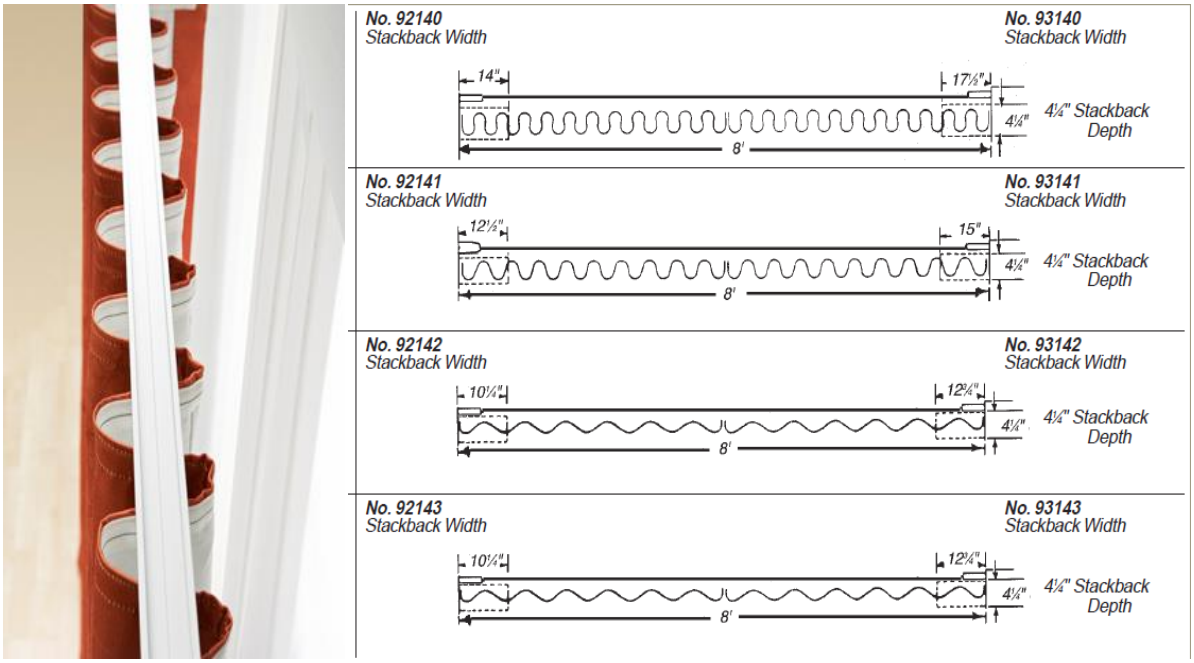
An Architect's Guide to Drapery Design



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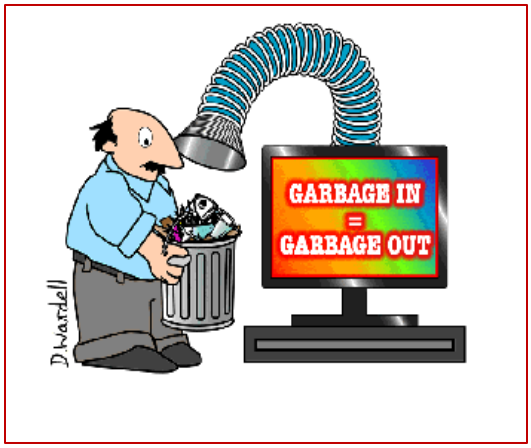


Introduction

The famous acronym GIGO is from the computer world and stands for Garbage In - Garbage Out. GIGO has never been more appropriate then in my world of custom drapery design and fabrication. I am referring to receiving little or no instructions in the form of a work order, purchase order or specification and being expected to fabricate what is in the mind of the architect/designer (A/D) and consequently what has been communicated to the client.

I have owned and run a drapery and upholstery workroom for the past 25 years. What I have seen over and over again is poor design planning, where the A/D hustles through the details of the drapery project leaving potential problem areas unaddressed. The architectural and interior design firms that I work for are fortunately rescued from this doom because of my direct involvement; others I surmise are not, and the results are very costly mistakes.

In this guide (and in my course I offer as an AIA Provider) I will address what I consider to be the necessary ways to communicate successful drapery design. I have broken them down into a two step process of Design and Documentation, with the ultimate goal of having a better grasp on how to communicate effectively what the client's expectations are and then matching them up with what is ultimately fabricated and installed. This is done by allowing the A/D to be able to identify the critical areas with careful planning in order to avoid surprises and to feel comfortable in specifying hardware, mechanisms, structural pockets and fabrics. For the A/D the two areas of Design and Documentation all need to be addressed in the planning stage.

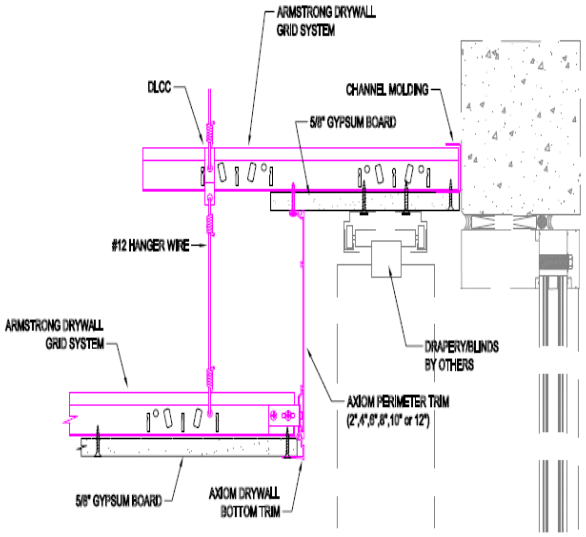
Design

In the book by Erik Larson: The Devil in the White City, there is a quote by the famous architect Daniel Burnham (pictured to the left) where he offers a more forceful point then the original often quoted statement of "Form Follows Function". To emphasize his argument on the design of the 1892 Chicago World's Fair he demanded that "Function Dictates Form".

This is so true when it comes to commercial drapery design and window coverings. Where as in residential treatments, many times function is overlooked in exchange for form or design. In commercial applications the treatment must function successfully over and over again depending upon its tasks. Even before form or style is considered, function must be determined. The A/D will identify in consultation with the client the function requirements of the window coverings by addressing such needs as: light control, privacy issues, stack-backs, mechanisms, mounting and then finally style selections.

Documentation

After the design decisions are completed they must be documented in the specifications so all parties can understand them. These parties are: The A/D, the Client, the General Contractor and the Drapery Consultant. This entails providing the information necessary to fabricate the finished product in the form of clear specifications and detailed drawings. Included would be the type of construction of the treatment, the hardware and control mechanisms, the structural pockets and stack-backs, the desired fullness, the lining selections, installation instructions and care and maintenance information.



Six Elements of Successful Drapery Design

Successful Drapery Design is achieved by understanding the Six Elements that are part of the details of the Design and Documentation that I described above. To complete the required information for documentation the A/D will need to address these Six Elements:

1) Function & Design

2) Hardware & Mechanism

3) Pockets and Stack-Backs

4) Fabrics & Linings

5) Installation Instructions

6) Care & Maintenance

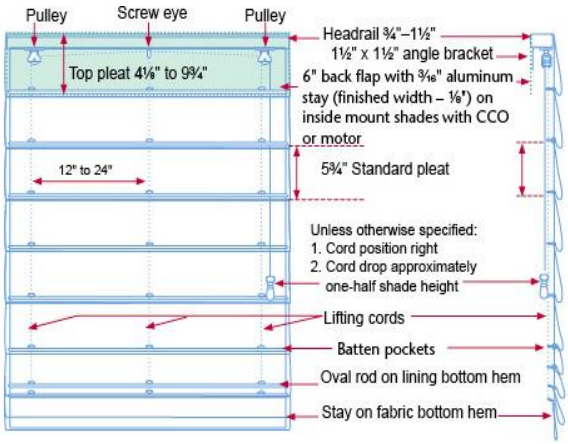
Function & Design

Before deciding upon the style or type of treatment the A/D must analyze what the needs of the window covering are. First and foremost the selection of a treatment needs to meet design requirements without sacrificing practical day to day function. Remember that "Function dictates Form".

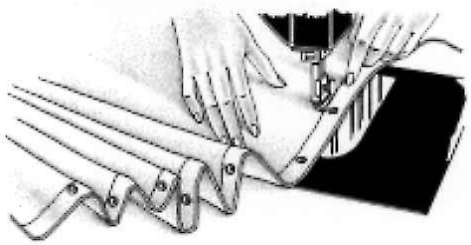
I will be using two types of treatments for the purpose of demonstration. Two of the best treatments that meet the requirements of function and form are Roman Shades and SnapPleat Draperies.

Roman Shades

Roman Shades are among the best horizontal stacking treatments. The Soft-Fold (pictured on the right) or Flat Roman (pictured on the left) are considered "constructed" due to the fiberglass rods or stays that are inserted at horizontal intervals. The constructed version gives these shades dependable function raising and lowering in neat folds.



For light control Roman Shades can be lined with a translucent or blackout lining. It is recommended that for the purpose of blackout, that the Soft-Fold Roman is specified because the folds of the shade will cover the pin-holes of light that are unavoidable when the needle passes through the blackout lining.

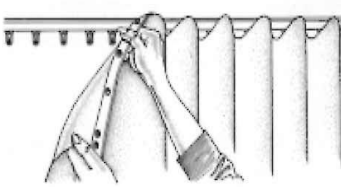


SnapPleat Drapery

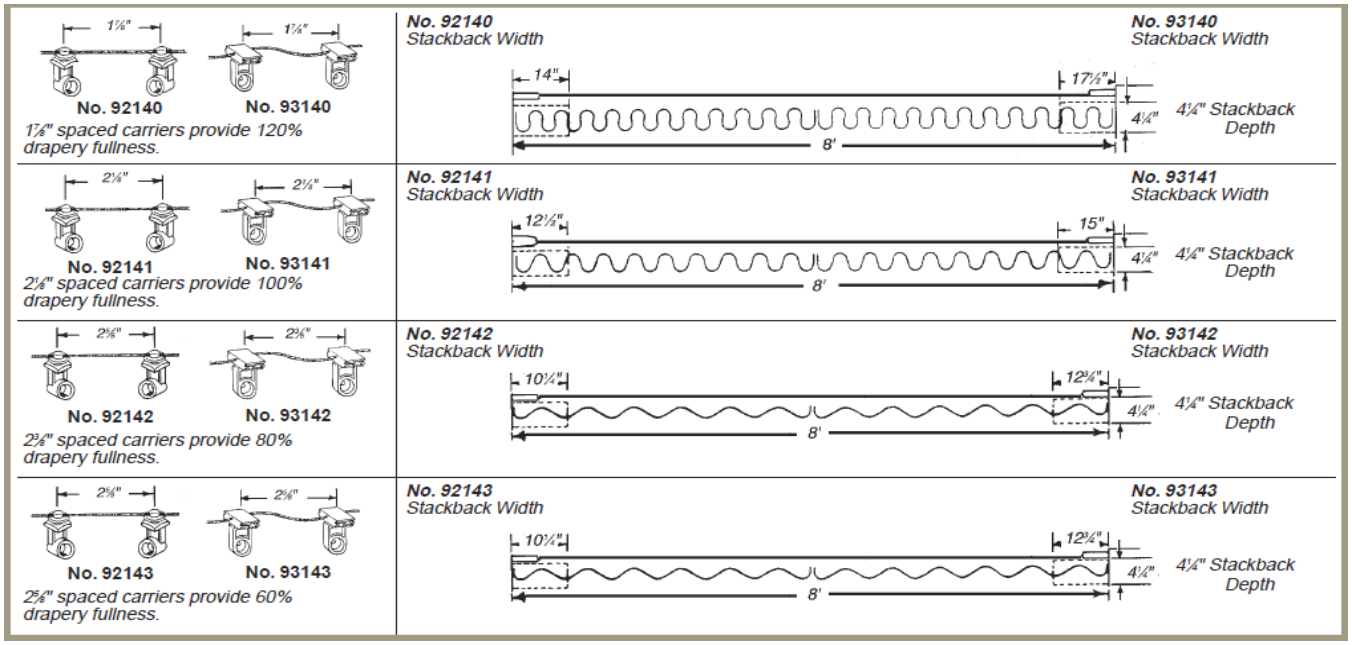
The SnapPleat Drapery is created by a fabric tape with snaps sewn to the top edge of the drapery panel. When these snaps are attached to the carriers on the rod, this creates an "S" shape design. The fullness of this treatment is measured in the range of 80% - 100% - 120%. The chart below shows examples of the fullness options. The weight of the fabric and the function will determine the appropriate fullness. This treatment is one of the best functioning vertical stacking treatments.

A few of the attributes of the SnapPleat Drapery are:

- Soft flowing appearance
- Suitable for Commercial and Residential
- Panels can be pressed flat
- No Hooks or Pins needed
- Low track profile
- Smaller Stack-back then pleated drapery
- Looks good from front or back.



Fullness Diagram:



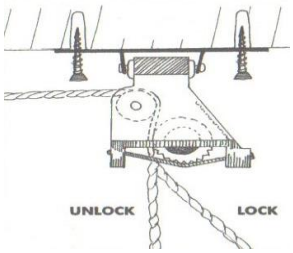
Hardware & Mechanism

Deciding upon the hardware and control mechanisms depends on the desired function of the treatment. Are the controls accessible or are they out of reach? If so, they may require motorization. If the treatment is heavy to lift, you may want to specify a clutch lifting system. I will explain the hardware and mechanism options for Roman Shades and Snap Pleat Drapery.

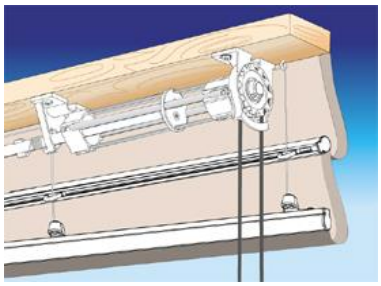
Roman Shades

Roman Shades are mounted on boards, so there are no hardware decisions to be made. However, some decisions can determine a certain size of the board depth. There are choices however in the lifting mechanisms.

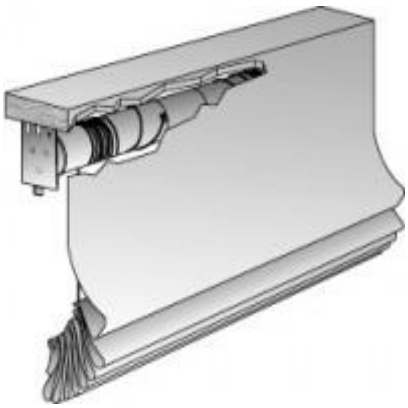
- **Cord Lift**
  The cord lift is pulled up by a series of cords that can either have a cord lock or a cleat to secure the shade at the desired height. This is good for smaller sizes and only needs a 1½" board to mount to.



- **Clutch**
  The clutch mechanism works well on larger and heavier shades. The physics of the clutch makes the heavier shade lighter to lift and the lifting chain is continuous, which means the chain never gets any longer or shorter.



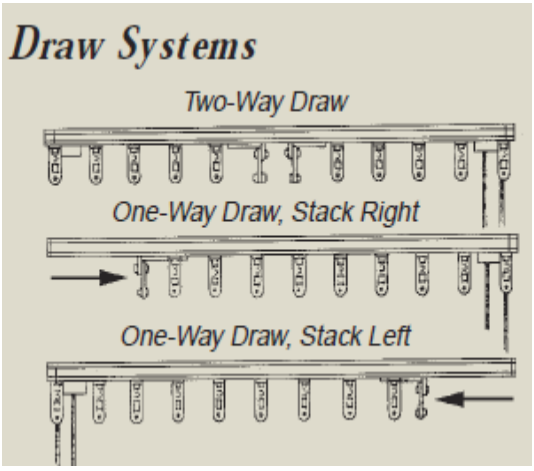
- **Motorized**
  Roman shades are easily automated. They can be hardwired or simply plugged in and operate with a hand-held remote or wall switch.

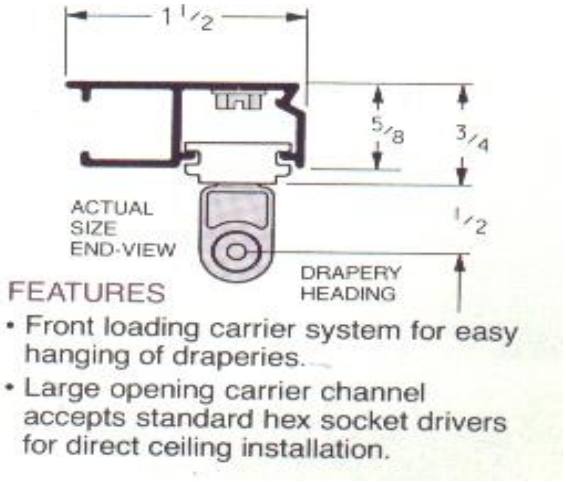


SnapPleat

- **Cord Pull**
  The SnapPleat Traverse rod works like other traverse rods. You can choose from a center split or one-way draws. Also, you can specify curved tracks.
- **Wand Pull**
  Some situations will call for a Wand Pull. This is common in Hotels and Health Care facilities where the cords are eliminated because of maintenance and/or safety concerns.
- **Motorized**
  The Snap Pleat rod can be motorized with a Plug n' Play system or hardwired and operate with a hand-held remote or wall switch.

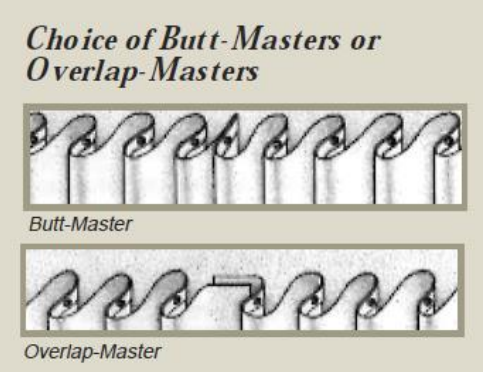
- **Draw Systems**
  You can choose Two-Way Draw, One-Way Draw - Stack Right or One-Way Draw - Stack Left.





Master Carriers

The Master Carriers are the mechanism that draws the fabric open or closed. You can select either a Butt-Master where the fabric meets one another in the roll style or the Overlap-Master where the fabric overlaps one another. This is good when you are specifying blackout fabric and want no light seepage.



Track Options:

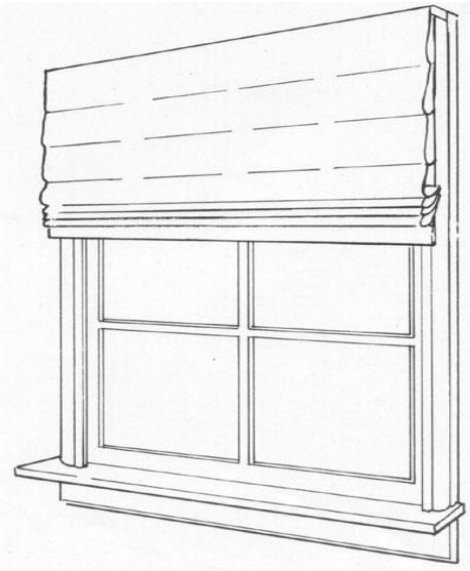
	SERIES	CROSS SECTION	MAX TRACK SET LENGTH	BENDING RADIUS	HEADING SYSTEMS
Cord Draw Systems					
Track set is opened and closed by traverse cord. Continuous cord loop permits use of cord tension pulley.	93001		One-Way Draw 16 ft. Two-Way Draw 32 ft.	12" *†	Conventional Pleated Ripplefold™
	93601		One-Way Draw 16 ft. Two-Way Draw 32 ft.	Not Available	Conventional Pleated Ripplefold™
	94001		½" pulley: One-Way Draw 16 ft., Two-Way Draw 32 ft. 1" pulley: One-Way Draw 20 ft., Two-Way Draw 40 ft.	12" *†	Conventional Pleated Ripplefold™
	9095		One-Way Draw 24 ft. Two-Way Draw 32 ft.	8" *	Conventional Pleated
	3000 (Superfine)		One-Way Draw 12½ ft. Two-Way Draw 25 ft.	Not Available	Conventional Pleated
Hand Draw Cordless Systems					
Track set is opened and closed by hand — no cord involved. Fiberglass batons, attached to lead carriers, are recommended for traversing draperies. Maximum track lengths and maximum fabric weight do not apply to curved track. Send complete specifications and fabric weight to customer service for feasibility.	94003		One-Way Draw 20 ft. Two-Way Draw 40 ft.	12" *†	Conventional Pleated Cubicle Curtain Ripplefold
	94004		One-Way Draw 16 ft. Two-Way Draw 32 ft.	Not Available	Conventional Pleated Cubicle Curtain Ripplefold
	94005		One-Way Draw 16 ft. Two-Way Draw 32 ft.	12" *†	Conventional Pleated Cubicle Curtain Ripplefold
	9046		One-Way Draw 16 ft. Two-Way Draw 20 ft.	8" or 12" *†	Conventional Pleated Cubicle Curtain Ripplefold
	94008		One-Way Draw 16 ft. Two-Way Draw 32 ft.	Not Available	Pinch pleats Cubicle Curtain Ripplefold

Pockets & Stack-backs

The purpose of the pocket for a window treatment is to conceal the hardware or the treatment itself. The stack-back detail relates to the drapery where the concern is pulling the stacked fabrics off the glass. Both the Pocket and Stack-back details must be planned for with the Drapery Consultant.

Roman Shades

If a pocket needs to be created for a Roman Shade it needs to be quite deep. A typical Roman Shade may stack 10" or more. The Roman Shade's fold stack upon each other and require more room into the depth of the pocket then other treatments. A Flat Roman will have a smaller stack then a Soft-Fold Roman because of the amount of fabric used. The stack will also depend on the weight of the fabric and lining. It is recommended to meet with your Drapery Consultant to determine the stacking heights.



SnapPleat Drapery

The pocket for a SnapPleat Drapery can be very shallow due to the low profile of the track and the lack of pleats on the drapery. The track can also be counter-sunk into a channel which creates a very simple tailored appearance.

The Stack-back issue for SnapPleat takes some planning. While the Stack-backs are smaller than other drapery treatments, the A/D needs to refer to the Stacking Chart (see below) supplied by the Drapery Consultant to determine what the overall width of the drapery needs to be to clear the desired opening.

As an example, let's use a track width of 60" with 100% Fullness. As you can see by looking at the column to the right called Std. Snap Carriers the number 14. This means that there will be a 7" stack on each side.

** Fabric Width (Hemmed)	PANEL COVERAGE 92140 93140 120% Fullness	92141 93141 100% Fullness	92142 93142 80% Fullness	92143 93143 60% Fullness	Stack Back Widths Std. Snap Carrier	Front Load Carriers
34	13-13	13-14	13-16	16-18	5½	6
42½	14-16	15-19	17-21	19-23	6¼	7
51	17-20	20-23	22-26	24-28	7¼	8¼
59½	21-24	24-27	27-30	29-34	8	9¼
68	25-28	28-31	31-35	35-39	9	10⅜
76½	29-31	32-36	36-40	40-44	9¾	11½
85	32-35	37-40	41-45	45-49	10¾	12¾
93½	36-39	41-44	46-49	50-55	11½	13⅞
102	40-43	45-48	50-54	56-60	12½	15
110½	44-46	49-53	55-59	61-65	13½	16⅜
119	47-50	54-57	60-64	66-70	14	17½
127½	51-54	58-61	65-68	71-76	15	18¾
136	55-58	62-65	69-73	77-81	15¾	19⅞
144½	59-61	66-70	74-78	82-86	16½	21
153	62-65	71-74	79-83	87-91	17½	22⅛
161½	66-69	75-78	84-87	92-97	18¼	23¼
170	70-73	79-82	88-92	98-102	19¼	24½

60" Track Width

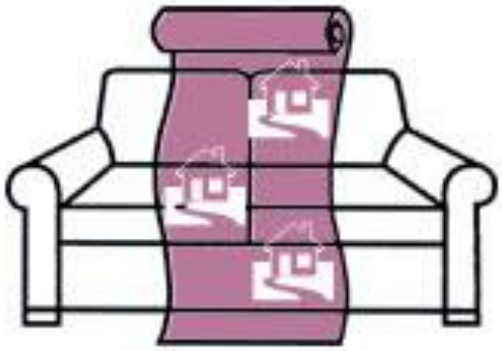
14" Stack Back
7" on each side

Fabrics & Linings

The selection of suitable fabrics and linings are universal for most drapery and window covering treatments. All commercial and contract installations require fabrics that meet the local fire codes. While this has little to do with the type of treatment, it is good to be aware that the linings of these treatments need to be fire retardant as well.

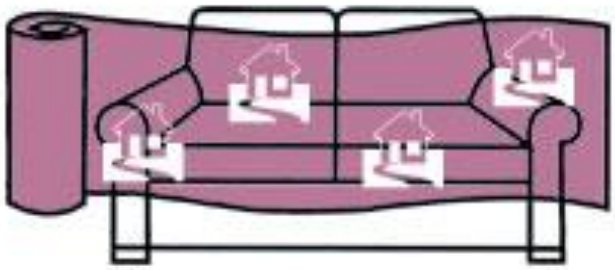
Fabrics come in two basic widths of either 54" or 118". The wide width of 118" is turned and is used as its length. For the Snap Pleat Drapery this can create a seamless drapery. The wider width fabric can also be used on Roman Shades. Please be aware of the pattern direction as well as fabric width when specifying.

Fabric width is turned and becomes the height. This is why the draperies can be seamless.



Regular

Top of pattern goes up the roll



Railroaded

Top of pattern goes to one side of roll

Installation Instructions

Instructions for the Installer are of critical importance of a successful drapery treatment, yet it is rare when an A/D mentions it. The Installer needs to know a variety of specific items related to the treatment. Some of these are:

- If the treatment is to be mounted inside or outside the frame of the window
- Does the treatment need to be steamed
- How is the drapery to be "dressed"
- The type of mounting brackets
- The desired overlap of the treatment
- The clearance off the floor
- Coordinating motorized treatments with the Electrician.

It has been said that the installation makes the treatment. Why should the A/D ignore giving instructions on this significant part of the job?

Care & Maintenance

The A/D needs to document during the planning stage the required cleaning methods and fabric content of the fabrics selected. Can they be dry cleaned or steamed cleaned? Can they be cleaned on-site or removed and cleaned and rehung? It will eliminate nuisance calls after the job is completed by providing this information which is easier to access during the planning stage.

Typical repairs can also be explained and documented to avoid call backs. Here are some common repairs:

Roman Shades

- The shade goes up uneven. This can be due to the cord wrapped around one of the stays.
- One of the cords or rings is broken. This can be repaired on-site.

SnapPleat Drapery

- The drapery un-snaps from the carrier. This is easily snapped back on.
- The rolls of the drapery come out of order. This is remedied by dressing the drapery rolls back in place.

Conclusion

With proper planning and the assistance of a drapery consultant, the A/D can communicate successful drapery design. The challenge of most drapery designs is that the client never sees the final product until the day of installation, therefore the need for effective planning. This is one of the main reasons in calling for mock-ups. A mock-up can eliminate costly mistakes after the fabrication is installed. Perhaps the fabric is too stiff, the hems are too long, or the stacking is too much.

Your Drapery Consultant

My name is Neil Gordon and I am available as your Drapery Consultant. I will personally work with you and/or your staff to help you design and document your drapery and window covering projects at no cost to you. Plus I will save thousands of dollars from avoiding costly mistakes.

I am a 25 year veteran of the Window Covering and Drapery Business. My company Decorating with Fabric not only offers expert consultation, but also an in-house drapery workroom and a staff of professional installers guaranteeing complete quality control.

Decorating with Fabric offers Architects and Designers:

- Free One-on-One Consultation
- Free Resource Binder with Specs for your Library
- Free Lunch & Learn for your Staff (I am an AIA Provider)

To make an appointment call me @ 845-352-5064

Thank you,

Neil Gordon

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