

Fabrics now and for the future

A number of fabric designers and manufacturers responded to our feature list to show-off their range of products and say what is available now and what is just around the corner.

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Out with the old, in with the New House

Whenever New House launch a new collection these days, you can be sure it's going to be something special. Their latest collection is a new roller book, and it's certain to be something of a landmark when launched at Decorex during London Design Week!

To work on the project, Nick Stanier brought in two of the UK's top up and coming young designers: Melanie Darwin and Charlotte Farmer. Melanie studied at the RCA and specialises in creating exquisite hand-made blinds for private clients, while Charlotte is an illustrator and stylist, whose work is often seen in stores such as Baileys Home & Gardens and Liberty's.

'We wanted to change New House's photographic style,' says Charlotte, 'moving it out of the studio and into real peoples homes, where we could use natural light and give the fabrics a relaxed, easy-going feeling.'

'We've created a collection that should inspire people to use roller blinds as a natural part of their homes,' says Melanie. 'We thought it was time for blinds to move on, and our vision was to create a collection with a slightly 1950's retro feel in terms of colour and flavour, but with elements of cool design, which will keep the collection fresh for years to come!'

The retro touches come from the textural weaves such as Raffia or Chambray which have the feel of 1950's wall coverings, and the 1960's-style prints such as Loop or Carousel which have an organic, hand drawn quality about them. The colours used are frequently milky tones – especially coffee colours such as latte, cappuccino or mocha, and there are many chalky colours too, perhaps reminiscent of sugared almonds, or iced cakes.

The collection has many open weaves and textures, which are all about playing with light as it enters a room. The whites, such as Organdie, Opal and other sheers, offer degrees of translucency, which are perfect for daytime blinds, while the metal and pearl fabrics were included for their sheen and luminosity.

The blind pulls and trimmings have been integrated with a series of collages, offering inspiration and ideas on how to use them to best effect. New House couldn't resist introducing two

new blind pulls – Alvo is a sophisticated wood and aluminium design, while Punk Skunk came about after receiving literally thousands of calls after a photo of the original Woolie Pullies appeared in two mother and child magazines. Simply by applying Punk Skunk, it turns an ordinary blackout fabric into a fun nursery blind!

In an industry dominated more and more by giants, it is good to know that there are still small companies around who are unafraid of taking risks, or of pushing the boundaries.



e Future

Changing Rooms?

The continuing trend in home improvement and design is closing the gap between fashion and home style.

No longer is the window blind the last thing a designer or home owner considers for a room – it has now become a design statement of its own. With this in mind the aesthetics of a blind are ever changing to meet the demands of the fashion conscious consumer. In order to meet these demands it is important for fabric manufacturers to monitor and assess fashion trends to be able to react to new demands as early as possible.

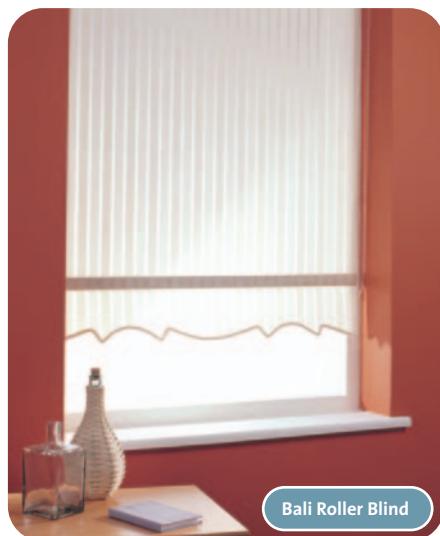
As we know, naturals and neutrals are always present in interior design, transformed each season by changes in tones and texture. A prime example is with the increasing popularity of natural wood products that have hit the industry in a big way. The desirability of wood has seen its use 'grow' in all areas of home design from floor coverings and furniture to blinds. Available in various styles, textures and colours, wood brings a natural element to the home – its warmth and light filtering properties combined with a natural beauty creates a stylish and functional feature of any room.

In contrast to wood, metallics combined with simple geometric shapes will continue to be strong in the market place for some time. Warm tonal metallic shades will add a luxurious element to any fabric.

Plain fabrics are increasing in popularity as texture becomes more important, as too are jacquards that offer subtle patterns that coordinate with alternative interior textiles. Technology used to manufacture jacquard fabrics has developed greatly over the last few years and now makes them an ideal choice for customers wanting a subtle balance between plains and patterns.

At the moment there is a big emphasis on light diffusion, focusing on translucent fabrics, sheers and voiles. Burnouts and printed translucent fabrics that mix pattern and colour will become more evident as the trend gathers momentum.

The use of soft colours and clear lines with geometric shapes and stripes will feature heavily in patterns, but in contrast so too will bright colours and bold patterns to bring vibrancy and depth to interiors.



Rich colour palettes with strong use of earthy tones and intense colours (burgundy, deep purple, ochre, emerald green) and textures will feature heavily in textiles, combined with warm metallic highlights. Reds remain a constant in collections adding richness to weaves and prints, whilst green is bigger than ever before in a vast range of shades (from soft and subtle to rich and vibrant).

As many of you are already aware, brown is now challenging black as the leading furnishings classic – a chic choice for contemporary interiors.

The performance of the fabric is just as important as the aesthetics nowadays. Peoples concerns over comfort whilst at home or at work are a strong influence when choosing a fabric for a blind, which explains the move towards fabrics that can provide light and solar protection and control, privacy and convenience.

Companies like Louvolite recognise the importance of research and development in improving the performance of fabrics and ensuring health and safety standards are met. This move towards performance fabrics, coatings and applications means that customers are now demanding criteria such as blackouts for skylights and bedrooms, solar protection for conservatories and Ultra Fresh™, with its anti-bacterial and anti-fungicidal properties, for kitchens and bathrooms.

With all of the colour and design options now available to the consumer, interior design, as a whole, is enjoying a real renaissance of interest, allowing people to make informed decisions and create rooms that are as individual as they are. Long may it continue!

Jo Gatrell is the Fabric Designer for Louver-Lite Ltd

Breaking News

New fabrics for awnings now a reality

Speculation that a new fabric is to be introduced to be used in the manufacture of awnings can now be confirmed by Openings. The fabric is woven from olefin and it is said to offer many advantages over existing awning fabric.

We have been told that a major European awning manufacturer has committed a substantial investment into the production of this fabric and is about to launch very soon.

Nobel Prize winner Dr. Natta first developed the olefin polymer in 1954. Over the years it has been used extensively in many applications and is second only to polyester in synthetic fibre world production volume.

The manufacturer believes it is the first to apply this technology successfully to awning fabric and is claiming several production and usage advantages.

100% recyclability, able to be incinerated with very low pollution emissions. Burning olefin is no more dangerous to the environment than burning wood and with a low melting point, it has a low recycling cost.

A further benefit to the environment is a lower energy input than any other synthetic yarn to produce similar volumes.

It has a very low water retention rate – less than 3% compared with acrylics at 10% – 20%, so it retains its strength when wet. This helps to avoid staining and soiling and it is unaffected by mould or mildew. Most yarns both synthetic and natural are weaker in a wet state; in contrast olefin retains 100% of its strength when wet.

It is unaffected by insects and micro-organisms – they do not see it as food as it is indigestible.

Overall the manufacturer feels he has a stronger, more durable and resistant fabric. It's happening. Watch this space!



Screen Science

Unlike blackout blinds or curtains the purpose of a sunscreen blind is the control of the excesses of heat and light without the loss of the external vision.

When choosing a sunscreen fabric you shouldn't look at it – but through it. You wouldn't notice the ideal sunscreen blind, only its effects.

How does a sunscreen blind work and what are the best properties to look for? Light and heat are controlled by selecting a fabric for its specific, unfortunately the same fabric will not be ideal for both in the context of internal blinds.

All of the solar energy (this includes visible light, UV, X-Ray etc) projected at the window, conservatory or roof-light must be either ABSORBED, REFLECTED or pass through (TRANSMITTED).

Heat is controlled by reflecting the solar energy projected through the glazing before it can be absorbed, change wavelength and turn into radiant heat. The ideal colour is white, the worst is black.

Light is controlled by restricting the quantity of light entering (transmitted), this is achieved by reducing the amount of

the fabrics total surface area that is permeable (openess) and absorbing reflected visible light. For absorbance the ideal colour is black the worst is white.

Absorbance is a function not only of openess and colour but also of fabric thickness, the thicker the fabric the better is performance.

Fibre glass based yarns are especially suited to the production of sunscreen fabrics. Their dimensioned stability allows the screen to hang flat and true without sags or wrinkles. Their thin profile permits a fine close weave – light is far better controlled with many small holes rather than a few large ones.

So when choosing a fabric for internal blinds if you want to keep heat out of your conservatory you want as light a colour and as closed (least open) a fabric as is available.

For removing glare off screens and best external transparency you want as dark a colour and as fine a yarn as possible.

So, **a** – don't plan on watching T.V. in the conservatory, and **b** – just to confuse matters, the best colour for an external blind to control heat is black.

Oh and if we get off the matter of performance and move on to the matter of aesthetics – when viewed from the outside (during daylight hours) a white blind is extremely visible a grey or black blind will hardly be seen – so if shutting up house for a week you are far less obviously 'away' with the darker blinds.

How to make Roller Blind Fabrics the Milltex Method

Established in the 1970's, Milltex Fabrics was a pioneer in the early development and manufacturing of Holland Blind fabrics. Going into the Millennium, the company is one of the market leaders in the manufacture and supply of high quality roller and vertical blind fabrics to the Window Furnishing Industry.

Throughout the years, the nucleus of our business as a specialist manufacturer of cotton and polyester based textiles has enabled Milltex to compete with other market leading suppliers.

For our 'Scottish' and 'Irish' Holland fabrics, the base cloth is received loom-state in rolls. It is then washed, dyed, dried, examined, stiffened and calendered.

All our dyes are mixed in-house for reliable and minimal dye batch variation. The fabric is quality checked at each processing state to ensure that our high standards of quality are met. It is then packaged for distribution to blind manufacturers and other wholesale distributors both in the UK and overseas. This fabric is an approved National Trust fabric, which is used all over the country for all our historic castles and country houses.

In the 1980's, Vertical Blinds were starting to take off in the workplace environment. The fabrics were usually heavily textured, tweedy looking, stiff as cardboard and could only be dusted.

As fabric manufacturers it was only natural that over the years we developed a superb range of roller fabrics with verticals to match. Jacquard fabrics have been the first choice for many of our customers over the years and with a superb range, both in design and colour it is easy to see why.

When you add the fact that over 80% of our vertical fabrics are washable it is easy to see why our collection is innovative, practical and stylish.

Dutton & Gavin are delighted to launch their long awaited new "Kings" collection

A radical departure from previous sample book presentations, Dutton & Gavin have completely redesigned the book with emphasis on the labelling of individual fabric swatches and removing acetate dividing sheets in favour of tastefully designed section dividers.

Most importantly the content has been dramatically improved with an even more extensive range of plain fabrics, with particular emphasis being given to "textured" materials.

Their new "metallics" collection has an excellent selection of unusual blackout and translucent metalline finishes which they believe will prove an essential part of any manufacturers range.

Two new ranges with pearlescent reflective coatings (PRC) have been



introduced to satisfy the growing demand for this type of fabric finish. They have also concentrated on offering one of the most comprehensive selections of flame retardant fabrics for the contract manufacturer, architect and specifier.

Dutton & Gavin's relationship with John King & Son Ltd. in Glasgow, Stromma Textiles in Sweden and other carefully selected international suppliers ensures that they offer an unsurpassed range of window treatments for roller and vertical blinds.

Scottish Holland – N.T. Stone

