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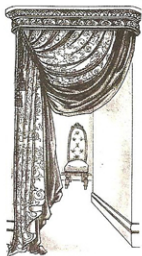
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# Curtains go dramatic

FABRICS ARE RICH, STYLES THEATRICAL AGAIN

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MOGGY



THE WORD 'CURTAINS' can evoke dozens of different images, from the most complex of theatrical creations to simple slips of muslin wafted against a window by a summer breeze.

Today we have not only the widest range of fabrics ever available, but also an astonishingly imaginative collection of decorative curtain poles, pelmets, tie-backs, tassels, trims and other accessories.

What to choose? For the past couple of years

simple treatments have been popular; plain, neutral shades for soft furnishings, a reliance on subtle texture rather than anything flamboyant for variety, and simple tab-topped panels used for curtaining. These are, it has to be said, far more economical than heavily gathered curtains which require a lot of fabric.

'But we are seeing more opulent treatments for windows coming back now after the years of simplicity', says Stephen Dimelov of House & Home,



An interior window between the main hall and porch needed no curtain, but is softened by a swag in Zoffany's 'Reveillon' lined with a green glazed chintz by Romo



Swag-and-tailed curtains in the formal dining-room have been made by the House & Home Design Studio in Colefax & Fowler's 'Alicia', with a Nina Campbell red striped paper on the walls

A dried flower arrangement in the lounge is perfectly colour-coordinated with the flowers on Colefax & Fowler's 'Evesham' fabric used to make the curtains. The wallpaper is by Zoffany. Drawings throughout this feature are from Wendy Baker's 'The Curtain Sketchbook', which may be consulted at the House & Home Design Studio



'and there are lots of fabrics like damasks, with a really mediaeval richness about them.

'The window treatments people want now are mostly based on Victorian styles, with the curtains interlined and padded, and trimmed with heavy fringing or beads.

'You can even get very good reproductions of those elaborate carved Victorian pelmets; they are moulded in resin nowadays rather than carved from wood, but painted and gilded they look very effective'.

When you visit the House & Home Design Studio in Douglas you can browse through useful volumes like Wendy Baker's 'The Curtain Sketchbook', which offers design solutions for every kind of style and situation.

In the more informal room you are likely to hang your curtains from poles – and the choice of poles and finials available today is worth a book in itself. Minimal modern decorations call for sleek blinds or simple fabric panels, feminine bedrooms for pretty gathered valances and bows, lavish formal drawing or dining-rooms for rigid pelmets, swags and tails.

You are limited only by your own imagination, and you can let it run riot if you want to. Curtains can be trimmed with any kind of decorative object: shells are very popular, and one window treatment in 'The Curtain Sketchbook 2' shows a tab-topped curtain hung from a natural tree branch.

Your curtains do not have to be purely functional, either. Many window treatments are designed primarily for their decorative effect, and where the window is not overlooked from outside there may be no need for curtains to be drawn. A window frame could simply be dressed with a swag of fabric

draped over the curtain pole, or with a lambrequin – a shaped fabric pelmet coming across the top of the window and down the sides – to soften its outline.

An interior passageway can be given a dramatic division with a heavy curtain draped and caught up to one side, and the proportions of a small window set awkwardly in a blank wall can be effectively amended by drapes far more generous in size than the window itself. And of course bed surrounds, even if you do not have a four-poster or half-tester, can be immeasurably enhanced by fabric. A decorative corona above the bedhead can be used to carry either fabric to match your curtains, or an airy lace or muslin drape.

MANX LIFE STYLE  
photographed two rooms and a



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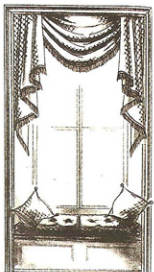
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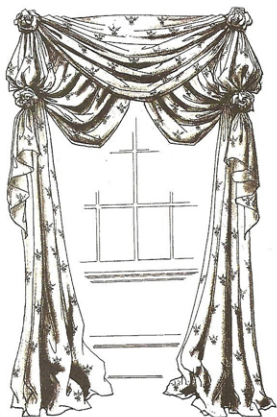




Simple window treatment with a gathered valance in the en suite bathroom to the master bedroom



The same combination of Zoffany and Romo fabrics makes a drape on a pole next to one of the exposed beams on the upper landing



series of curtain treatments in a house for which the House & Home Design Studio has recently made curtains and soft furnishings. The heart of the building is an old two-storey Manx farmhouse, but it has been considerably extended over the years; rooms in the newer parts tend to have lower ceilings than the originals. The importance can be seen here of scaling curtain designs up or down to match the proportions of a room. Many Victorian curtain styles were designed for rooms with very high ceilings, which even modest terraced houses had in those days; an over-deep pelmet or valance, or over-long swags and tails, would look quite wrong in one of today's low-ceilinged rooms.

The dining-room is in the older part of this house – in fact it incorporates what would have been the original hallway and front door – and the ceiling is high enough to accommodate a swag-and-tail window treatment. House & Home supplied a Nina Campbell striped wallpaper in two shades of red, that favourite colour for the formal dining-room, and dressed the windows in Colefax & Fowler's 'Alicia' (the pink and sand colourway) lined with red to match. Heavy tassels are used as tie-backs; as the room looks only into a secluded private garden the owners seldom draw the curtains, but we did so for the photograph for a cosy winter dinner-party effect.





There is a small window on either side of the bedhead in the main bedroom, but the overall effect has been streamlined by curtaining the entire wall. The main fabric is Sanderson's 'Bloom'

By contrast, the master bedroom is on the first floor of a new wing. It is a very large room with windows on three sides and a lower ceiling, so although the owners wanted a traditional curtain treatment the scale had to be handled very carefully. The windows on two facing sides have been curtained separately, but the bed head is set against the third wall with a small window on either side of it. To curtain each of these windows separately could have looked rather fussy, so the problem has been solved by hanging the entire wall with gathered fabric and creating an ensemble with matching patterns for both the bedcover and two side tables.

The main fabric used is Sanderson's lovely 'Bloom', here with rust-pink flowers – it is available in four different colourways. The gathered panel behind the bedhead and the skirts of the bedside tables have been made in Romo's glossy glazed chintz in rich rust-red 'Bittersweet', and curtaining has been continued right across the wall, and on all the other

windows, in the main 'Bloom' pattern. The bedspread and the gathered valance which runs right along the curtained areas are both edged with a border in Colefax & Fowler 'Petersham', and the valance with a Jane Churchill bobble trim.

Elsewhere in the house Stephen Dimelior has come up with variations on the theme – in the large conservatory, roman blinds in a Jane Churchill voile, edged with a 'Regency' fringe; in a little downstairs cloakroom, curtains in Colefax & Fowler's 'Melbury Sweet Pea', with a coordinating wall covering and Luxaflex roller blind.

Curtains are not just curtains. Material can be used to adorn, to disguise, to correct architectural proportions or to create a mood, and today fabrics can be found to enhance every conceivable decorating style. Stephen and his staff at House & Home are particularly skilled at coming up with design solutions using the enormous range of fabrics they have available.

