

LAYERING | LININGS AND LIGHT | LET THE SUNSHINE IN

LIGHT





# LIGHT

## LAYERING AND LIGHT

HARD AND SOFT COMBINE TO CREATE  
THE ULTIMATE WINDOW FASHIONS

BY KAREN BARNES

To professional window fashion designers, a naked window is a blank canvas, and fabric, blinds, shades and shutters are the paints used to create unique art for the eyes of a home. Technological achievements in textiles, automation and products combine with beautiful fabrics to provide almost unlimited ways to dress windows. Today, as never before, we can satisfy the functional need for privacy and light control in decorative and beautiful ways by combining two or more window fashions to create layers of visual excitement.

In the fashion world, layering clothing creates a unique look with an underlying practical purpose of insulating the body. This technique spills over into home fashions and has become a hot trend used to solve many window issues. From correcting odd-sized windows to improving the proportions of an ordinary room, window treatments also provide year-round insulation against both heat and cold while looking great and saving energy.

“Window treatment layering can give the best of all worlds, from blackout drapery for total darkness to sheers for softer lighting,” says Debra Caso of Tony Caso Designs, Palm Harbor, Fla. The basis for determining the layering elements to use starts with understanding the purpose of the room. Then the appropriate window fashion can be designed to complement that purpose.

Hard treatments such as shades, blinds, shutters and window films are often combined with soft fashions such as sheers, drapery panels and valances to create window covering layers. Each layer serves a distinct purpose and provides an opportunity to enhance the window and achieve the desired design objective.

[ opposite page ] The many layers of this window fashion add to its grandeur. The first layer includes sheers on a motorized rod. The second includes decorative stationary panels, with banding, beaded trim and Italian stringing to pull the panels back. The third layer is also decorative—a valance with jabots and cascades with trim. Arizona artisans on this project included: Designer: Nancy Slane High, Nancy Slane Interior Design. Workroom: Karen Barnes, The Elegant Window. Installer: Dan Helser, The Taller Installer. (Main drapery/valance fabric: Kravet 24539-423. Contrast lining: Highland Court 800060H-19. Sheer: Pindler and Pindler 8737—Fawn. Trim: Kravet T30257-30.) (Photo by BKBarnes Photography.)

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Rainforest Twilight, among the new Nature's Creations patterns. Nature's Creations is the latest addition to B&W Window Fashions' Horizons natural woven shade line.



Dallas-based designer Michelle Nussbaumer created an Old World atmosphere in an upstairs landing off the garden. Designed to bring the outside in using elements to represent nature, the space features Duette® honeycomb shades from Hunter Douglas in a linen-like non-woven fabric called Batiste (available in two styles, Batiste Textured and Refined, featured is Batiste Refined in Daisy White). "The light that comes in is beautifully diffused," says Nussbaumer.

### The Light-Filtering Layer

Unfiltered sunlight damages fabric, carpeting, furnishings and artwork. Minimizing the damaging effect of sunlight, but maintaining its healthful benefits on our mood and well being can be accomplished by using a light-filtering window fashion layer. This layer blocks the harmful effects of the sun while allowing light to softly filter into the room and keeping the outdoors visible.

There are many options to consider when designing the light-filtering layer. From beach settings to the desert, solar window films applied to window panes reduce glare and can remove up to 90 percent of the sun's damaging UV rays, yet allow a sense of openness and are almost invisible.

One of the most widely used solutions for the light-filtering layer is sheer fabrics. Today's sheer fabric is not the 1950s undergarments with

little style. Sheers now have a presence of their own—they can enhance the overall design of the room or become the pathway to a stunning view. When designing this layer, consider the contemporary beauty of a wall of ripplefold sheer drapery, the romantic tucked Roman shade or the soft look of a traditional London shade.

Ravi Pankhania, of Ravi Design in British Columbia, Canada, took the light-filtering layer to another level when he created layer upon layer within the sheer treatment itself. He describes the idea that led to this approach:

"The light quality on this side of the home was so beautiful, it inspired us to create window coverings that not only retain that beauty but somehow changed it, experimenting with fracturing, bending and dispersing light," he said.

Hard treatments can serve dual or even multiple purposes. They can be used to filter light or to block most of it out. Shades and blinds are especially versatile because they can disappear under a beautiful cornice or valance when not in use.

B&W Window Fashions recently launched a new line of patterns in its Horizons natural woven shade line. Called Nature's Creations, the line features handwoven and handcrafted patterns in grassy weaves made from renewable materials that filter light. Add lining to these Roman shades for more room-darkening ability, and decorative trimmings for beauty.

Hunter Douglas' Vignette and Duette shades soften and diffuse light through two fabric layers for a warm glow and calming effect. The company's Silhouette and Luminette not only diffuse the light, they offer the added benefit of allowing you to



Designer Odile de Schiètièr used Silhouette® window shadings from Hunter Douglas in her design of a "Drawing Room for a Venetian Gentleman," featured at the International Designer Showhouse in New York City. Here they are featured in the linen-like Toujours™ fabric in a soft hue called Scented Linen. "I always use Silhouette shadings under the most elaborate and fanciful curtains; they bring a glow and a twist of modernism while being elegant at the same time," says de Schiètièr.

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gently direct it either up or down by tilting the vanes, or close it out when privacy is desired. Pirouette features soft adjustable horizontal fabric vanes attached to a single sheer backing, allowing an enhanced outside view.

Even shutters have light-altering appeal. North American Sunburst, a division of Glen Oak Lumber in Naples, Fla., offers “Shutter Bursts” and “Blind Bursts” for specialty windows that allow light in while also providing privacy. Light Bursts have fixed louvers and spacing to permit light. (The company also has products that can serve as a blackout or decorative layer. Light-blocking or purely decorative products include Faux Bursts, arch boards and valances. Faux Bursts are solid and look like a shutter burst with louvers closed. Arch boards block light, with a solid, smooth face and decorative edge.)

### The Blackout Layer

“The purpose of a blackout layer can be two-fold,” says Sharlie McRaney of Tigh Interiors in Scottsdale, Ariz. “In addition to the functional and practical aspect, often a blackout layer serves an aesthetic purpose.” From an aesthetic standpoint, using blackout lining in stationary side panels prevents light bleed and provides consistent color of the face fabric throughout the panels.

Functionally, a blackout layer will eliminate sunlight and darken the room. Often used in bedrooms, home theaters and on western and southern exposed windows, blackout layers can be soft or hard window fashions.

Hard treatment options for a blackout layer include shades, blinds and shut-

ters as well as the popular blackout mesh fabrics used as an automated roller shade. Many homes are being built with shade pockets in the ceiling to house the shade when not in use, allowing the shade to completely disappear.

Blurring the lines between light-filtering and blackout layers is Lafayette’s Allure Sundown Transitional Shades, which offer the ability to gently transition the view from light filtering to room darkening. Offering the privacy of a shade and the softened view of a sheer, Allure can be raised or lowered to any level.

In a soft window fashion, a blackout layer is created by lining the treatment with a blackout lining fabric. (See story about lining elsewhere in this issue.)

When discussing blackout options, let clients know that light can seep in at the edges of the window fashion or pin holes of light can be seen between slats or in treatments where rings are stitched on the back. An informed client is less likely to be surprised or disappointed.

### The Decorative Layer

The crowning touch to a successful window fashion is the decorative layer. It may be a beautiful cornice or valance or perhaps side panels or a wall of drapery. But it must complement the design of the room. Fabric is the most obvious choice for the decorative layer. But non-fabric innovations are popping up in this layer, too.

Not all cornices are created equal. That’s the case with the new Crystal Cornice, an invention of interior de-

signer R.G. Langston III, who created a piece with handcarved ornaments, crown molding and glass materials. Yes, glass. Langston envisions that the patented invention will “grace the interiors of opulent residences, exquisite mansions, upscale penthouses, grand hotels, royal palaces, the Neiman Marcus Fantasy Book” and more!

Faux Iron Solutions’ Tableaux wrought iron insert is also a unique decorative solution. It can be hinged, directly set over the window or mounted into the window casement. Tableaux partners well with drapery and blinds and can stand alone in transoms or sidelights. The iron can be installed in the top of shutters, in glass above a doorway (inserted with jewels, if you desire) and more.

In the fabric world, designers and dealers address the decorative layer with fabrics ranging from the traditional to dress-weight fabrics, wool suiting, leather, faux leather, cashmere, beaded lace and unexpected trims and oversized elements. A leather tieback on a traditional panel or an embroidered valance fabric combines with jewels, crystal and beads to add flair and a sense of adventure to this layer. Generally, the decorative layer has the strongest color and is often lined with a contrasting fabric to add interest. Be generous with this layer: Skimping on fabric will create a poor result.

### Working Together

Window fashions must be easy to use and they must work practically. All layers work independently on different tracks. The key to a successful layered window is the ability to vary



Ravi Pankhania of Ravi Design in British Columbia, Canada, designed and crafted this unique treatment. He used a 40 percent, FR rated opaque sheer. The shades use approximately 2.5 times the amount of fabric required to do a flat shade, he says, and they are assembled using more than 400 "banners." There were several more of the same treatment in the same bathroom. "We make several of these kinds of fractured and fragmented shadings," says Pankhania. "We love them." Pankhania also makes them for other designers and fabricators.

the products that you see by drawing one or the other over the window. The layers must be able to function easily and not tangle with or crush each other. When layering, it is important to consider the projection of each layer and plan the treatment to include space between the layers.

"Usually three inches between drapery layers is sufficient," says Rick Ramsey of Rick's Drapery Installation in Glendale, Ariz. "Top treatments can have less projection, about two inches, between the inside dimension of a cornice and the drapery or shade underneath," he says.

For the ultimate in flexibility, luxury and energy efficiency, keep the layers working together with motorization. For example, the Somfy DecoFlex WireFree RTS is a new five-channel wireless radio wall switch that can be personalized to raise and lower multiple window coverings indepen-

dently or all at once. The wireless wall switch will work with awnings, blinds, shades, draperies and rolling shutters. Installation is quick (no wires), and is powered by an extended life lithium battery.

Layering is a fun and exciting opportunity to make window fashions extraordinary. Experiment with products, textures, fabrics and use elements in unexpected ways. Your creativity is unlimited and your clients will be amazed! **V**

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## CLOSER LOOK



**B&W Window Fashions**  
horizonshades.com

**Faux Iron Solutions**  
fauxiron.com

**Hunter Douglas**  
hunterdouglas.com

**Lafayette Interior Fashions**  
lafvb.com

**Nancy Slane Interior Design**  
nancyslaneinteriordesign.com

**North American Sunburst/  
Glen Oak Lumber**  
glenoaksite.com

**Ravi Design**  
ravidesign.ca

**Somfy**  
somfysystems.com

**Tigh Interiors**  
tighinteriors.com

**Tony Caso Designs**  
tonycasodesigns.com