

COVER STORY

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 70 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 Princess 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, Radminston Chinoiserie, in the living room of her London home. When she was interviewed by Elle Decor on the tea tins in her home that she couldn't live without, her De Gournay wallpaper, featuring birds, flowers and trees, was number one. High price index.

A house in east London for sale through Savills features a bathroom decorated with De Gournay wallpaper, gold and adorned with black trees and peacocks. 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 renaissance" 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 that you don't have to worry about paintings or adding much else to the wall, and it can make a room cozier-like, adding good acoustic qualities, says Charni Gandhi, the founder of Elleyou, an interior design company.

De Gournay was founded 30 years ago by Claude Cocci 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 2008C in China, where rice paper was glued to walls. In Europe wallpaper was first used in the 18th 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 Deterling, 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 their teenage children spill 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 Casaleco, 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 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.



Wallpaper by Banbury, £150 a roll

On the cover: Hand-painted Amazonian Chinoiserie wallpaper by De Gournay

Trend alert Table lamps

► Gold flamingo table lamp, £230 luzology.co.uk

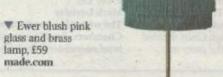


◄ Bourgie table lamp by Kartell, multi-fuchsia, £388 heals.com



Compiled by Victoria Brazzinski

◄ Cap table lamp by Normann Copenhagen, £283 scandiandesigncenter.com



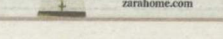
► Nappa fringed lamp, £115 oliverbonas.com



◄ Ever blush pink glass and brass lamp, £59 made.com



► Printed tiger table lamp, £59 oliverbonas.com



MARKET INTELLIGENCE

It's like the Wars of the Roses all over again, but with added luxury bathrooms and proximity to outstanding schools. While Yorkshire has been stealing the glory in the north-south property price battle, a quiet revolution has been taking place across the Pennines.

Research by Savills found that the northwest is set to streak ahead, with property prices rising 21.6 per cent in the next five years, potentially putting undervalued locations in Cheshire, Lancashire and north Wales on the map. These include Warrington, which is on a direct train link between Manchester and Liverpool; Crewe, where a hub is planned for the HS2 high-speed rail link from London; and Preston, where regeneration of the city centre is taking place, including the creation of a market quarter and the redevelopment of a former Edwardian Royal Mail sorting office into a boutique hotel.

Last month Preston opened its first loft living scheme, where a Victorian warehouse on Guildhall Street was converted into 18 apartments. Prices start at £105,000 (eturban.co.uk).

Not only is this strong evidence of the area keeping up with Yorkshire, where Savills expects prices to rise by 21.5 per cent, it adds further ballast to the north-south debate, tipping the balance firmly in favour of the top half of the country. Luctan Cook, the director of residential research at Savills, says that London, in contrast, is poised to suffer at least five years of stagnation, thanks to likely rising interest rates and affordability issues.

There is also the unavoidable issue of Brexit. Yet Charlie Kannreuther, who runs the Chester and Knutsford offices of Savills in the northwest, points out that the barely heard word mentioned, "It's almost as if this part of the country is insulated from it," he says.

David Lewis, the northwest associate at Garrington Property Finders, argues that the north-south gulf is as wide as ever, but says this is a good thing long term. "For buyers coming into the region from elsewhere, whether they're looking for a home or an investment property, the potential for strong capital growth is a key part of the appeal."

He says the most sought-after areas for family homes are the south Manchester belt of Knutsford, Alderley Edge, Hale and Winslow, and further afield, Wirral and Chester. "All of these areas offer outstanding schools, public and private, and strike a winning balance between country living, access to Manchester city centre and a two-hour rail journey to central London."

Most agents agree that the economic growth of Manchester has been the most significant driver for prosperity across the region. Many of the popular suburbs and satellite towns Lewis mentions have enjoyed a rebirth in recent years, with the mansions and grand family houses once owned by cotton merchants and traders being embraced by families and affluent professionals who work in



Seven-bedroom the Hall in High Hoyland, Yorkshire, is £12 million (Cartier Jones). Below: in Winslow, Cheshire, this five-bedroom home is £5 million with Savills

Why the northwest is a region to watch

industries such as IT, the media and digital technology.

Other cities and towns are also gaining in confidence, creating their own identities and appeal. Kannreuther says that this is what makes the northwest so interesting. His suggestions for investors and relocators from London and the southeast include Chester (where the average property price is £245,312, according to Rightmove), Knutsford (£438,094) and Wrexham (£158,839).

gorgeous higher-end houses here, mostly period properties lined along the River Dee, overlooking the racecourse and in Curzon Park North. Many of the peripheral towns and villages outside of Chester are equally expensive. Handhridge remains incredibly popular and Hoole is up-and-coming.

Yet Wrexham is really the one to watch. It's in Wales, but only ten miles south of the Shropshire borders.

At the prime end of the market, prices are up to a third cheaper than their more established neighbour. "Villages such as Overton-on-Dee, Ellesmere and Oswestry offer access to some of the best independent schools in the area," Kannreuther says. As for Knutsford, 14 miles south of Manchester, he says, "It's one of the nicest small towns in the northwest."

If Manchester is the beating heart of the northwest, it's helpful to see the M6 as its main artery. Head northwards past Crewe, Warrington and Preston to the historic city of Lancaster, where the local estate agent Victoria Green of V-Move says Victorian terraces, grand gentlemen's residences and canal-side homes are attracting buyers enticed by employment prospects, the expansion of the university and Windermere being only 30 minutes' drive away.

"Places such as Haverthwaite, a private residential estate near the Lancaster Canal, where the average home can set you back just shy of £600,000, are favoured by those moving here for work," she says. "Also there's Aldcliffe, popular with parents of children of secondary school age because of its proximity to Lancaster Girls' Grammar School and Lancaster Royal Grammar School (boys). New homes on the exclusive Park Meadow development sold quickly, with prices from £700,000."



A six-bedroom house in Lancaster is on sale for £750,000 through Fine & Country



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 Succulentis 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 messy, and if you have a large wall, hang several panels in portrait orientation. Victoria Brazzinski



Azalea sofa, stool and chair, £3218; Lullu coffee table, £329 (Barker and Stonehouse)