



TOILE DE JOUY

Creative Combinations

Continuing our series celebrating the evolution of colour and pattern, we explore how trends and historical influences have shaped British interiors, this time focusing on perennially popular toile de Jouy

FEATURE EMMA J PAGE

ABOVE Sporting stripes are the perfect accompaniment to the lively scenes depicting a day at the races in Mind The Gap's Grand Prix toile wallpaper.

OPPOSITE Mythical Land Flax wallcovering, by Kit Kemp for Andrew Martin, introduces a fantasy element in this contemporary version of classic toile. Created by Kit Kemp Design Studio, the scheme has a richly botanical air.



DESIGN INSIGHT



ABOVE Neutral or earthy toned toile, such as Arte's Le Mythe wallcovering in Sand, can create an ideal backdrop for otherwise contemporary looks.

LEFT The dynamic Eglantine fabric in Printemps by Quenin and Lelièvre Paris is anchored by a classic stripe, adding a softly modern touch to this traditional dining room.

OPPOSITE Woodwork finished in Little Greene's Puck picks out the colourway of its Lovers' Toile wallpaper lending this bedroom a cohesive feel.

Toile de Jouy first surfaced in 18th-century Ireland before gaining popularity across France. A printed fabric, it featured depictions of rural life, scenic vignettes and romantic patterns in repeat on unbleached linen and later, wallpapers. In 1760, to capitalise on the prevalence of this popular motif, German-born Christophe-Philippe Oberkampf opened a textile factory in Jouy-en-Josas, in the suburbs of Paris, thus coining the fabric's name. With the help of painter Jean-Baptiste Huet, he produced a wealth of scenic designs referencing history, nature, travel and European mythology. Patterns in monotone – often black, brown, blue or red – define this classic style. Toile has since evolved to incorporate a wider colour palette and occasionally more abstract or pared-back designs. More than two centuries later, it continues to lend a sense of grace, elegance and narrative to an interior.

Picture perfect

Known for its pictorial storytelling approach, toile adds an instantly classical or a wryly modern feel, depending on its design. Traditional motifs include Maison Lelièvre's recently revived Quenin brand, which revisits 19th-century archives, while contemporary ▶



In this elegant bedroom scheme by Ashdown Studio, Pierre Frey's Au Bord Du Lac wallpaper injects a whimsical feel.



'I prefer using it in smaller rooms, where the design seamlessly enhances walls, curtains and beds, elevating the overall cosiness'

Henriette von Stockhausen, VSP Interiors

urban scenes, such as those depicted in the updated toile by Timorous Beasties, offer a fresh take. Both approaches lend depth, interest, colour and cosiness.

"Toile brings an immediate sense of refinement and an element of historical grandeur to a space, evoking the nostalgia of days gone by," believes interior designer Henry Prideaux. "When I worked for Nicky Haslam, we introduced curtains, headboard, bed valance and armchair in a blue toile to a guest bedroom. The walls were lined with fabric in the same pattern, but hung on the reverse side, which lent a faded air. It all tied together beautifully without being overwhelming. More recently, I've used House of Hackney's bold and playful Dinosauria – a modern take that gives edge to a powder room."

Because of its largely monotone pattern, toile has the ability to add a cossetting feel to small spaces or gravitas to larger rooms without intensity. "It introduces a wonderful yet calming sense of storytelling that is soft and dreamy," says Little Greene's Ruth Mottershead. "Often in a single colour with a patination that feels subtle through gentle brushstrokes, toile patterns are

easy to scheme with. I like to take my lead from the colour found within the toile and extend it across furnishings and woodwork for a cohesive interior."

Synonymous with attic bedrooms and cosy spaces, traditional toile has a reassuring quality. "It's brilliant for eaves rooms because you can use an all-over approach that easily disguises lumps and bumps," says interior designer Nina Campbell. "Like all the best designs, including leopard print or trellis, toile manages to evade trends, largely because it carries the nostalgic appeal of granny's home."

Timeless style

As with many patterns, toile works best with a confident approach and because of its whimsical nature, it is particularly suited to personal spaces such as bedrooms, bathrooms and dressing rooms. "I prefer using it in smaller rooms, where the design seamlessly enhances walls, curtains and beds, elevating the overall cosiness," says VSP Interiors' Henriette von Stockhausen. "I love using it in bathrooms, too, because it turns utilitarian spaces into havens. The ▶

ABOVE LEFT Classic blue and white adds a fresh and playful air to this bathroom, whose walls are papered in Little Greene's Stag Toile wallpaper in Juniper, with the bath exterior painted in its Hicks Blue for cohesion.

ABOVE RIGHT Schumacher's Chariot of Dawn Toile wallpaper, upscaled from an original 18th-century design, lends the bedroom of textile collector Jill Lasersohn a bold, monochromatic backdrop, contrasted with red accents for added drama.



soft, romantic designs harmonise seamlessly with white porcelain, adding a touch of elegance. I might limit its use to one room, but apply it comprehensively for maximum impact. The key lies in not spreading it too thinly and ensuring the pattern corresponds with at least one other element in the room.”

Smaller spaces also enhance the intrinsic beauty of toile. “We have recently used it to line a bed nook,” says interior designer Pandora Taylor. “It’s a successful treatment because you are able to get up close and enjoy its nuances. There are also lots of fun, modern toiles available depicting scenes like the London skyline or contemporary groups of people going about their daily lives. If these feel too bold, a botanical toile will act as more of a colour story within a scheme.”

Mixing too many other colours and patterns can dilute the effect of a toile or create disharmony, so pair it with plains, or as Nina Campbell advises, a stripe or check in a corresponding colourway. Likewise, complement a key toile feature, such as curtains, with other toile elements such as a lampshade, valance or upholstered bench for a scheme that feels intentional.

Toile wallpapers are best enhanced by dynamic colours for integrated appeal. “Papers add depth and

‘I also like to see toile framed within painted panelling, where it becomes its own piece of art’

Philippe Desart, Arte

ABOVE In this country house bedroom, a lampshade and cushion in Octavia Dickinson’s Edie, in Cherry, inspired by a fragment of a hand-drawn 19th-century French textile, have given toile a fresh twist.

W A zingy cloakroom designed by Henry Prideaux features House of Hackney’s playful Dinosauria wallpaper in Turmeric, complemented by panelling in Paint & Paper Library’s Very Well Red.

dimension as well as a whimsical ambience,” says Ruth Mottershead. “But avoid combining them with harsh whites and instead pair with complementary hues for a more harmonious finish. For a contemporary approach, introduce a pop of colour, painted as a highlight across woodwork or panelling, such as Little Greene’s hot pink ‘Leather’ or bold yellow ‘Mr David’, which can transform what might feel like a traditional wallpaper into a modern design statement.”

Creative ways to maximise the impact of toile is to introduce it as a highlight. “It’s one of the few patterns that does suit an accent wall,” suggests Arte’s Philippe Desart. “For impact, choose the wall that you face on entering the room, as this is where the eye naturally falls. Quite often, that’s where the fireplace is, which creates a natural focal point. I also like to see toile framed within painted panelling, where it becomes its own piece of art.”

With a twist

Though toile is seen as a classic print, there are many ways to give it a twist, either through choosing a revamped design or presenting a traditional pattern in a new context. “It need not be conservative in feel,” suggests designer Kit Kemp. “Toile can be given an airy and more contemporary look by the spacing of motifs and the colour choice. I like to use it in reverse on curtains – so a coloured backdrop with white ▶



A sophisticated blend of plains, paisleys and modern toiles is pulled together by a palette of soft greys and sage greens in this scheme in California’s Greystone Mansion, designed by Nina Campbell.

DESIGN INSIGHT



‘Toile brings an immediate sense of refinement and an element of historical grandeur to a space, evoking the nostalgia of days gone by’

Henry Prideaux

ABOVE LEFT In this bathroom by HÂM Interiors, chequered flooring provides a contemporising note to a classic, pastoral toile, Pierre Frey’s Martinique in Celadon, whose forest green tones are picked out in the vanity unit.

ABOVE RIGHT Interior designer Kate Earle’s country house bedroom features walls papered in a Chinese-style toile – Canton by Pierre Frey. The design is inspired by the works of French painter Pillement and likely first printed around 1770 at the Réveillon factory.

motifs. It’s all about balance and scale. It’s also great to use inside wardrobes for an unexpected detail with a contrast braid or trim.”

Using antique toile or a design based on an archive print, such as Octavia Dickinson’s ‘Edie’, inspired by a 19th-century French textile, injects flair. “I find it works well on the inside of bed dressings or as cafe curtains on bathroom windows,” she says. “I often come across antique toile pelmets, which can be made up beautifully as curtain pelmets or sewed onto the bottom of chairs acting as skirts. I also think a toile dining room is very chic, especially in red and white balanced by heavy framed works of art.”

Many specialists, such as fabric house Rubelli, often experiment with unconventional colour palettes or applying toile to unexpected surfaces, such as a ceiling. This approach can breathe new life into a traditional pattern. “Over the years, we’ve designed many toiles, often evoking a sense of adventure, travel and excitement,” says Alberto Pezzato of Rubelli. “Based on a classic, but featuring ancient Venetian engravings rather than bucolic scenes, our ‘Toile de Venise’ is one of my favourites because it’s instantly transporting.”

To elevate this motif, consider vibrant colourways and a generous approach. “You can’t overdo it,” says HÂM Interiors’ Pamela Cox. “I especially like the look of walls battened in a toile fabric, finished with a tape border. When co-ordinated and layered across wallpaper, curtains, and furnishings, it can look quite affecting. We recently decorated a cloakroom in Pierre Frey’s ‘Martinique’, a paper first designed in 1953. It’s a bold design that will always remain timeless.”

Beyond its origins in rural scenes, toile has evolved to include exotic landscapes, florals, architectural elements and abstracts, and can be found on a variety of decorative objects too, including plates, cushions, lighting and bedlinen. “At tea time or dinner time, what could be more chic and delicate than tableware with a toile de Jouy print?” suggests Lelièvre’s Emmanuel Lelièvre. “This is a pattern that has been democratised and reworked,” he adds.

Evoking a sense of both cosiness and grandeur, few other motifs have toile de Jouy’s ability to envelop a scheme without overwhelming it, introducing both playfulness and gravitas – one of the many reasons perhaps that it retains enduring appeal.

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