

What fabric to use where? Aye, there's the rub



WILLIAM MACDONALD GO DESIGN IT

Have you ever wondered what fabric to use where? As a designer I'm always being asked about fabrics and where they should go.

'What do you think of this fabric for my sofa?' 'I really love this fabric for drapery, will it work?'

Recently, I was in a restaurant when a rather excited lady recognized me and came up to my table where I was sitting.

She barely blurted out 'hello' and then proceeded to pull out a fist full of fabrics from her purse.

(You'd be amazed how many of us walk around town with paint chips and fabric samples shoved in our bags.)

Then, oblivious to all around her, went on to ask me what I thought of the textiles. I told her that they were very nice but that she had chosen all the wrong fabrics for all the wrong places.

I then invited her to book an appointment through my office so we can get the selections right for her.

After that encounter, it reinforced in me what I already know, that so many people, although well intentioned, often are blind as to what fabrics to use where.

Choosing soft linen for a sofa is okay but it may not give you the durability you need in your family room.

The same can be said for choosing upholstery fabric for drapery. It won't 'drape.'

More often than not, I have been hired after the fact when so many costly mistakes have

been made.

So, in an effort to help you make the right choices, I want to share with you some simple things to look out for when choosing fabrics.

When covering furniture, always look to upholstery weight fabric. In general, I love working with the wide selection of Robert Allen Fabrics myself.

Keep in mind fabric that is specifically made to be used on furniture and is made of all types of cotton, linen, poly and silk and is priced accordingly.

I always make sure I know the number of "rubs" a fabric can

withstand. A very durable fabric will have anywhere from 50,000 to 100,000 "double rubs."

This will be perfect for family room sofas and chairs, kitchen chairs, benches, desk chairs and kid's rooms.

There is upholstery fabric that has less double rubs and is more delicate these can be used on furniture that needs less durability such as occasional chairs, living room sofas, dining room chairs, headboards and accent pillows.

Drapery weight fabric is different from upholstery weight fabric in that it is much lighter, generally speaking, and obviously gives a softer effect to your window treatments.

When properly constructed and lined silks, linens and cotton twills are all excellent options for drapery.

When choosing fabrics for your home always remember, suitability, appropriateness and your lifestyle.

Keep in mind too the type of fabric. Upholstery weight vs. drapery weight. 100,000 double rubs versus 10,000. Sofa vs. window. I know it may sound simple but so many get it so wrong.

So, now when you see me in a restaurant and go to reach into that bag of samples, know with confidence that what you can walk on by without question. But please do say hello!

— *William MacDonald is a Toronto-based designer and principal of Willmac Design, a firm known for creating stylish spaces that evoke a simple timeless elegance. Visit www.willmacdesign.ca.*

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