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DESIGN

13 Interior Design Trends Shaped by the Pandemic

As we've quarantined at home, our needs for privacy, security, flexibility, loppability and beauty have changed the way we want to live. Here, 13 décor trends courtesy of 2020.



WONDERWALL Transporting murals, like this example commissioned by New York designer Katie Ridder and featured in 'De Gournay: Hand-Painted Interiors' (Rizzoli), have grown more popular during quarantine. ERIC PIASECKI/OTTO

By Kathryn O'Shea-Evans

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LAST AUGUST, interior-design blogger Lydia Elder found herself buying something that never would have darkened her door before the pandemic hit: a blush pink beanbag chair. "Schools were closed, and with our family of four at home all the time, we needed some extra, flexible seating," she said. Now everyone in her 1,610-square-foot household in Kent, England—including her 6-foot-6-inch husband—is besotted with the smushy seat and, what's more, her young children have found it obligingly stands in for a volcano, mountain or quicksand. "It's given us an extra place to relax that can be transferred across rooms depending on where the rest of the family is, and how much peace and quiet you want," Ms. Elder said.

The trials of lockdown have led us to crave decorating solutions from easily hauled seats to lush wallpaper murals that transport us to inaccessible locales. As homeowners and interior designers have come up with intrepid fixes for current conundrums, the ingenuity has given rise to micro-trends. These 13 struck us as the most clever and doable.



London designer Rose Uniacke hid a telly with matching textile and wall treatments

PHOTO: SIMON UPTON

1. Tucked-away TVs

The big, dark rectangle has always been a décor crasher, but with all the ever-present computers we need to work and learn remotely, the television is one more black hole. “We just don’t want to see [the TV] all the time anymore,” said Toronto designer Colette van den Thillart. She has concealed five of them since the pandemic started, hiding one behind a 1940s chinoiserie screen. In a London home library local designer Rose Uniacke camouflaged the telly behind fabric in the 1882 William Morris pattern of the wallpaper—to serenely seamless effect.



2. Ploppable Perches

A seat with an undeniable nostalgia factor, the beanbag chair was introduced in 1969, when Italian designers Piero Gatti, Cesare Paolini and Franco Teodoro unveiled the Zanotta “Sacco” chair at the Paris Furniture Fair. Today the beanbag’s flexibility as a movable seat has brought it back as Americans struggle to improvise quiet spots in a crowded home. On Instagram, #beanbag counts 438,000 posts, and FatSak, a South African beanbag brand, reports a 200% spike in year-over-year sales this January. A rakish pom-pom denotes the top of one of our favorite blobs, a Hershey’s Kiss-shaped corduroy version. Corduroy Beanbag—Caramel, \$165, burkedecor.com



3. Lights That Travel

Ms. van den Thillart admits she initially viewed rechargeable lamps with skepticism, fretting the light would be “crappy—too blue.” Still, seeking maximum flexibility from limited space, she decided to try them in her crowded home. After toting one from bedside to bathtub, she found it “completely life-changing. Every time I take one to a client, I lose it because they won’t give it back.” Philippe Malouin’s gracefully arched Arca Portable lamp has four settings, from ambient to task, and lasts up to 30 hours before needing a boost. \$275, mattermade.us



4. Barely-There Hardware

“People are so, so sick of being in their house, they’re looking to refresh almost anything,” said Brooklyn designer Laurie Blumenfeld-Russo. Six months ago in a client’s dining room, she installed 1930s-inspired brass light switches with transparent acrylic plates so they wouldn’t block a hand-painted wallcovering by Porter Teleo. Their dimmer function “allows you to change your environment even though you’re in the same room all day,” she said. Brass Toggle Invisible Lightswitch, from \$102, forbesandlomag.com

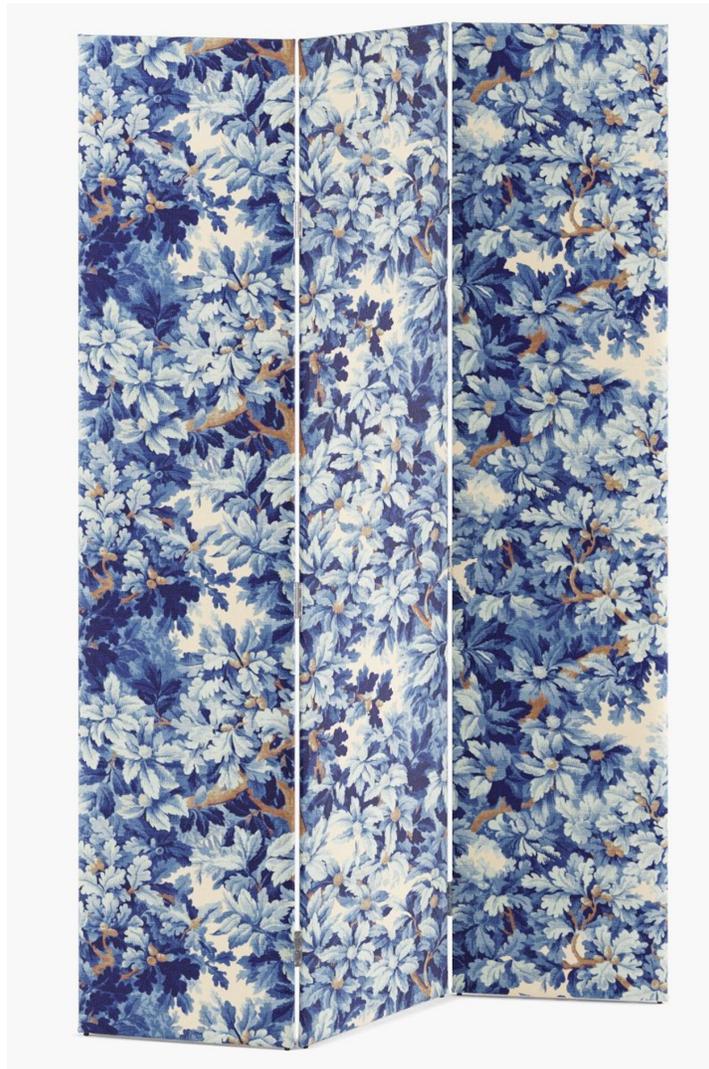


PHOTO: THE INSIDE

5. Peacekeeping Screens

“We had Covid, and when we had it, I thought for sure we were going to kill each other,” said designer Rush Jenkins, who, with life and work partner Klaus Baer, founded WRJ Design in Jackson, Wyo. The couple, who were still conducting business in their “little house,” created separate office spaces in their great room with a 19th century papier-mâché folding screen. The idea has clearly occurred to other quarantiners: In the past 11 months, folding screen sales at the Inside, a custom furniture retailer, grew 150% over the same period the previous year. The company’s Modern Screen in Limoges Bois De Chene by Old World Weavers provides privacy quickly and charismatically. Modern Screen in Limoges Bois De Chene by Old World Weavers, \$399, theinside.com



6. Air Scrubbers

The latest air purifiers are mercifully handsome. In the central hallway of a client's home, designer KD Reid of Newark, N.J., placed the sleek and simple Molekule Air Pro, which sucks up viruses, VOCs, mold and more in spaces up to 1,000 square feet. "It's been helping a lot with anxiety and stress and refreshing the environment." Mr. Reid's concealment trick: buffering it with a fig tree and monstera plant. Air Pro, \$1,199, molekule.com



7. Sanity-Saving Saunas

Designer Allison Babcock, based in Sag Harbor, N.Y., transformed a basement bedroom into a DIY wellness zone last October, adding a gym, yoga space and cedar sauna complete with teak bench and sheepskin rug. “You feel like you’re going into a little European spa,” she said of the 6-foot-by-4-foot cube. Painter and sculptor Darius Yektai presciently installed a plug-in infrared sauna of poplar in his Bridgehampton, N.Y., mudroom in 2019. He toggles between sauna and winter-surfing days: “It helps regulate, you know?” The Luna Outdoor Sauna could rejig a garden into a destination worthy of Goop. \$9,544, divinesaunas.com



8. Wombs Within Rooms

Promising a crib's cossetting comforts, canopy beds are trending. "They've come back in the biggest, most feverish way that I've ever seen," said Dennese Guadeloupe Rojas, principal of Interiors by Design in Silver Spring, Md. She understands the allure. "They're a space in a space that gives you that snugly feeling," she said, adding that ceilings should be 9 feet or taller to handle the visual bulk. The Somerset canopy bed, with S/8 Bridget Panels, has curtains you can tug shut to block out an en-suite office or a bustling spouse. Bed, *from \$3,295*; Panels *from \$2,595*, onekinglane.com



9. Unclear Glass

Andrew Kline believes rippled, etched and otherwise tactically variegated glass finishes are bubbling up for a reason: our constant interaction with screens. “That has become work to your body and soul, staring at this glossy glass all the time,” said the design director at New York’s Workshop/APD. “So I found that we’re craving texture in things that are not work.” His firm recently installed reeded-glass étagères and ribbed-glass sliding doors in a client’s Greenwich, Conn., bathroom. Poured glass yields a more organic, imperfect glass, like the top of Glas Italia’s Nesting Clear and Green Coffee Table by Ronan & Erwan Bouroullec. \$3,880, artemest.com



10. Pretty Pegboards

The garage/workshop essential has been reinterpreted for inside use. In the last six months, Brooklyn designer Jenny Dina Kirschner has hung two different types of pegboards, equipped with hooks, in clients' homes. An IKEA option helps regiment school sundries. Another spans an entire wall to become a catchall for masks, keys and mail. "We even hung a miniature laundry basket for dirty masks," she said. This fetching birch-plywood Peg-it-All Little Pegboard in a Cross Pattern adds shelves to its organizing arsenal. \$135, kreisdesign.com



In a Franklin Lakes, N.J., dining room designed by Katie Ridder, a hand-painted mural from de Gournay immortalized the clients' dog. PHOTO: ERIC PIASECKI/OTTO

11. Stolen Scenes

You might not be able to trek to a Ming Village or Nantucket harbor, but you can unfurl their panoramas on your walls. “A scenic wallcovering can be transporting and make us feel as if we’re surrounded by nature,” said Richmond, Va., designer Janie Molster, who has recently wrapped rooms in grisaille-toned riverside landscapes. New York designer Katie Ridder, who hung a hand-painted mural in a New Jersey project, particularly favors them in lieu of art in dining rooms. “By candlelight, you feel like you are living in the painting,” she said. Added Lee Cavanaugh, partner at New York design firm Cullman & Kravis: They’re an unbeatable Zoom background.



12. Tricked-out Tents

Since the pandemic began, landscape architect Janice Parker has helped 10 clients get more from outdoor space by installing tents, including a brown Moroccan-inspired number in which she hung swaths of paisley fabric punctuated by rechargeable votives. In the corners, she propped birch branches and up-lit them for a romantic, “warm shed in the woods” feel, You don’t have to settle for the purely functional tenting that sidewalk restaurants have thrown up. The bulbous Froute Pod can be assembled in 45 minutes and would lure Tinker Bell herself. \$4,800, giantgrassdesign.com



13. Tables With Reach

Over the years, Dallas designer Joshua Rice has tried unsuccessfully to interest 15 clients in one of his obsessions: The Swiss Utility Table—a two-tiered, cantilevered, articulating contraption designed in the 1940s by Georg Albert Ulysse Caruelle, useful as a flexible workstation that can abut a sofa or bed. Until recently, he said, “I could have found those all day long for about a thousand bucks. Now they’re all \$2,500 on a good day.” Of course, less rarefied “C” tables function similarly, but Mr. Rice currently flanks his boomerang-shaped linen couch with two authentic Caruelle tables. He uses one of the telescoping trays, he said, in lieu of an office. *\$3,200, 1stdibs.com*