



Spring Rollout

Update your walls' wardrobe? Dare to dress them with texture and color this season.

BY

Jennifer Porter

PHOTOGRAPHY: [Hank Drew](#)

If the idea of wallpaper conjures up cozy country kitchen patterns and has you frantically begging for up-to-date alternatives, we're here to calm your design anxiety. From faux animal hides to digital images, this season's array of wall coverings represents a welcome change.

Much of the excitement is a result of a trend to combine texture, color and innovative materials, resulting in unexpected looks for the home. "Texture is something you can get from wall coverings that you can't always get with paint," says designer Holly Van Biene. The newest products to capture this craze feature cork, stone, glass beads and leather.

EXAMINE YOUR OPTIONS

Other materials making strong statements in designers' portfolios this season include tile, vinyl, natural elements, handmade paper, murals and digitally created images. But traditional wallpaper design has made strides too. Seattle artist-turned-wallpaper designer Steve Jensen has witnessed a shift in demand away from what he calls "Italian-looking" paper to a midcentury feel. "I see more design and overall texture," Jensen says.

"There is a much broader range [in paper]... from the very sophisticated and subtle to the more whimsical with social overtones," says Terry Draheim, whose Seattle Design Center showroom carries Steve Jensen's collection.

FIGHT THE WEATHER WITH WALLPAPER

Drab weather may be something Seattleites can live with much of the year, but spicing up your home's interior is a great way to get through those rainy days. One recent trend among designers seeking to add dramatic impact is choosing wall coverings made of faux animal hides.

The illusion of texture in animal prints is another important trend, contends Joan Lockwood, of her eponymous showroom. She cites the recent popularity of Osborne & Little's shagreen print wallpaper as evidence. Made of shark belly, authentic shagreen has traditionally been used in decorative accessories.

For times when only the real thing will do, rely on local resources that carry coverings made of organic and environmentally friendly materials. Innvironments® is a growing collection of wall coverings made of natural, renewable and recyclable materials.

BE PRACTICAL WITH PLACEMENT

Steve Jensen suggests covering an entire room and those adjacent to create the same effect that using complementary paints from room to room might do. Designer Amely Wurmbrand, however, warns her clients against covering entire rooms. "The eye can get tired and bored. That's why a small space makes sense," she says.

Another consideration when incorporating a new wall covering is maintaining a cohesive design scheme. "Be sure to choose wallpaper that complements your art and acts as a canvas might to set the scene," says Jensen.

CONSIDER THE SPACE, AND THE SOURCE

Beyond aesthetics, keep in mind some practical matters. Resist applying fragile wallpaper or coverings in heavily used bathrooms, where frequent condensation can wreak havoc on tender treatments.

Consider these designer tips: Save time by choosing wall coverings for your home--they require only a fraction of the preparation and installation effort that painting requires. Choose an installer carefully and discuss the use of an oil-based primer with your treatment. It will make the difference between easy removal and future frustration.

When covering a bathroom during new construction or a remodel, "have the fixtures installed before a covering is applied," advises Holly Van Biene. You'll reduce the risk of damaging your \$150-per-roll paper during the process.