

The Wallpaper Issue
July, 2023

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THE WALLPAPER ISSUE

When were wallpapers first used?

What was the artwork like?

How different are wallpaper styles around the world?

Why is innovation in wallpaper production so important?

There's so much more to these pretty spreads that make our rooms delightful.

Let's explore it all in the wallpaper issue.

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Gournay Chinoiserie





A BRIEF HISTORY OF WALLPAPERS

During the Qin Dynasty around 200 BC, the first wallpaper was apparently made of rice paper. Perhaps the desire to make rooms prettier with printed wallpapers led the Chinese to use smother papers with fibres and voila! Printed wallpaper was born. The Silk Route and booming trade took paper to the rest of the world along with wallpaper.

By the 16th century and later block printing techniques were used to print chinoiserie, Moorish and eastern patterns. But these exquisite wallpapers were reserved for stately homes and exclusive spaces. By the time the Industrial Revolution in the 18th century when mass production changed the very fabric of manufacturing, common homes began using wallpaper in their drawing rooms.

Enter William Morris and Timorous Beasties!

William Morris was a poet, fantasy writer, textile designer and a part of the British Arts and Crafts Movement. He, along with his friends Charles Faulkner and P.P. Marshall formed the Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. This firm influenced interior decor in Victorian England with their fabrics, furnishing and wallpapers. Since the British Arts and Crafts Movement spread across the colonies in America and Asia, it wasn't long before these artistic interiors spread to other parts of the globe. Today, Morris and Co. still make wallpapers with a company that spans across the globe.

Chinoiserie and block prints dominated the 1800s in England. But across the pond, rustic American homes sported prints like Toile de Juoy. Later on, studios like Dorothy Draper and Clarence House made their mark on the wall. The 70s were not far behind with Woodstock colours and abstract patterns.

Ever watched one of those family entertainer TV series that were made between the 60s and 90s? Have you ever noticed how the set decor of the classic American or British home was almost iconic with its floral wallpapers? Companies like Timorous Beasties and Cole and Sons produced just that! Heavily detailed wallpapers.

Each era had its own design influence and artistic quirks. From starting in China with print design influences from India and Persia, wallpapers were a true international art form by the time its popularity grew in England and reached America. How better to describe the main exhibit of a common man's gallery.





Timorous Beasties

WALLPAPERS TODAY

Today we have environmentally friendly materials with digitally printed surface pattern designs in most houses that choose wallpaper. Even the glues are flame resistant, fungus and moisture resistant. But the thing about wallpapers today that makes it the talk of the town are surely the novelty designs.

Wallpaper designs are an opportunity for homeowners to express themselves. Spiderman wallpapers are not limited to your 8 year old's bedroom. Futurism, cubism, pop art, Toile de Jouy and even Moroccan tile patterns. All it would take is one influencer having a home makeover and their wallpaper would sell like hotcakes.

If you are a designer yourself then by all means custom-made is the way to go. Good ole Adobe illustrator and a colourful imagination is all you would need. And it's not just design... some wallpapers come with a spongy layer that can absorb sound waves. This can be a lifesaver for someone with a small recording studio in their garage.



Toile de Jouy



WALLPAPERS OF THE FUTURE

A material designer, surface pattern designer and interior designer walk into a bar. They don't get to have a punchline for a joke but they do come up with futuristic wallpaper ideas.

Not everybody uses a straw every day. We mostly drink straight from the glass or water bottle and yet, companies are getting creative with paper and metal straws to save the turtles. Think about how much wallpaper it takes to cover a single room and how we actually use that space every day. Shouldn't something so ubiquitous have equally the same focus as planet-friendly straws?

Wall paints have fewer harmful fumes these days and come with upgrades like UV-protection. Wallpapers of the future should also have promising innovations like thermal insulations to keep rooms cooler. While making wallpapers fully biodegradable is a great first step, material designers can and must explore this avenue even more.

Wallpaper and interior architecture should go along with surface design and product design. Pretty prints and fancy chairs are pleasing to look at but a million dollar invention is generally something that goes a step further.

Exploring bioluminescence, flame resistant material and perhaps even electromagnetic embeds for contact charging of devices would surely be a great win for material designers.

This section generally explores new innovations in the subject of the magazine issue theme. However, there isn't much to talk about other than scratch-n-sniff and heat-sensitive wallpapers. Sure these are cool but they belong in a museum because they are a novelty.

Wallpaper on the other hand is an everyday object and not something framed in the Louvre. Whatever innovations a wallpaper demands in 2023 should have an upgrade that seamlessly enhances everyday life without wearing out in two weeks like a scratch-n-sniff.

Oddly enough, this report on the lack of innovation in wallpapers should bring hope. Hope because there is an area in design that has so much potential for design innovation. Wide-eyed designers who are hoping to create the next big thing... this could be your chance.



SISTER PARISH



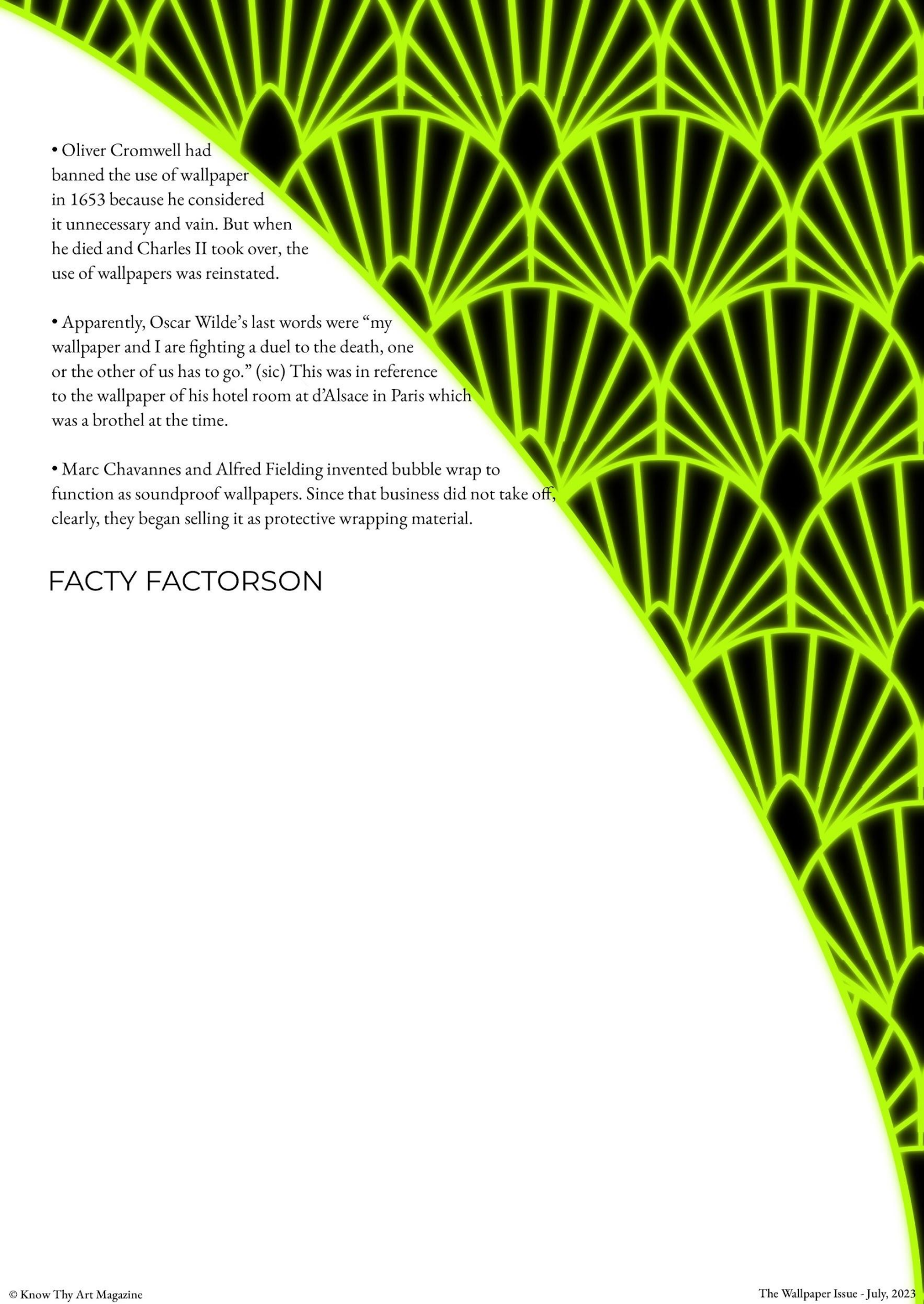
ZEBRINE
BY
ROSE
CUMMING

SENSEI SPEAKS

"Your home is the backdrop of your life,
whether it is a palace or a one-room apartment it should honestly be your own — an expression of your personality."

DOROTHY DRAPER





- Oliver Cromwell had banned the use of wallpaper in 1653 because he considered it unnecessary and vain. But when he died and Charles II took over, the use of wallpapers was reinstated.

- Apparently, Oscar Wilde's last words were "my wallpaper and I are fighting a duel to the death, one or the other of us has to go." (sic) This was in reference to the wallpaper of his hotel room at d'Alsace in Paris which was a brothel at the time.

- Marc Chavannes and Alfred Fielding invented bubble wrap to function as soundproof wallpapers. Since that business did not take off, clearly, they began selling it as protective wrapping material.

FACTY FACTORSON



ASK THE EDITOR

How do I become a designer for home furnishing?

-Jess, New Castle

A surface designer has the exciting job of making artwork for home furnishings like sheets, curtains, table covers, wallpapers and more. To be a surface pattern designer, it would be great if you were well versed in making digital illustrations.

Practicing how to create seamless patterns from spot illustrations and themed designs is a must. Learn to make designs using fixed palettes, consistent design styles and themes that you might see in your own home. Look up “Surface Design” as a career to know more about this branch of illustration.

SNEAK PEEK OF THE NEXT ISSUE

THE APP DESIGN ISSUE

Like water and air,
you probably can't go
a day without using an app.

Some useful, some ridiculous,
love 'em or hate 'em, you can't ignore them.

Know Thy Art Magazine will explore the

design aspect of mobile applications
in next month's App Design Issue.

