a room."

Surface View (*www.surfaceview.com*) and Murals Your Way (*www.muralsyourway.com*) offer the unique option of creating wall-sized murals from photographs — your own or those of a professional photographer from the manufacturer's collection. Casart Coverings (*www.casartcoverings.com*) makes a removable, custom, designer wallcovering that can be changed almost as fast as you switch the linens on your bed. And each decorative finish can be custom matched to Benjamin Moore and Pantone colors. Removable wallcoverings provide great value to homeowners and renters.

Like comic book-style beach scenes? What about a vintage Porsche? These very images could be the backdrop to a favorite room in your house. "Wallcoverings are a cost-effective way to get large-scale art on your walls," said Surface View co-owner Wayne Hemingway. "Technology is allowing the concept of wallcoverings to be pushed even further."

Another new trend is fabric and wallpaper combos. You can use your choice of wallpapers and then cover the room's chairs in an identical fabric. Some of the freshest trends in wallcoverings can be a great component in interior design.

"People are finally moving away from just a feature wall and are once again wallpapering two, three and four walls in a room," says David Klaus at Graham and Brown Wallpaper Company. "Fewer accent walls and more fully papered rooms are cropping up in homes and magazine spreads as of late."

According to the Wallcovering Association, wallcovering is a great impersonator. It can change the visual appearance of a room in many ways. Wallcovering helps make the most of a room's strong points, while masking its weaker features. It can be used to draw attention to a fireplace focal-point wall by wrapping the fireplace facing with a strong pattern. A focal-point wall can be created by using the same strong pattern on any blank wall. All

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it takes is a little imagination.

Wallcoverings can brighten a dark room, add character to a dull room, warm up a room with no architectural features, create a cozy atmosphere, frame the room's best features and reveal your personality more than any other wall treatment. In addition, wallcoverings feature certain patterns such as stripes and overall prints to perform optical illusions that make rooms that ordinarily look too long, too boxy or have low ceilings appear more proportionate.

Walcoverings can also be used to add value to your home. They cover flaws in the wall surface that paint can't. They protect the wall surface from marks, are an excellent fast-fix for those selling their home and offer a wide range of subtle patterns and colors to neutralize the interior to fit anyone's style. Retail studies show that a tastefully decorated home can add a 10 to 15 percent increase in property value.

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Wallcoverings are a timeless decorating product. As new styles emerge, wallcovering designers capture it, define it and present it in a variety of color choices. With its ability to capture any style or color scheme, wallcoverings help you express your personality and style — whether your taste is contemporary, romantic, country or eclectic.

Here are a few wallpaper trends that you can expect to see this fall and on into the new year.

Printable wallpapers –Printable wallpapers are a perfect hybrid between dressing a wall with wallpaper and painting it. The idea of printable wallpapers is to allow the homeowners to customize their own wallpapers according to their taste. If the design trends change the next year, the wall can change with it.

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From the Lisbon Studio 465 collection, soft linen looks, muted color ways and elegant damasks echo the sophistication of Lisbon, while flowery medallions offer a captivating, traditional feeling.

Perfect for focal and accent walls, Birds and Birch removeable wallcovering from Casart adds color and whimsy to the neutral tones of the kitchen and free-standing room divider.

Tone on tone –A subdued look is one latest trend, and tone on tone wallpapers fill that bill. Creating a dramatic statement with tone on tone papers is very easy. They are perfectly suited to guest rooms, entryways, corridors, closed balconies and staircases.

Metallic –From rich bronzes and sharp silvers to soft gold, metallic wallpapers are a fantastic way to add decadence and instant glamour to a space. Some companies offer the opportunity to customers to select a preferred design.

Nature-inspired earthy and green tones — Nature-inspired earthy and green tones are set to rule the base color of the wallpapers. Since these colors are neutral, few colors clash with them, and the wallpapers can be easily used in any area of a home.

Old is new in the world of wallcovering these days. Expect to find some of these old favorites returning in updated colors and textures.

Grasscloth — Grasscloths are back and better than ever. They provide a great texture and fit with any style from traditional to contemporary.

Flocks — New flock patterns come in many different colors with both simple and ornate patterns and are perfect for accent walls.

Damasks — Your guests won't be able to detect that these "old world" damasks are laser-printed. They look like the walls were fauxed 100 years ago.

Textured Vinyl — Vinyls are not just for commercial use anymore. They can look like leather, crocodile, basket weave, grasscloth, silk, linen, sisal and much more. Scrubbable vinyls are perfect for high-traffic areas such as bathrooms, hallways and kitchens.

Botanicals — Cool, subtle botanicals such as pussy willows, cotton plants, twigs and branches provide a soft touch for those who don't want a bold print. This is a great place to start if you're wanting a spa feel.

Going Bold — Europeans are using a lot of bold patterns, geometric shapes and bright colors such as fuchsia, lime green and purple.

So, if you love wallcoverings, don't let anyone talk you out of them. Today's wallcovering choices are plentiful, colorful, functional and a great way to make a big impact in the home you love.●

Sandberg's Claude from Thibaut Designs is a surface print, a printing technique of painterly pigment layering. Matte colors and shimmering gold and silver blend into each other, softening the edges of the box-within-a box pattern.

Wallquest's Kensington collection includes this damask pattern that is laser-printed but looks like an authentic damask print from a century ago.

Casart's Custom Drysdale Colorwash wallcovering mimics the look and texture of faux linen. It can be replaced with the change of seasons.

Casart revives the historic mural and trompe l'oeil techniques of the fascinating Artichoke with the same quality of a hand-painted botanical print.