

Soft, romantic patterns featured on today's walls

By LIS KING

The biggest news in wallcoverings is a soft, romantic look that's sure to convert many a wall from the painted blahs to pattern prettiness.

The designs, whether countryish or elegant, reflect those places and eras that inspire the sweetest daydreams, and the new colors are soft and flattering.

But the biggest change of all is in scale. It has gone from bold to modest, with mini-prints demanding a great deal of attention.

"What it amounts to is a look that's very easy to put together and live with," says Jerry Papia, chief designer for the Thomas Strahan Company.

Adds Bob Spaeth of Christopher Prints, another fashion leader in the wallcovering industry: "Those bright-colored super-graphics of a few years ago were scary... Only the most self-assured do-it-yourself decorator dared use them. The new wall fashions, on the other hand, are low-keyed and incredibly versatile."

Mary Taxiarchis, of Style-Text, says that "wall designs traditionally follow the trends set by the fashion industry, and it so happens that this year's frankly romantic styles are particularly well suited for wallcoverings."

"Pretty patterns on the walls bring softness to a room," agrees Spaeth, "and that's a nice look to come home to after a hectic business day."

Orient expressions

Wall fashions with strong Oriental overtones are the forerunners this year. Stylized bird and flower motifs in lovely pastels and earthtones are particularly plentiful. Butterflies also flutter about many a new wallcovering.

Nature themes borrowed from garden, meadow or woodlands have none of the exaggerated scale or colors of the last few years. Instead they're as soft as an impressionistic painting.

Most of the new mini-prints are frankly nostalgic. Many are sweetly flower-sprigged or boast lovely ribbon motifs.

Two or three-colored small geometrics inspired by antique trunk or tea chest liners are also very trendy members of the mini-prints family.

Nostalgic look

Even larger scaled designs are nostalgic. Motifs may be tall-masted ships, elaborate embroideries or tapestries, South Seas batiks, Bargello effects, or antique botanical prints. So it's with good reason that today's wall fashions carry names like "Shalimar," "Shangri-La," "Palace Garden," and "Nauticus."

Very new is the "brown paperbag" look. Here, simple, stylized motifs, such as

twigs of pussywillow or dogwood, are printed on Kraft paper. It's a look that's particularly effective in informal rooms furnished with wicker and blond woods.

As a result of these new wallcovering designs, decorators, both professionals and do-it-yourselfers, are now romancing walls in a big way. Suddenly, patterned walls show up everywhere, and old rules are broken all over the lot.

Formal temple garden motifs are as likely to show up in a bath as in a Chippendale-furnished dining room, for example.

Lush ferns may cool a bed-

room; a calico mini-print may bring the country to a city apartment; and a floral, heav-

ily textured to resemble fancy embroidery, may re-decorate a kitchen of its utilitarian look.

Adding to the new softness traditionally used only for draperies, these fabrics are now also stitched up as tablecloths, bedspreads, pillow

covers, window shades, slipcovers, comforters, dust ruffles and place mats.

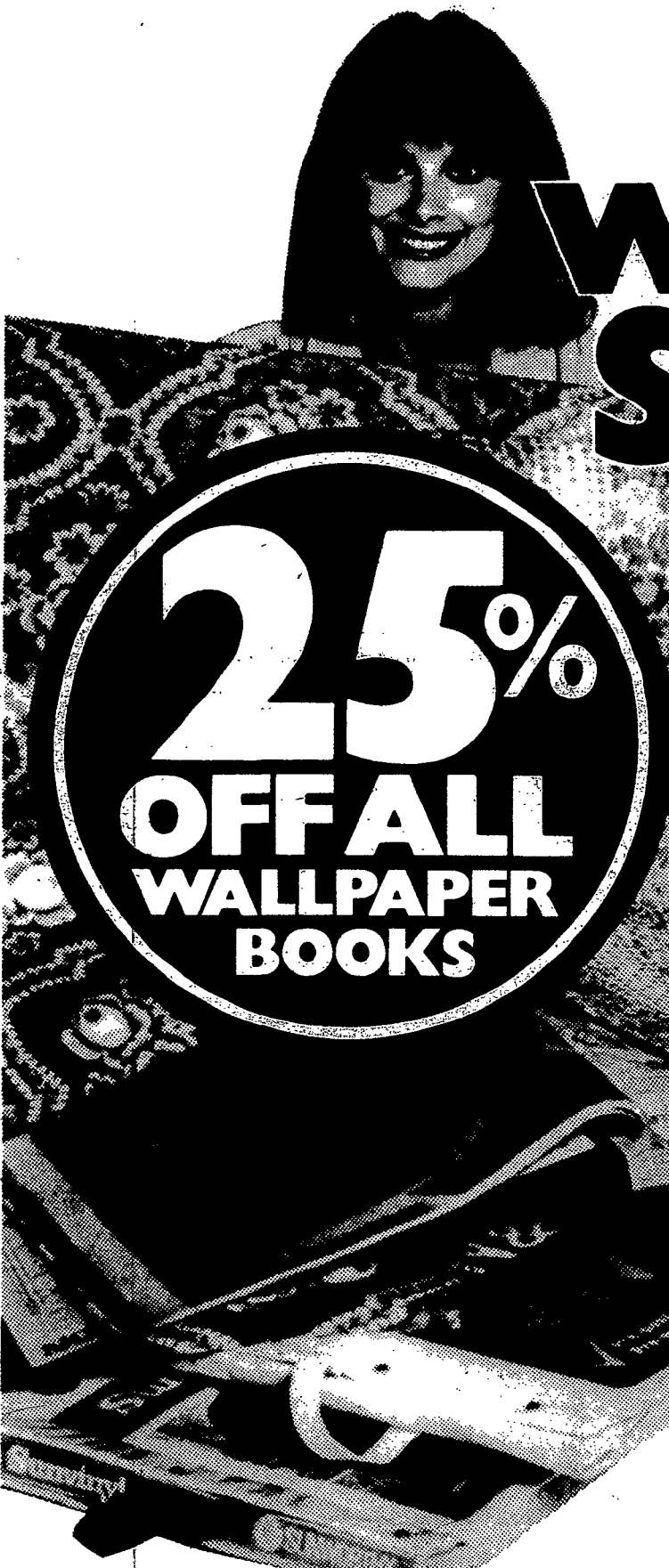
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