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PROPERTY

PREMIUM GUIDE TO THE MOST EXCLUSIVE PROPERTIES IN HERTFORDSHIRE

What's on your walls?

Wondering what to do with your walls? We have a choice of options inside - page 4 - 5

3D walls

There's a growing trend towards the 3D-effect, thanks to the wide range of textured surfaces on the market. Once seen as effective solutions for finishing uneven walls and adding extra sound-proofing, they are now coming into their own for their statement value.

Ian Garibii has created a range of concrete tiles in designs that emulate such effective designs as folded fabric (domustiles.com; £326 per sq m), and Tracey Tubb has come up with an interesting origami-style concept in folded pieces of wallpaper to create a similar effect, creating the designs on-site to avoid damage in transit (traceytubb.co.uk; from £695 per sq m)

Bookshelves haven't been left behind either. The traditional types, whether floating, built in, wall-fixed or on adjustable racks have been usurped by the most innovative of designs.

Part of a series of quirkily formed shelving units, the Bookworm is an original piece by Israeli post-modern designer Ron Arad. It's artistic, flexible in durable plastic, and can be made into any shape – literally, as flexible as a worm - holding up to 10kg on each support. Available from Heals (heals.com; £258)

Such designs are popular with parents looking to inspire reading by doing something different in children's rooms and nurseries.

A good example is designer Shawn Soh's Tree Bookcase, hand-crafted from CARB II compliant MDF and finished with high gloss, non-toxic lacquer, it can hold over 100 books on its branches (nurseryworks.net; prices vary from around £580).

And if those ducks are making a bit of a comeback – albeit in a less garish form - so are animal heads, although not the taxidermy ones that hang in libraries of traditional country estates. These days, they're more PC and fun. Graham & Green have a range of polyester-filled felt tigers, giraffes and elephants that can be hung singly or clustered for effect (grahamandgreen.co.uk; £79 each).

Wall art

In terms of art, new trends are emerging there too. Sales of street photography increased significantly last year, partly inspired by social media and the familiarity with the emotionally charged scenes familiar on Instagram feeds.

Art has never been more popular, original works in particular, thanks in part to greater awareness of new talent, the popularity of art-related TV programmes and the rise in online galleries.

But what's really hot is statement art. Anything in a frame over five feet wide may have been a risk a few years ago, but online retailers are finding they are now among the most searched-for items on their books.

This has also led to a growth in the number of private collectors as people catch on to the fact that a painting they bought a few years ago may have the bonus of investment value and there's a market growing as fast as the artist's reputation.

One of the best examples is the work of the Padstow artist Sarah Adams whose Cornish coastal oil-on-linen paintings have seen crowds form outside the Mayfair gallery where she exhibits every two years. (maasgallery.co.uk; oil on board studies start from £2,500)

Rupert Maas, the Antique's Roadshow's fine art expert said: "If you've spent time and effort making your house look lovely, there are few better ways to really set it off than with fabulous artwork. I suggest you go for something calm. The colours need to work and provide a vision of the outdoors. No contemporary painter does this better than Sarah."

When it comes to putting things on the wall, it appears these days, the more off-the-wall the better.

Magnolia has given way to the mural as trends for everything from wallpaper to have taken inspiration from bygone times and given them a modern twist. It's true. Even your grandmother's flying ducks may be coming home to roost.

It's all down to a renewed confidence home-owners are showing in making bold choices when it comes to home décor. Wallpaper sales have grown as they reject the safe option of merely using safe, neutral colours.

And they're buying in larger quantities, suggesting entire rooms - and ceilings - are being covered, and not just the odd feature wall as has been the case.

Big statements are in, according to the experts. Even in the case of art, it seems bigger is better as buyers think nothing of devoting walls to works twice the size of a plasma TV screen.

"When it comes to decorating walls we often wallpaper, paint and add pictures but have been hesitant to try anything outside the box," said Kate Vincent of furniture specialist Graham and Green.

"Don't be afraid to be a bit more inventive and find unique products that suit your style. Think bright colours, bold textures and three dimensional pieces that really pop out. Multi-purpose products like hooks, clocks and lighting are brilliant for personalising where you are short on space."