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Globe Real Estate

West Coast style in the Beaches

HOME OF THE WEEK, G23

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TO THE FOREGROUND THIS ISN'T YOUR GRANDMA'S WALLPAPER

SARAH RICHARDSON DESIGN

What's old is new again as **SARAH RICHARDSON** embraces the modern aesthetic pleasures of high-end, hand-printed, high-impact designer wallpaper. **G4**

INTERIORS

Grandma's old wallpaper no more

SARAH RICHARDSON
DESIGN INC.

If all that's old is new again, then wallpaper is the cutting edge of modern designer style.

Let's face it, for many years wallpaper was the unfashionable outcast at the annual trends cocktail party. Often mocked and ridiculed for being fussy, prissy and downright overbearing, it seemed that there would never be a place in the volumes of critical style for poor, old wallpaper.

I remember reading a quote from a famous U.S. designer: "Will needlepoint pillows work in my living room? Not if I'm your designer!" In my own mind I thought that, if asked the same question, I'd also include wallpaper in the list. It was so "not me," so contrary to the pared down, calm, soothing environments I was trying to create.

Yet I have to confess that I use wallpaper, I like wallpaper, I even want to put wallpaper in my 1960s-style modern home! So what happened, why the change of heart?

After seeing one too many soulless, sterile, "modern spaces," I found myself drawn to the texture and impact of a room dressed in sassy wallpaper. Now, let's be clear about what makes the cut in my books. I'm not talking about prepasted vinyl patterns with cute patterns. I have a strict policy that says "no ribbons, no bows, no baskets, no cherubs, no bunnies . . . and *no* borders."

What I'm embracing is papers of the high-end, hand-printed, high-impact (and, not coincidentally, high-priced) variety.

When charged with the task of creating a 7,000-square-foot home for the Vancouver General Hospital and University of British Columbia Hospital Foundation Millionaire Lottery for the third time in as many years, I decided to make wallpaper my friend.

I used it to give bland rooms personality, make large rooms feel intimate and uninspired spaces seem welcoming.

Like any decorative statement, the most important guiding principle when using wallpaper is knowing when to stop, understanding the fine line between something being an accent and theme. If in doubt, remember that in the general world of good taste, accent equals good, theme equals bad. If you are thinking about embracing the decorative "wow" of wallpaper, here are a few ways to use it.

Sarah Richardson is a designer (www.sarahrichardsondesign.com) as well as host and co-producer of design inc. *(www.designinc.ca), which airs Tuesdays at 8:00 p.m. on HGTV. Her column will appear occasionally in Globe Real Estate.*

Go for fun

Forget the teddy bear borders and do something really playful in the nursery. A simple two-colour palette of red and lilac offers a break from tried-and-true nursery colours. The whimsical sketches are reminiscent of Ludwig Bemelmans' illustrations for the famous *Madeline* series of books and the iconic Bemelmans Bar at the Carlyle Hotel in New York. This paper shows seaside snapshots with fashionable flair. Bold fabric accents and pared-down accessories are the key to keeping this sassy, not suffocating. (Wallpaper by Thibaut.)

Go for colour — and lots of it!

Butterflies, frogs and flowers all in one room? I never thought I'd do it, but this is the paper that really got me going. If you're thinking about experimenting with wallpaper, the dining room is an ideal starting point. After all, this is a room where you want to create energy and excitement. I've had it with neutral dining rooms — they're boring! I want spice, laughter and good times. Reflective surfaces create sparkle and elegance while the fabrics play down the formal mood — linen drapes and polka dot dining chairs make sure it's perceived as more groovy than grandma. (Wallpaper by Thibaut.)

Go for monochromatic

If you're in the mood for modern you can still make a statement with wallpaper. Keep in mind classic vertical awning stripes can be reinterpreted for modern cool if installed horizontally (only a good idea if your walls and floors are level). In this case, a slightly opalescent stripe adds a smoky lustre to an otherwise masculine scheme. (Wallpaper by Romo.)

Go for texture

If you're not feeling too bold about pattern, then start with something decidedly simple. Classic grass cloth adds a tactile appeal with a slightly retro feel. When paired with panelling, it's the perfect neutral solution for a powder room. It brings relaxed sophistication to the city and polished rustic to the country. (Wallpaper by Waverly.)

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