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INSPIRING HOMES WITH HEART

united nations
INTERNATIONAL STYLE AT HOME

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WEEK REPORT



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A GOOD OUTLOOK

The right window dressings frame a view, filter sunlight and breezes and provide privacy when necessary. These hard-workers around the home can also be things of great beauty.

WORDS CATHERINE MCCORMACK
SOURCING ALEXIA BIGGS

CURTAINS

Whether you like heavy drapes or soft sheers that billow in the breeze, "Curtains can be used to frame a window, layer a room or add warmth, movement and texture," says Paul Hecker, director of Hecker Genetic. Traditionally kept to bedrooms and formal living areas, there's a growing trend for sheer and motorised curtains in open-plan living spaces. The most style-savvy homeowners are also embracing muted colours and folk- and floral-inspired prints. "We will be seeing a shift towards 'beautiful' fabrics and a softness that moves us away from minimalism," says Toby Gray, director of BQ Design. Organic grey shades now offer a modern update on cream and white, and richer hues can be introduced to complement a room's colour palette. The only rule? "Curtains should always touch the floor," says Paul.

[Main image] Classic semi-sheer curtains appear 'weighted' by a band of contrast colour at the base. **1.** Knife-pleat curtain in Boyac sheer fabric, from BD Design. **2.** Panel-guide system in Bali Black, from Writbus. **3.** Curtain with eyelet heading in Boyac sheer fabric, from BD Design. **4.** Whisper-soft sheers barely intrude on window walls. **5.** 'Amali' (left) in Noir and 'Cecilia' in Birch, from Designers Guild. **6.** Black metal rod and rings are ideal for gathered neutral curtains.



IN THE MARKET FOR...

CURTAIN TEXTURES

TREND REPORT

Sustainability, traditional craftsmanship and a mix of pattern and colour were the key textile trends to emerge at this year's influential Heimtextil trade fair in Germany. Expect to see more ethnic influences and natural imperfections in fabrics and a shift to curtains as a design device, not just a decorative element. "Previous trends for curtains focused on them being a feature within a space, whether by bold fabric or heavy treatment," says Andrea D'Cruz, director of R&D. "The trend apparent now is their use as a tool to enhance the design of a space along with the views beyond." Contemporary, open-plan living, dining and kitchen areas "can look fantastic with a sheer curtain to soften the link between inside and outside," agrees interior designer Fiona Lynch, of Doherty Lynch.

1. SHEERS ARE HUGE RIGHT NOW. **2.** THE PANEL SUNSCREEN WITH A LOT MORE SOFTNESS. **3.** PEOPLE ARE PUTTING BLINDS BEHIND SHEERS OR ADDING A BLOCKOUT LINING FOR PRIVACY AT NIGHT. **4.** SUE STUCKEY, HOOD

CURTAIN CARE

Sun, moisture and pollutants all damage curtains. However, most wear and tear is a result of fabric handling. Wands and flick sticks keep hands clear of the material, while quality lining will help reduce fading. If in any doubt as to washing requirements, always have your curtains professionally cleaned.

GREEN APPEAL

The eco-conscious can choose natural fabrics, like linen, cotton and bamboo, or collections such as 'Green Dreams' from Crownson Monkwell, made from recycled fibres. New-generation PVC-free polyesters, like 'Trevira CS', used in many Creation Spaumans curtains, require less water to manufacture and can last three times longer.

Sheers (top) Light-filtering Eco drapery fabric, from Hood. **Eco** (centre) Metallo metallised transparent and translucent fabrics from Vertibus. **Blockout** (bottom) 'Colorama T' curtain fabric from the Kilt system, from Silent Bliss.

3 TOP HEADERS

1. EYELETS With a choice of nickel-plated, brass or antique brass rings, these are ideal for light fabrics. A major benefit of eyelets is the fabric stacks right back to let in more of the view. **2. SOFT & CASUAL** "I prefer a relaxed approach to curtain headings, so we avoid pleating tape," says Paul Hecker. The result is a soft, modern finish, where the curtain seems to drape quite naturally. **3. RECESSED PELMETS** Actually built into the architecture of a room, recessed pelmets hide curtain tracks in the ceiling space to achieve a streamlined finish.

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BLIND TEXTURES

TREND REPORT

In line with global textile trends, organic textures are big news in blind design. "We're seeing a swing away from the more technical fabrics - they tend to lack character and can have a flat appearance - in favour of fabrics that feature interesting textures," says Jennifer Elmet, from Designed Blinds Australia. "There is also a 'back to nature' trend, with linen looks and softer fabrics in neutral palettes." Stronger-coloured blinds are on the radar, too. "We're doing a farm project at present and have chosen a blind fabric in the bedrooms that is black on both sides," says Fiona Lynch. The Japanese continue to lead the world in blind technology, developing systems such as single-control venetians, dual 'day and night' blinds and motorisation for turrets and sun sensors. Eco-specified blinds are also growing in scope.

5 BLIND STYLES

1. ROMAN These can be bonded with sunscreen fabrics for optimum durability. "We're also seeing a move towards softer varieties made from sheer fabric with no lining," says BQ Design's Toby Gray.

2. ROLLER

The most popular and affordable blind style in myriad colours, textures and transparencies. For large or multiple window spaces, opt for styles such as 'Overlap' by Designed Blinds Australia, which link together to eliminate gaps.

3. VENETIAN

Made from timber or aluminium slats, venetians can be tilted to capture light and cross-breezes. Depending on colour and material, they can feel modern and urban or relaxed and beachy. They are operated with a single cord or wand.

4. PLEATED

Slim and streamlined with a nod to Japanese design, pleated blinds fan from top to bottom, offering privacy and light control. Cellular or honeycomb styles add insulation and energy efficiency.

5. PANEL

A contemporary solution for large spaces, panel blinds glide up, down and side-to-side, allowing for design flexibility. Available in transparent or blackout fabrics, they can be motorised.

FROM A PRACTICAL POINT OF VIEW, BLINDS CAN BE USED ANYWHERE AND EVERYWHERE THAT NEEDS SUN PROTECTION." PAUL HECKER, HECKER GENETIC

BLIND CARE

Most blinds do not respond well to water or chemical solvents. Instead, dust regularly and then spot-clean any stains. Roman, roller and cellular blinds can all be vacuumed - use a soft brush attachment and take care not to stretch or pull the fabric. Venetians rarely need more than a wipe over with a soft microfibre cloth.

DESIGNING WITH BLINDS

Streamlined design aside, the major attraction of blinds is their ability to block out heat and glare. "One of the biggest problems in Australian interiors is colour-fading," says Paul Hecker. "Blinds provide sun protection." Wide styles are good for open-plan areas, as are dual blinds or rollers, layered with curtains. They're also good in small rooms because, "They make the room feel bigger," says Shana Buchanan-Bayliss, of Blinds By Bayliss. "Above window frames, blinds make the window look larger, and above blind doors, they are out of the way."

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IN THE MARKET FOR...

"People are starting to move away from mass-produced roller-blind fabrics and are looking for elegance and texture"

Shana Buchanan-Bayliss, Blinds By Bayliss

BLINDS

From translucent roller blinds to roman and timber venetians, the enduring beauty of blinds is their ability to control light - and disappear when required. "Roller blinds are a great solution for achieving light control with minimal design impact," says Andrea D'Cruz. A less-formal style of window treatment, they tend to be relegated to family areas, where blackout styles offer UV protection by day and added insulation at night. Motorised roller or panel glides also make them easy to control over large spaces. While see-through styles diffuse light without losing the view, in winter, "The most important thing is to make a large room feel cosy," says Paul Hecker, who often layers blinds beneath curtains. He prefers soft roman blinds, which can be sheer, textured or bonded with a blackout fabric. ❖

[Main image] Hand embroidery adds a crafted feel to a roller blind. **7.** Sliding panel system in semi-sheer Japanese washi paper fabric, from Blinds By Bayliss. **8.** Polycresin shutters in White, from Designed Blinds Australia. **9.** Roman blind in Manas Tex Amos' semi-sheer fabric, from Blinds By Bayliss. **10.** "Logic" roller blinds in White/Pearl sheer fabric, from Designed Blinds Australia. **ADDRESS BOOK** page 161