

COVER STORY

Bold and beautiful: wallpaper is back

Exotic designs are appearing in the houses of celebrities. Take a tip from Gwyneth Paltrow and transform your walls, says **Jessie Hewitson**

A small detail that appeared in stories last week about the wedding of Gwyneth Paltrow and Brad Falchuk

will be of some interest to interiors fans: Paltrow decorated part of the marquee with wallpaper designed by De Gournay.

The actor Robin Williams observed that cocaine is God's way of telling you that you're making too much money, and if you're using De Gournay in your wedding marquee, the same principle definitely applies. De Gournay makes some of the most expensive wallpaper in the world. It costs from about £700 for a single 915mm-width panel, and most designs are 20 panels in length. It takes up to 150 hours to paint each panel, and its Chinese artists use techniques dating from the 18th century. The Prince of Wales, and John Galliano have this wallpaper in their homes.

Paltrow is clearly attached to her De Gournay design — she has the same one, Badminton Chinoiserie, in the living room of her London home. When she was interviewed by *Elle Decor* on the ten things in her home that she couldn't live without, her De Gournay wallpaper, featuring birds, flowers and trees, was number one. High praise indeed.

A house in east London for sale through Savills features a bathroom decorated with De Gournay wallpaper, gold and adorned with black trees and pelicans. David Carter, the property's owner, says it cost £15,000. Carter is an interior designer with an interest in fashion and his home, which has been



Gwyneth Paltrow's wedding marquee

hired out for countless photoshoots, is on the market for £2 million. The top two rooms of the house, which share the De Gournay bathroom, make up 40 Winks — the bed and breakfast room that he calls a micro-hotel.

So why are people prepared to spend a small fortune on wallpaper in a time of economic and political uncertainty? A spokesman for De Gournay says that it's because it isn't simply wallpaper. "It is an exquisite, hand-painted display that will transform your interior — an antique of the future that retains a 'spirit of resonance' of the artists that painted it. They [the panels] would of course be cheaper if they were printed, but they would be lifeless too."

The practical benefits of wallpaper are that you don't have to worry about paintings or adding much else to the wall, and it can make a room cocoon-like, adding good acoustic qualities, says Charu Gandhi, the founder of Elicyon, an interior design company.

De Gournay was founded 30 years ago by Claud Cecil Gurney, but the history



De Gournay's St Laurent Chinoiserie wallpaper hand-painted with birds and trees in a living room by the interior designer Greg Natale

of wallpaper is thought to have started in 200BC in China, where rice paper was glued to walls. In Europe wallpaper was first used in the 13th century.

By the 1980s it had fallen out of fashion, remaining unpopular until the early 2000s, but wallpaper is big business again and the creative directors at Soho House say it is a key trend.

De Gournay's rival, if there is one, is Fromental, a creator of silk wallpapers. The interior designer Sophie Paterson has launched a collaboration with the company, a chinoiserie design featuring magnolia branches, birds and butterflies

on a metallic-gold background that had been distressed to give it an antique feel. The price may also cause distress: it costs £420 a square metre for handmade or hand-embroidered silk wallpaper, or £320 for printed.

It is possible to choose Fromental patterns and customise them, which adds to the appeal. "We have had clients who have requested designs without birds — they have a fear of them — and a couple who wanted a dragonfly on his side of the bed and butterflies on her side," Paterson says.

The fashion houses Hermès, Versace, Roberto Cavalli and Christian Lacroix have all entered the wallpaper market in recent years as sales have increased.

Yet not everyone loves De Gournay. Emma Deterding, an interior designer, renovated her home in Holt, Norfolk, and paid £190 a metre to upholster her sofa in a beautiful De Gournay silk velvet (De Gournay creates fabric as well as wallpaper) only to watch in horror as her terriers licked it and her teenage children spilt beer on it. She describes it as "the biggest mistake she ever made", a reminder that with sky-high prices come sky-high expectations.

Less expensive options, for those who don't need to be told by God that they have too much money, include Cole & Son and Casadeco, says Rob Burton, the director of Dapa Interiors. The interior designers Kit Kemp and Martin Waller have collaborated recently to produce wallpaper that has the mural spectacle of a De Gournay wall. Their Mythical Land design features pears and trees, and is based on American folk art. It is a large pattern and costs £378 a roll, which, all of a sudden, seems a bargain.

ON THE COVER: MARIAM MEDVEDEVA. THIS PAGE: ANSON SMART

Trend alert Table lamps

► Gold flamingo table lamp, £120
luxecology.co.uk



◀ Bourgie table lamp by Kartell, multi fuchsia, £368
heals.com



Compiled by
Victoria Brzezinski



◀ Cap table lamp by Normann Copenhagen, £283
scandinaviandesigncenter.com

► Nappa fringed lamp, £115
oliverbonas.com



▼ Ewer blush pink glass and brass lamp, £59
made.com



▲ Printed tiger table lamp, £59
oliverbonas.com



◀ Lamp with feather-shaped base, £119.99
zarahome.com

Turn your wallcovering into art

If you like the look of wallpaper, but not on all the walls, consider installing a panel, which is less dominating and easier to update.

"Wallpaper, especially heavily patterned and detailed designs such as chinoiserie, is more like art than a standard wall covering, so you can get away with some framed panels of it," says the interior designer Sophie Paterson.

Choose a pattern in keeping with the tone of your blinds, curtains and upholstery, such as the Succulent Anthracite wallpaper panel, right, by Mind the Gap, £132 for three rolls (mindthegap.com).

Maintain a wide band around the edges, to stop it looking too chaotic or fussy, and if you have a large wall, hang several panels in portrait orientation.
Victoria Brzezinski



Azalea sofa, stool and chair, £3,218; Lalit coffee table, £329 (Barker and Stonehouse)