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### DECORATING

# Make a statement in a room through its 'fifth wall' — the ceiling

BY KRISTINA ORREGO

What does the Sistine Chapel have in common with a house for a family of eight in Lutherville, Md.? The ceilings in these spaces demand that you look up.

"Statement ceiling" is a term designers use to describe a ceiling that's been given extra attention, sometimes even making it a focal point of a room. And Elizabeth Reich of Jenkins Baer Associates, an interior design company in Baltimore, said that "statement" can be anything a person wants it to be.

"The ceiling is a huge part of the overall impact on how you're going to feel in the space," she said. "There's a lot of different ways you can make it stand out and give the space a lot more character."

Reich recently posted an Instagram photo of an ornate ceiling at the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore. In the picture, a wooden staircase winds around a light-blue stained-glass statement ceiling.

"That was just a gorgeous feeling in the stairwell," she said. "Historically, when they built these, they paid a lot of attention to those kinds of architectural details, and they had these amazing craftsmen who turned your plain ceiling into a masterpiece."

Although what Reich saw in the museum isn't realistic to replicate in the average home, she believes ceilings in any kind of room — living rooms, bedrooms, dining rooms, powder rooms — can be enhanced.

So what's the best way to maximize a ceiling's potential? Reich and other designers shared their favorites.

#### Wallpaper

Quintec Hill-Mattauszek, an Alexandria designer, said a lot of people forget about their vertical real estate. She's a self-proclaimed "pattern fanatic" and is unafraid of using vibrant, bold patterns to liven up a ceiling.

"A lot of times when you're in a bedroom, you're on your back," Hill-Mattauszek said. "So, it's really nice to see something really cool."

Reich says interesting wallpaper is particularly smart for powder rooms because their small size means not much is needed to make a big impact.

"You can also do a contrast wallpaper on the ceiling to add texture or graphic interest," she wrote in an email. "It's always fun to do something unexpected in a powder room."

For wallpaper on a bedroom ceiling, she said she's used grass cloth for a calming effect.



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In the home above, the "statement ceiling" demands that you look up. The lavender ceiling in the bathroom below stands out.

"I tend to like the ceilings in bedrooms to be beautiful and serene, since this is your place to relax and unwind," she wrote. "I prefer texture to graphics in a bedroom."

#### Molding

Coffered ceilings can provide a timeless look, and beams or planks can add character that will complement many styles. One of Reich's favorite projects was a Lutherville home that she says exemplifies the way changing the ceiling can transform a space.

"We decided to eliminate the sky lights that were in the original ceiling because the room gets a ton of natural light, and they weren't symmetrical to the room," Reich wrote. "We took out the high peak and added a flat section to the ceiling, which made the room feel more intimate," and added planks, crossbeams and arches.

Kelly Walker, a Baltimore artist, faux-painted the entire ceiling in a weathered teak finish, which allowed some of the natural knots to show through.

#### Paint

Andrea Houck, an interior designer based in Arlington, loves statement ceilings — especially



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in dining rooms, powder rooms and master bedrooms — and is working on a silver dining room ceiling in McLean.

She recently dedicated a blog post to the design element, calling the ceiling a "fifth wall." She described ceilings she'd painted in verdant green and soft blue, and highlighted some of her favorite rooms by other designers, including a bathroom by designer Amanda Nisbet with white walls and a lavender ceiling.

Without the unexpected ceiling color, she said, Nisbet's white bathroom "would be a little bit predictable and mundane." And the finishes — high-gloss on the walls and matte on the ceiling — provide contrast.

Alternately, a high-gloss ceiling could formalize a space, Reich said. Any colors can be used to create lacquer, or high-gloss, finish, but dark colors, such as blue, work particularly well, she said.

"I think a ceiling is another piece that people just can't forget about," Houck said.

"It's so important. You can just tweak the color ever so slightly and totally change the feeling in the room."

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