

Fabrics unlock key to great looking room



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As the principal designer of a bustling interior design firm, I'm often asked a lot of questions about style, trends, design, and taste.

However, the most frequently asked question I hear is: "Where do you start when designing a room?"

My answer is almost always "with the fabric." One of the best parts of my job is going to fabric showrooms, for me, they are places of inspiration and ideas.

I like to spread out different linens, velvets and silks intricate and simple, costly and attainable and pull together a look that I know my clients will love.

For me, fabric is the key that unlocks the door to a great looking room.

When you have a textile that's dynamic and exciting you have a lot to work with.

I like to start with a patterned material with at least three to five colours. Perhaps a chinoiserie inspired linen like, fabulous JF Fabric Toiles or bold graphic silk/cottons.

From the fabric's palette, I can then select my wall colour, carpets, lamps, and develop other ideas for the look of the room.

Mixing fabrics is very important. Be bold, confident and never boring. A boring room is the worst.

Stripes and solids, checks and prints and various textures add personality and keep a room alive and attractive.

If you're not experienced in mixing fabrics keep a common element in mind such as



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colour, a motif or a natural reference.

And remember to include materials with texture; smooth and rough, shaggy and short, all will play a part in the suc-

cess of a room.

I go by my own rule "if I like alone, it will work together".

Fabrics don't all have to be super strong, in fact, I choose quite subdued colours and



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patterns if my clients are interested in a quieter more understated space.

I always keep in mind the functionality of the room and my clients needs. A bedroom may inspire softer more restful fabrics where as the family room could be more playful and light hearted.

Where durability is a concern, I always use what's appropriate. Linen for a family room sofa that kids and dogs use daily is not a great idea. Instead I opt for sturdy velvets or strong cottons.

Speaking of sofas and fabric, I'm a big fan of patterned fabric on sofas. For too long, sofas have been a little too safe and frankly just boring.

A bold pattern is fun and unexpected and the pattern, if chosen carefully, will stand up to daily life and be so much

more forgiving.

When I'm asked how to create a beautiful room I say "start with fabric". It's the foundation from which I build ideas and create the look my clients want.

I start with a key fabric then add more and more keeping in mind appropriateness and good taste, of course but balancing it with the boldness of confidence and the desire not to be boring. Because the worst thing a room can be is boring!

— William MacDonald is a Toronto-based designer and Principal of WillMac Design, a firm known for creating stylish approachable spaces that evoke a simple timeless elegance. For more information, visit www.willmacdesign.com.