

Decor Score: Finding the perfect window dressing

by *Rose_Bennett_Gilbert*

Q: I love decorating my home but am buffaloed when it comes to doing our windows. My mother put cafe curtains everywhere and let it go at that, but I'd like something "dressier," at least, in the living and dining room as well as the master bedroom. I went to a window store, but there were so many new shades and things that I came home more undecided than ever.

Can you help?

WINDOW TO THE WORLD - Elegance goes easy in a dining room where the window designer combines classic balloon shades and curtains with more casual wooden blinds. CNS Photo courtesy of Exciting Windows! A: There is indeed sometimes a bewildering richness of choices when it comes to dressing today's windows. Time-honored standbys like curtains and shades have been supplemented by dozens of other options, all the way from accordion blinds to what one manufacturer calls "shadings," which are what happens when you cross a sheer curtain with a louvered blind.

Then you also have wooden shutters, mini- and maxi-Venetian blinds, even films that adhere directly to the windowpanes to block both UV rays and passersby's eyes.

Still, when you say "dressy," most of us, in our mind's eye, see traditional swags and jabots and curtains (as many interior designers call them, not "draperies," and never "drapes"). Not that that necessarily translates into "formal," as you can see from the inviting dining room we show here. Most of the furnishings are traditional, from the French dining table to the crystal chandelier, but the room-maker is the jaunty window treatment. It's an inspired combination of beaded balloon shades in plaid silk - essentially formal - and wooden cafe shutters - essentially informal. The plaid plays back to the wall color and fabric on the chair fabric, tying the room together and turning the window into an important focal point.

But I don't tell you this to make you feel even more "buffaloed" by your own windows. This home decorator had help from a pro who raced to her rescue from an interesting design service called Exciting Windows! It's a nation-wide service that makes house calls, literally, to help the hesitant through the myriad choices available for today's windows. Even Michael Payne, TV star and celebrity designer ("Designing for

the Sexes") used an Exciting Windows! consultant for his own home in L.A. and was so pleased, the company reports, that he decided to become a spokesman for the service.

For more information, visit www.excitingwindows.com.

Q: I'm redoing an old salt box-style house (early 20th century) and really want to use as many of-the-period (18th-19th century) decorating products as I can find. Where can I find authentic wallpaper designs?

A: Race to your computer and look up www.historicnewengland.org/wallpaper/. It's the Web site for Historic New England (once known as SPNEA, the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities).
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Since early last century, the Society has been researching, recording, and reproducing (through licensed manufacturers) wallpapers and other artifacts discovered in the historic houses of New England. Found on walls, in old trunks, decorating fire boards and bandboxes, their collection of wallpapers now numbers more than 5,000 pieces and is internationally renowned as one of the largest in this country.

One of those authorized licensees is Brewster Wallcovering, which offers a number of historic patterns. You just may find something that suits your own walls at www.brewsterwallcoverings.com.

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