

# Wall this way

## Are painted murals making a comeback?

By Caite White

Design trends come and go. And, sometimes, they come back again. Take, for instance, wall murals. Interior designer Karena Akhavein says she's been getting more and more requests for 21st century versions from clients of her Gordonsville studio, Pebble Hill Design.

"In grand Virginia estates, it was the tradition to use pictorial wallpaper in the dining room," says Akhavein. "This wallpaper is usually made in Europe, and is prohibitively expensive, so a similar effect can be achieved with a painted mural." But not the cheesy (read: trompe l'oeil, with 3D-like windows peeking out over a beautiful faux vista, or those in children's rooms) kind.

Akhavein, who in her own home painted a grisaille (that is, tone-on-tone) landscape in the dining area, recommends everything from Chinoiserie and Delftware patterns to distressed or smoked faux finishes. At Pebble Hill, she uses Photoshop to help clients visualize what a wall mural will look like in their space.

But are they something a homeowner should DIY? "That depends!" says Akhavein. "If you are artistic and not afraid to paint over your mistakes, have at it." That's one benefit of a wall mural—unlike wallpaper, you don't have to navigate a removal process to course-correct.



Plus, it affords more flexibility in terms of motif, scale and color.

Akhavein contends that painted murals look good anywhere in the house, but a particularly fun application is in powder rooms, where they can bring big drama.

And, she says, walls don't have to be the only thing you paint. "Elaborately painted ceilings and doors can create a striking effect."



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