Give Walls A Chance

There is so much variety in interior and exterior construction materials, people often overlook the possibilities that are open to them in wall selections. Percentage wise, gypsum board and plywood paneling are probably the two most widely used materials on walls in homes built today. The reasons why are most persuasive — they're inexpensive, relatively maintenance free, easily obtainable and easy to install.

Though these are conveniences that are hard to pass up, more often than not, they don't offer very much decoration. Consider the jobs a wall has to do. It serves as a background for art and furnishings. It frames a view within the house. Sometimes a wall must attract attention, as in an entrance or a Japanese style tokonomo niche.

At other times it should recede. By varying texture, color and shape, it can make a room seem larger, smaller, taller, longer, lighter, darker, etc. If analyzed from a functional point of view, the wall is seen as one of the most variable elements in the house design.

So, what do we do with them? We make them all the same, do very nicely.

Vary Wall Materials

In recent years, architects have taken to using more and more varied and ingenious wall treatments, some of them materials never intended for such use on walls, in an attempt to design each wall in the house for a specific visual or functional purpose. Some of these materials the average homeowner can apply himself.

Probably no wall covering material is more versatile than the new vinyl - clad fabrics and papers. Masquerading as grass cloth or watered silk or old stone, this material comes in literally hundreds of textures and dozens of colors. Fairly expensive, it costs from 49 cents to several dollars a yard, depending upon the pattern, but is almost indestructable, making it a good buy if you have children.

Some of it is adhesive backed (for the do-it-yourself trade); but most of it should be installed by an experienced paper hanger. All it requires is a smooth, dry foundation. Your old gypsum board wall should do very nicely.

Solid wood paneling is one of the traditional wall treatments that has been largely eliminated by the advent of prefinished plywood; but, how about the use of exterior siding and paneling indoors? It can be very effective and is available in dozens of patterns in pine, cedar, redwood, cypress and other woods that look good finished naturally.

Use Weathered Siding

One very effective treatment is the use of so-called "barn siding." Rough sawn, weathered boards from the wrecking yard are used as paneling with no finish applied whatever. The weatherbeaten wood colors and flecks of old paint and stains look particularly good against pure white walls and colorful furnishings.