

DESIGNER'S CORNER

Taking a Fresh Approach to Scenic Toile Patterns

The timeless patterns add stories of romance, history and whimsy into a home's interior

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A tone-on-tone toile wallpaper establishes a romantic mood in this soothing bedroom by designer Cindy Rinfret.
NEIL LANDINO



Each week, Mansion Global tackles a topic with an elite group of designers from around the world who work on luxury properties. This week, we look at tips for adding classic toile de Jouy patterns into a modern home.

Historically, toile de Jouy dressed entire rooms, from the walls to the curtains to the bed covering, creating a head-to-toe design statement. Nowadays, Toile still has its place in interiors. Decorators mingle these printed pastoral scenes, dotting living spaces, bedrooms and baths, taking a fresh approach to the storied 18th-century French patterns.

“Everyone loves its charm and sophistication,” said interior designer Cindy Rinfret of Rinfret Ltd. in Greenwich, Connecticut, and Palm Beach, Florida. Rinfret says toile “adds a shot of history and romance,” and “is a great way to make the room feel traveled and layered.”

The decor mainstay acts as a conversation-starter on powder room walls, adorns accent pillows to accessorize a sofa and pops up on Roman shades, adding flair to a kitchen. We asked several design pros to share their tips on embracing toile in new and exciting ways. Here’s what they recommend.

Mix Modern Items With Toile

“I like to use toile in all areas of the house, making sure that toile is not used in neighboring rooms. If the ground of the toile is striking, such as orange or black, you could use this colorful toile in limited doses. It could be used as an accent. Or if the ground of the toile is expected, such as green, red or blue, it could possibly be used as an upholstery fabric on a chair or sofa with sleek lines.

“Incorporate some more modern items in the space, such as lamps, artwork or a modern style of furniture. The toile print could then be used as a wallcovering or an accessory, such as pillows, to contrast with the more modern touches.

“Softer colors would work well in a bedroom. A toile in softer tones, such as green, red and blue, looks striking when used abundantly in the space—for instance, on the walls, windows and bedding.”



Kelley Proxmire adds style to this sunroom with a bold but elegant toile table skirt and accent pillows.

Angie Seckinger

— Interior Designer Kelley Proxmire in Bethesda, Maryland

Use a Single Shot of Toile

“We love an unexpected element in any interior, and injecting some toile into a more modern space is a perfect example. The unexpected inclusion of a toile can be an amazing blend with any style, and brands offer so many iterations and colorways nowadays. You can always find something that pops. It shows design confidence with a sense of history, which makes your design style feel collected.

“The pattern is so classic that you can’t go wrong with any colorway or motif. Manuel Canovas and Pierre Frey make a lot of bright variations of the design, which is a fun way to make a toile feel new. Pierre Frey takes the idea of a toile and makes it a beach scene, adding whimsy to a classic idea. A tonal toile can be easily translated into any home if you want to start incorporating it in a subtle way. The romance of a toile is always in style.

“Incorporating a single shot of toile into a space allows it to be used in both modern or traditional interiors. I love a dose of toile on lampshades or the back of a chair. Another brilliant application is using a toile for window treatments, accented with a velvet or linen edge. It’s a classic design—somewhat like a damask—so it’s timeless and romantic in any situation.”

— Interior designer **Cindy Rinfret of Rinfret, Ltd.**

Try an Updated Pattern or Bold Color Combination

“I love to mix and match styles and periods, so I think there are no rules about toile. Toile is a graphic design that tells a story and can add whimsy and humor or social or political commentary.

“Any modern toile with a strong point of view can make a statement without covering the whole room with it. Toile is very dense, so I appreciate it more in small doses, such as a wallcovering above wainscot paneling.

“I enjoy a modern or clever twist on traditional forms. You can’t get more traditional than the bucolic 17th-century French pastoral scenes typically seen in toile, usually in black and white or blue and white. The fresh modern twist can be a bold color combination like mustard and fuchsia or replacing the lovely shepherdess with a Brooklyn stroller mom. I love how sly the modern updated toiles are.”



Interior designer Tracey Stephens selected this funky Brooklyn-themed toile—originally designed with and for Mike D of the Beastie Boys—for a client's bathroom.

Wing Wong/Memories TTL

— Tracey Stephens, Allied ASID, of Tracey Stephens Interior Design and EcoSmart Kitchens and Baths in Montclair, New Jersey