

MADISON STYLE AT HOME

Wallpaper makes big comeback

CLAIRE BITNER

For the State Journal

Pete Curtis, owner of Madison Brushworks, is glad to be hanging wallpaper again. He said his business has seen an increase in wallpaper installation in the past three years, after a big drop around 2000. He estimates 15 percent of his business is now wallpaper clients, up from zero just a few years ago.

"We are seeing an increase in interest in wallpaper," he said. "When installed properly, it's crisp, it's clean and it provides a pop."

Curtis said the majority of his wallpaper installs are on one statement wall in an entry way or living room, or perhaps a nursery or bathroom with a patterned paper. Textured, neutral-colored grass cloth is also a popular way to add wallpaper, he said.

At one point in the 1990s, Curtis estimates he wallpapered 200 kitchens and baths in one year. But by 2000, wallpaper business had dropped so much that he changed the name of his company from Madison Paperworks to Madison Brushworks, focusing on painting and embracing the then-popu-

lar trend of faux finishes. Today, the pendulum is swinging back to embracing wallpaper in new, restrained additions, he said.

"In the past, I've had clients say to me, 'Pete, you are saving my marriage,' when I came in to finish a DIY wallpaper job," he said. He can properly install the wallpaper and select the appropriate paper for different rooms, such as vinyl wallpaper for a kitchen or bathroom.

"You get what you pay for," he said. "A good paper hanger is valuable."

Bill Beaudreau, owner of CRB Interiors, said he started seeing wallpaper resurgence as a national design trend three or four years ago. Today's wallpapers are large-scale, exuberant patterns, often in bright, saturated colors rooted in a 1960s or 1970s aesthetic, he said.

Beaudreau said wallpaper is popular, but it hasn't spread to many of his clients in Madison.

"My own clients are looking for relaxed, natural, comfortable design," he said. "It's what I do well."

He said he did design a memorable bedroom space with an accent wall of bright red wallpaper



MADISON BRUSHWORKS

Wallpaper is becoming more popular, with most homeowners using it as a special accent on one wall.

with black and gold roses.

"It made a statement," he said. "It can be a great way of providing a zone or separating a space in a traditional floor plan."

Charlene Andrews, a sales and design specialist at McGovern & Sons on Odana Road, said she's noticed an increase in wallpaper sales.

"Wallpaper sales are definitely up in the past few years," she said. "I think people see it on HGTV and they think, 'I'd like to get that look in my house too.'"

The store has 10 books of wallpaper designs and most patterns can be delivered in a week. A new wallpaper with a large-scale lattice pattern has been received.

ing some interest, she said. The paper is a white lattice design on a light gray, beige or off-white background.

Andrews said in past decades, home owners may have burned out on wallpaper after papering multiple rooms or attempting large wallpaper projects with little experience.

Today, more buyers are wallpapering one wall in one room, and they primarily hire a professional to do the installation, she said.

Andrews advised a novice wallpaper installer to consider working on one, window-less wall. In comparison, a bathroom will have mirrors and fixtures to cut around, making it a fairly difficult project.

The key to a successful wallpaper installation is starting with a smooth, clean surface, she said.

A wall should be primed with a wallpaper primer with a sizer built in. The surface should be as smooth as possible — ideally the drywall doesn't have a texture added.

"If the wall is smooth and primed, the wallpaper will be able to be removed fairly easily," she said. "When people talk about the nightmare of removing wallpaper and pulling it off in tiny pieces for hours, that's paper that wasn't applied properly."

Have an idea for a local store we should feature? Email features@madison.com.