



by IRENE WILLIAMS

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# writing on the wall

Peruse paper, paint, and prints to create wall-to-wall style.

**One of the great mysteries** in the history of home décor may be the “Wallpaper Caper.” What really caused the demise of the formerly beloved patterned, pasted wall adornment? Did the paint marketers do an exceptional job? Did society tire of all the scraping and seams? Was paper too closely aligned with the now nearly extinct wood panel?

Just mention wallpaper, and I harken to childhood memories: the flocked asparagus green bamboo shoots of our dining room wallpaper (so tactile!), the repetitive Peter Pan pattern in my bedroom — appealing during elementary school, appalling post-junior high. Then I recall the fascination of vertical excavation in my first rental house, peeling back decades of designs

to get down to a paintable surface. I saw everything from paisleys to pansies during that project!

Over the last 15+ years, the fall of wallpaper’s popularity has paralleled the rise in preference for paint colors. Certainly, paint is typically a more versatile, changeable, and affordable means of dressing walls, and it’s less committal. Want to update a room? Just repaint! Then there’s the comfort of the immediate forgiveness should a color selection prove to be a total misfire: paint-over = do-over. Importantly, luscious swathes of color can really open up a space without competing with patterns in furniture or upholstered accents.

Mind you, paper has never gone away entirely; yet any proclamations of a full comeback are totally off the wall. Many of today’s most popular applied wall coverings really aren’t “paper” per se. They’re sheets of natural materials and fibers, including textured and eco-chic grasscloths, woven reeds, and bamboos. And as retro’s gone metro, there has been a subtle surge in vintage paper prints, quasi-antique looks some designers are incorporating as accents or space-enveloping explosions. (Note: Some new wallpapers are tack-backed and require no gluing.) While the bursting florals and borders of the late 1980s remain out of vogue, the delicate, intricate designs of the 1880s are occasionally embraced.

Also embraced today are natural stones, tile, metal, and glass — and not just for bathroom walls and kitchen backsplashes anymore; these authentic materials are increasingly prominent in living spaces, even bedrooms. Classic and lasting, these di-

mensional, environmental options are decidedly more committal than aforementioned paint colors, let alone wallpaper. Yet many homeowners are drawn to the quality, undeniable style, and potential ROI of such installed investments.

In contrast, there are some inventive and decidedly non-permanent wall adornment alternatives on the market today. Giant, printed canvases, peel-and-stick decals, large format stencil art motifs, even adhesive words and inspirational phrases — there are wall-to-wall options to create style that’s trendy, tenacious, and totally temporary. These clever creations are ideal for young adults with fleeting tastes, renters unauthorized to alter walls, or anyone wanting fresh designs to look up to — literally.

To round out this article I’m writing on “the wall,” here are some specific products to paper, print, and paste your vertical spaces.

## 1. Read the Paper

This wacky wallpaper by Tracy Kendall is available via [anthropologie.com](http://anthropologie.com) and will create the appearance of one who’s very well read.

## 2. Hemp to Be Squared

Phillip Jeffries Ltd. ([philipjeffries.com](http://philipjeffries.com)) is the source for natural fiber wall coverings, such as this lovely embroidered hemp selection.

## 3. A Touch of Glass

The spectrum of colors in Exceptional Surfaces’ ([exceptional-surfaces.com](http://exceptional-surfaces.com)) Britto add sparkle and shine to any wall.

## 4. The Clock on the Wall

Chiasso’s ([chiasso.com](http://chiasso.com)) full-size decal is a great grandfather clock decoy. Couple the peel-and-stick silhouette with a functional clock face, and you’ll be rockin’!

## The Finish Line

Paint is quaint, but faux finishes are true wall art. Partner with a proficient artist to turn your walls into replications of brick, stone, even plaster.

With these options, I do believe we’ve thoroughly covered the wall! ☞



P: Exceptional Surfaces



P: Phillip Jeffries Ltd.



P: anthropologie.com



P: Chiasso

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Wanna find home décor in your neck of the ‘hood? Read the “Her Home” blog throughout the month of January to discover great shops and stops in your neighborhood — from East Nashville to West Meade ... and everywhere in between! Plus, find live links to the products on this page at [hernashville.com](http://hernashville.com).