

Decor Score: Patterned or dark-colored ceilings can create a cozy atmosphere

by *Rose_Bennett_Gilbert*

Q: What happens if I put a darkish plaid wallpaper on the ceiling of my husband's study? It's his idea â€” he says he wants a "cozy" environment â€” but I've always heard that ceilings should only be white, unless you live in the Sistine Chapel. What do you advise?

Down with convention, and up with a dark, reflective ceiling that makes the room feel cozy but not claustrophobic. Photo courtesy of Malke Naz Freidouni. A: First don't even think of moving to the Sistine Chapel. Terrible traffic and zero chance of repainting the ceiling white.

Hubby's study is another matter entirely. As he has already surmised, a dark-colored or patterned ceiling will make any room feel warmer and cozier, which is another way of saying "smaller" because a ceiling that seems omnipresent always looks lower.

Designer Leslie May (www.lesliemaydesign.com) offers a compromise. In the pictured room, she had a faux painter treat the ceiling as a focal point, applying a tortoise finish â€” in a surprising color, blue â€” with a highly reflective finish. Similar to a mirror, the ceiling actually lifts the room visually, neatly balancing "cozy" and "expansive."

"We wanted to make a strong impact," May explains. "It's an old house and the ceiling wasn't particularly high â€” about 9 feet."

The combination of faux tortoise and reflective finish was so effective that May is having the same idea (in natural tortoise flecked with gold) applied to her dining-room ceiling.

Q: I have always loathed the color orange. I can't bear it, even at Halloween.

But everything I see in the stores is all about orange. Please tell me I can sit this one out and that something new is just around the corner.

A: Keep the faith. Orange was all over Paris this winter, but by now it's being blown away in the winds of change.

In its place — say those who prognosticate design trends — we'll soon see fun colors that flatter nearly everyone. Pinks, for example, were all over the Maison et Objet trade show, from which the whole world gets its fashion directions these days. Close behind: Clear, clean yellows, greens of all nuances and even screaming red, aka the new neutral.

It's true of color what they say about the weather. If you don't like what you've got, wait. It's sure to change.

Read more about coming color trends in "On the Surface," the e-newsletter from SURTEX, the art and licensing trade show coming up in May (www.surtex.com).

Q: We're looking for something fabulous to put on the floor of our bar/wine-tasting room in place of the worn-out carpet. The room is not big — about 12 feet by 15 feet — so we could go for a rug, unless you have a better idea.

A: Just when I thought luxe living was out, I'm happy to have someone to tell about a remarkable "new" product I've just discovered: handmade leather floor tiles. Yes, I said leather tiles designed and engineered to go on the floor ... almost any floor, since they're so durable.

Made in Italy — with all that implies about skilled leather workmanship — by Inpelle, a division of a 30-year-old company that supplies first-quality leather for auto interiors, the tiles have aluminum frames hand-wrapped in Italian leather. You can choose from a range of colors (think reds, greens, blues or any color you want to match) and an equally diverse range of finishes, from croc to lizard to basket weaves.

Get all this between \$90-100 per square foot. Not so scary when you compare it with, say, a top-quality handmade rug.

By the way, Inpelle leather tiles are also salt-water resistant, just in case you're thinking of replacing a floor in your yacht. See more at www.gbr-inpelle.com.

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