The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Wallpaper, In Russian

By Andy Frecka

July 24, 2013



This morning I was sitting, minding my own business, in a rather meditative state of mind, when my eldest offspring interrupted my tranquility.

"Dad", she inquired, "why is there wallpaper on our ceiling?"

I began an exhaustive explanation about how wallpaper on the ceiling is a less dusty alternative than whitewash and doesn't scratch or fade with time.

"Hm", she said offhandedly, and made her escape.



So much wallpaper, so few ceilings.

She's a sensible yet respectful young lady, so I can only assume that's why she didn't begin to riddle holes into my very incomplete explanation. Indeed, I have scratched a whitewashed ceiling or two in my day with a Christmas tree star, and have witnessed the need to perpetually update the ceiling whitewash. But still, there must be a better solution?

I realized that I had come to accept wallpaper on the ceiling as a normal fact of life, just like many of my countrymen think it is acceptable and normal to shake hands without removing their gloves. Or, I think it's normal, you know, normal like stirring 3 tablespoons of mayonnaise into each and every bowl of soup prior to consuming.

I guess I should take this moment, since it is as good as any other for this purpose, and explain to you an important point: "wallpaper", in Russian, does not include the word "wall". Nor does it include the word "paper". Therefore, you can feel free to glue it up just about anywhere you like. Your English term for this fine remodeling commodity has closed your mind to its many uses.



You know, instead of glue.

Actually, if you think gluing is the only way to fasten this fine product to another surface, you are guilty of an incredibly paltry worldview and are in deep need of broadening your horizons. One time I was part of purchasing a house in a small village in a remote area of Russia. We were fascinated to discover that they had nailed the wallpaper to the wall. I never found out why, and that is something that keeps me up at night. The possible explanations include: 1) There was no glue available. OR 2) If there was ever the need to move quickly, due to an unforeseen cataclysmic event, you could quickly remove the wallpaper and take it to your new residence under the cover of the darkness of the early morning hours.

Please do comment below if you have any other thoughts on why it would be necessary to nail

wallpaper to the wall. It does provide for a perfect habitat for creepy crawlers, thus keeping insects and rodents of various shapes and sizes out of sight and out of mind.

When I first came to Russia in the mid-1990's I was impressed at the landscape wallpaper that was all the rage at the time. It would be so cold outside that the molecules had stopped moving and the weather report was in Kelvin, and you would come inside and "Voila!" you were in a tropical paradise, with a wall print from floor to ceiling depicting a beach, palm trees, et cetera. Very effective for those who are adept at the willing suspense of disbelief.



Create the illusion that you can afford furniture and fruit.

Since my daughter stumped me this morning, I turned to social media to answer this question. Whenever I don't know what to do with life's big questions I always turn to Twitter. One of my followers (I lead, he follows) was kind enough to explain to me that "during Soviet times, wallpaper on the ceiling was a sign of prosperity".

I suppose to show off our prosperity, after wallpapering the ceiling, we could cast off all financial restraint by putting a coat or two of paint on the windows. But I digress.

I proudly passed the prosperity argument on to my daughter. She didn't even hesitate to ask, "So, does this mean we are rich?"

"Oh yes, definitely", I replied.

And if my daughter's curious mind ever inquires why "all the kids" at school have iPads and she doesn't, I'm thrilled that I now have a ready answer: "But look, we have wallpaper on the ceiling".

Original url: https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2013/07/24/wallpaper-in-russian-a34537