



**PANEL DISCUSSION** (above, from left) Displaying artworks on your wall lends contrast to the room's colour palette; stylist Steve Cordony used this period landscape panorama by Boyac in a recent renovation; (below inset) feature walls, such as this wooden design, can become the hero of the space.



**NEALE'S OBJECTS OF DESIRE**

**Picture this**

1. **NATIO** scented candle, \$26.95, [natio.com.au](http://natio.com.au)
2. **BLACKLIST** Lily # 9 print, from \$120 (unframed), [blackliststore.com.au](http://blackliststore.com.au)
3. **GRAHAM & BROWN** wallpaper, \$130 a roll, [grahambrown.com](http://grahambrown.com)



# WE'VE HIT A WALL

Feature walls are back – and they're better than ever

In her tiny room, my uni friend Pam would slide open her wardrobe door and luxuriate in the kaleidoscopic colours and fabrics of her crazy op-shop clothes. They were on permanent display. Pam considered her clothes art (polka dots were her thing) and that wardrobe was her feature wall, long before anyone ever coined the phrase.

But today, just saying the words "feature wall" induces reactions ranging from eye-rolling to all-out contempt. Once an interior must-have, feature walls quickly became a design cliché.

## "After a decade or so in style Siberia, the feature wall has returned to the stage"

As Melbourne interior designer Chelsea Hing ([chelseahing.com.au](http://chelseahing.com.au)) puts it: "Feature walls were typically a cheap trick, using a contrast colour on the main living room or bedroom wall to create impact. The execution was rarely successful, as more often than not, it made no sense with anything else in the room." But after a decade or so in style Siberia, the feature wall has returned to the stage with a polished new act. "We

have far more sophisticated tastes now," explains Hing. "We'll draw from history or take elements of a building and reinterpret them in bespoke finishes to create a more considered response."

Certainly, the greater choice of wallpapers available now has created more interesting options – but feature walls needn't be limited to wallpaper or paint. Raw brick makes a brilliant contrast, as does a gallery-style display of art. With more of us adopting open-plan living, feature walls have a new function as zone dividers and, perhaps surprisingly, in a small space a feature wall – especially in a dark shade such as charcoal or navy – can be your best friend, creating the illusion of depth.

"Feature walls have definitely come of age," says Hing. "They've morphed into feature finishes with real transformative power." She suggests wrapping the colour around an entire space, not limiting it to just one wall.

That's a technique used by stylist Steve Cordony ([stevecordony.com](http://stevecordony.com)) in his recent renovation of a period home. "I used a wall mural from Boyac ([boyac.com.au](http://boyac.com.au))



to create a period landscape panorama," he says. "It adds depth to the room, transporting you into a different world. I love that people respond so emotionally to it. It is like being in a garden, surrounded by trees and animals."

Adds Hing, "My advice is to be brave with a feature wall. Be bold, be confident and let it be the hero." Maybe the feature wall simply needs a new name. Hero wall has a nice ring to it. ★ Neale Whitaker is co-host of *Foxtel's Love It Or List It Australia* and a judge on *Nine Network's The Block*.