



President's Message

News & Notes

By WIA President Mike DiGilio, C.P.

So, I am hoping that everyone is back to work and using safe practices to do their jobs.

Spring of 2020 proved to be an unprecedented time for all of us, our families, and our communities. We've had to make many changes and adjustments in our businesses as well. We are increasing our marketing efforts to the general public, not only through social media channels, but in a direct, hands-on manner.



In a mutual effort to increase our visibility with the people who buy York Wallcoverings

and the people who install York Wallcoverings, York will be inserting a WIA information card in every box of wallpaper sold. The card has both our logos on it. The card's message directs the purchaser to the WIA website for further information on installers and the association. We are very proud to partner with York Wallcoverings in this endeavor. Both groups look forward to where this will lead us. We hope it leads to more and better installations for York and more business and more members for the WIA.

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Since we are all stepping up our professionalism this year, have you registered for WIA's online TeleSummit? By now, most of us know that our annual convention has been moved to July of 2021. We hope that you plan to attend our first online "convention" on September 26, 2020. It starts at 9:00 AM Central Time and goes until 7:30 PM. There will be over a dozen seminars, vendor vignettes, and lunchtime breakout "rooms" where you can talk to vendors. We'll even have a happy hour, where you can chat up the event with your friends. It's a global happening never been done by anyone in the industry: a complete online experience! I hope to see you there. Till then, stay safe, stay working, stay learning. ■

WIA 2020 TeleSummit

September 26th - 10am ET - 7:45pm ET

Wallpaper in Literature

In 1960, E. A. Entwistle published a book that referenced all mentions of wallpaper in English-language literature from 1509 to 1960. It was titled *A Literary History of Wallpaper* and makes a surprisingly insightful observation upon the social value of wallpaper in the 19th century. This exhaustive recitation of quote after quote mentioning wallpaper in literature indicates that wallpaper does more than insulate or decorate walls.

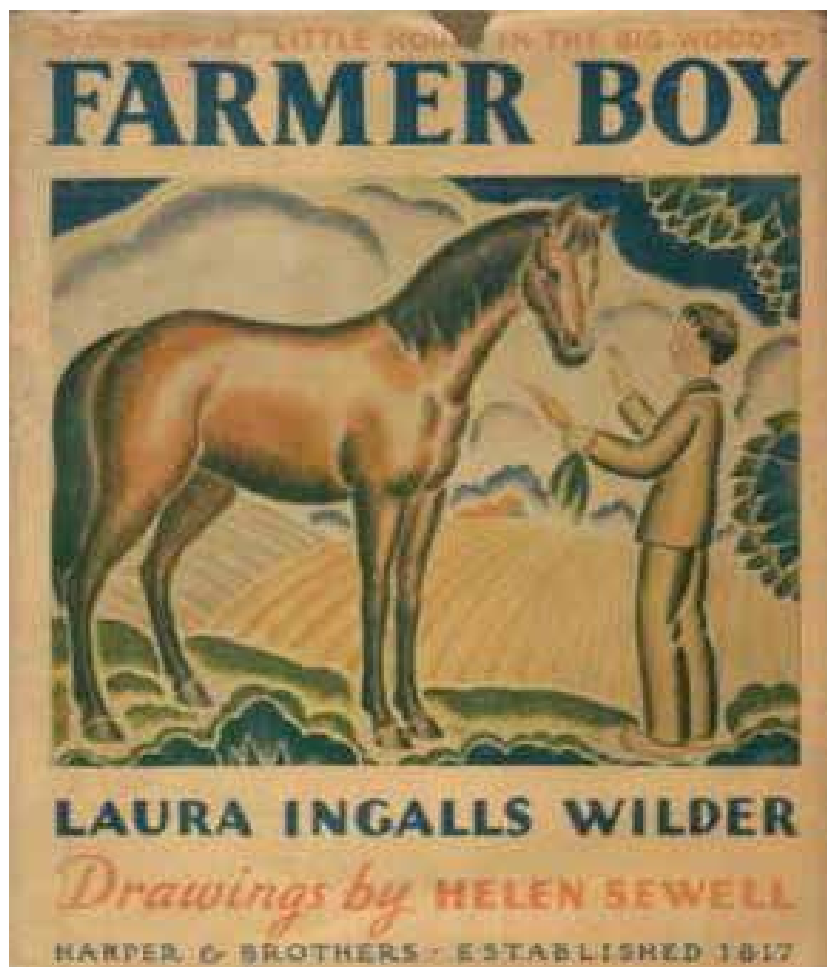
Probably the most famous example of wallpaper in literature is Charlotte Perkins Gilman's short story, "The Yellow Wallpaper." In this exposé of the stultifying oppression of women in the late 1800s, the "optic horror" of the wallpaper contributes to the protagonist's descent into madness.

In *Farmer Boy* by Laura Ingalls Wilder, the fanciest room in the Wilder family home is the formal parlor where visitors are received. It has wallpaper, which hints at the family's prosperity and the significance of them having a genteel room reserved especially for important visitors. In anger, Amazon Wilder damages the wallpaper with a mis-aimed paintbrush and fears dire punishment by his parents when they make the inevitable discovery. Later he discovers one of his sisters saved his bacon by patching the splotch with a clean scrap of unused wallpaper.

Guy de Maupassant delivers an unsettling description of interior decor in his 1881 novel *Bel-Ami: The History of a Scoundrel*: "The wallpaper, grey, with blue posies had as many stains as flowers, stains ancient and suspicious which defied analysis, crushed remains of insects, drops of oil, smudges of fingers greasy with pomade, splashes of soap suds from the wash hand basin."



Front cover art by artist Helen Sewell, 1953.



Photograph of Charlotte Perkins Gilman, c. 1900.

Writing for The Atlantic, Jude Stewart notes that wallpaper's very purpose in covering walls and concealing flaws makes it an effective literary device as a symbol of deceit and braggadocio. Embossed with textures and painted or dyed with colors to mimic other materials, to add a sense of spaciousness to small rooms or intimacy to large rooms, wallpaper smacks of falsehood. It lies to the eye and human perception. Used to display a homeowner's affluence to impress visitors, it also boasts of the homeowner's sophistication, worldliness, education, importance, and wealth.

Descriptions of wallpaper in literature allude to a character's place on the socioeconomic spectrum, whether he feels comfortable surrounded by such luxury or whether it makes him feel uneasy or out of place. Descriptions of wallpaper may correlate to a character's literary navel gazing in the absence of a mirror.

Wallpaper lends itself to synesthesia as a literary device. For instance, "bland" or "lukewarm" wallpaper indicates a dull, uninspired décor which further alludes to the lackluster character of those responsible for that décor. "Loud" wallpaper refers to garish colors and, perhaps, disorienting patterns and certainly a homeowner lacking good taste. A mention of peeling wallpaper in a story or sight of it in a movie brings to mind sustained neglect of a property, a creepy feeling that something ominous is about to happen. In *The House That Ate Bone* by Natasha Danzig, wallpaper is described as reminding the character of Edgar Allan Poe. You know something bad's going to happen. Indeed, later the wallpaper participates in the house's deceit and horror: "Her finger wedged the loose wallpaper from the wall and, as she peeled, a strip of paper tore off, revealing skin – living, flushing skin with pores and little hairs."

Conversely, tasteful, elegant wallpaper gets hardly a mention.



New Members

New Members May – July 2020

Installers

Aaron Byrne Graphics & Wallcovering Installation Service
Aaron Byrne, Mobile, AL

D & L Wall Design
Gerardo Gonzalez, Miami, FL

Dreams Wallcovering
Victor Pino, Davie, FL

FDS, Inc.
Marco Felonta, Atlanta, GA

Feitoza Wallpaper Décor
Paulo Feitoza, Northborough, MA

Installdesigns
Miguel Adrianza, Davie, FL

Patrick's Painting & Paperhanging
Patrick Osetek, Jupiter, FL

The Persnickety Paperhanger
Tim Schanz, Cleveland Heights, OH

S & S Pro Paperhanging & Painting
Sean Cooke, Stamford, CT

Wallpaper Solutions
John Krause, Concord, CA

Westcoast Wallcovering
Jack Conneway, Ft. Meyers, FL

Associate Member

MISH, Inc.
Mike Bixler, North Little Rock, AR

The next time you read a novel or watch a movie, pay attention to the wallpaper. What does it say? ■

Working During the Pandemic

Months after the nation began locking down and imposing shelter-in-place orders in March 2020, headlines still clutter newspapers with the rippling devastation of the COVID-19 pandemic. Everyone, even those workers deemed essential to the continuing operation of modern society and economics, has been affected. Self-employed contractors are no exception. What adjustments have WIA members made to protect themselves, their clients, and their businesses?

The range of adjustment often depends upon the anxiety of the people involved, especially with regard to residential installations. Tim Bodine stated, “We just tell them we are fine. Ask if they are fine. Proceed with work as normal.”

Contractors cannot rely on clients to volunteer information regarding anyone in the household or office being exposed to contagion, so asking whether anyone in the household is infected appears to have become standard operating procedure for many. When the population reaches the goal of “herd immunity” and the novel coronavirus is no longer so novel – rather like influenza – these protocols will stand them in good stead to protect themselves during future waves of seasonal illness or other pandemics.

Others like Chris Woodie, Shelly Wilkins, and Bill Armstrong simply show up to the job wearing a face mask in the hope that taking it off during the installation is an option. Several WIA members agreed they breathed more easily without their noses covered by masks.

Julie Young takes it a step further to ensure her clients understand what she expects to keep them and her safe from contagion. “I prefer working in private homes – you interact with fewer people. I send

out a how-to-prepare checklist where I list what they can expect. Like Chris, I start out wearing a mask. The checklist has already told them they need to stay away from where I am working, like in another part of the house. They are all happy to comply, and it’s working wonderfully.”

Trade organizations and unions have published their own job site protocols for protecting contractors and their clients. The General Building Contractors Association (BGCA) recommends contractors refer to CDC guidelines on protecting themselves, including not reporting to work if sick or experiencing symptoms of illness. Protocols include the now-ubiquitous term “social distancing” and frequent washing one’s hands with soap and water.



Image courtesy of cottonbro via pexels.com.

Recommended personal protective equipment (PPE) includes gloves appropriate to the task being performed, eye protection, face masks.

Associated General Contractors of America maintains an up-to-date roster of news releases and information for contractors concerned about protecting their health on the job site. The “Job Site Safety Protocol” prepared by the HBA of Greater Cincinnati echoes the standard operating advice recommended by larger, national trade associations and includes recommending against shaking hands with coworkers and customers, food delivery to the job site, and gathering in groups of more than 10 people. The HBA also specifies regular disinfection of regularly touched surfaces and ensuring subcontractors, like wallcovering installers, follow the safety protocols.

The U.S. Department of Health & Human Services has published a sample management plan for subcontractors, which may include wallcovering installers. To see what the federal government recommends general contractors use to ensure tradesmen don't endanger their clients, go to <https://www.phe.gov/about/amcg/contracts/Documents/subcontractor-management.pdf>. The management plan covers all phases of a construction project and governs interaction between subcontractors working simultaneously on the same job site.

If you think to rely upon herd immunity to protect you, think again. Writing for ScienceAlert, Gideon Meyerowitz-Katz states that herd immunity for COVID-19 requires that 70 percent of the population become infected to develop the antibodies needed to prevent the spread of further contagion. Since no vaccine for COVID-19 exists, the development of antibodies requires actual sickness. Meyerowitz-Katz states, “If 70 percent of your population is infected with a disease, it is by definition not prevention.”

Remember, job site protocols are not designed (and cannot) kill contagion; however, they do offer a measure of protection for preventing or at least slowing the spread of disease by reducing exposure. ■

Wallcovering University Adds New Classes

The WIA continues to build its online educational programs to help wallcovering installers build their skills. As of this writing, WIA's Wallcovering University has two courses available: “Professional Wallcovering Removal” and “Mastering Metal Leaf Wallcoverings.”

The newest course teaches the best ways to strip wallpaper in five “parts” spread across 12 sessions. The first session covers the usual introductory material, introducing instructors and going over general questions. Following the course introduction, students learn the fundamentals of wallpaper removal, how to estimate wallcovering removal jobs, the necessary tools and preparation of the room for the wallcovering removal, best techniques for removal and cleaning up the site when finished, and, finally, prepping the walls for the next phase, whether that be installation of new wallpaper, paint, or something else. The course concludes with a test. A passing score counts toward WIA accreditation.

Advancing up the scale of skill is the installation of metal leaf wallcoverings. This tricky, yet dramatic and impressive, type of wallcovering adorns truly upscale homes – the sort featured on the bygone show *Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous*. A noted master of wallcovering installation, the instructor relates experience and teaches how to properly handle this type of wallcovering. ■



Sharing Expertise: Fixing Bubbles in Wall Patches

Bubbles are fun. We enjoy them as children, blowing bubbles. We enjoy them as the frothy heads on beer and the carbonated tingle in wine and soft drinks. We even admire them in art glass. However, we do not like them on our walls.



Photo courtesy of Andre Hunter via Unsplash.com.

that her drywall contractor employs his grandfather's trick of adding Dawn dishwashing liquid to drywall mud when mixing it. She explained the dishwashing detergent "makes the water wetter and lets the mud compound gas out prior to setting." Ivory and Joy

In December 2018, one member asked on the WIA Facebook page why his patches bubbled. He explained his process for patching after removing existing wallpaper and finding damage to the drywall beneath.

After the wall dried, he sanded off the loose paper, applied Gardz, and let the surface dry overnight.

The next day, he patched, sanded, and wiped down the surface of the wall.

He applied two coats of Gardz, allowing two to three hours pass between each coat.

Members pitched in with clarifying questions and advice. Many opined that the problem likely stemmed from too much moisture in the patching compound or a too-deep patch that did not have sufficient time to dry, the upshot being the wall (and patch) was not fully dry or cured before application of Gardz.

For any material to dry, water must exit it and evaporate. A porous material allows water to seep through, but does not seal the surface against moisture.

WIA member Cyndi Green consulted Van Perrine of U.S. Gypsum Co. who said, "Compared with an unpainted drywall surface, a painted surface has essentially been 'sealed.' The compound contains air that has to escape as it dries. With unpainted drywall, the air can escape both through the drywall surface and out into the air. When the drywall is sealed with paint, all the air has to escape outward, and it tends to create the small air bubbles you mention. There's nothing you can do but add successive thin skim coats of compound and lightly sand between coats until smooth."

Other WIA members chipped in with suggestions for preventing drywall patches from bubbling. Lillian Spurlock Weist-Kincaid reported

dishwashing liquid and vinegar have also been recommended to break surface tension and release air from the compound. Several people testify that adding dishwashing liquid makes the mud "slicker" and easier to pull.

Writing for the DIY crowd who read Hunker, Christi Adlridge addresses the process of fixing a wall patch when the spackling bubbles. After popping the bubble with a straight pin or the edge of a putty knife, sand off the excess spackling compound and wipe the area with a clean cloth. Apply more patching compound as necessary. When the compound dries completely, coat the area with primer.

Other authoritative sources recommend preventing bubbles in drywall mud by applying multiple thin coats of the compound and sanding between each coat. On Fine Homebuilding, subscribers replied to the question of mitigating bubbles in joint compound and recommended that the compound be mixed slowly, not whipped. Other sources credit knife angle and pressure for mitigating bubbles, although only on the skim coats.

If you use a premixed drywall mud or joint compound, understand that it's a water-based adhesive mixed with finely ground solids to give it body and mass, says PopcornRemoval.com. Proper mixing of the compound should result in a smooth texture similar to "warm cake icing" or pancake syrup. In short, it should flow easily. The proper tools used to apply the compound also make a difference.

As with many tips and techniques, "your mileage may vary." However, learning from the anecdotal experience of others may help to prevent mistakes. ■

Taking Care of Business For Retirement

The numbers don't lie. Neither does the gray-haired evidence before our eyes. A large percentage of WIA's membership has reached retirement age.

Most installers are small business owners of the self-employed variety. They know they should have begun investing in retirement when in their twenties, but little things like life and children and keeping the business running got in the way. Now with business booming because of the resurgence in the popularity of wallpaper, they're busier than, yes, a one-armed paperhanger and looking to enjoy their golden years.

The good news is that business is booming. You're making profits that can be invested for future income. The bad news is that you're sorely tempted to continue working.

Planning for Retirement

For the self-employed contractor with no employees, the choices are limited. NerdWallet explains the five most common and commonly used retirement plan options. These are: the traditional or Roth IRA, Solo 401(k), Simplified Employee Pension (SEP) IRA, Simple IRA, and defined benefit plan.

The different retirement plans allow for differing amounts of money to be saved for future use. The SEP permits contributions up to 25 percent of one's net income to a maximum one-year limit of \$57,000. For those 50 years of age and older, a 401(k) plan accepts annual salary deferrals up to \$26,000. MarketWatch suggests taking out a Qualified Longevity Annuity Contract (QLAC), "which charges no fees and protects your money against taxes that will be charged when you turn 70½ and are required to take a certain percentage of your IRA or 401(k) money." A QLAC yields lifetime income and keeps some money out of your taxable income.

The Motley Fool addresses the particular concerns of self-employed contractors whose livelihoods depend upon a healthy gig economy. The online magazine echoes NerdWallet's recommendations and also alludes to ways

to boost your Social Security benefits. Investopedia describes nine ways to maximize Social Security benefits without having to sign up for someone's mailing list.

Many self-employed business owners don't have anything truly substantial built up in retirement savings. Writing for Forbes, Kerry Hannon reports that "A striking 75% of survey respondents age 18 to 64 have saved less than \$100,000 for retirement. Those age 45 to 64 are only marginally more prepared: 32% have over \$100,000 in retirement accounts and only 11% have more than \$500,000." The reason for the lack of retirement savings, she says, is because the business is the retirement plan.

To summarize, business owners intend to transfer the business for a share of future profit or sell it and fund their retirement with that money. The risk of this plan lies in a lack of diversity. The business owner puts all his eggs in one basket and risks poverty if the business fails or can't be sold.

Many small businesses don't have a lot of wealth invested in physical assets. Their most valuable assets--knowledge, skill, and experience--can't be sold. Therefore a late realization that retirement is coming sooner than expected can have devastating consequences.

Knowing If You're Ready to Retire

Retiring before you're financially secure is a mistake. Of course, not everyone has the option or the desire to work until they die. The Motley Fool suggests that the aged-and-ready-to- retire ask themselves five qualifying questions:

- 1. What will your spending budget be after you retire?** Be realistic, because underestimating regular living expenses could derail your retirement plans.
- 2. How much income will you have once you stop working?** Be sure to tally all sources of income, especially guaranteed income, including investments and Social Security.
- 3. How much cash can you lay your hands on?** Investments like real estate and stocks generally aren't liquid, so you'll need a source of ready cash, like a savings account, to take

care of expenses until you can sell them off.

4. **How will you pay for healthcare?** Medicare doesn't cover everything and "Medi-gap" insurance premiums come out of your pocket. If you can take advantage of a (younger) spouse's health insurance coverage, do so. If not, be sure to calculate the expense of coverage and figure it into your budget.
5. **How will you spend your time after retiring?** If you've got plans for retirement, whether that's volunteering as a Little League coach or traveling the world, understand the financial implications as well as ensuring your plans to stave off boredom.

The Kiplinger Report offers additional advice to ease the transition from working stiff to retiree. These include suggestions related to how robust your investment portfolio is. In short, can it withstand a market crash? Additionally, pay off high-interest debts and avoid taking on new debts. It may make sense to carry your mortgage into retirement; seek recommendations from your financial adviser. Otherwise Kiplinger offers much the same advice, but with more detailed statistics, as The Motley Fool.

Money isn't the only consideration for retirement. Think long and hard about what you're going to do. Sitting in a recliner and watching TV all day isn't much of a retirement plan. The best retirements entail remaining active, whether that's taking the around-the-world trip you've always dreamed of or signing on as a volunteer instructor at the local career center to teach youngsters your trade or exploring a new hobby. Think of retirement as a career change: **What do you want to do with the rest of your life?**

Now make it happen. ■

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An (Un)Conventional Twist: The WIA TeleSummit

WIA members look forward every year to the association's annual convention. In addition to visiting a city with places to go and things to do, members also enjoy reacquainting themselves with old colleagues and meeting new ones. The highlight of the convention is always the hands-on workshops taught by masters of the craft.

This year, COVID-19 really put a damper on those happy plans.

WIA Executive Director Nancy Terry and the convention committee, however, didn't let a mere pandemic destroy their plans. The contagion merely forced them to switch gears. Instead of gathering in person, WIA members now have the opportunity to gather online.

It's not quite the same, but this year's online event offers a feasible compromise. Next year, the convention will meet its regularly scheduled, in-person expectations in New Orleans, LA.

The preliminary agenda shows a roster of topics pertinent to both the craft of installing wallcoverings and to installers as businesspersons. Beginning at 10:00 AM Eastern Time on Saturday, September 26, 2020, the agenda lists the following topics:

- Why Use Liners & Muslin by Michael Wells
- Introduction to Muslin by Steven Kaye & Shawn Lawler
- Being Service Oriented and Safe in Today's New Environment by Diana Halverson
- Hanging Liner and Paper over Muslin by Steven Kaye & Shawn Lawler
- Online Estimating Tool by Leo Acevedo
- How to Measure for Wallpaper
- Reverse Match Commercial Wallpaper by Eunice Bokstrom
- Profiles of Courage by Phil Reinhard
- How to Remove Muslin by Steven Kaye & Shawn Lawler

Participation How-To

For many, especially those who admit to not being tech-savvy, the "how-to" of participating in the WIA's 2020 "TeleSummit" causes confusion and creates uncertainty. Kelley Millar, the

WIA's event manager, remarked, "It's really fun and you can still interact with people." The virtual meeting room will open about an hour before the TeleSummit starts so attendees can socialize and catch up with each other from a social distancing perspective. If you've ever watched a how-to video on Youtube, then you'll find this format familiar. Don't fret over your lack of tech-savviness, because Kelley will send registrants a simple video showing them the steps to take for making the experience pleasant. There will also be a "live" check in and tech check the day prior to the event.

The virtual TeleSummit will be held on Zoom, a popular and reliable online meeting service. Attendees will be displayed onscreen in a sort of Hollywood Squares or Brady Bunch arrangement of live video. "Most of the presentations will be live, too," Kelley explained. A few presentations will be pre-recorded because of the time lapse needed for materials and processes to set before the next steps can be completed. All sessions, including "Virtual Vendor Vignettes," will include live question-and-answer portions during which attendees may ask questions and receive responses in real time.

The vignettes are 10-minute vendor presentations during which they can promote their products or deliver a short presentation. These short promotions are priced at \$200 each. The lunch hour and happy hour sponsors each receive an hour in a private "meeting room" to promote their companies and products and interact with attendees who are encouraged to ask questions. WIA urges vendors to offer virtual "swag bags" (such as digitally delivered product and service discounts) to attendees. The hour-long vendor sessions are priced at \$400 each.

Since this is a long time to sit in front of a computer, breaks are scheduled throughout the program to accommodate frail human biology and short attention spans.

Registration for the virtual convention will open after Independence Day. WIA members may register for \$99 per person. Go to www.convention.wallcoveringinstallers.org to register. ■

Light Up My Life

Proper illumination is critical for a well-executed wallcovering installation. Especially when working on a residential project, one cannot expect adequate lighting and must supply his or her own to make up for the lack. So, what do WIA members prefer?

“We have literally used little lanterns under floating vanities as well as headlamps upon occasion when there were no lights (or minimal lighting) in a room,” Jennifer Curtis commented.

Chris Woodie volunteered, “I have a little Ryobi LED light I use sometimes. For bathrooms, when I pull the light, I have a simple bulb and socket I wire in for temporary lighting.” Gary Mineo stated he did much the same thing and also used a Husky LED light with a rechargeable battery. He mentioned that the battery’s charge will power the light for over seven hours.

Julie Young also mentioned she uses a temporary bulb-and-socket rig plugged into an extension cord. She’ll hang the rig from the air register or exhaust fan for overhead illumination. Otherwise, she employs a work light that sits on the floor. “For small, quick tasks, I have a killer flashlight called a ‘Big Larry,’” she added.

John Golden stated a preference for incandescent light, and Tracy Ebbet chimed in with a preference for LED wobble lights. Brenda Hayes offered a truly specific recommendation for a work light, a LUTEC 6290XL 7,000 lumen, 93 watt, dual-head LED worklight with telescoping tripod and waterproof lamps. Amazon sells it for about \$100.

Long-time WIA member Susan Macuna mentioned that she has used both LED lights and ambient lighting. “I found that color shading shows better in ambient light. So, I will often turn off the work lights to check how my work is looking as I go.”

When you think about it, that makes a lot of sense. After all, the homeowner won’t be illuminating the room with work lights; they’ll be living with the wallpaper under the room’s ambient lighting coming through the windows and the house’s interior lighting. What will the installation look like under those conditions? The difference in lighting sometimes highlights striking changes

and may show flaws that work lighting doesn’t reveal.

The prevalence of using LED lights for temporary lighting testifies to the versatility and brightness of the technology. Being smaller for the lumens emitted and using much less power than incandescent or fluorescent lights, LED lights are practical to use, particularly in areas where battery power is necessary.

The differences between LED and fluorescent lights span the spectrum of light. Compact fluorescent light (CFL) bulbs contain low-pressure mercury-vapor gas that emits ultraviolet light when stimulated by an electrical current. Fluorescent lights last about 1,000 hours. LED (which stands for light-emitting diode) lights cost more initially, but average 30,000 hours of useful life and operate with much greater energy efficiency. LED bulbs use 75 percent less energy than incandescent bulbs while creating comparable light output at only a fraction of the wattage.

Improvements in LED technology have decreased the cost of LED bulbs and broaden the spectrum of light they emit. Formerly, they only broadcast cold, harsh, white light; however, now they come in warmer shades of light that’s easier on the eyes. Arcadia’s blog offers a quick comparison of incandescent, fluorescent, and LED lights:

Incandescent bulb: A 100-watt incandescent bulb running for a full year would use 876 kWh of energy, which would cost \$131.40 in electricity costs. Keep in mind that you’d also need to replace the bulb, probably about once a month.

CFL bulb: A 25-watt CFL bulb would match the brightness of a 100-watt incandescent bulb, but only use 216 kWh of energy over the course of the year. That comes to \$32.40 in energy costs, and you’d probably only need to replace the bulb twice.

LED: It would only take a 16-watt bulb to emit as much light as a 100-watt incandescent bulb, and it would use only 140 kWh of energy over the year. The electric cost would be just \$21. Oh, and one LED would last the entire year.

No one expressed a preference for heat-intense halogen lights. ■