



In a dining room, the designers at Kalu Interior might introduce a reflective or glimmering feature using a metallic wallcovering.

# WALLPAPER MAKES STYLISH COMEBACK

Modern treatments can add impact and personality to home decor

LINDA WHITE

After years of getting a bum rap, wallpaper has returned with a vengeance. Think ultra-stylish prints, dimensional fabrics and new materials that make installation and removal a breeze. Decidedly more dramatic than paint, wallpaper is also a relatively affordable way to transform a room.

"What previously would have been considered very '80s and '90s is now completely on trend for the 21st century ... and is definitely cool again," say award-winning designers Phyllis Lui and Aleem Kassam, the principal design duo at Kalu Interiors. Based in Vancouver, the design firm provides bespoke design services across the country.

Today's wallpapers aren't like anything you saw on your grandmother's walls, assures Benjamin Moore colour and design expert Sharon Grech.

"I would suggest using wallpaper to create a focal point or to highlight an architectural feature, such as a wonderful fireplace," she says.

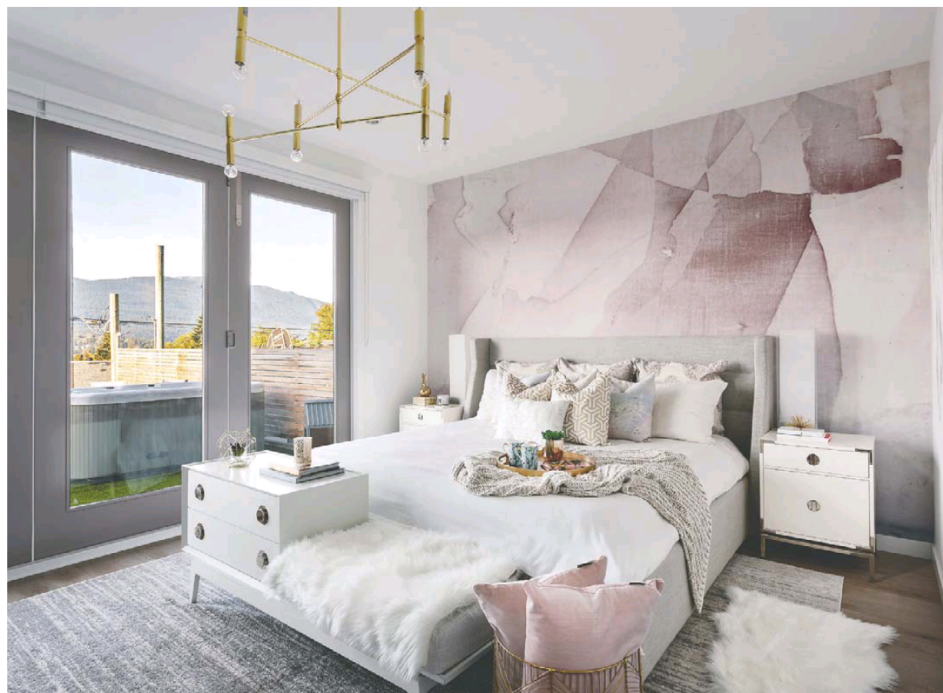
For a modern take on the trend, avoid small patterns.

"With the emergence of new technologies, materials, patterns and colours, wallcoverings have come a long way," say Lui and Kassam.

Embrace bold colours, textures and patterns or create a look all your own, with customization in colours, patterns or scale readily available through many suppliers.

The designers at Kalu Interiors count metallic wallcoverings among their favourites. Think gold accents, embossed jewel tones and avant-garde patterns. Natural-inspired images, such as botanicals, trees, birds, clouds or conceptual interpretations of those subjects, meanwhile, are whimsical, not too serious and add a touch of elegance to a space, Lui and Kassam say.

Popular styles also include print-



New adhesive formulas and stick-and-peel fabrics that strip off walls without leaving residue have done wonders for wallpaper's reputation. Whether creating a focal wall or something more subtle, there are endless options.



Phyllis Lui and Aleem Kassam of Kalu Interiors say wallpaper provides layers of colour and texture to finish off the look of any space.

ed grass cloths in beautiful saturated colours, says Rebecca Hay, president and principal designer of Rebecca Hay Designs in Toronto. "Botanicals are still popular but flo-

als are in the spotlight. Wall murals are also a great option and very popular. They're less expensive often than traditional wallpaper." In her boys' room, Hay used gold

star peel-and-stick decals on top of Benjamin Moore's Hale Navy paint. "It's a great cost-effective way to add personality" she says.

There are lots of reasons to love wallpaper. It provides an added layer of colour and texture or a combination of the two, which truly finishes off the look of any space, Lui and Kassam say.

In some spaces, they use a treatment that appeals to the sense of touch. If they plan to add shelves, art or wall scones on top of the wallpaper, they opt for a more "subtle" approach to create "thoughtful layers of colours, materials and finishes versus elements competing with one another."

In other areas — such as a nursery or powder room — the design duo may choose a bolder wallpaper to create a focal wall.

## DESIGNER TIPS

- Always get a sample of the wallpaper at the scale you intend to use. Take it home and adhere it to your wall using green painter's tape. Live with it for a few days to see how it looks in different lighting conditions and decide if you still love it. — *Rebecca Hay*
- When selecting a wallcovering, don't overlook its application. If you've selected a wallcovering with a large pattern repeat but it's being applied to only a small area — within a niche, for example — you won't achieve a pattern repeat and might miss out on a good portion of the design. — *Phyllis Lui and Aleem Kassam*

Wallpaper is also a simple way to tie in themes or create cohesiveness throughout a home by using the same or complementary coverings in different spaces. "Recently, we've been stretching the limits with not only the types of coverings we decide to use for our clients and projects but the locations of them too," say Lui and Kassam. "No longer just traditionally along one feature wall, we may wrap an entire room or span from the first level up to the second or third floor of a home.

"By strategically placing wallcoverings, you can highlight certain areas or architectural details or, alternatively, introduce details where there perhaps were none."

Their favourite places to use wallcoverings are powder rooms, bedroom headboard walls, and feature walls in the dining and living rooms.

Another interesting place to incorporate wallpaper is on the ceiling, with blue being a popular option — but hardly the only one, Grech adds.

"The trend these days has moved away from accent walls to wallpapering every wall in a room. Go big or go home," says Hay. "As a designer, I love working with large-scale patterns in wallpaper to maximize impact. It's fun to play with scale and make a statement."

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