

# FLOOR-TO-CEILING TRENDS

Twin Cities design experts go deep on details, revealing new and emerging trends that will touch every surface in your home—from bold bathroom tile to showstopping ceilings.

BY MOLLY GEIPEL CHAUSS

*“In smaller spaces, you can play with patterns without the risk of overwhelming the space the way it might in larger rooms.”*

— JILL BYRNES, THE TILE SHOP



### BACK TO NATURE

Modern design finds perfection in imperfection. “We’re seeing customers embrace the more relaxed and natural look,” says Jill Byrnes of The Tile Shop. “These tiles have softer edges, imperfections, and variation in color or texture that evokes an old-world craftsmanship, like Zellige tile.” While technological improvements allow ceramic and porcelain to mimic the look of natural stone, Byrnes says clients are drawn to materials that are “real and authentic,” seeking out truly natural options like marble, slate, and travertine.

Walls are another great way to bring “the textures and patterns of nature into the home,” says Soozie Neubauer, a designer with Abbott Paint and Carpet. The Benjamin Moore Color of the Year is October Mist, a “gently shaded sage” that both “anchors and uplifts” a space while serving as fertile ground for other design choices to blossom.

Neubauer also reports that wallpaper is back and “hotter than ever”—and designers aren’t

being shy. “Whole rooms are being papered rather than just a focal wall.” Nature shines in popular wallpaper designs, many of which feature “leaf patterns, grass cloth, and florals.”

### IN SMALL SPACES, GO BIG

Though seemingly contradictory, smaller rooms invite homeowners to go bigger and bolder with design choices. Jill Byrnes says clients are more comfortable choosing bold patterns for contained spaces like mudrooms and laundry rooms. “In smaller spaces, you can play with patterns without the risk of overwhelming the space the way it might in larger rooms.” Use high-contrast tiles in bold geometric patterns on floors or even walls to turn your home’s smallest rooms into its biggest statements.

### COOKING IN COLOR

Sleek, all-white kitchens have dominated for nearly a decade. But that trend is starting to thaw. Colors and textures are taking hold to

bring more warmth back to the space that, now more than ever, serves as the heart of most homes. “The pandemic really brought us back into the home,” says Summer Kath, Cambria’s creative director. “We’re paying more attention to our environment, and we want it to be light, bright, and cheerful.”

After years of white-on-white, kitchens are finally mixing color into the palette, like this emerald gem. // BY CAMBRIA (ABOVE LEFT). Speaking of blank canvases: The ceiling is the new fifth dimension of design, ripe for pattern and color exploration. And you thought you only had four walls. // TWIST INTERIOR DESIGN (ABOVE RIGHT).

Kath acknowledges that kitchens are often still white. “They’re just not all white, she says. “We’re seeing an appetite for more diverse textures, with a colorful touch to the vein or pattern.” Cambria’s Inverness line—available in colors such as cobalt, gold, and burgundy—features debossed veining that adds texture to

the sleek quartz surface.

Add even more color to your kitchen with painted or stained cabinets. Sawhill Custom Kitchens and Design owner Matt Cook's clients are forgoing white cabinets in favor of blues and greens. "We're also seeing colored stains," he says. "You can still see the wood grain, but you get to bring in tints of that color you want, too." Some bold homeowners mix it up even more by using both techniques—painting the upper cabinets in color and finishing the lower with a natural wood stain, or vice versa.

### APPLIANCES IN DISGUISE

Kitchen appliances are going undercover, masquerading as cabinetry and daring you to distinguish the refrigerator from the pantry door. While stainless steel oven ranges still reign, Cook says, "all the other kitchen appliances are getting panelized." That means overlaying appliances with wood panels to match the surrounding cabinets. Panel-ready appliances, as they're called, can give the kitchen a more streamlined and homey look.

Meanwhile, choosing a contrasting material for the range hood—such as brass, copper, or quartz—will make your oven even more of a focal point. "The possibilities are endless for hoods," says Cook. "There are all kinds of things you can do."

### DO LOOK UP

"New builds give us very few walls these days," says Sandy LaMendola, owner of Twist Interior Design. "And when you do get a wall, it's often taken up by cabinets or windows. So our new canvas is ceilings." Clients are using that canvas for attention-stealing spectacles: hand-painted

### PRO TIP

"Wallpaper is hotter than ever. Whole rooms are being papered rather than just a focal wall, with popular designs like leaf patterns, grass cloth, and florals."

—Soozi Neubauer, Abbott Paint & Carpet

murals, intricate wallpaper, or sculpted centerpieces. "It's confident, it's big, but still tastefully refined," LaMendola says of the trend.

### BIGGER IS BETTER

Wide-format flooring is increasingly popular for its ability to open up smaller spaces and add a contemporary feel to any room. "Larger tiles provide a clean and modern look with fewer grout lines," says Byrnes. For hardwood lovers, Andrew Zheng of Unique Wood Floors recommends wide-plank woods in "lighter colors or white-washed grains" with minimal knots to make open-plan spaces feel even more roomy.

### PATTERN POPS

Some designers are playing with installation techniques to create eye-catching patterns with tile or hardwood. Tile is often laid in a staggered, offset pattern, says Cook. But lately, he says, "we're seeing tiles stacked vertically or horizontally to create straight lines." Classic herringbone and interlocking diamond patterns are also making a comeback. "It's simpler materials," says Cook, "but the pattern pops." You can also play with patterns by mixing finishes. "I love combining matte and gloss tiles together," says Byrnes. "It's a subtle design



Laundry room patterns fold in fun. // TILE FROM THE TILE SHOP (TOP). And subway goes ultramodern in a geometric grid stacked both vertically and horizontally. // KITCHEN BY SAWHILL CUSTOM KITCHENS (BOTTOM).

## Function at the Foundation

If there's a silver lining to the pandemic, says Sandy LaMendola, it's the clarity people have found about themselves and their lives. That new clarity is surfacing in home design. Clients today care less about following trends and more about trusting their own aesthetic vision.

"There's more attention going into [design decisions]," she

says. "Clients have the confidence to say, 'This is how I want my life and my home to be,' now that they've had time to really think about it."

Extra time to think has also led people to reconsider how well their spaces are serving them. Matt Cook says that spending more time at home—and expecting more out of it—means

clients are "focusing more on the function of the space." When you're cooking every meal in your own kitchen, for instance, it becomes harder to ignore a lack of counter space or an awkward layout.

"The drive is function over aesthetic," he says. "When something's not functioning, it becomes more urgent than from an aesthetic standpoint. But of course, it's not either-or—we

can improve the aesthetics at the same time."

"Our clients aren't just putting money into a project to have a good time," says LaMendola. "They want value out of it. They want design that will endure." The trick, she says, is to keep an eye on trends without overapplying them.

"It's been so great to interact with clients this way," she says, "instead of just checking boxes."

element that provides a sophisticated play on what, at first glance, looks traditional and expected.”

**PUT A CORK IN IT**

Cork is the flooring of choice for high-impact rooms like home gyms, kids’ bedrooms, and playrooms, says Zheng. Cork floors are durable and noise-dampening, and they have a cushy, “bounce back” quality that makes them well-suited for spaces in which jumping and tumbling are the norm.

It’s also an eco-friendly option. Cork is harvested by peeling off the outer bark from cork oak trees. The bark regrows every nine years, making it naturally renewable, and the trees can live for over 200 years. Harvested cork trees also absorb three to five times more carbon than unharvested trees. The cork forests in Portugal (where over 90 percent of cork flooring is produced) offset an estimated 10 million tons of carbon every year.

Along with sustainability, Zheng attributes cork’s rise in popularity to a growing variety of designs hitting the market. “It’s less like traditional cork,” he says. “It looks cooler.”



**HOT TREND**  
“Wet rooms” are all the rage. Made with water-friendly materials, they’re fully enclosed and separate your tub and shower from the rest of the bathroom. *Materials by The Tile Shop, design by West Bay Homes (left)*

**SEAMLESS SURROUNDS**

The latest bathroom luxury is so-called wet rooms that house a tub and shower in a single space fully enclosed in water-friendly materials. Using the same material for the floor, walls, and ceiling creates a seamless, minimalist look that is visually striking.

Cambria, a Minnesota-based manufacturer of engineered quartz, uses a technique called book-matching to produce mirror-image slabs. When laid side by side, the quartz veins appear to flow continuously from one

slab to the next, creating distinctive patterns. Book-matching can also produce slabs as thin as 6 millimeters. “Because you don’t have the weight issue,” says Kath, “you can get very creative.”

Quartz is a naturally nonporous surface that, unlike granite or marble, does not require sealing to remain bacteria- and stain-resistant. This makes quartz a more durable and hygienic choice for rooms exposed to as much wear, tear, and water as kitchens and bathrooms. ■

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