



Floors and walls

From tile to paper, creative surface magic

AFTER spending an afternoon traipsing through elegant model homes and beautiful designer showrooms, your home suddenly looks blah in comparison. Your first temptation may be to gut the entire house and start from scratch.

Before calling in a demolition team, take a good look at the interior of your home. Chances are it's not as dull or lackluster as you first imagined. A few minor decorating changes may be all that's required.

Wallpaper is one of the best ways to brighten up a room. There are thousands of wall coverings on the market today, ranging from elegant grass cloths to velvety fabrics to glittering metallics. Most wall coverings come prepped and pretrimmed for easier installation.

Before setting out to buy wallpaper,

determine how much light a room gets during the daytime. A sunny room can cause a light-colored wall covering to appear washed out. A darker wall covering, on the other hand, can sometimes take on a rich, warm glow when hit by sunlight.

ALSO, KEEP IN mind the colors and patterns of adjacent rooms. By selecting a harmonious color palette, the transition from one room to another will be smoother and your home will take on a more pulled-together look.

In general, dark colors make a room appear smaller while light papers do the reverse.

Don't necessarily opt for a small subtle pattern for a small room. Often a large-scale motif can create the illusion that your room is larger than it really is.

To give your walls some pizzazz, de-

signers recommend that you combine two patterns, one for the top half and one for the bottom half, using a coordinating border to separate them.

If you can't afford to wallpaper an entire room, you can still spruce up a room with a border. Used creatively, borders can give a room dimension and create interesting architectural details where none exist.

Borders aren't restricted to just walls these days. They can add color and style to a room when used to trim windows, fireplaces, mantels or door panels.

An ideal solution for bumpy or heavily damaged walls is the use of fabric. Sometimes the fabric can be applied directly to the wall's surface, but usually a layer of batting or thin foam rubber is applied to make the wall smooth.

COMMERCIAL FABRIC wall coverings usually come with paper backing and can be applied directly to the wall with a wall covering adhesive.

Unbacked fabric also can be attached to the wall with an adhesive or can be secured using a staple gun. Slightly woven fabrics tend to work the best.

One of the newest trends for adorning walls is a technique called "wall printing," which is akin to stenciling. Using a machine that resembles a hand-held printing press, a professional wall printer applies a design of your choice directly on the wall in up to three colors of paint. The final result looks like wallpaper but costs about half as much.

If you've toured model homes recently, you already know how popular

Please turn to Page 12

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