



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Travertine flooring in a Greg Natale kitchen; large stone slab flooring in travertine by Architects EAT, a selection of hard flooring options in marble and quartz by Quarella. Tastes are moving towards honed finishes in soft whites and varying shades of grey. Quarella, 1300 726 469; quarella.com.au

# TAKE TO THE FLOOR

ALL EYES ARE ON FLOORING AS DESIGN TRENDS DEMAND INTEREST AT GROUND LEVEL. FROM LUXE STONE TO SUSTAINABLE TIMBER, THESE ARE THE HARD DECISIONS.

**SET IN STONE** 'Natural' and 'organic' are the buzzwords in flooring, whether it be in materials, colours or textures. Travertine, a textured stone, is a favourite among many interior designers and architects. "Skheme does a unique and amazing-looking black travertine, while Arte Domus does a silver travertine," says GREG NATALE of Greg Natale Interior Design. "It's a very retro material. Mies van der Rohe used travertine in all his interiors – with minimalism in particular, you need to offset it with something interesting like this."

Large stone-slab flooring is a material used extensively by Melbourne firm Architects EAT. "We have been working on a number of projects using this in the form of basalt, travertine, bluestone and marble," says director ALBERT MO. "The beauty of them is that the natural grain and colour is unique in each batch, as if Mother Nature has autographed the materials in streaks. It makes every living space individual. When the stones are honed or polished, they are relatively easy to maintain yet exude a luxurious feel. Another advantage is that the same stone can be used seamlessly from indoor to outdoor, as well as in the bathrooms – all in one continuous piece."

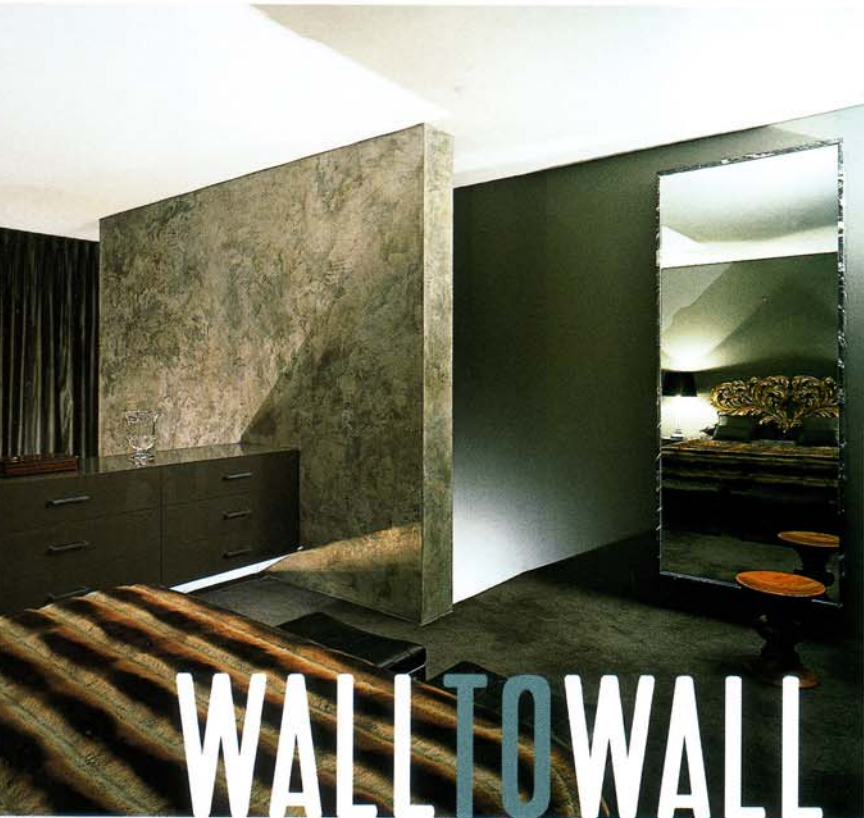
Quarella Australia is also predicting that raw and organic-looking materials are on the rise. "The look is warm and subtle," says managing director STEWART MACCIOLLI. "We are seeing super-honed finishes in solid stone flooring surfaces in soft shades of white and varying tones of grey. Ultra-matt qualities of honed finishes enhance the pattern and veining found in the composite materials."



**BOARD WALK** While stone floors are on the rise, timber also remains appealing. "I'm generally in favour of natural products and use a lot of timber – new and recycled – a favourite species being blackbutt," says Sydney interior designer MERYL HARE of Hare + Klein. "Bamboo flooring has a great appeal, both its appearance and sustainability."

Limewashed American oak, American oak engineered, and American walnut are flooring materials that Precision Flooring predicts will remain favourites in living spaces. "American oak engineered flooring has a warmth that's unique. Being engineered, it works well in apartments and can be laid reasonably quickly," says RICHARD KARSAY, director of Precision Flooring. "Limewashed American oak is an ideal colour for light and airy spaces. American walnut, on the other hand, can be likened to a chocolate swirl."

For streamlined, low-maintenance floorboards, take a look at ReadyFlor from Premium Floors. These boards are finished before they're laid, so there's no sanding or staining in your home. They also come with a scratch resistant technology and lock together without nails. Premium Floors, [premiumfloors.com.au](http://premiumfloors.com.au); Precision Flooring, (02) 9690 0991, [precisionflooring.com.au](http://precisionflooring.com.au); Skheme (02) 8755 2300, [skheme.com](http://skheme.com); Arte Domus, (02) 9557 5060.



# WALL TOWALL

THE MESSAGE FOR RENOVATION IS BE BOLD WITH COLOUR AND TEXTURE. 2007 WILL SEE A REVIVAL OF TREASURED PRINTS AND WALLPAPERS. CREATE WITH CONFIDENCE.

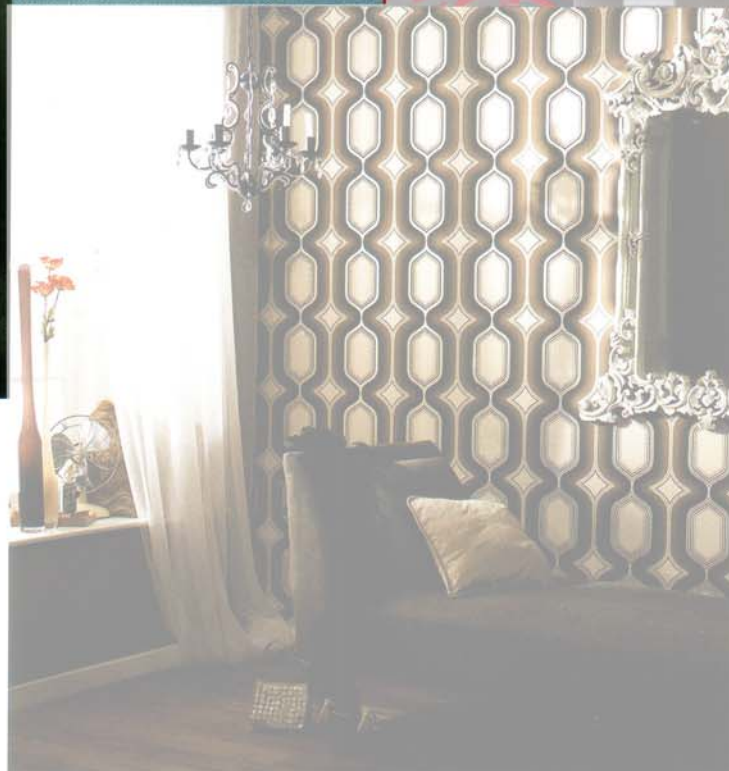
**INTERIOR DESIGNERS** are unanimous when it comes to walls: wallpaper is very directional and growing in popularity. "Wallpaper will soon be as big as it was 30 years ago – think whole rooms decked out in prints," says GREG NATALE of Greg Natale Interior Design, Sydney. "We're now just doing feature walls because we're at the beginning of the trend. People are afraid to use wallpaper in a whole room because they think it will look too busy. But it creates depth instead."

Flocked wallpaper is part of the resurgence. It's another throwback to the 1970s, but luxurious and contemporary interpretations are available at leading wallpaper and fabric houses. "For a dramatic visual statement, try Graham & Brown's soon-to-be-released Drama and Julien MacDonald ranges," says Sydney interior designer and colour consultant DANIELLE JAMES of Janssen James. "And its Printable Whites – luxurious, textured wallpaper designed to be painted over – look fabulous just in white." **Graham & Brown, (08) 9314 3733; grahambrown.com.au**

Minimalism is now well and truly behind us, and wallpaper and textured paints tap into the current trend for highly decorative interiors. "As the pendulum swings towards more decorative individualism, we're looking to inject modern textures that add interest to our walls," says Danielle James. "Pearl finishes such as Porter's Paints Duchess Satin in Oyster and Murobond Sari create an opulent look. Subtle sparkle in dark dramatic tones such as Porter's Paints Industrial Lustre in Quarry and Murobond's Bridge Paint in Jute or Carbon create a chic urban edge."

There's no sign of mirrors going away, either. "At the moment, we're quite obsessed with mirrors, or mirror-finished stainless steel surfaces," says ALBERT MO, director of Melbourne architectural firm Architects EAT. "When a mirror stretches from floor to ceiling on a wall, it seamlessly disperses the structure of the wall, reflecting the surroundings. On the other side of the scale, when the mirror is stacked or laid in multiples and unevenly, the wall becomes a vertical kaleidoscope, producing myriad images and reflecting and refracting light in the most wondrous way imaginable."

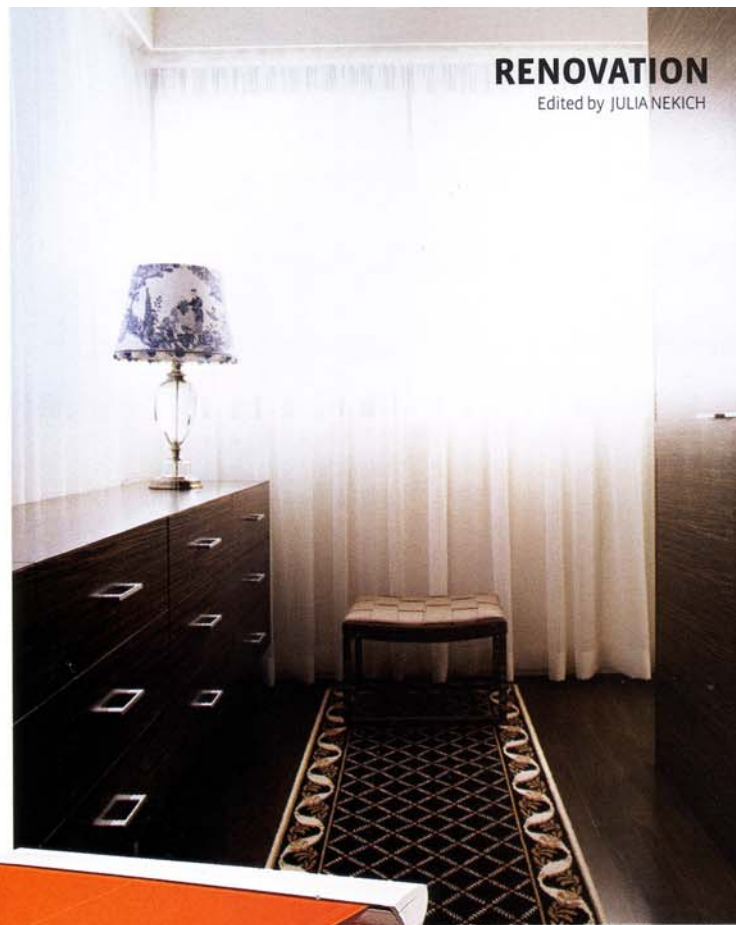
"Among the return to all these traditional finishes is **stucco**, which is like polished plaster," says Greg Natale. "Stucco is a mix of marble dust and pigment. When it's applied to walls, it's buffed back to achieve a polished and shiny look. If you're doing modern architecture, to simply paint the walls can have a flat effect." Interior Decorative Coatings in Sydney applies stucco to interior walls. Call director Robert Lewis on 0417 474 948 or visit [idcfinish.com](http://idcfinish.com)



**ARCHIVAL PRINTS** "A favourite wallpaper range of mine is Cole & Son's old archival prints that have recently been revived," says DAVID MCMULLEN of Melbourne interior design company Beautiful Room. "There are gorgeous screen- and block-printed designs made using traditional methods. I love using some of these 100-plus-year-old designs mixed in with modern furniture to create something surprisingly fresh and different. Check out designs such as Canonbury and Cheyney Walk, both from The Damask Collection; Paisley Flowers from the Waldorf Collection; and The Magnolia from the Patina Collection." Available from **Radford Furnishings in Sydney, (02) 9368 0484; cole-and-son.com**

**PAINT FINISHES** While wallpaper is big, paint finishes remain a staple. "Neutrals continue to be the mainstay for residential interiors, although the underlying tones do vary with trends," says DANIELLE JAMES of Janssen James. "The current direction is warm brown 'true' neutrals such as Dulux Hog Bristle and greyed-off cooler neutrals including Dulux Candle Bark. Danielle's colour suggestions for accent or feature walls are:

- **Laksimi**, a sophisticated oriental pink from Porter's Art Gallery Goddess range.
- **Porter's Banana Leaf**, a yellow tone perfect for resort-themed interiors.
- **For contemporary coastal style:** Dulux Sharp Blue teamed with true neutrals and crisp white such as Dulux White on White. "This combination is classic good taste and will never date. Think Ralph Lauren fabrics, rich warm travertine flooring and blue summer skies as inspiration for this scheme."



# CURTAINCALL

SUMPTUOUS FABRIC IS ON ORDER FOR WINDOW TREATMENTS. GET THE VIEW FROM INDUSTRY INSIDERS.

## TALKING POINT

**What's the current look in window treatments?** "Curtains are making a big impact. And don't think these are for traditional interiors only – curtains give a contemporary feel. Mies van der Rohe made his glass boxes work not by using roller blinds, but by using pleated curtains." GREG NATALE, Greg Natale Interior Design.

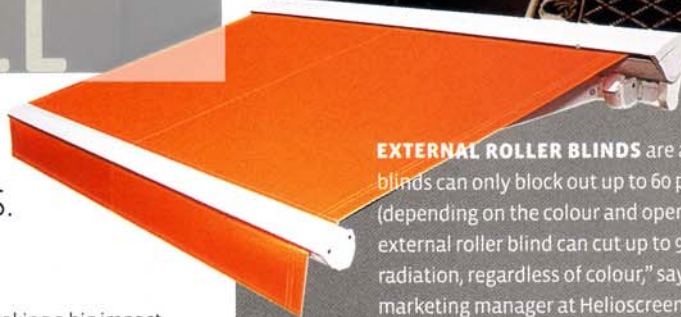
**How far will the trend go?** "We haven't felt the full brunt of the resurgence in curtains yet. Look out for quilted bag curtains with more creative heading styles, curtains that comprise many layers and coloured linings, and that mix taffeta, silk, velvets and suedes. We will be creating these over the next couple of months. It's a mix of understated elegance and opulence." GEORGE KATEHOS, managing director, Blinds + Curtains.

**Which curtain styles are here to stay?** "Simpler and more modern headings such as Wave and S-Fold. These styles achieve a cleaner look, which appeals to both modern and classic interiors. You can vary the fullness of the curtain and 'wave' effect – but keep in mind that a larger fold suits larger spaces." TIM O'HANLON, national sales manager, Silent Gliss.

• "Stark plain and modern looks of the past are being softened with a return to simple curtains in either sheer or softly lined fabrics with separate block-out blinds behind. Fussy treatments have been simplified to contemporary eyelet or box pleated curtains or rods or recessed under built-in bulkheads. Fullness in curtaining has been reduced, allowing greater light into a room and the detail in fabric to be noticed." Interior designer DAVID MCMULLEN, Beautiful Room.

**Curtains or blinds?** "You don't have to choose. Curtains go hand-in-hand with roller blinds. You can combine a lined curtain with sheer blind, or a block-out blind with a sheer curtain – or you can use the same fabric on both." TIM O'HANLON, Silent Gliss.

**Which materials are on the rise?** "Fabrics are so very innovative and interesting, and manufacturers are experimenting with new fibres. We are seeing some wonderful sheer fabrics made from combinations of fibres such as raffia, bamboo, abaca, paper, silk, acrylics, cottons, linens, wool and hemp. These work well with simple window styling." Sydney interior designer MERYL HARE, Hare + Klein.



**EXTERNAL ROLLER BLINDS** are a great idea. "Internal blinds can only block out up to 60 per cent of the sun's heat (depending on the colour and openness of the weave). An external roller blind can cut up to 90 per cent of the sun's radiation, regardless of colour," says Jamie Shakespeare, marketing manager at Helioscreen. "External rollers also allow you to extend your living space." [helioscreen.com.au](http://helioscreen.com.au)

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Pleated Royston House fabric in Ivory, from Blinds + Curtains, (02) 9597 1001; knife-pleated sheer fabric in Sunny Sheer from Warwick Fabrics, 1300 787 888; [warwick.com.au](http://warwick.com.au); both awnings from Helioscreen.

