



A page from one of Wolf-Gordon's early sample books, with wallcoverings that mimic the texture of burlap.



BOOK Surface History

Wolf-Gordon was founded 50 years ago, at the peak of the plastics boom, as a vinyl wall-coverings company. And it shared the obsessions of many of its contemporaries, judging from *Wolf-Gordon: Sample Book* (Andrea Monfried Editions, 2017), a story of the company told through archival sample sheets and essays by experts like *Metropolis* editorial and brand director Paul Makovsky and Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum curator Ellen Lupton. "The majority of patterns from the early decades were based on nature, designed to look like something else—stone, wood, grasses, animal skins," Makovsky writes. "A turning point for the company came in 1995, when the second generation of family management took over." Rapidly expanding into textiles, and working with a host of boundary-pushing designers, Wolf-Gordon didn't so much reject its origins in what might be considered a superficial industry as expand the possibilities of patterned interior surfaces. "These patterns are more than graphic," Lupton writes. "They bring tactility to the experience of space; they implicate not just the eye but also the body."
—Avinash Rajagopal