

Bricks & Mortar



Wallpaper makes a comeback

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LONDON



This three-bedroom penthouse in the boutique Artisan development in Fitzrovia, central London, is on the market for £3.4 million. Below: flats in VI Castle Lane in Victoria, London, start at £1.25 million through Knight Frank and Strutt & Parker

A boutique home? It's not all about size

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, a boutique business is "small and sophisticated or fashionable". It is certainly fashionable for developers to call things, from hotels to apartment blocks, boutique. Yet Louisa Brodie, the head of private client search at Banda Property, says: "The word is overused. I would class a true boutique development as one with fewer than 15 homes that offers privacy, exclusivity and is unique."

Jamie Gunning, head of the boutique development division at CBRE, the property group, says: "Classically a boutique development is one which has up to 20 homes and is individual, where the developer is really offering a point of difference."

Alex Stocker, the chief executive of Sons and Co, a boutique developer, says: "Boutique developments have up to 30 or 40 homes, but also have a certain *je ne sais quoi* — it has to be a little bit special."

So while size appears debatable, everyone agrees that to be boutique they must offer something out of the ordinary. Nick Vaughan, a director of east and west London residential development sales at Savills, says: "What buyers are getting is a building that is designed, almost bespoke, for them. A good boutique developer will sit down and consider who is going to live there and the local market conditions."

Rory Cramer, the head of new homes consultancy at Marsh & Parsons, the estate agency, says that boutique is more about attitude and sense of community than size. "Size isn't everything. Exclusive interior design, high-quality specification and well thought out architecture and landscaping can make a large development feel boutique."

Community is an often quoted advantage of boutique schemes. "Buyers like the small community aspect —

the fact that you get to know your neighbours," Brodie says.

Nick Herrtage, the owner of Chester Row, a boutique developer, says: "If our development in Charles Baker Place in Wandsworth [southwest London] of nine houses has a USP it is in the mix of different sizes and styles of housing. It attracts buyers from the young to the downsizers, which is what helps create the feeling of community."

Another advantage is security. "This is a factor for buyers; being in a smaller development can make people feel safe and secure, even if there isn't a 24-hour concierge, because there aren't as many comings and goings," Brodie says.

"Our research shows that buyers don't want a vast range of amenities. They want security and to have someone there when they come home, or can take in deliveries and sort out problems when they are away. Providing a gym is a waste of time," Stocker says.

Buyers in boutique schemes are also more likely to wait until a development is finished rather than buy off-plan. Gunning says: "It attracts a different sort of client. They tend to be owner-occupiers rather than investors. They like to come, see and touch. They need to see that it is different to anything else on the market."

Tom Dailey, a residential development partner at Knight Frank, says: "We have seen the success of boutique schemes across London and many have achieved significant premiums over local markets. The buyers appreciate quality and want to live in an intimate residential environment."

Gunning, whose department was set up just six months ago to cater for increased interest in the boutique market, says: "I think there has been a rebellion against the larger schemes which can be a bit faceless."

Carol Lewis



COVER STORY

Wallpaper stages a bold, bright comeback

The Ikea generation is embracing geometric patterns and prints, reports Anna Temkin

Wallpaper is making a comeback. Prints and patterns, banished in the age of minimalism to make way for paint shades such as Elephant's Breath, are once more resurgent, with florals and botanicals the new decor buzzwords.

Forget the feature wall trend under which only one wall of a room was papered, supposedly providing "extra texture or dimension", Maurizio Pelizzoni, a London interior designer, declares: "Wallpaper is back to its heyday, with people using the same wallpaper for the entire room."

For millennials living in small apartments, it is a way to add colour and create a statement, he says. Many brands are relaunching some of their old or classic designs, bringing them up to date in new colours, in a movement that has its roots not only in a change of taste, but also an economic shift.

Wallpaper's return to popularity has been spurred by the slowdown in the housing market and the waning enthusiasm for the acquisition of new buy-to-let properties. If you are staying put and have no need to woo potential buyers with a neutral decor, you can be braver with your choices.

Another advantage of contemporary wallpaper is that it is removable. If you pine for plain grey walls once



Artemis wallpaper, £185 a roll (House of Hackney)

more, you can peel it off. Andrew Graham, chief executive of Graham & Brown, says: "The younger generation is becoming more engaged with wallpaper because it is easier and quicker to hang than before. They are keen to stamp their own personalities on their homes."

Among the brands that have launched wallpaper lines this autumn are Timorous Beasties and Cole & Son. Farrow & Ball has three new floral prints, Atacama, Hegemone and Helleborus, in shades ranging from ochre to azure. The Paint and Paper Library has launched "Tresco", a wallpaper collection designed by the artist Hugo Dalton, with prints inspired by his time in the Isles of Scilly. Graham & Brown recently revealed its 2018 Wallpaper of the Year — Pierre Pink, which features pink pastel florals

How to get the look

- **Bold is good.** Clashing is not. Your choice of paper should tone with the blinds, curtains and upholstery. This is not the 1980s, which means that you should avoid using the same pattern in the curtains and the wallpaper. Festoon blinds, that 1980s favourite, are not once more in vogue.
- **Negative space is key.** That is, the space around an image. If

opting for a very bold pattern that can easily create a chaotic look, find space in the print or opt for a print with a white background.

- **Always get samples.** The outlay is minimal, and some companies offer them free. Check to see how the pattern looks from an adjoining room, a staircase or a hall to make sure it does not jar or look out of place.