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CREATIVE WAYS TO JAZZ UP YOUR FIREPLACE

October 12 | By admin | Comments (0)

By Owner/Principal Designer: Paola McDonald

It is a fairly steadfast design rule that fireplaces should be the focal point of a room. If you were to ask most designers, it would be a pretty safe bet that they are going to work pretty hard to make sure that the fireplace creates a statement and draws your attention. Most of us have a few tricks up our sleeve when it comes to jazzing up a hum-drum fireplace. Here are five of my favorites:



I love making fireplace walls a prominent feature in my design and there is no simpler way to do that than with paint or wallpaper. Not only can it be a simple way to add some serious wow, it could also be fairly inexpensive and an opportunity to splurge on something that may be out of reach cost-wise if

you were to try to implement it in the entire room. When selecting a wallpaper or faux finish for your feature wall, remember that your goal is to accentuate the fireplace. At our office we typically stick to papers and finishes that have a strong texture and that speaks to the overall feeling we are attempting to create in the space.



For example, in this space we wanted to soften and lighten. The faux marble paint treatment adds texture and interest without making the space feel heavy. It's luxurious and eye-catching but at a substantial savings over real marble slabs.



In this modern space, we wanted to create a soft, natural, mildly Asian feel. The stria pattern draws attention and subtly evokes the theme we were after without being in your face. This faux concrete wall treatment was inspired by a photo I had seen of a concrete wall. It's modern, unique and attention grabbing but the light colors and soft texture keep the wall and treatment from feeling heavy.



Another way to bring focus to the fireplace is to focus on the mantel. In the project above we had our carpenter build a very simple, Parsons-style mantel. We had him paint it with a glossy white lacquer to ensure it stood out from the faux wall finish and drew your eye towards the fireplace itself.

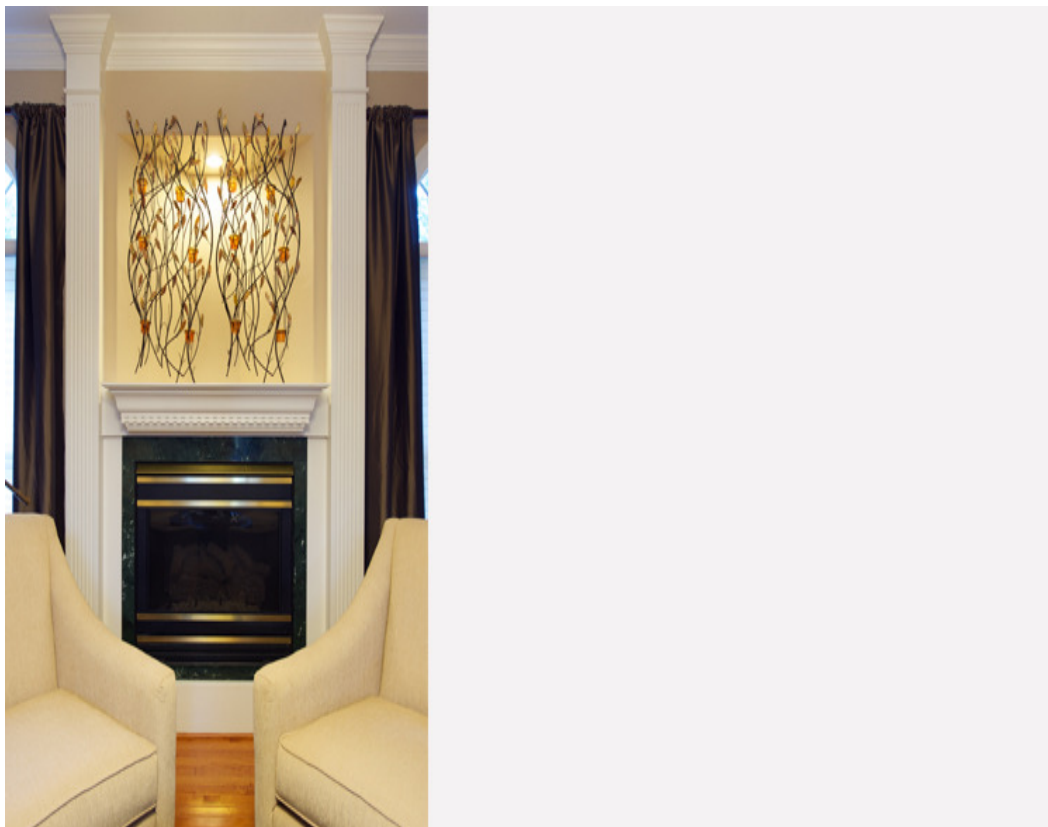


A boring, typical mantle can become something truly special with some unique faux painting techniques. Forth is project we had our faux finisher create a rustic wood grain on a typical, builder grade white mantle. We layered some rustic accessories on top to finish the rustic, "pulled-together-over-time" feel.



If you are trying to disguise or design around an unusual feature, such a niche, creativity will go a long way.

In some instances you will want to accentuate the niche, perhaps with a dark or bold accent paint color or wallpaper, like in this example.



Other times you will want to disguise the feature, such as in this instance where the niche was rounded and difficult to dress. We attached two wall-mounted candle sconces to the front upper wall of the niche, creating a unique, back-lit, sculptural accent piece that you notice the moment you walk into the space.



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