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Homes That Wow

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With Marble

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MODERN TAKES ON MARBLE

HOW TO USE THE ULTRALUXE MATERIAL ALL OVER YOUR HOME

In the world of interiors, no material exudes elegance quite like marble. Prized for its varied colorways and unique veining, marble elevates an interior to luxury status. It's no wonder the natural stone has graced the palaces and temples of kings and emperors for centuries.

"Marble has been used in the most noble homes for flooring and decoration since the beginning of time, and using it in any interior perpetuates this legacy," says Rome-based architect and designer Achille Salvagni. "Because there are so many types of marble, it is an easy way to play with color and pattern."

Formed from limestone when it's exposed to high pressures and temperatures, marble is found in many colors and veining due to mineral impurities such as iron, clay, and sand, which intrude as the original rock is recrystallizing.

Marble adds "sophistication to an interior, whether it is used for a mantle, a piece of furniture, or as an architectural element such as flooring," says Lisa Melone Cloughen of Melone Cloughen Interiors in Greenwich, Connecticut.

MAKING IT FEEL CURRENT

While marble has a tendency to evoke an old-world aesthetic, designers are using it in ways that feel current. For instance, highly veined, polished black-and-white book-matched marble—mirror-image marble placed side-by-side—would make a stunning dining tabletop, Cloughen says.

"Pair it with a contemporary metal base and the result is dynamic and elegant and timeless—whether it's a cocktail table or a dining table," she says. Similarly, a light, subtly veined marble in a honed finish creates a soft luster and looks sophisticated with minimal design, she says.

Marble is a material seen more often in homes today due to advances in quarrying and fabricating stone, which have helped lower the cost, says Phillip Thomas, founder and principal



of Phillip Thomas interior design firm in New York. "Just be mindful, marble needs to be counterbalanced with other materials to support acoustics, since it doesn't absorb noise," Thomas says.

Marble can also look of-the-moment through its detailing. "There is something very modern about expressing marble in a monumental fashion with large, gutsy proportions," Thomas says.

Rendell Fernandez, design director for Pembroke & Ives, a firm with offices in New York and Beverly Hills, utilizes marble as a feature in bathrooms and powder rooms, as well as foyer floors—for a classic application—and staircases for the ultimate in luxury.

"You can also take a classic piece of marble and modernize it by mitering a chunky edge on it," says Michelle Gerson

An interior designed by Phillip Thomas in Bellport, New York, uses a marble table as an accent.



of Gerson Interiors in New York, who likes to use slabs of marble for fireplace walls. “When I am using marble, I like to mix in warm cerused woods and soft-textured pieces of upholstery to create balance in a space.”

Cloughen cautions against too much. “Two, maximum three marble furnishings are acceptable, and any more than that would be monotonous,” she says.

WALLS OF WONDER

The look of marble-clad walls can rival an interior filled with fine art, creating drama and glamour, Cloughen says. “The fact that they are created in nature adds an element of uniqueness to each and every design,” she says.

Because there are so many types and colors of marble, it’s easy to play with color and pattern in the veins. “The key is to ensure the craftsman will cut the marble so that the patterns will be similar, which creates the ‘wow’ effect if it is made properly,” Salvagni says.

“I love the layer of texture and depth marble can add to a space,” Gerson says. “You can control the levels of depth and

texture by varying veining and colors. If you’re not afraid to take a risk, it’s great to mix marbles.”

One of the most popular places to use marble is in the bathroom. “Since antiquity, marble has been the choice of bath houses, and that trend continues today,” Cloughen says. “An entire bath done in primarily whole slabs or with detailed wainscoting and paneling can be so elegant,” she says.

PERFECTLY IMPERFECT

As a natural stone, marble tends to be soft and porous, so it can stain and scratch.

When it comes to high-traffic zones, some types of marble may be marginally more durable than others.

Gerson recommends a heavily veined or patterned marble for common areas. “Arabescato marble is great for a kitchen countertop, as it tends to be busy and hides stains and etching better,” she says. She suggests onyx marble for tabletops, since it’s a harder stone that “allows light to flow through, bringing another dimension to a surface.” ☒

Top: A kitchen designed by Phillip Thomas shows off how marble works on more than just countertops. Below: Marble makes for a luxurious bathroom, designed by Achille Salvagni.