



A textured brick ceiling is an attention-grabber in a kitchen designed by Chicago architect Elisa Morgante of Morgante-Wilson Architects.

JIM TUCKER PHOTO

The real feel

Designers share their tricks to decorate with texture

By BARBARA BALLINGER
Tribune Staff Writer

Walk into some rooms, and you immediately feel welcomed, nurtured, visually excited. You want to curl up on the plush velvet sofa, wrap yourself in its nubby throw and enjoy the flickering, warming flames from the fireplace with its big rustic stone surround.

What's the room's secret? Often, not its

size, style of furnishings or color palette. A mix of textures may be the catalyst.

"Texture makes all the difference between a room seeming warm and inviting rather than cold, flat and uninvited," says Erica Elias, owner of EMI Interior Design in Los Angeles.

Chicago architect Elisa Morgante with Morgante-Wilson Architects agrees. "Texture's definitely the total buzz, especially because neutral palettes have become so

popular." And for Sarah Bernard, another LA designer, texture, not pattern, is the go-to tool.

Welcome to 2014, and a world awash with textures.

Textural trends have come, gone and returned before. But not all's the same this time around. Today's updates? An overall subtlety in the finished design, and one chunky show-off texture to act as a focal point or foil.

Manufacturers are adding texture in expected and novel ways. Katia Silva of Sacoro USA, a Brazilian furniture-maker, uses textures from rattan to leather and wood in the company's indoor and outdoor pieces, many now in a lighter tone to reflect that color trend.

Jon Sherman, creative director of Flame Paper in Brooklyn in New York, uses texture to give a more authentic trompe l'oeil look and dimensional effect to some com-



BARBARA VAUGHAN PHOTO

Christopher Grubb designed a game room with an eye-popping column covered in Balinese seashells.



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A wool-blend rug with a combination of geometric and abstract patterns complements a room's business.

pany wallpapers. "Some mimic stone, brick, canvas or leather. Our Brooklyn Bridge wallpaper has a gritty feeling," he says.

In a game room by LA designer Christopher Grubb, he wrapped a cabinet in textured but low-key thersidol, covered the ceiling in grass cloth and walls in ribbed vinyl, chose a carpet with a loop, then added one textural star — a column lined in Balinese seashells. "The shells work as a

conversational piece unto themselves," he says.

But design experts know that the best executed textured spaces avoid a too-busy palette that can quickly become cacophonous. "You can't have everything scream, 'look at me, look at me,' or a room won't work," Grubb says.

Barbara Ballinger is a freelance writer.



MICHAEL GLASSMAN PHOTO

A natural limestone rock wall adds dramatic texture to an outdoor fire element.

8 tricks with texture

- Be playful, use a texture with a small scale next to one with a larger scale to introduce it out. "Part of the fun is exploring and doing things differently, though in moderation," says Kustom-area designer Tiffany LeBlanc, who loves using steel rope topped with handmade overlays.
- Keep a room's colors or tonality the same or in a similar family. "Texture's my substitute for color," says Chicago designer Michael Del Piero. "Everything in my shop, including the wall, is textured, a fringe bustle with clay plates."
- Choose the right texture for the desired effect. "Rough textures make a space more intimate, smooth textures bring a sleekness, bold saturated colors are best with smoother textures, and soft textures are nurturing," says New York designer Laura Arpallid.
- Avoid mixing too much texture with too much pattern; they'll compete and distract the eye.
- Use texture as one feature rather than the dominating theme of a space, says Los Angeles designer Christopher Grubb.
- Introduce texture through layering different ones: waxy tactile, some with dimension and some reflective, says Elias. New York designer Lori Dwyer makes a new grass rug her go-to favorite because it's affordable and can be topped with another texture such as a shag rug.
- Don't forget Mother Nature, a pro. Dwyer often uses a piece of driftwood on a table or console, or a grouping of seashells in a glass bowl. Big windows with views toward the outdoors are another way to bring texture indoors visually, Morgante says. Sacramento, Calif., landscape designer Michael Glassman thinks about texture whether planning a subscape of plants, flowers, bushes and trees or a landscape of walkways and terraces. In one of his designs, a stone wall crafted from natural ledge stone rock adds great textural interest, while in another he mixed different leaf textures of rough, sticky and shiny leaves.
- Edit your choices. You'll know you've gone too far when you start to feel uncomfortable, LeBlanc adds. "You don't want to look like you bought the entire show-room," she says.