

## INTERIORS

**M**aria and Ekaterina Yaschuk are on a mission to “rescue walls from the background”. They think it’s time to swap your Elephant’s Breath Farrow & Ball paint for illuminated wallpaper studded with crystals.

The Yaschuk sisters, who run the London-based design company Mestyle, are launching Conductivity, an LED wallpaper collection that combines natural textures with lighting and Swarovski sparkles, at the Decorex International design show next month.

It is one of the first light-up wallpapers on the market and the first to use flexible OLEDs (organic light-emitting diodes), developed by LG Display, a supplier of crystal display panels.

The LEDs create “light waterfalls” and concentric circles that you can dim using smart home technology. However, the innovative wallpaper does not come cheap; £540 a square metre plus £150 for each OLED.

The light-up wallpaper is an inevitable extension of a growing trend to ditch paint in favour of unusual wall decorations, from leather and straw to polished plaster, to fabric, silk, foil and lacquer. Distressed wallpaper, where the paper has been sanded by hand to make it look as if it has been there for years, is also popular.

The interior designer Sophie Paterson launched her first chinoiserie wallpaper collection with Fromental in June. “There is so much variety today that even if you are not a fan of the concept you can find something that you will like. When you use beautiful wallpaper you don’t need as much art because it adds so much interest and luxury to a room.

“It is also a practical way of covering the walls. I recommend vinyl wallpaper to all my clients for their hallways because it stands up to scuff marks and handprints. After five years, when you would have to repaint the walls to remove marks, it becomes a cost-neutral option compared with paint.”

Dedar Milano creates unusual fabric wall coverings, such as the 3D



Silk fabric is on the walls in the show flat at Chiltern Place, a luxury development in Marylebone, London

## Forget the grey paint, it’s time to sparkle

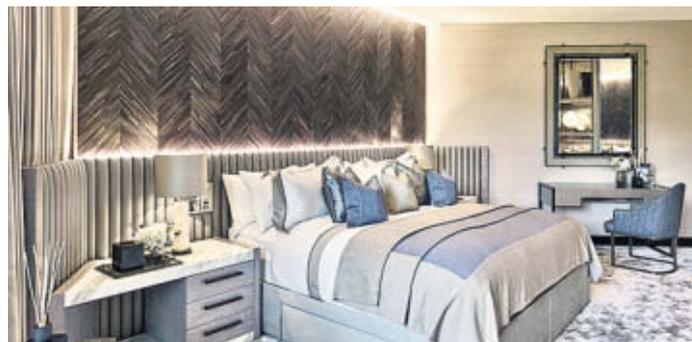
The latest wall coverings feature texture, fabric and even the occasional Swarovski crystal, reports **Laura Whateley**

geometric Intarsiato embossed vinyl, which is coated in beeswax to make it fire-retardant, wipeable and washable.

If there is a particular fabric you like, Walltex UK, a textile lamination company, can help you to turn it into a wall covering. It offers paper backing for a variety of materials, including silk, velvet, linen, suede and leather.

Lucy Barlow, the founder and creative director of Barlow & Barlow, an interior design company, uses raffia and grasscloth for a natural-look wallpaper, which is ideal if you want texture on your walls, but do not like bright patterns or colour.

She suggests Malabar, which sells affordable China grass wallpaper in



The luxe industrial look bedroom designed by Charu Gandhi at One Hyde Park, London. Left: Barlow & Barlow dark lacquered walls add drama

natural colours, or Phillip Jeffries for textured woven, hemp and linen wallpapers.

For the opposite effect, Barlow has recently created a chocolate-brown lacquer wall covering for a lateral apartment in Notting Hill, west London. “It looks phenomenal. It’s one of our favourite things to do in a hallway, a super high-lacquered finish is so glossy, and bounces light around. You can add

layers of colour too. It works best with a very deep, bright, vivid shade: a navy blue for a library, for example, or red for a dining room. With dark punchy colours you get drama.”

You need a specialist to lacquer your walls, however, and it can be expensive. For a more affordable take on lacquer, try painting a wall in high gloss, which works particularly well in kitchens.

Traditional Japanese interiors favour matt, raw-plaster walls, applied by hand, similar to Italian lime plaster.

The rustic and earthy look is making a comeback and companies such as Kabe Copenhagen sells its own colour plasters inspired by the Scandinavian lifestyle in muted tones of blue, green, grey and red. The plaster comes in smooth or rough textures. Kabe stone can be used in wet rooms or to create work surfaces and tabletops. No matter your DIY competency level, Kabe’s online tutorials take you through how to apply it.

Plaster can look ultra-luxurious. In the entrance lobby at the Corniche — a high-end development in Albert Embankment, London, by Foster + Partners, where apartments start at £3.3 million — the interior design company Brady Williams did not use paint, but white polished plaster to increase reflected light.

Charu Gandhi of Elicyon, a luxury interior design studio, also loves to experiment with unusual wall coverings. In a recent project at One Hyde Park, London, Gandhi went for an “industrial luxe” look, with straw marquetry as a backdrop to the master bedroom, to create a wall “alive with movement and subtle shifts in colour, almost rendering it a piece of art”.

She also used plaster in the lobby, but with a metal effect and concrete-like finish, while she lined the corridor with vacuum-formed leather hide juxtaposed with dark bronze metalwork and an antique mirror.

If you favour seriously intense, opulent pattern, Blackpop, the British wallpaper and fabric company, is launching a collaboration with the Sir John Soane’s Museum. Named the Collector’s Collection, its ultra-luxury, ultra-detailed wallpapers are inspired by the architects Robert Adam and Soane, and the painter Canaletto, with patterns coming from a reworking of architectural drawings, paintings and objets d’art. Prices start at £216 a roll, with a percentage of each sale going to the museum.