

the great wall

Turn a bare surface into a style statement with colour, pattern or texture

WORDS CATHERINE McCORMACK

A FEATURE WALL breathes new decorative life into a tired room – and can enhance an already beautiful one. “It generates impact and drama, creates a focal point or helps to accentuate an architectural feature,” says Amanda Grace, director of Sydney Design School. Better still, with only a limited amount of surface to cover, feature walls are generally inexpensive – and easy to alter if you change your mind! >





Perfect placement

PICK THE BEST SPACE
FOR A FOCAL POINT

Your feature wall should be the first surface your eye falls upon when you enter a room. It could be a chimney breast, an alcove or the backdrop to floor-to-ceiling shelving. "Choose an area big enough to carry your chosen colour or finish, then use it to highlight a feature or a piece of furniture," says Sydney Design School director Amanda Grace. Feature walls are also a design-savvy way to create 'zones'; here, De Gournay 'Japanese & Korean' handpainted wallpaper, available from Milgate, defines an earthy dining area. Think upwards, too. "Paint cornices in a light colour and the ceiling in a darker shade to highlight the details," suggests Carmen Parker of Carmen Parker Styling. If your ceilings aren't blessed with charming period details, add your own – check out the range of cornices and other trims at Porta Mouldings.



This painted stone-look wall (try Watty's Feature & Effects Stone for similar) adds a sense of theatre, softened by simple blinds; try Luxaflex 'Sunscreens' roller blinds.

Paint pizzazz

DRESS UP A WALL WITH A BOLD HUE OR SPECIAL-EFFECT FINISH

A single surface painted in a striking shade makes a classic feature wall. If you're struggling to choose a hue, be inspired by a favourite artwork or accessory in the space. Or, if you want an interior that's up-to-the-minute, try Pantone's colour of 2015: Marsala, a rich and earthy shade of burgundy (turn to page 57 for style buys in this shade). "Balanced with copper, raw wood and other spice colours, it feels sophisticated and organic," says Sarah Stephenson of Watty.

Ocean blues such as aqua and teal are also on trend, as are deep shades of grey, although dark colours are best suited to rooms with plenty of natural light. "Trim a dark feature colour with fresh, white skirting and balance the deep tone with plenty of light colours in soft furnishings and window dressings," suggests Sarah.

Paint doesn't have to be limited to a single flat colour. For an old-world look, consider a specialty finish like Watty Interior Design Features & Effects Stone. The Design range from Dulux includes striking metallic and pearlescent finishes, while Porter's Paints Liquid Copper & Patina Green lends an intriguing, textured look.

If fun and contemporary is your thing, consider wide directional stripes – surprisingly easy to do with the help of painter's tape. A wall splashed with chalkboard paint, available in all manner of hues, is a great fit for kids' bedrooms or the kitchen. >



To re-create this luxe effect, sponge on Dulux Design Metallic paint in Metro Mars.

TEXTURED FINISHES
WORK BEST IN WARM,
neutral HUES



Try this smart design trick: the TV seemingly disappears into this hearth wall, painted in Thoroughbred from Porter's Paints.



Find this Piet Hein Eek 'Scrapwood' wallpaper at Safari Living.



For a soft and subtle finish, try this De Gournay 'Badminton' wallpaper, available from Milgate.

TAKE CUES FROM THE *natural* WORLD WITH WALLPAPERS THAT MIMIC TIMBER AND STONE



This Komar 'World Map' mural, available from Wayfair, adds an international flavour.

Paper play

FOR A SHOT OF PATTERN OR LAVISH LOOK, IT'S HARD TO GO PAST WALLPAPER

Although sophisticated and visually arresting, wallpaper can be a daunting design decision, so start small and safe. "Paint the wall in a similar colour first," advises interior designer Andrea D'Cruz. If you feel comfortable living with your chosen colour, press on and install that statement paper.

"I love heavily patterned wallpaper behind a bedhead," says Carmen Parker. "It creates drama in a room that is often swathed in neutrals." Patterned or gilded papers also work well in living and dining spaces, studies, hallways and powder rooms. "Choose something that will age well – a neutral pattern is ideal, as you won't fall out of love with it as quickly as you might a hot pink chevron," says interior designer Emma Blomfield of Nest Designs.

For a subtle, organic effect, look to textured grass weaves, botanical-themed prints or papers that replicate distressed metal, concrete or raw timber. If you enjoy unleashing your creative side, try a paintable paper such as Anaglypta (available from Vision Wallcoverings), which you can paint in the colour of your choice.

To add fun and wonder to a child's room, try animal decals, cartoon prints or map wallpapers – find an extensive range at The Wallpaper Company. The rise and rise of graphic printing means that virtually any image can be turned into a bespoke wallcovering, giving you the chance to create a truly personal space by turning a much-loved photo into a mural; Rebel Walls can custom-make a paper to suit your preference and scheme. >

Make a bold blue statement with Christian Lacroix for Designers Guild 'Azulejos' tile-style wallpaper from Radford Furnishings.



transform {easy updates}

Heritage Ceilings 'Snowflakes' pressed tin wall panels, painted in Dulux Natural White, offer a nod to the past.



Eye-catching alternatives

FEATURE WALLS ARE ONLY LIMITED BY YOUR CREATIVITY

Look to unexpected materials to create a feature wall with wow. Tiles and natural stone are an obvious choice for bathrooms, but also work around a fireplace, in the kitchen or in a study nook – for added interest, lay tiles in a geometric or herringbone pattern.

Sometimes, there's no need to spend a cent on new finishes – exposed building materials such as brick, cement, timber or plywood will deliver a contemporary, industrial vibe. Contrast a raw brick feature wall with plush textiles to keep the look warm and inviting, as pictured below left. Andrea D'Cruz also points to pegboard as a clever finish. "You can hang artwork on it and create an ever-changing wall," she explains.

Pressed tin, which can be spray-painted to match your decor, is another stylish (and relatively inexpensive) option, especially for kitchens and bathrooms. "It pulls the focus onto something more fun and inspiring than your appliances or vanity," says Emma Blomfield. Decorative pressed metal panels also look amazing overhead, adding old-world elegance to a space without architectural details. **hb**



EXPOSED ORIGINAL BRICKWORK BRINGS *rustic* WARMTH TO A MODERN SPACE

This large Baroque-style mirror is balanced by supersized bathroom tiles. For similar large format charcoal tiles, try De Fazio Tiles & Stone.



PHOTOGRAPHY (TOP LEFT) JODY DARCY (BOTTOM LEFT) ELSA YOUNG / FRANK FEATURES. (BOTTOM RIGHT) GAP INTERIORS / JOHN DOWNS.