

Decore Score: Window film will soften your days of rays

by Rose Bennett Gilbert

Q: One side of our great room is all windows. It's one reason we bought this house, but after living here for nearly a year, we find that the winter sun makes afternoons almost unbearable from the glare. Strange, because we didn't have this trouble last summer and fall. I hate the idea of curtains - the view is over the back garden and we love looking out - that is, when we don't have to squint.

A: You've rediscovered a seasonal secret that's been pretty much lost in these days of 24-hour-electric lights: when the earth's slant changes, the sun's rays come in lower and at an oblique angle. That's why it gets cold in the winter months, and why you're getting that blinding glare in late afternoon.

THE SECRET WINDOW - This energy-efficient window film blocks glare and tames the wide-open spaces, but not the view from this rustic vacation retreat. CNS Photo.The ancients knew how to predict and even deify this celestial phenomenon. Think of shrines like Egypt's Abu Simbel, sited precisely so a ray of sunlight reaches into the temple for just two days once in every year.

As you have to deal with more days of rays, I'd say, yes, give in to some kind of window covering. Roller shades are an unobtrusive option. Install them roller-side out, and they'll virtually disappear when you snap them up and out of sight.

Another choice is to have a glare-blocking window film applied directly to the glass panes. The films are virtually invisible; for example, the Vista UVShield Window Film that you can't see on the tall wall of windows in the vacation home we show here.

The new films must be professionally applied (see www.vista-films.com), but once in place, they work practically forever, blocking glare and filtering out almost all the UV rays that overheat your room and fade your furniture and fabrics.

Q: What color is good for a dining room? Ours opens through an archway from the living room, which we've painted that sage green, you know, that you see in all the furniture catalogs. My husband thinks we should continue the green, but I think it would look cold in a dining room. Is it OK to change colors, even if you can see into the dining room from the living room?

A: Not just OK, almost mandatory, especially given your color choice for the living room. Sage green may be hot on the pop charts as you point out. But it's too cool to the eye for a dining room where the emphasis is on warmth, camaraderie and gustatory pleasures.

It's for good reason that the most compelling restaurants indulge their walls in deep, rich, high-temperature colors like wine red and saffron, hues purported to stimulate the appetite. Whether that's so or not, such human colors definitely flatter the diners themselves. Everyone looks alive and lovely in the reflection that bounces off warm-colored walls.

Conversely, the bounce off green - or gray or black or most blues - can cast a ghastly, cold pall over the dining table and everyone thereat.

Shocking case in point: I was appalled to find that the dining space in James Beard's New York home had been repainted from luscious "cream of tomato-soup" red to an icy, unappetizing green, chosen, I was told, "by a top restaurant consultant." They should have asked the gourmet members of the James Beard Society (which meets and eats in honor of Beard, the first champion of American-style cooking; www.jamesbeard.org).

That warm, flattering, appetite-revving red had been chosen by great gourmand himself. And who could ever question his good taste?

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