

WINDOW to your soul

How do you choose between billowing curtains, stylish blinds and elegant shutters? Read on to discover which window fashion could best suit your home

WORDS CATHERINE MCCORMACK

Curtains

ALL IN THE DETAILS

Curtains offer infinite creative possibilities. Fabrics can be mixed and matched to create a romantic, formal space (think delicate organza sheers behind rich brocade curtains that puddle on the floor), or evoke a warm, informal mood with a mix of tones and textures in a single colour. One idea is to pick up a soft hue in a brightly patterned drape and use it on other windows to create consistency between rooms. Ready-made curtains with unexpected details are an affordable alternative to designer prints – check out the crystal beading on Freedom’s ‘Sparkles’ tab-top curtains (inset), \$32.95/140cm x 221cm; call 1300 135 558 or visit www.freedom.com.au.



Shake up formal window furnishings with a dash of the unexpected, such as modern patterns or offbeat details added to elegant drapes.



“An elaborate PATTERN ON A LARGE SCALE ENDS UP LOOKING QUITE FORMAL AND LUXE” ~ AMANDA MOONEY, WARWICK TEXTILES

SHEER APPEAL

Beautiful in the bedroom or living room, soft transparent sheers provide a romantic touch without the drama of heavier drapes. Generally made from polyester or feather-light silk organza, sheers offer privacy while still letting in plenty of natural light. The latest looks feature delicate pastels, invigorating stripes and organic-inspired prints. For the environmentally minded, Zepel’s FR-One sheers are fire-retardant and come with Oeko-Tex 100 certification, meaning they’re free from formaldehyde, pesticides and allergenic dyes (from \$95/metre; visit www.zepelfabrics.com.au). Look out, too, for Warwick’s upcoming range of linen-look sheers in natural and charcoal tones (from \$30/metre; visit www.warwick.com.au).

PRINTS CHARMING

Modern yet intimate, the latest prints add warmth to curtains. UK designer Nina Campbell’s Delphine fabric (inset, from \$240/metre, Mokum; visit www.mokumtextiles.com) is a favourite of interior designer Fiona Lynch. Inspired by Monet’s famous garden in Giverny, Campbell’s fabric features large-scale pale blue and olive maple leaves on textured woven linen. If you’re nervous about going all out with prints, Fiona suggests “a vertical panel of a bold fabric joined with the main body of the curtain.” Amanda Mooney of Warwick adds, “We have quite a few damask decorative looks coming through – an elaborate pattern on a large scale ends up looking quite formal and luxe.” >



PHOTOGRAPHY (OPPOSITE) SIMON BEVAN/LIVING ETC/IPIC • SYNDICATION

{Top left} Casamance St Petersburg Collection ‘Tsar’ sheers, \$526/m, Zepel Fabrics. {Top right} ‘Pom Pom’ fabric in Zebra, from \$150/m, Mokum. {Right} ‘Mercer’ silk drapery in Sterling, \$130/m, Warwick.

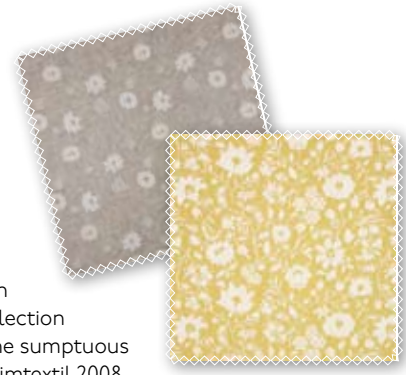


Curtain in Dauphine Collection 'Petit Trianon' fabric, from \$280/metre, Mokum.

"Look for ORGANIC COTTON THAT'S GROWN WITHOUT CHEMICALS" ~ INTERIOR DESIGNER SHARON HAMILTON

TREND ALERT

At the 2008 London Design Festival, the well-dressed windows wore botanical and folk-inspired prints, sand-washed stripes and dramatic monochrome schemes. "Geometric patterns are also really big at the moment," says Bethany Linz, textile designer for Mokum, who worked on their richly decorative Dauphine collection (pictured right), which references the sumptuous luxury of 18th-century France. At Heimtextil 2008, Europe's renowned international textiles trade fair, the trend was for futuristic materials that shimmer (think plush velvet, silk and metallics), and natural, eco-friendly fabrics, such as rough linens and organic cotton.



Xenon Collection 'Vapour' sheers in Cobalt, \$56/metre, Warwick.

NATURALLY YOURS

Living green may just have you seeing green, too, if the latest curtain colours are anything to go by. Muted shades of citrus, beige and charcoal continue to grow in popularity, as do eco fabrics such as cotton, linen and hemp. "I always prefer natural fibres," says Sharon Hamilton, interior designer for Your Abode, who eschews synthetic and chemically coated fabrics for the rich, grainy texture of cotton – try No Chintz's Georgian ticking (below), \$44/metre; visit www.nochintz.com.au. Most natural fabrics are also

hand- or machine-washable, so are easier to clean than many synthetics, which should be professionally cleaned

once a year. Many natural fibres, however, are still treated with pesticides. "Look for organic cotton grown without chemicals," advises Sharon. "Wool is also good as it's naturally fire-retardant and a very good insulating material." >



Hang ups Add interest to your curtains with intricate pleats and fancy fastenings



Eyelet



Goblet pleat



Inverted box pleat



Triple pinch pleat



Decorative tab top

Custom-made curtains, similar to these pictured, are available though Domayne Design; call (02) 8339 7138 for further details.

Blinds

HIGH ROLLER

Simple, elegant and a cinch to operate, it's little wonder roller blinds are the most popular style of blind. They're also among the most affordable, with basic blinds from around \$250 each. Available in an array of colours, transparencies and textures, roller blinds let you control the amount of light in a room; try the new Cachet range from Mermet, which boasts nine different textures and eight colourways, from rich mocha to a whisper-soft lilac (visit www.mermet.com.au). Better still, two-in-one styles, such as Designed Blinds Australia's Dual system, incorporate sheer and blackout fabrics in the one blind, ideal for high-traffic living areas that require light during the day and privacy at night (www.dbablinds.com.au). "Roller blinds in a coated open-weave fabric are also great in kitchens, as they are easy to clean," says interior designer Fiona Lynch.



The right WINDOW COVERING CAN REDUCE HEAT LOSS THROUGH WINDOWS BY UP TO 70 PER CENT AND KNOCK AROUND \$200 OFF YOUR HEATING BILL EACH YEAR

BLIND FAITH

"Unlike curtains, blinds are very flexible – they can be part-way up, have flexible tilt control and come in modern fabrics that resist mildew and dust," says Genevieve Marshall, marketing manager of Luxaflex Window Fashions. "Blinds are also generally far more energy-efficient, particularly if you have a top and bottom rail, so there's no room for air flow." Government research shows the right window covering can reduce heat loss through windows by up to 70 per cent and knock around \$200 off your heating bill each year. Try the latest from Luxaflex, Duette Architella Shades – these are gently pleated blinds made with a honeycomb-design fabric that traps air in three distinct air pockets, providing increased insulation (from \$558 excluding GST and installation; visit www.luxaflex.com.au).

FEARLESS PRINTS

If you love the idea of introducing a print or splash of colour into your decorating scheme, but don't want curtains, Roman blinds are an ideal alternative. These blinds look elegant when gently draped in creamy, organic shades, and artistic when made with a bolt of bold patterned fabric. Similar to a feature wall, a decorative Roman blind gives a room that 'wow' appeal – just keep the length neatly flush with the window sill. "Bathrooms are a great place to be more adventurous with a bold blind, as they are often white or neutral and can easily carry a splash of colour," says Fiona Lynch. >

The versatility of blinds, particularly venetians and vertical blinds {top right} make them a clear favourite in window furnishings. Blinds can be as formal as curtains – try loosely folded Roman blinds in elegant fabric {top left} – or add life to a room without dominating it; try fun fabrics {right} for kids' rooms.



PHOTOGRAPHY (OPPOSITE) DEREK SWALWELL, (THIS PAGE, TOP LEFT) CLAIRE RICHARDSON/NARRATIVES, (BOTTOM RIGHT) SHARYN CAIRNS



SLIDE STAR

Trying to cover extra-large windows, glass bi-folds or sliding doors? Sliding panel blinds are a smart option. Suspended from anodised aluminium tracks, these operate remotely or manually with a wand. A series of lightweight fabric panels gently glide across the window until they slightly overlap – putting an end to the light gaps often associated with roller and Roman blinds. Designed Blinds Australia's Glide panels (pictured, left) can be custom-made for windows up to five metres in width. Choose transparent fabrics to retain light and views, or heavier blackout fabrics for total privacy.

MOTOR RUNNING

With no visible chains or tassels, motorised blinds are a great option for families, removing the issue of pets and children tangling (and getting tangled in) the cords. They're also just the ticket for large windows or those out of reach. Designed Blinds Australia's Move system (pictured, below left) is operated by remote control and has a timer option for when you're not at home. Move is also one of the most cost-effective motorised systems on the market, from \$500 for an average-sized window; visit www.dbablinds.com.au.

STRAIGHT SHOOTER

With their architectural elegance, light-blocking abilities and warm, natural character, timber venetians (pictured, right) are a perfect fit for modern, eco-conscious spaces. "Some schools of thought say timber is the ultimate eco material," says interior designer Sharon Hamilton, "although there are a lot of problems around where the timber comes from – look for styles using sustainably sourced timbers." Plantation timbers such as western red cedar are a safe bet. "It's the king of timbers as far as venetians are concerned," says Peter Meyer of Peter Meyer Blinds (1800 254 631, www.petermeyerblinds.com.au), who produces cedar venetians that can be motorised. "Western red cedar is the best-looking, is extremely durable and long-lasting, can be stained, painted or lacquered, and the timber is renewable and sustainable." Basswood is another readily available plantation timber, or try Ikea's renewable hardwood 'Lindmon' venetians in brown or white stains, or with a clear finish, from \$39 for a 60cm x 155cm drop (visit www.ikea.com.au).



PHOTOGRAPHY (TIMBER VENETIANS) ANDREAS VON EINSIEDEL/PICTURE MEDIA. (OPPOSITE, TOP) JONNY VALIANT

The rest...

TROPICAL COOL

Plantation shutters (pictured right), made of timber, aluminium or vinyl, are fixed to the window frame and operated with a tilt rod. Their smooth, wide slats evoke the feel of a lush, tropical retreat. Able to withstand heat and steam, "plantation shutters, painted to match the window architraves, are very effective in a bathroom setting," says interior designer Fiona Lynch. For durability, look to Vogue Shutters, winner of the outdoor living section of *Home Beautiful's* 2008 Product of the Year. Made with strong, easy-to-clean Polyresin 3, these shutters won't crack, warp or discolour, and help reduce the amount of heat entering the home (fixed/hinged blinds from \$520/sqm and sliding/folding blinds from \$650/sqm; call 1300 361 433 or visit www.vogueshutters.com.au).

ECO MINIMALISM

If you'd rather leave your windows *au naturel*, performance glass could provide the perfect solution. Produced with a special coating that improves its insulation qualities, performance glass products from suppliers such as Trend Windows (www.trendwindows.com.au) and Viridian Glass (www.viridianglass.com) can cost as little as 20 per cent more than normal glass and can often be retro-fitted or reglazed into existing windows. David Richardson of Trend Windows suggests tinted glass to repel up to 50 per cent of heat coming in, or a clear low-e (low-emissivity) glass that will insulate while retaining light and views. "You can have the lifestyle you bought your home for without compromising on comfort," he says.




"The best way to keep your house cool and be energy-efficient is to keep the heat from getting in to begin with" ~ INTERIOR DESIGNER SHARON HAMILTON

for the outdoors

SHADY CHARACTER

"The best way to keep your house cool and be energy efficient is to keep the heat from getting in to begin with," says interior designer Sharon Hamilton. "Sun shading on northern and western windows is particularly effective, and most awnings can be retracted or shutter-tilted to allow the sun and light through in colder months." For the budget conscious, Bunnings Warehouse sells DIY external pull-down window awnings in an array of natural colours. UV-resistant, they help protect furniture and flooring, and reduce heat gain. Available in four different widths, from \$256 each; visit www.bunnings.com.au.

OUTDOOR ROOMS

An emerging trend, retractable overhead awnings not only help protect your home from heat and glare, they instantly transform courtyards and other backyard areas into outdoor rooms. They are generally made with a steel or aluminium frame covered in durable sun-shade or blackout fabrics. "Folding-arm awnings can now incorporate heaters and lights, making them into true exterior space creators," says Peter Meyer. Try Aluxor awnings (pictured right), which come in five styles, can be operated manually or via remote control, and extend up to four metres without supporting poles; call 1800 254 631 or visit www.petermeyerblinds.com.au. 



Fabrics Customise your Roman blinds with on-trend fabrics



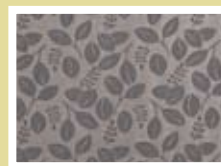
'Oxford Stripe' fabric in Blue/Red, \$44/metre, No Chintz.



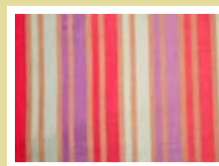
'Coyoacán' fabric in Obsidian, from \$130/metre, Mokum.



Caprice 'Elegance and Indulgence' jacquard, \$19.95/m, Spotlight.



'Havana' drapery fabric in Coal, \$36/metre, Warwick.



Environmentally friendly fabric, \$151/m, Domayne Design.