

Pleated Blinds

an open and shut case

Almost all pleated blinds end up in conservatories. Why? When it has so many possibilities. We begin this feature with a wonderful story from Gerald Arding whose company distributes Cosiflor.

Like Tom we'll discover what we are missing...



The boys were talking recently, a light-hearted moment of banter with the world's financial meltdown, grand global corruption and corporate prostitution all featuring prominently ahead of sport and other recreational pursuits.

Just as the moment of redemption was upon us, one of the assembled crowd suddenly gazed upwards and with almost unbelievable gravitas, uttered the immortal word – Blinds!

This unexpected turn to the more mundane side of life, in fact, turned out to be a cry for help, a plea for support within a turbulent and uncaring world. Poor Tom, one of life's "undecideds" was in some serious trouble and needed help. He turned to me – the Dr Who of the blind industry, I suppose, as I've certainly been around for a good few intergalactic time zones, for advice.

It transpires he has two very difficult windows in a downstairs reception room at his house – an interesting home that in decor terms resides squarely between 70's veggie chic and contemporary urban supernatural. Apparently, for years, he has grappled with these windows and their decor and throughout, this achilles heel has tormented him and his clan.

Now, I know Tom's house quite well and he currently supports an eclectic mix of window dressings that would have made Liberace flinch.

Net curtains – yes really net curtains, thick medieval tapestry curtains with swags and tails, curling roller blinds are all about.

Wood Venetian Blinds in High Gloss Piano Black – heh, wait a minute, this is almost fashionable and stylish. Together with Roman bamboos and lest we not forget the two sets

of dramatic vertical blinds in a geometric fabric that turns the home office into an inverted dartboard, all add a certain je ne sais quoi. No wonder the poor man can never make ends meet.

Yes, dear Tom has them all or rather almost all. On reflection there was one type of blind that has never graced this edifice to modern interior design and that is the pleated blind. It was time to move and rally the troops.

Now, for anyone with a conservatory, the flexibility and performance of pleated blinds is a fact of life. Whether roof or side fitted free hang or tensioned, these tight, tasteful little beauties offer both style and performance in any window. Spend a little more and go for the double pleated cellular product with increased insulation in the winter, better reflection in the summer or go the whole hog and follow today's trend of neat motorised operation and you will be the envy of the county.

Developments have come a long way in Pleated Blinds in recent years and besides introducing smarter, more stylish headrails, bottom rails and really good features that reduce the fabric fanning when the blind is open, the fabric choice is now greater than ever before. Even prevaricators like Tom are well catered for with the pleated option and the 2 in 1 blind option, offering two fabrics in one blind is a great idea. Combining a sheer with a blackout, a fizzy primary and a moody sexy weave for later will certainly maximise your options allowing one to create an ambience with minimum effort – and cost !!

Whilst the others that evening worked on an action plan to bring back capital punishment for all misdemeanours including stealing sweets, we got Tom, armed with a couple of attractive collection books, immersed in looking at the exciting underworld of Window Blinds.

Yes, it seemed like high time that dear Tom came out of the closet and declared himself a pleater. Looking at his windows later, this style of blind really suited his windows giving lift and



definition where none existed on their own. But to be true, this style of blind seemed equally ideal to all the other windows in the house – living room, dining room, kitchen and utility area not to mention the bedrooms and bathrooms upstairs where clever use of blackout fabrics added extra practicalities. Ooooooh, cried Tom, these blinds are really cool how come they have just been invented ! I suppose hereby lies the problem that with a blind style that has been around for over 100 years it is still relatively unknown and is only really associated with conservatory applications.

In other countries, pleated blinds are a much more popular choice and certainly promoted much more by retail shops and interior design specialists. In Germany and Holland where windows look and work similar to ours in the UK, pleated blinds account for more than 50% of their sales. Outside of conservatories, we manage less than 5% of blind sales. Even taking into account the national taste (or perhaps lack of it), there does seem to be a splendid opportunity here to grow business. At the end of the day we would all like to give the customer what they really want – Total Satisfaction !!

And what of dear Tom, well, he is now the proud owner of four pleated blinds and is vowing to introduce more of these terrific zig-zag jobs as he refers to them at the next interior update. He is even suggesting fitting some in his car and perhaps the boat down on the Solent too – now there's an idea.



Sunpleat™ – the Complete Cellular Blind Solution

Decora Blind Systems Sunpleat™ range is the natural choice when looking for quality, affordable Cellular Blinds.

With their 20mm honeycombed structure these blinds provide the ultimate solution in energy efficiency and insulation, keeping your home cool in summer and warm in the winter.

The routless system and choice of eight neutral and pastel colours ranging from classic cream or elegant rose to a subtle shade of blue allows you to create a chic, contemporary look in any interior space. The cord lock has been designed to allow exceptionally smooth and



easy operation. Regardless of the size of pleat the fabric sits neatly against the headrail when raised to maximise exposure to natural light.

Sunpleat™ allows you to create a uniform white appearance to the exterior and maximum privacy while knowing you are reducing the amount of heat lost or gained through your windows.

The Sunpleat™ range is manufactured to the highest standard and comes complete with colour coordinated headrail and bottom bar. Sunpleat™ from Decora is the optimum choice in Cellular Blind Systems.

Luxaflex® Duette® Architella™ – championing the fight to reduce ENERGY bills

Luxaflex® has launched Duette® Architella™, - a patented 'honeycomb within a honeycomb' pleated shade. This ingenious shade features a honeycomb pleated fabric construction with 3 air pockets, making it one of the most distinctive and energy efficient shades available in the UK market.

Most heat in a room escapes through the windows. This is not surprising since the average wall provides 8 times better insulation than normal double glazing*. Add a Duette® Architella™ shade to this window and the insulating properties more than triple, which can save up to 30% on winter energy bills**. This amazing blind also reduces solar heat gain. A bare, double-glazed window transmits 76% of solar heat through it. Add an opaque Duette® Architella shade and the solar heat gain drops to as low as 15%, significantly reducing heat entering the room, which also helps to reduce cooling costs in the summer months.

Made with 64mm width Panache™ fabric, with a unique textured look and soft feel, Duette® Architella™ is available in two opacities: opaque and dim-out. The added beauty of this



shade is that because of the honeycomb within a honeycomb construction of the pleats it keeps every shade crisp and consistent from front to back and top to bottom and the inner layers of the fabric create the most radiant colour palette, even in the brightest light.

Duette® Architella™ can be operated using either the simple cord loop or revolutionary new LiteRise operating system. The LiteRise system virtually eliminates cords and allows blinds to be raised and lowered with the touch of a finger.

As a responsible, environmentally-aware brand, Luxaflex is committed to producing superior quality innovative window styling products which are energy efficient as well as superbly fashion forward.

* Based on: wall: $U = 0.35 \text{ W/m}^2\text{K}$, glass: $U = 2.8 \text{ W/m}^2\text{K}$, window + Architella: $U = 0.72 \text{ W/m}^2\text{K}$.

**Energy savings will vary based on the number of windows in the home.

Stevens (Scotland) Reversing the trend

Pleated Blinds have been a major success story for our conservatory market – but why is it this versatile product is rarely seen in other rooms in the home? The UK blind market has consistently steered away from pleated blinds in the kitchen,

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bedroom, lounge and dining area whilst in mainland Europe they are a readily accepted window dressing throughout the house. So how can the industry reverse this trend?

Fortunately the seeds of change have already been sewn, at Stevens (Scotland), we are successfully manufacturing and supplying to our customers Perfect Fit™ and intu™ systems, both of which were initially designed to accommodate pleated and venetian blinds, more recent developments have seen the introduction of roller blind versions. The advantage over traditional blinds is that Perfect Fit and intu™ offer the ability to be fitted to a variety of UPVC windows without the need to drill and or use screws... and in particular, due to the blind being controlled under tension; they have become the ideal solution for tilt and turn windows.

Due to the influence from continental Europe and the United States, there is now a wider spectrum of pleated colours and textures in the market that was not available to us before. There are beautiful crush effects, stunning designs and prints as well as the ever popular honeycomb pleats, which not only offer the added protection of double thickness material and its inherent insulation qualities, but it also conceals the cords within the honeycomb material; giving a clean and uncluttered appearance. The range offered by Stevens also includes functional properties such as black-out, pearlised and solar protective coatings – giving the performance that is an integral requirement of the modern blind. And the hardware that goes with the 20mm pleat means a tight, neat, unobtrusive finish every time and importantly the end-user has a wide choice of operation, with options for rod, crank, motorised crank or fully motorised blinds.

The Perfect Fit™ and intu™ systems have opened the door for the pleated blind and now the industry should capitalise on this opportunity,



by encouraging the interior designer and the end user to open their minds to the flexibility and seemingly endless possibilities of the under-rated pleated blind.

You can't beat the pleat, Supersize it

In the UK pleated blinds product have been used, almost exclusively, within conservatories, orangeries or atriums. They are of course ideal for use in such areas. They not only create a very neat solution to a window furnishing problem that includes a roof section, which incorporates unusual shaped glazed area at angles well removed from the vertical.

In addition fabrics have evolved to incorporate solar protective coatings that provide significant performance benefits to reduce solar gain, and therefore interior temperatures in what is essentially a beautiful glass room. Louvolite Perfect Fit™ products have taken this one step further by totally removing the frightening thoughts of drilling holes into a pristine new conservatory and then screwing into those holes to fit brackets. However perfect the pleated product is for use in such an environment we do it a disservice to limit our use of the product to the conservatory.



Pleated blinds can provide fabulous window covering solutions to a huge variety of window and door shading requirements it is just that we have become so used to using them in a specific area. The features and benefits of pleated shades are just as relevant in all areas of the home as they are within a conservatory. The blinds are extremely simple to install and fit close to the window or door to remain unobtrusive when either open or closed. The ranges of fabric and textures are sufficiently broad to satisfy the most discerning decorative palettes. The SPC finishes which provide additional defence against solar gain works equally well in any window in the home and endows the fabric with a higher degree of privacy to boot.

The fact that the product can be manufactured to operate at none typical angles makes it ideal for use with the modern tilt and turn windows and once again installations with Perfect Fit™ allow the blind to operate fully regardless of whether the window is open closed or somewhere in between.

The size of the pleated fabric originally was 25mm – this is neat in itself – but over recent times the fabric collections have moved to feature 20mm pleats designed to fit within



the bead depth of most UPVC double glazed windows. This feature in itself allows the shades to be tensioned within the glazed area and negates the need for operating cords, apart from improving the physical appearance of the product this also complies with child safety concerns.

Honeycomb or cellular fabrics are the cousin to pleated shades – essentially a double pleat back to back these fabrics feature honeycomb construction which results in an air pocket in each cell. This improves both the solar gain rejection and the thermal loss reduction performance of the fabric. In addition cords are hidden between the cells and not visible in use.

People sometimes say that familiarity breeds contempt and it may be we have to go back to the future to revitalise the appetite to use pleated shades in the home. Louvolite is currently experimenting with a 50mm maxi-pleat, which will work with different window styles to create a totally different and fuller window dressing style to be housed with a recess.

Maybe the neat pleat needs to get bigger and bolder to create a new image and regain the industry's recognition as a product capable of more than it currently provides. All we know is that when the pleated blind is used with imagination and flair, it takes a lot of beating.

