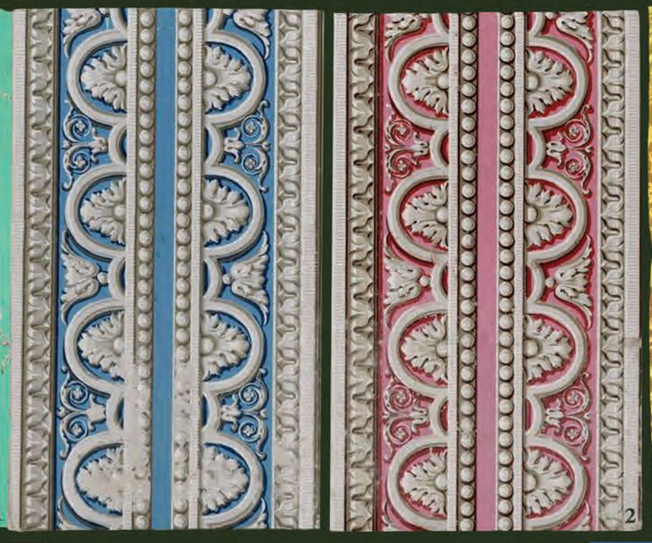
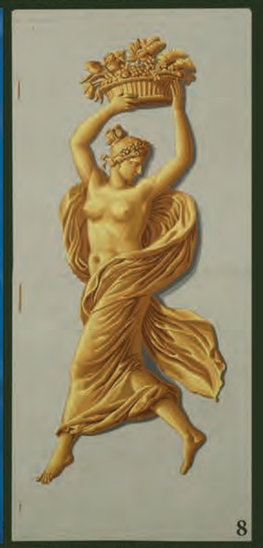


# MURAL FUROR

Pierre Roffe

WORDS **PIERRE ROFFE**

SPECIAL THANKS **CAROLLE THIBAUT-POMERANTZ** AND **MAD PARIS**



## THE ORIGINS, EVOLUTION AND FASHIONS OF PAPER AS WALL DECORATION

*Certainly, we've heard about them and could loosely specify what they were but, the discovery of the vast world that is of wallpaper, we thank to an experience from several nights ago, around Spring. At seven in the afternoon, whilst the descending Sun reflected on the window panes of Ajuda Palace, we attended the lecture given by Carolle Thibaut-Pomerantz to drink from her experience with the ancestral medium used as mural decoration. After getting a copy of her book "Wallpaper, A History of Style and Trends", published in 2009 by Flammarion, a strong wish to produce an article was born. We reached Carolle, and she kindly helped us write about this niche branch of the decorative arts. Hopefully, we will be able to provide our readers interesting facts about another facet of our material, superficial world, that so greatly enriches the arts and our experience of beauty. This article is thus a gathering of the origins and evolution of printed papers used as mural ornamentation.*

Wallpaper! It's a world! A great world deserving of full appreciation. So many interesting facts are there to be discovered, endless insight into the evolution of society and taste of recent centuries. Do not despise them, these mural coverings, coloured fantasies imprinted on paper, for they are symbols of the status of our whims as a civilization.

As the name indicates, wallpaper is in fact paper used to cover our rooms' walls; they are also known by *papiers peints*, though if one scrutinizes the French term, one comes to the conclusion that it is employed somewhat erroneously when describing those produced in Europe. For European workshops did not produce 'painted papers' but actually 'printed papers'; as unlike the Chinese, whose wallpapers were manually painted and decorated using brushes, the European printed their designs onto paper by means of ingeniously carved blocks of wood.

Before modern wallpaper there were other sorts of printed papers being produced: one can find them in Europe, between the 13th and 15th Century, in the form of playing cards and religious imagery, and then later, but around the same time, in the form of little sheets of paper decorated with simple patterns. These little patterned papers started serving decorative purposes such as the linings of books, boxes, chests, cupboards, fire screens and other panelled surfaces. These little sheets of paper became quite commonplace and are known as *dominos*.

*Dominos* are known to be in use at least since 1401, and largely produced by the French. These were small sheets of paper sizing roughly 50 by 36 centimetres—20 by 14 inches—with each sheet featuring the exact same motif, printed in black using a single woodblock. There are certainly other more elaborate *dominos* but these required more woodblocks, could employ different hues, coloured washes or stencils. All, however, stylistically, still quite elementary.

As *dominos* became so much more adorned and sophisticated, printed papers had surely, slowly, moved from smaller surfaces to whole walls. It was such a growing industry that, in 1540, France created a special guild for these craftsmen, and that, in 1597, as Carolle Thibaut-Pomerantz mentions in her book, England "issued a decree recognizing 'the makers of painted and printer papers for lining walls and other uses'". There it says: "lining walls"; printed papers were started being applied to walls, even if still in the form of primitive wallpapers, still as sequences of *dominos*.

In the 16th Century, business was so prolific that many new workshops sprouted throughout France and Italy, producing papers decorated in the spirit of the Renaissance, with Ancient Rome motifs, foliate scrolls, grotesques... Destined to the rich merchants and all of those unable to afford tapestries, marbles, leathers or expensive fabrics but that could instead afford their paper counterparts. The will to simulate worthy reproductions of fabric would, slightly further in time, around 1620, pave the way to create something called "flock papers". The brilliant flocking technique consisted in adding coloured wool fibres to certain areas of the paper, thus giving it a velvety appearance and touch.

For the better part of the 17th Century, *dominos* were the sole way of covering walls with paper. Nonetheless, in 1690, it was established a new technique that would profoundly reinvent the industry of the *domino* maker (also known as *dominotiers*): the *papiers raboutés*. The *papiers raboutés*, or 'joined papers', were accomplished by gluing together sheets of paper into small scrolls, creating something of a rudimentary wallpaper roll. The mastery of this process allowed for greater freedom and made possible a design in continuity, a design that could extend itself outside a single *domino*. Simultaneously in Paris, around 1688, Jean Papillon II (from the Papillon workshop, a dynasty of woodblock engravers and master *dominotiers*) invented a new printing technique called *papier de tapisserie*, which greatly depended on a new method of carving the woodblocks. It further permitted creating wider design schemes, with separate *dominos* intermingling delicate grotesques, flowers, fruits and animals.

Meanwhile, the flock papers evolved steadily: in England, the Blue Paper Warehouse in Aldermanbury, founded in 1702, perfected them to such point that they became also known as "blue papers". By 1730, their baroque designs presented such large motifs imitating damask and velvet fabrics, and were so incredibly exquisite, that they started replacing tapestries, silks and velvets for an attractive cost. These English papers, despite already fashionable since a few decades, had their heyday and were highly exported across Europe in the 1750s.

At this time, in the mid-18th Century, the wallpaper industry was vigorous. The English imitated Chinese wallpapers with a distemper technique, where paint would be mixed with water and then hand-brushed onto the papers (normally, only ink and oil were used, something that continued to be preferred by the French). They also perfected the *papiers raboutés*, gluing together 24 sheets of paper to make rolls of 11 meters—or 36 feet—, permitting vaster freedom in continuous wider designs. They produced the "mock papers", also known by "India papers", which were imitations of Indian cotton chintzes decorated with floral patterns. And the English also provoked the creation of a new type of wallpaper design that—inspired by the fashion of gluing series of engravings and wallpaper borders directly onto walls—would have faux engravings printed on blue or yellow grounds... All of this to make the industry of wallpaper enter a new era around 1765, when there could be found at least one important room adorned with it at every grand house.

Meanwhile, the French, who felt inspired by the English and also imported from them, started producing their own version of the flock papers. Soon, the French were surpassing their peers in mastery and *raffinement*, further prompting the English papers into decline, already frail due to high taxation and licenses cost. While the English had banned wallpaper importation in 1773, something that would last until 1861, the French, on the other hand, protected their wallpapers in 1766 and taxed them very differently from imported

*FIRST ARTBOARD*

**1—Manufacture Réveillon,** 1789 **2—Manufacture Réveillon,** 1789 **3—Manufacture Réveillon,** 1770 **4—Manufacture Réveillon,** 1770
**5—Manufacture Réveillon,** 1789 **6—Manufacture Lapeyre & Cie,** c.1833-42 **7—Manufacture Jacquemart,** 1815
**8—Manufacture Jacquemart,** 1815 **9—Manufacture Réveillon,** 1771 **10—Manufacture Joseph Dufour,** 1808
**11—Manufacture Joseph Dufour,** c.1810 **12—Manufacture Joseph Dufour,** 1820 **13—Manufacture Réveillon,** c.1780
**14—Manufacture Réveillon,** 1770 **15—Manufacture Jacquemart et Bénard,** 1794 **16—Manufacture Réveillon,** 1800

*SECOND ARTBOARD*

**1—Manufacture Joseph Dufour,** 1804-05 **2—Manufacture Réveillon,** 1788 **3—Manufacture Dufour & Cie,** 1804 **4—Jean-Laurent Malaine for Manufacture Zuber,** 1803 **5—Manufacture I. Leroy,** 1919-20 **6—Manufacture Jacquemart,** 1830 **7—Manufacture Joseph Dufour,** 1814
**8—Manufacture Dufour & Leroy,** c.1835 **9—Piero Fornasetti for Cole & Son,** 2007 **10—Manufacture Réveillon,** c.1786
**11—Manufacture Réveillon,** 1780-90 **12—Manufacture Zuber,** c.1815 **13—Chinese manufacture,** Qing Dynasty, late Qianlong period
**14—Manufacture Réveillon,** 1771 **15—Manufacture Réveillon,** c.1780 **16—Manufacture Joseph Dufour,** 1808
**17—Manufacture Dufour & Cie,** 1815-20 **18—Manufacture Joseph Dufour,** c.1820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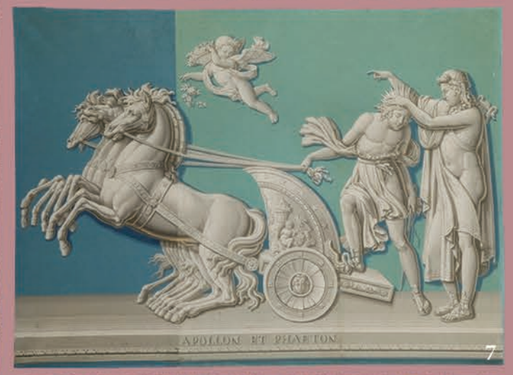

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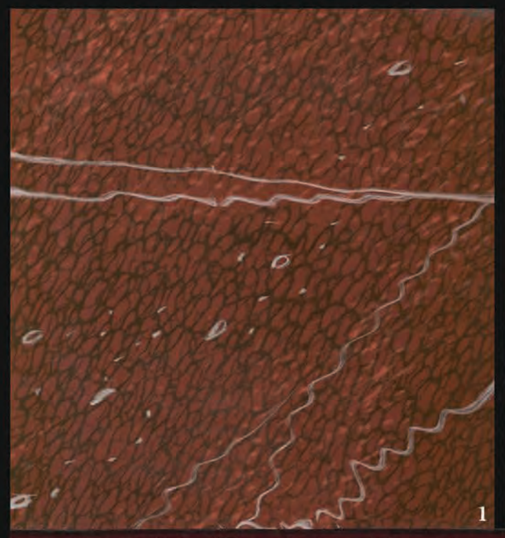
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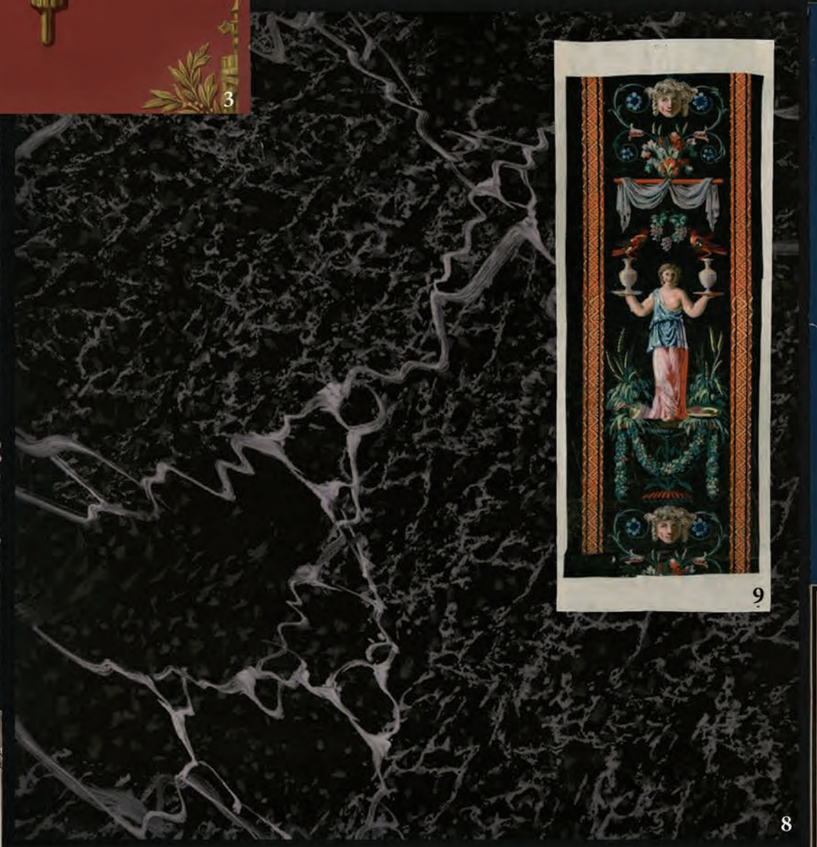
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> “ So exquisite that they started replacing tapestries, silks and velvets for an attractive cost

ones, helping further flourish national production. Madame de Pompadour, for instance, is known to have used them in her dressing room and hallway leading to her chapel in Versailles; and in 1758, she had also used them in her bathroom at the Château de Champs-sur-Marne... By this time, *dominos* had completely given way to the *papiers raboutés*.
Another important chapter of wallpaper in the 18th Century concerns Chinese wallpapers and its European take, the *Chinoiseries*. Chinese wallpapers themselves had been first seen by Dutch missionaries in the 16th Century and were considered too fragile for travelling, being solely brought by captains to Europe to be offered as gifts. These wallpapers were hand-painted in gouache and highlighted in ink, made with large sheets of ecru rice paper that could be sometimes coloured or gilded, and featuring designs that were viewed in a continuous swoop: panoramas devoid of shading and depth illusion, replete with birds, flowers, trees, landscapes or everyday scenes. They became so extensively imported by the English in the 18th Century, so imitated by European craftsmen for local markets, and so largely counterfeited, that even the Chinese started producing their own papers in series destined for exportation. The first examples, however, remain considered the most rare and refined, and both Chinese or *Chinoiserie* wallpapers remained the height of fashion from 1740 to 1790.
Exoticism as inspiration was fashionable in general... Turkish ornament passed from dress, paintings, literature, opera, ballet and music, to wallpaper. Flowers, already fashionable within *dominos*, continued to appear frequently in bouquets, garlands and festoons together with vases, *putti* and shepherds, inspired by Watteau, Boucher, van Loo, Oudry. Pillement occupied a special place amongst the ornamentalists and his works did reflect the taste of his day but also embodied a return to nature, much like the case of the Hameau de la Reine, inspired by Rousseau. Still on flowers, another name worthy of retaining is that of Joseph-Laurent Malaine, considered to be the designer of the finest floral wallpapers ever conceived.
Also in vogue were the Baroque and Rococo sinuous curves. The visits to Italy, with its neoclassical vocabulary reminiscent of Hubert Robert and Fragonard. Jean-Baptiste Huet with his grotesques and arabesques inspired by the Raphael Loggias. Piranesi and his engravings of Hadrian’s Villa. The Marquis de Marigny, Madame de Pompadour’s brother and future director of the Royal Works, with his combinations of Rococo decoration with Greek key and linear motifs. However, it was the infatuation with antiquity and Pompeian styles that were preferred, as these trends would emerge and continue onto the beginning of the 19th Century as the best and proper mural art, where paper could be seen as a proper wall decoration in itself.
The second half of the 18th Century was a time of taste, technical mastery and high quality manufacturing for France. Around 1772, there were 30 Parisian workshops and amongst them was the unrivalled master Jean-Baptiste Réveillon, who gave the *‘lettres de noblesse’* to the art of *papiers peints*. A producer of flock papers as well, soon surpassing the English production in quality, he too perfected their technique of gluing sheets into rolls. Réveillon produced larger, more elaborate and more durable wallpapers with richer materials, more varied and delicate colours. He had 300 employees, divided into paper gluers, colour grinders, background-brushers, printers, engravers, designers and painters. He produced luxury collections that cost as much as silks and tapestries, collections for the average market, and collections of ordinary papers with patterns obtained with a single colour. He hired textile designers, some from the Gobelins Manufactury, and commissioned them to recreate motifs from Étienne de la Vallé Poussin, Jean-Baptiste Huet, Jean-Louis Prieur and François Boucher. His production of arabesques resulted in so many refined compositions that often high-quality arabesque papers are attributed to him, even if in detriment of other manufacturers. With him, a unique mural art form was born and from then on the French excelled in the making of wallpaper decors.
Despite being a successful industry in France, towards the end of the 18th Century, wallpaper had not yet reached the zenith... A great royal commission had yet to come, one that would be placed for the Tuilleries Palace. When Louis XVI had to leave Versailles and return to Paris, the Tuilleries hadn’t been lived in since 1722. The palace needed works and the urgency, together with the state of government finances and the exigences of ceremonial etiquette, prompted the use of wallpaper; it was acquired quicker and for a lot less money, and for this were called Réveillon but also Arthur et Robert, another famous manufacturer.
These wallpapers lent gaiety and nobility to the rooms of the Tuilleries. There were floral garlands, arabesques, pilasters, medallions and the cameos in the Etruscan manner that made Arthur et Robert’s papers so famous. These papers inspired and spread all over France but, with the Revolution, Réveillon withdrawn himself from scene and sold his factory to Jacquemart et Bénard in 1792. Even Arthur from Arthur et Robert, more friendly to the Revolution, was guillotined, and thus the top manufacturers from the Ancien Régime were gone. The wallpaper industry certainly remained, becoming a medium for propaganda and themes for the new centres of government or revolutionary celebrations, abundant in allegories of the Nation and other revolutionary pictorial art alike; but citizens continued nonetheless enjoying the neoclassical motifs and all the other Ancien Régime classics.
Soon, the prevailing trends, promoted in France by Percier et Fontaine, and in England by Adam, reinforced a preference for antiquity inspired decoration, reminiscent of Pompeii, Rome and Etruria. There were panels of arabesques framed with pilasters, borders, mouldings, friezes and palmettes. Friezes and borders were in fact a novelty: densely designed and richly coloured, with heavy garlands of flowers and fruits, gilded acanthus leaves and floral bronze work... And with Napoleon’s triumphs came winged Victo-

*THIRD ARTBOARD*

**1—Manufacture I. Leroy,** 1919-20 **2—Manufacture Desfossé et Karth,** 1864 **3—Manufacture Gruin,** 1900
**4—Manufacture Jules Desfossé,** 1855 **5—Manufacture Desfossé et Karth,** 1898 **6—Manufacture Réveillon,** 1789
**7—Manufacture Dufour & Leroy,** 1828-29 **8—Manufacture I. Leroy,** 1919-20 **9—Unidentified manufacture,** c.1780
**10—Manufacture Desfossé et Karth,** 1870 **11—Manufacture I. Leroy,** 1889 **12—Manufacture I. Leroy,** 1889
**13—Manufacture Jacquemart et Bénard,** 1794 **14—Manufacture Jacquemart et Bénard,** c.1796
**15—Manufacture Jacquemart et Bénard,** c.1796 **16—Manufacture Richard Bon,** 1799 **17—Manufacture Turquetil et Cie,** 1864-68

*FOURTH ARTBOARD*

**1—Manufacture Réveillon,** 1771 **2—Manufacture Réveillon,** 1771 **3—Manufacture Réveillon,** 1770 **4—Manufacture Réveillon,** 1770
**5—Manufacture Réveillon,** 1770 **6—Manufacture Réveillon,** 1789 **7—Manufacture Réveillon,** 1789 **8—Manufacture Réveillon,** 1789
**9—Manufacture Réveillon,** 1788 **10—Manufacture Joseph Dufour,** 1820-25 **11—Manufacture Joseph Dufour,** 1820-25
**12—Manufacture Joseph Dufour,** c.1825 **13—Manufacture Réveillon,** 1770


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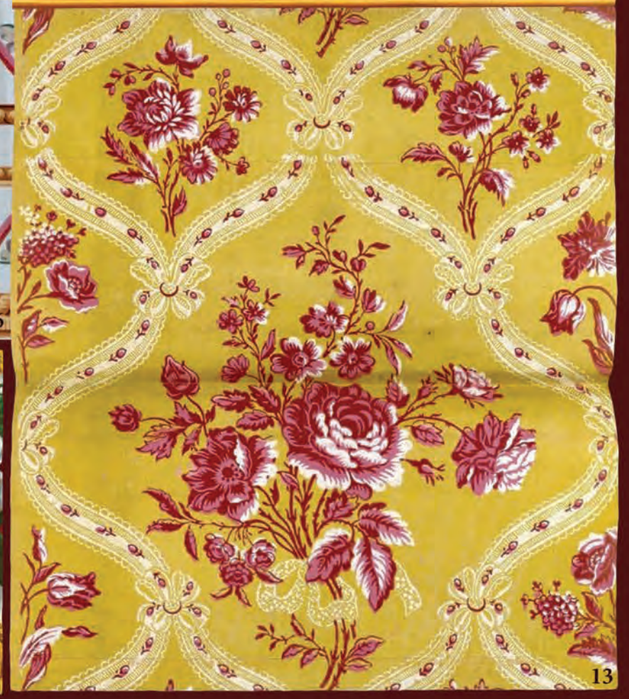
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ries, luxurious draperies and tassels, laurel and oak gilded wreathes, griffons, eagles and bees.
In the beginning of the 19th Century, Jacquemart et Bénard were supplying Fontainebleau, and wallpaper in general was being acquired by the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie. Trompe-l'oeil made a comeback, imitating wood, marble and fabrics, and with it came a new fashion: the *panoramiques*. The idea of representing a panoramic view in drawing came with the painters Carmontelle and Robert Barker, who were interested in the portrayal of the horizon as a total and continuous vision; these panoramas were first exhibited in Paris in 1800, and with it the panoramic view was launched, paving the way for the *panoramique* wallpapers. The first examples were modular panels, with ensembles of non-repetitive scenes punctuated by columns, floral garlands and arbours; but soon, though, the *panoramiques* were being conceived to somehow abolish the whole structure of a room, through a design that featured the perspective of the all-round geographical setting of a certain place in the world. Only the French made these decors in continuity, produced in restricted quantity, that rapidly became the vogue of interior decoration. Brightening the patrician homes of Europe, Russia and North America, these *panoramiques* reached the sky with Joseph Dufour and Jean Zuber.
Joseph Dufour made his first *panoramique* in 1804, called "Les Voyages du Capitaine Cook", and it was the largest that had ever been executed, being 10 meters long—around 33 feet—and using a hundred colours stamped using more than a thousand woodblocks; in 1816, Dufour produced his famed masterpiece "L'Histoire de Psyché et Cupidon". Jean Zuber, another major pioneer of the *panoramiques*, produced his first one in 1804 too, called "Les Vues de Suisse", with 16 strips, 95 colours and using 1,024 woodblocks. In the first half of the 19th Century, Dufour and Zuber were the most prestigious and prolific makers of *panoramiques* and, during that time, wallpaper had expanded to themes such as distant lands, history and mythology... The original editions of these *panoramiques* made by Dufour and Zuber are today regarded with great appreciation, vastly more than their modern counterparts, and are found of high resale value. They are considered today as fine works of art by experts in the field.
The whole 19th Century in regard to the industry of wallpaper was, like in most other fields, subject to constant change and innovation. From a technical point of view, there were incredible new inventions that would reshape the way of producing and printing wallpaper: the copper printing cylinder was created in 1827, the continuous paper rolls in 1830 and the rotary presses in the 1840s. As it concerns with style, the *panoramiques* were being seen as less sensational and sometimes even criticised around the mid-century. At that moment, the atmosphere of a room was being worked as an artistic ensemble and the large imposing paintings were too contrasting with the other elements of a room. So wallpaper transformed along with the changing preferences and started complementing everything from furniture to objects and architecture; thus continuing to be a favoured mural decoration, this turn by the eclectic ambitions that shaped

*FIFTH ARTBOARD*

**1—Manufacture Jules Desfossé,** 1814 **2—Manufacture Réveillon or Jacquemart et Bénard,** late 18th Century
**3—Manufacture Jacquemart,** 1826 **4—Manufacture Réveillon,** 1789 **5—Manufacture Joseph Dufour,** 1820-25
**6—Unidentified manufacture,** c.1815 **7—Manufacture Dufour & Leroy,** 1829
**8—Société Anonyme des Anciens Établissements Desfossé & Karth,** 1912 **9—Unidentified manufacture,** c.1815 **10—Willliam Morris,** 1879
**11—Manufacture Joseph Dufour,** early 19th Century **12—Manufacture Réveillon,** 1770



> “ Wallpaper transformed along with the changing preferences

the second half of the 19th Century. In fact, in England, after 1851, an aesthetic renewal took place. English wallpapers were returning to craftsmanship in detriment of industrial production, they were imbued with a nostalgia for medieval romanticism, advocating for the revival of Gothic, its medieval fabrics and heraldry of strong colours. William Morris, a famous contributor to this, opened his first workshop in 1861 where he created everything including wallpaper. He was later joined by Walter Crane, who designed two-dimensional wallpapers with coordinating ceiling and frieze papers.
From the turn of the century to the whole 20th Century, there's a parade of trends taking place... From the 1900s to the 1920s, there were Art Nouveau wallpapers merging aesthetically with anything in a room, there were Naïve, Fauvist and Cubist ones, even some in the spirit of Léon Bakst's Ballets Russes. From the 1920s to the 1930s, there was Art Déco with its flora constricted to straight lines and its sober decorative panels inspired by geometry, there was Bauhaus, there were wallpapers adapted to the new practical lives, made in synthetic and washable materials. In the late 1940s, and during the 1950s, post-war Europe saw hastily constructed apartments with little mouldings and cornices as the perfect canvas for affordable wallpapers. From the 1950s to the 1980s, there was a mix of contemporary and classic designs, there was Pop Art and Andy Warhol, there was the 'disco culture' inspiring psychedelic patterns in wallpapers with changing reaction to light. In the 1990s there was beige and minimalism. After that, up until this day, there are artists incorporating wallpaper into other works, there are limited-editions made in the traditional methods as well as mass-produced wallpapers in modern techniques and materials, there is contemporary expression as well as a revival of the classics.
Yet despite contemporary production, there's a market for old wallpapers as collectibles; the vintage works done by people at an atelier, printed with woodblocks in limited numbers, made between the 18th Century up until the end of the Art Déco period. These aren't exactly fragile, many are in fact of incredible quality, for their natural pigments have enabled them to survive poor conditions and exposure to light and dust, and can be transferred to canvas. The value that is currently attributed to these old wallpapers is reinforced by their presence in museums and specialized auctions, and by how some of them, together with their printing materials, are nowadays considered national treasures.
Diving into the history of wallpaper makes it clear how relevant it actually is. It's a mural art form that clearly helped revolutionise our homes and where one can see the evolution of Western society and its changing relationship with taste and progress. One can see the unending procession of extraordinary characters participating in their journey, be it designing or acquiring. One can even celebrate all the geniuses behind the complex printing techniques, the adaptations and handling of paper, the mathematically complex designs. Great wallpaper requires incommensurable patience, creativity and intellect. Great wallpaper has today its status clearly set up in the stratosphere. ■

*SIXTH ARTBOARD*

**1—Manufacture Gaillard,** 1920-25 **2—Manufacture Paul Balin, before** 1873 **3—Manufacture Dufour & Cie,** 1816
**4—Manufacture Joseph Dufour,** 1818 **5—Manufacture Dufour & Leroy,** 1831-32 **6—Manufacture Joseph Dufour,** early 19th Century
**7—Manufacture Jacquemart et Bénard,** 1794 **8—Manufacture Desfossé et Karth,** 19th Century **9—Manufacture Joseph Dufour,** c.1820
**10—Manufacture Réveillon,** 1770 **11—Manufacture Jules Desfossé,** 1857 **12—Manufacture Joseph Dufour,** c.1820


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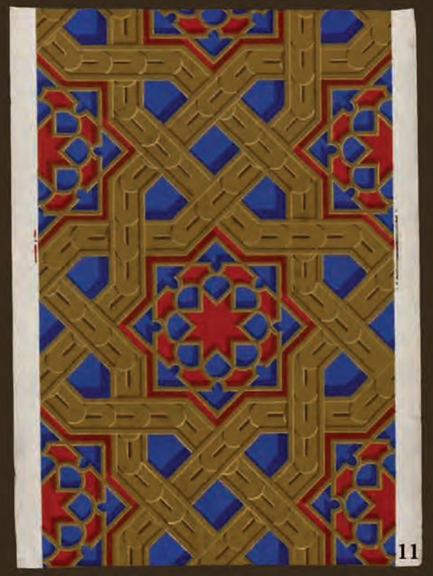
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