



Talk about a knockout! Magic Brand Digital wallpaper makes any room more exciting, and it's even less expensive than custom wallpaper.

DIGITAL WALLPAPER - Technology

Maybe you're tired of staring at the tacky floral print emblazoned on your living room walls. Or maybe you can't find a decent design in any of the dozens of wallpaper books you've looked through. Fear not. There is a new choice in wall coverings that may save you from wallpaper ennui. It's digital wallpaper, a new, personalized solution that lets you paper any wall with your favorite images - be it a memorable holiday photo or custom graphic.

Printing Expands Itself

Digital wallpaper is wallpaper-not simply a giant digitally printed mural. It comes in strips and is installed using standard tools and paste. Although digital printing has been used since the late 1980s in the advertising and display markets, it wasn't until 1997 that Rexam Image Products, a substrates manufacturer headquartered in South Hadley, Mass., decided to look into using digital printing machines for producing wallpaper. In 1998, Rexam partnered with four digital printing companies to see if the concept would fly. They called themselves the Unusuwalls Group (www.unusuwalls.com).

Developing a product that was both durable and an effective printing medium was one of Rexam's biggest challenges. "We started making latex- saturated papers, which gives the feel of vinyl paper-but doesn't use vinyl. And we added Fluorex, a protective film for the paper, which can be added to a finished product with hot-roll laminators if you decide not to use the process where it's built into the paper," says Ed McCarron, Rexam's product manager for display medium.

One Potato, Two Potato

You can create almost any kind of image for your walls. But first, you've got to find a printer. As of now, there are close to 20 companies in the Unusuwalls Group. Then, it's time to get creative. If you have a photograph that you want to use, it can be scanned to produce a digital file. You also can add artwork to your photos using images on a CD or from digital art libraries. The only rule is, whether it's a painting, drawing, photo or a combination of them all-it has to be a high-resolution digital file in the end.

Once the image has been chosen, there are a variety of printing processes used. The easiest way to print is with a wide or grand format ink jet printer. The printer, which costs from \$10,000 on up, uses heat to make vapor bubbles from water- based ink. The bubbles then eject drops of ink directly on the paper to form the images. Another printing process uses electrostatic printers that create an electrostatic charge on the paper and the toner. The charged toner sticks to the paper, applying the color. Electrostatic printers, which print at higher speeds, run for \$30,000 and above.

The third process uses Rexam's Magic Brand Dry Transfer Paper with Fluorex protection. An electrostatic printer is used to actually form the image, which is printed onto the Magic Dry Transfer Paper. Heat is then used to transfer the design, along with the protective Fluorex, to the final paper. Why Buy?

Apart from being an excellent way to one-up your neighbor in home decorating, digital wall- paper is cheaper than buying rolls of custom-print wallpaper from home stores. True, your least expensive option is traditional, no-frills wallpaper sold for less than \$1 per square foot from stores like K-Mart and Target. But, let's face it, it's usually pretty hard to find something you love.

Custom-print paper, which is what many people end up with, costs roughly \$35 to \$40 per square foot. By comparison, at about \$8 to \$20 per square foot, digital paper is a cost-effective choice.

If nothing else, digital wallpaper will give you something to think about the next time you're sitting at home, staring at the four walls.

Reprinted by Permission of POPULAR MECHANICS MAGAZINE The Hearst Corporation. All Rights Reserved
Popular Mechanics IS a Publication of Hearst Magazines, a Unit of the Hearst Corporation.
#273786 Reprinted by Reprint Management Services. (717) 399-1900 www.reprintbuyer.com

Digital Wallpaper

BY TOBEY GRUMET

■ Maybe you're tired of staring at the tacky floral print emblazoned on your living room walls. Or maybe you can't find a decent design in any of the dozens of wallpaper books you've looked through. Fear not. There is a new choice in wall coverings that may save you from wallpaper ennui. It's digital wallpaper, a new, personalized solution that lets you paper any wall with your favorite images—be it a memorable holiday photo or custom graphic.

Printing Expands Itself

Digital wallpaper is wallpaper—not simply a giant digitally printed mural. It comes in strips and is installed using standard tools and paste. Although digital printing has been

IMAGING

used since the late 1980s in the advertising and display markets, it wasn't until 1997 that

Rexam Image Products, a substrates manufacturer headquartered in South Hadley, Mass., decided to look into using digital printing machines for producing wallpaper. In 1998, Rexam partnered with four digital printing companies to see if the concept would fly. They called themselves the **Unusuwalls Group** (www.unusuwalls.com).

Developing a product that was both durable and an effective printing medium was one of Rexam's biggest challenges. "We started making latex-saturated papers, which gives the feel of vinyl paper—but doesn't use vinyl. And we added Fluorex, a protective film for the paper, which can be added

to a finished product with hot-roll laminators if you decide not to use the process where it's built into the paper," says Ed McCarron, Rexam's product manager for display medium.

One Potato, Two Potato

You can create almost any kind of image for your walls. But first, you've got to find a printer. As of now,



Talk about a knockout! Magic Brand Digital wallpaper makes any room more exciting, and it's even less expensive than custom wallpaper.

there are close to 20 companies in the Unusuwalls Group. Then, it's time to get creative. If you have a photograph that you want to use, it can be scanned to produce a digital file. You also can add artwork to your photos using images on a CD or from digital art libraries. The only rule is, whether it's a painting, drawing, photo or a combination of them all—it has to be a high-resolution digital file in the end.

Once the image has been chosen, there are a variety of printing processes used. The easiest way to print is with a wide or grand format inkjet printer. The printer, which costs from \$10,000 on up, uses heat to

make vapor bubbles from water-based ink. The bubbles then eject drops of ink directly on the paper to form the images.

Another printing process uses electrostatic printers that create an electrostatic charge on the paper and the toner. The charged toner sticks to the paper, applying the color. Electrostatic printers, which print at higher speeds, run for \$30,000 and above.

The third process uses Rexam's Magic® Brand Dry Transfer Paper with Fluorex® protection. An electrostatic printer is used to actually form the image, which is printed onto the Magic Dry Transfer Paper. Heat is then used to transfer the design, along with the protective Fluorex, to the final paper.

Why Buy?

Apart from being an excellent way to one-up your neighbor in home decorating, digital wall-

paper is cheaper than buying rolls of custom-print wallpaper from home stores. True, your least expensive option is traditional, no-frills wallpaper sold for less than \$1 per square foot from stores like **Kmart** and **Target**. But, let's face it, it's usually pretty hard to find something you love.

Custom-print paper, which is what many people end up with, costs roughly \$35 to \$40 per square foot. By comparison, at about \$8 to \$20 per square foot, digital paper is a cost-effective choice.

If nothing else, digital wallpaper will give you something to think about the next time you're sitting at home, staring at the four walls. **PM**