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## NEW HOMES & CONDOS

## Fake it to make it



There is nothing quite like the luxury of marble or the richness of leather.

Designers are drawn to the unique, the organic and the depth that only natural materials possess. But if only every project could be draped in yards of raw linen and clad in white arabesque marble.

Here's the thing, not all of us can afford the price tags that inevitably must be attached to the laboriously harvested, tanned and milled.

Natural resources are limited, which of course creates both the demand for their bespoke qualities and the matching high-style pricing.

Natural also tends to come with their inherent weaknesses, be that the porous quality of stones, or the delicate surface of a hide.

The dreaded maintenance issues certainly drive and deter certain material selections. With most new design trends, they are born out of need, and this want for a budget-friendly, low-maintenance options has seen the market awash with ugly cousin fakes.

I've watched the evolution of the fake go from Frankenstein to fabulous, and in truth in many cases, better than the real thing!

Here are my top three fakes that give the real thing a run for their money.

1. Stone tile and slabs. We all love the look of marble but honestly do we really want the panic that ensues when we spill hand cream on the bathroom floor or red wine drips on the kitchen counter?

MELISSA DAVIS

## LIFE WELL-DESIGNED

Fear not, porcelain products now exist that are inherently non-porous making their maintenance near zero, but are also priced at a fraction of their fancy counterparts.

Collections like Maxfine from Ciot include slabs, and tiles allowing ultimate flexibility in design with the slabs available in several patterns within each colour for a true 'natural' application.

With thicknesses starting at ¼" the weight issues associated with natural stone is also eliminated. In short, they are cheaper, more durable and easier to install than the real thing.

2. Leather wall coverings. Using luxury materials and textiles in statement areas has long been a designer go-to move. I've installed rich leather panels on the entry walls of a penthouse and created leather-wrapped wall panels in a dining room.

The subtle patina offers texture and elegance, however, it's also an expensive and skilled process to install, and leather is not kind to scuffs and scrapes.

A fantastic alternative to the real thing, you can now get wall coverings in all manner of patterns, hides and tones.

Whether you're looking for a classic leather, or the detail of a faux-croc or faux-ostrich, synthetic wallcoverings are a fast, affordable and humane alternative.

**3. Natural textiles.** I love the softness and weight, natural linen adds to a room. The problem is I'm not as keen on the hefty price 100% linen carries.

If you've had custom dra-

pery made, you learn quickly the enormous quantity of yardage required. The material cost alone can be debilitating, plus some of the more natural materials unfortunately don't fair well under direct sunlight.

A terrific alternative is to opt for a linen blend, offering the drape and look of the real thing, with the added durability and reduced cost associated with synthetics. A great collection of offerings can be found through Robert Allen Design

If you love the luxury, but prefer an easy and affordable reality, I say, fake it to make it!

 Melissa Davis is a celebrity designer well-known for her appearances and creative work on several HGTV programs. Visit her at www.melissadavis.com.



Porcelain collections like Maxfine from Ciot are available in several patterns and are cheaper, more durable and easier to install than marble.



A terrific alternative to linen is a linen blend, which offers the drape and look of the real thing but with added durability and lower costs.



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