

Painterly effects

The synergy between art and textiles has a long and well-established history. Now advances in digital printing have opened up exciting new possibilities, moving from decorative and pictorial to a much more abstract, painterly approach. Xanthe Brookes finds out more.

It looks as if we might just have reached peak botanical, and, as like nature, the surface design industry abhors a vacuum, the question is, what's next? While metallics have been heavily mooted, and there's undoubtedly an interest in graphic grids and geometrics for 2018, the trend that feels freshest right now is driven by the world of abstract art. "There is definitely a growing appetite for more vivid and bold patterning. Wallpaper has historically presented an opportunity for something, for instance a landscape mural. However I think that people are eager for something that feels more gestural and art-like," says Nick Cope, CEO of Calico Wallpaper. Marisa Gutmacher, Executive Design Director, Samuel & Sons agrees: "Contemporary abstract

painting is emerging as a strong influence in interiors through new collections of textiles and wallpapers across the industry today. We are seeing abstract painting using shapes, colours and forms without seeking realistic representation."

Much of the impetus for this trend has been driven by the seismic technological leaps forward in printing. Wallpaper designer Louise Body explains: "Now it is possible to reproduce a painting with all of its nuances and brush strokes and scale it up to mural size without losing too much of the original detail." Body cites advances in technology as a catalyst for watercolour and painted effects. This simply wasn't possible with traditional Flexographic, Screen

or Gravure print and designers are to a degree influenced and restricted by the production techniques available to them. Cope of Calico Wallpaper agrees: "There have been so many advances in printing in the past decade it is hard to keep track. Without question there is improvement and texture and range of colour helps to make this sort of work achievable."

Fi Douglas, Founder & Creative Director of Bluebellgray believes that digital print has allowed artists and designers to push their work further and experiment more easily and for less financial investment. "Without digital print I could never have started my company, the minimum printing levels and money



Calico Wallpaper



Feathr™



Louise Body

needed to print with traditional methods in factories was a real barrier to young designers starting out. Digital print has made it possible to start something with very little.” She adds: “I also think digital print has been the catalyst for the current trend for oversized painterly effects; it has given artists and designers the tools to go bigger with their work and play with scale in a way that was very difficult to do before.”

However, this trend isn’t powered by technical advances alone. Perhaps most importantly, these advances have allowed textile designers to be less constricted and more creative. “It has given me the opportunity to tap into my fine art and painting background and allowed a freer approach to interior decoration without necessarily thinking about pattern repeats,” says Body. Wallpaper designer Deborah Bowness agrees. “By treating the blank wall as a canvas I am allowed the freedom to create wallpaper as art, which in turn allows conceptual thought to be considered within the decoration of a room,” she explains.

Tom Pukko, Founder of Feathr is taking the synergy between surface design and art even further, working with independent artists to produce ‘Wallpaper with extraordinary stories.’ Pukko explains why: “Art moves and amazes and engages you; so why not cover your walls with the same extraordinary stories that artworks have? Working with artists allows us to leap outside the conventions of



Sandberg



Abstract Painting © Tracy Kendall Wallpaper | Photo by Ollie Harrop



Blackpop



Deborah Bowness

surface design. We can bring in new creativity, new aesthetics and new stories.”

Pukko takes a distinctly egalitarian approach to sourcing these artists, drawing from tattoo parlours, painters’ studios and even urban walls. “They bring something much more fresh than a designer in front of an iMac. Customers can spot the benefit too; that’s why there’s such a trend for painterly pieces at the moment,” he says. Pukko believes that customers want to see the artist’s craft, the authenticity of it and abstract painterly pieces effectively deliver this, while not dominating a room. “We’ve certainly noticed that in sales; abstract and watercolour pieces are where many customers are heading at the moment,” he says. ●



Samuel & Sons

- blackpop.co.uk
- bluebellgray.com
- calicowallpaper.com
- deborahbowness.com
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