

# Wallpaper Can Transform a Space—As Much or As Little As You Like

‘Dress your walls as you would dress yourself,’ suggests one designer

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Patterned wallpaper above this otherwise neutral dining room designed by Donna Mondì, founder and principal, Donna Mondì Interior Design in Chicago adds unexpected detail to the ceiling.

*NICK NOVELLI, COURTESY OF DONNA MONDI INTERIOR DESIGN*

*Each week Mansion Global tackles an interior design topic with an elite group of designers from around the world who work on luxury properties. This week we look at **how wallpaper can transform a space**.*

Using decorative wallpaper is one of the easiest and quickest ways to transform a space. There are so many options from materiality— like hand-painted or silk—to the pattern—bold geometric to nature-inspired, said Rome-based architect and designer Achille Salvagni.

If you're a bit of a commitment phobe, before papering a large-scale room, try something smaller. "My favorite room to paper is the powder room," said Donna Mondì, founder and principal, Donna Mondì Interior Design in Chicago. "You can have some fun in there and create something dramatic and powerful without the commitment that a larger room would require. I also love the unexpected effect wallpapering a ceiling has. It always comes as a sweet surprise to guests," Ms. Mondì said.

The beauty of wallpaper is it can have so many different effects on the overall room. "If there's a lot going on in a space but you want to do something special on the walls, we may select a textured wall covering like a metallic grass cloth, ribbed lacquer, or woven linen to add depth or sheen," Ms. Mondì said. "If we want all out drama to come from the walls, then a bold, graphic wallpaper is the perfect thing. Over-scaled patterns in tribal prints, florals, and even traditional iconic motifs like damasks and Chinoiserie are great choices with lots of impact."

Whether you're ready to commit to papering an entire great room or a cozy nook, here are tips from the pros to help you narrow the field.

## **Consider the room**

"First, think about how much traffic the space will have, as well as if there are kids and pets in the house. Wet areas also need special consideration. If you're worried about any of these elements, commercial-grade vinyl coverings are a great solution.

If you have a room with strange angles, choose texture or a small pattern over a distinct pattern, as the latter will get distorted with the irregular lines of the room.

"You should also think about the style of the room itself (Is it a formal dining room? A casual den?) however, there is usually a wall covering that can work with whatever level of formality and style you want to create. In most instances, the paper can have a big impact on defining the style, but the level of formality can vary based on the furnishings already inside the room. For example, even the rough texture of a grass cloth can look quite sophisticated when the surroundings are more posh.

"When it comes to how much of the room's walls you should cover, most of the time, I cover all four. Accent walls can work really well but only in certain circumstances. Most often, if we plan an accent wall, it's for the wall the bed is against in a bedroom. If you have a large living space and only cover one wall, it can look unfinished and give the impression that you held back because of either fear or budget."

— **Donna Mondì, founder and principal, Donna Mondì Interior Design, Chicago**

## **Select the style**

"Dress your walls as you would dress yourself—soft textures, chic flocking, raffia for an island feel, or silk wall coverings for elegance.

"Different types of wallpaper can have different effects on a room. Metallic wallpapers, for instance, are reflective and offer new light to a space. Plus, they are also a less expensive alternative to a sheet mirror, which is more difficult to remove from a space (which can be problematic if you have a rental).



Red-patterned wallpaper in this dining room designed by Palm Beach, Florida-based designer Carleton Varney, president/ owner Dorothy Draper & Co. Inc. creates an eclectic feel in the context of the room's décor.

*Dorothy Draper and Company, Inc*

"Specific patterns can also influence the feel. Vertical stripes, tall trees, or architectural elements like columns, can actually give a room with low ceilings a sense of height.

"Wall coverings transport an empty space into a fantasy in just a few hours. Asian styles, beachy themes, or even Spanish influences transform the feel of an ordinary room into something more exotic."

**— Carleton Varney, president/ owner Dorothy Draper & Co., Palm Beach, Florida**

### **Mix and match—subtly**

"You don't have to stick with the same paper throughout your home. To create synergy from room to room, you can use different colors and patterns, but by sticking with the same type of paper and complementary colors your home will look more cohesive. Walking from one room with a bold graphic identity into another one with contrasting and clashing colors creates a disconnect. Subtlety is key. If the design is too aggressive, it will overcome the natural environment that surrounds it. It should add to a space without overpowering it.



A subtle abstract floral pattern used above the bed creates a mural-like accent in this bedroom designed by Rome-based architect and designer Achille Salvagni.

*Paolo Pettrignani*

"Another interesting way to use wallpaper is sparingly—above a dado rail or wood paneling, for example, to give just a touch of color and print to the room. I often use it to highlight the back of an alcove or as a border."

— **Rome-based architect and designer Achille Salvagni**