

# 7 things you didn't know about wallcoverings

Well it's big fashion now, Tektura's Angela Paterson tells us. It's been around since 1400s, with the Chinese and French, Americans and latterly the British leading the way in design, innovation and production techniques. Didn't know that? Here's seven more for you.

# 1

## The Real Thing

How many times have you seen wallcovering installed, and, by mistake, the glue has been wiped across the join, but not cleaned off so it dries and leaves a shiny seemingly immovable stain? Here's what

to do. Grab some Coca Cola, and use this to wash off the dried glue. It works! Rinse afterwards to avoid sticky residue. Before Coca Cola's versatility was discovered, vinegar was commonly used to wash off glue, and yes, it was smelly. And no, it's not nice to drink, even when mixed with Bacardi and ice. So there you have it. We're told that Coca Cola is also the chemical of choice for cleaning car engines, and dissolving nails! ●



# 2

## Death by wallcovering

Heard the one about how Napoleon was poisoned by his wallpaper? Apparently he died of arsenic poisoning. At the time it was thought that there was foul play by the British authorities. A scientist in the 1980s managed to get hold of a sample of

the wallpaper in Napoleon's St Helena home, and discovered that the bright green ink (Scheele's Green – popular in the 1770s) was copper arsenite. If the wallpaper became damp, and then mouldy, the mould created arsenic vapours. This vapour was very poisonous indeed. Breathe in enough and you'd go down with a nasty case of arsenic poisoning. The green ink had been used to create a star motif pattern on the wallpaper ●



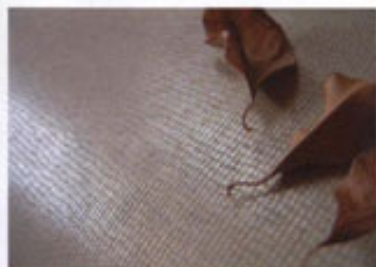
# 3

## Bake for 20 minutes

### Regulo 5

Vinyl wallcovering – bendy pliable stuff. But some of the heftier, deeply textured designs can be hard work to wrap round corners. Well, grab the nearest hairdryer or

fan heater. Gently warm the vinyl – we're looking for warmed up here, not melted. This will help make the vinyl pliable, and it will wrap those corners neatly and tightly ●



# 4

## Tax!

In 1712, due to wallcoverings' rapidly growing popularity, a tax was introduced on papers which were 'painted, printed or stained to serve as hangings' (Gordon B, please don't get any ideas here please). People began

to colour in wallpapers by hand to outwit the grabbing tax man. Various taxes were applied throughout the 1700s, and by 1806 it had got completely out of hand: 'falsification of wallpaper stamps was punishable by death'. The repeal of wallpaper taxation finally took place in 1836. Moral of the tale? Mix readers – let's keep it amongst ourselves! ●



# 5

## Old favourites and new kids on the block

Vinyl is still the most popular wallcovering of all; it's low cost, durable, and readily available. Modern embossing and printing techniques can create stunning detail, such as intricate stitched

leather effects, and pleated; folded fabrics (any reader who's most recent experience of wallcovering is of the shabby flower variety, see Number 2. But there are many other types of wallcovering too:

- Natural Fibre Finishes – soft tactile surfaces made with cellulose/polyester
- Teflon-coated Write on / Wipe Off wallcoverings (plus magnetic versions!)
- Paintable Glass Fibre (incredibly strong)
- Hand-painted, hand-crafted designs (for a completely unique effect)
- Digital wallcoverings (for giant murals or one-off bespoke designs) ●

# 6

## Some statistics

The 20 biggest hotels in the world (most of which are in USA) have over 71,000 bedrooms between them (that's a staggering average of 3,500 rooms per hotel – how do you find your room after a night on

t h e town?). The largest is in Kuala Lumpur with 6,300 rooms. A modest-sized hotel room uses 50 metres of wallcoverings. For our top 20, that's a total of 3,550,000 metres. The largest hotel in Europe – Gothia Towers in Scandinavia – is just a blip with a mere 1,200 rooms ●



# 7

## What the flock?

No longer limited to a few dodgy restaurants. Flock is now mega-trendy, and flock-style prints and fake flocks can be found in all uber-fashionable interiors (Big Brother?). As for the real stuff, how's it made?

The furry shapes are created by applying glue onto the surface – and while the glue's still wet, lots of chopped wool is sprinkled onto the sticky bits (that's what authentic flock is made of). Modern flocks are made with synthetic fibres. There are some clever 'fakes' around, which are made in a different way. A special ink is applied to the surface, where the 'flock pattern' is designed to be. During production, this is heated up, and the heat makes the ink 'fluff up' ●