

PUNCH LINES

PERFORATED DESIGNS ARE BEING SPOTTED EVERYWHERE - LOVED FOR THEIR DECORATIVE NATURE AND ABILITY TO LET IN LIGHT

FEATURE Emma Breislin

There's a playful detail doing the rounds in design right now that, since we first noticed it, we've seen wherever we look: perforated pinpoints that play with light, texture and the overall flow of the space. You might know that polka dots are trending, both in our wardrobes and our homes – and perforated surfaces offer the same sense of motion and playfulness, while also feeling slightly more design-forward, elevated, even architectural.

The trend cemented itself in our minds when we saw the way design studio Pirajeon Lees incorporated a draped, perforated fabric in its room at WOW!house last year. The effect added movement to the space, the light spilling through the pinpricks sparkles, as if stars in a night sky.

But if decorative drapery is off the cards for you, there are more architectural ways to incorporate perforated surfaces around your home, too. Take the custom-made door leading into a home designed by Sydney-based YSG Studio, which features perforations backed with bronze mirrors. 'The property has some circular windows on its lower floor, like those you find on the hulls of boats,' explains founder and principal designer Yasmine Ghoniem, 'so this was a way of incorporating some original structural elements, too.'

Perforated surfaces can also serve more practical purposes. In a living space by interior designer Greg Natale, an air conditioning unit is discreetly disguised behind a perforated panel. It feels intentional, architectural and not what you'd expect from a purely functional feature.

While perforations can help increase the flow of light and air through traditionally solid surfaces, they can also, cleverly, do the opposite. In a bathroom design by Mumbai-based firm, DIG Architects, perforated tiles replace traditional windows: it's an architectural touch that 'amplifies and refracts the amount of light coming in,' says Amit Khanolkar, one of the studio's principals – while also ensuring ample privacy in the space.

The truth is that perforated surfaces are by no means a new thing. It's a design element that's existed for eons, but it seems that designers are starting to play with punctures in new and different ways. But why? It could be to do with the resurgence in 1970s and 1980s design language. 'I think the renewed interest in perforation ties back to that revival, particularly in postmodernism,' says Greg Natale. 'In the 1980s, geometry became a playful tool for decorating spaces, and perforated surfaces tap into that spirit. They're graphic, rhythmic and a bit unexpected. There's also a contemporary appeal in how they balance function and ornament. For example, they can conceal ventilation, filter light or divide space, all while adding a sculptural quality. It's that mix of utility and visual intrigue that's making them so popular again.'

Whether you're using perforated surfaces to block sight lines or to boost them, the design element seems to nod to a certain dialogue that feels considered, clever and undeniably cool – and far from the 'industrial chic' connotations you might previously have associated with the meshed material.



FORM AND FUNCTION

Perforations serve a practical purpose in this space by Australian interior designer Greg Natale. 'Rather than relying on standard vents, we often design custom features that conceal these systems within the interior architecture,' says Greg. 'In this case, the holes in the perforated detail allow for airflow from the AC unit, enhancing the space with a distinctive design detail that ties into the broader aesthetic.' ➤



SOFT FOCUS

'Made from 100% virgin wool, the perforated textile here features a laser-cut, jazz-inspired pattern that evokes abstract musical notes and musicians' hands,' says Clémence Pirajean, co-founder of Pirajean Lees, of the 'listening library' the studio created for WOW!house2025 in collaboration with Dedar. 'Crafted by upholstery house Maison Phelippeau, the curtains are backlit to bring the motif to life. They also help control the sound, reinforcing the calm, inviting atmosphere that we wanted to achieve.' ➤



REFRACTED LIGHT

Mumbai-based firm DIG Architects opted for an unusual design trick in this bathroom, which features walls and floors in Italian Venatino marble, and a single-vaulted ceiling illuminated by a Davide Groppi 'rope' light. 'A grid of circular punctures lets the natural light in rather than having a mundane window opening,' explains Amit Khanolkar, one of the studio's principals.

OPEN UP

Perforations in a front door might seem like an unusual idea – but the design in YSG Studio's Black Diamond project was custom-made and features circular perforations lined with bronze mirrors. 'A gentle shimmer reflects from its surface when sunlight hits it, which is like a warm welcome for house guests,' explains founder and principal designer, Yasmine Ghoniem.

PEEK-A-BOO

In this project by London, New York and Miami-based design studio Malyev Schafer, mini portholes are a recurring motif, surfacing everywhere from double doors to sliding systems that lead into a dressing room. The ideal solution for dark spaces that need all the daylight they can get, the doors allow light to filter through the neat circles, creating a soft, diffused effect that's perfect for bedrooms and dressing areas alike.



PHOTOGRAPHS (REFRACTED LIGHT) ISHITA SITWALA;
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