

Interiors

Ceilings really are starting to look up

WE'VE long moved on from feature walls. Now the focus is shifting to ceilings, in what could be seen as a tribute to a bygone age.

After all, some of the world's most beautiful art requires a craning of the neck, whether it be Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel or Carracci's masterpieces in the Farnese Palace, both in Rome.

So here are some suggestions as to

by Frances Childs

how things might look up in your own home.

MAGNIFICENT MURALS

NO NEED to travel to Italy for inspiration. Kingston Lacy, a National Trust property in Dorset, has a fine Guido Reni mural in its library ceiling.

It depicts Dawn separating the voluptuous figures of Night and Day (pictured right). But are we ready to



Bold: Interior expert Kate Watson-Smyth's tin tiled ceiling

embrace such an ornate look? Yes, apparently. Interior designer Joanna Wood (joannawood.com) has seen an upsurge in demand for murals. 'Clients are indulging their imaginations, the pared back look is giving way to opulence,' she says.

Mel Holmes, (melholmes.co.uk), a Sheffield-based artist, has been commissioned by clients in Britain and across the globe to paint murals on ceilings.

'Optical illusions, images of birds, sunny skies, a sense of opening up the room to the world outside is popular. Though I've also been asked to create grand murals in the style of the Italian master Tiepolo,' says Holmes.

He charges from £300 a day plus expenses and usually paints on to canvas which he then installs. 'I do point out the ceiling if the work demands it, but it's time-consuming,' he says.

If you want something more subtle and have a steady hand, interior designer Vanessa Brady OBE (vanessa-brady.com) suggests painting a tree or vine climbing up the walls on to the ceiling.

ON THE TILES

MADE in Brooklyn in the 1850s, metal ceiling tiles gathered a following in Britain in the Twenties.

They're garnering fans again on both sides of the Atlantic.

'It's part of the industrial chic look,' says designer Dara Huang, founder of Design Haus Liberty, (dhl Liberty.com).

The tiles, which come in copper, tin and zinc, should be professionally installed for safety, but can look striking.

Nick McGrath, of Tramps UK, an online retailer specialising in importing tin ceiling tiles (new and vintage) from the U.S., says they've seen a 50 per cent increase in demand in the UK in the past 18 months.

Clients can choose from a range of patterns, fleur-de-lis and Maltese crosses are traditional and popular options, but we offer unpainted or customised tiles, too,' he says.

Tramps tiles, from £23.76 per new unpainted 610mm² tile, tin ceiling tiles.co.uk.

PLASTERWORK

ROBERT ADAM, the great 18th-century architect whose ceilings you can see at Osterley Park and at his House in Isleworth, inspires the work of Bristol-based master ornamental plasterers Hayes and Howe, (hayesandhowe.co.uk).



They recently reproduced another famous Adam ceiling, the one at Kenwood House Library in London.

As well as reproductions, they are frequently called upon to embellish ceilings with medallions, cherubs or ornate cornices, as well as preserving existing ceilings.

PAINT IT UP

IF ORNAMENTAL plasterwork isn't your style, then taking the plunge and painting the ceiling to mirror a feature wall is a daring option.

The best effect is achieved using pastels such as sky blue, leaving the walls white. But do remember that the darker the ceiling, the lower it will appear, so unless you have very high ceilings, choose lighter tones.

If you have colour on the walls and want to paint the ceiling, too, then go two shades lighter.

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STORY BEHIND KNOLL PLATNER ARMCHAIR

WHO'S THAT BY? Architect and designer Warren Platner (1919-2006) created the Platner Collection in 1966. The style typifies the move to modernism.

WHAT'S IT MADE FROM? Steel rods and fibreglass. The vertical steel rods are welded to circular and half-circular ones.

IS IT COMFORTABLE? That's the idea, Platner said: 'What I wanted to achieve was a chair that, number one, was complementary to the person sitting in it.'

WHAT ELSE DID HE BUILD? He is best known for the Georg Jensen Design Centre and the Windows On The World restaurant which used to be atop the World Trade Centre.

WHAT WILL THE CHAIR SET ME BACK? It's on sale for £2,529.60 (down from £2,976). You could settle for a side table for £129.60, nest.co.uk.

ANYTHING ELSE? If you are embracing opulence in 2018, then the Platner Collection is also available in 18-carat gold, knoll.com.

JENNY COAD