



How fabrics are enhancing romans'

# pulling power

**A** BROADER RANGE OF FABRIC CHOICES IS MAKING THE OPTIONS FOR ROMAN BLINDS LIMITLESS. DAWN ADAMS REPORTS.

Furnishing fabrics, patterns, a linen look and banding are among the trends adding increasing interest to the roman blind category. While most roman blinds continue to be made in 'safe' fabrics in neutral shades, manufacturers and consumers are warming to the endless possibilities presented by introducing colour or pattern. With the colour palette moving from browns to charcoal grey, this category is enjoying a resurgence.

## ***Bolder use of colour***

Furnishings fabrics are increasingly being selected to create the potential for huge variations in roman blinds, according to The Roman Empire managing director Don Hailes. He describes the options as 'limitless' and credits them with building greater interest in the category.

"The trend this year is, without doubt, custom romans," Haile says. "People are using furnishings options, like drapery fabrics, with a lining behind. And the trend is moving a bit from minimalism. We still have a minimalist feel but it is more vibrant and colourful with textures."

Hailes tells how the newer more adventurous options add greater interest. "The new fabrics look great," he says. "We've even done bold reds. At we're currently making a small blind with a wide pink and a wide green horizontal band with contrast butterflies on the stripes. It's fantastic. There are limitless possibilities."

Hailes sees roman blinds as a definite growth segment and is pleased he decided to start making them again after quitting the segment 10 years ago. "At that time, they had gone out of fashion and hard blinds had taken over," he says. "Now, they're flying back. It's been five years since we re-introduced the product and our sales are back to where they were, if not better."

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## ***A return to pattern***

Fabrics with a linen look, a pattern or banding are among the latest trends for roman blinds, according to BQ Design sales consultant Danielle Tregenza. "We're seeing lots of linen coming through as well as linen look fabrics," she says. "The benefit of a linen look is that they are made from man-made fibres that give the fabric more stability."

While patterns are returning to favour, banding is another way to introduce a second colour. "A band can be used on the base or on three sides of the roman," she says. "If they're not daring with pattern, they can add it as a border in a smaller amount. It is a way to introduce a little bit of pattern."

Tregenza confirms a lot of 'safe' fabric is still used. "A lot of people leave the bolder fabric to other accessories that can be changed more readily like bedding items or cushions," she says. "There are lots of neutrals and there is a shift to a charcoal grey palette rather than browns."

The majority of the firm's work in romans tends to be basic plain lined options, while a smaller amount are produced in a structured sheer or soft gathered sheer look. "It's a softer look than a basic sunscreen roman blind," she says.

An alternative is also a swag base roman, which is more traditional in style and not as popular as a straight base roman blind. "But it's nice if someone wants a softer look, a mix of a contemporary and classic feel," she says. "And we also doing more work in motorisation and that will continue to grow."

In most instances, the firm's clients supply the fabric for custom romans. But Tregenza notes that the company provides a 'home' range of fabrics with a casual appearance that offer a cost effective option. "They lend themselves to a beachy look depending on the fabric, but they are cost effective because they come back coated with a lining," she says. "For someone on a smaller budget, we can offer the home range and the client can supply another fabric for the border or a band to make it more personal. And we can add that as a trim."



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## **Pre-lengthened romans from Sunlight**

Roman blinds are pre-lengthened before delivery at Sunlight Products to ensure they better fit a window when installed. "We pre-lengthen them with weights and steam them to come to their full finished length," says managing director Andrew Clark. "We hang them for a day before they are delivered."

Clark notes that without pre-lengthening, a roman blind could be installed and appear shorter than sought after in a window. "Under those circumstances, customers might be told they have to wait until they come to their full length whereas ours are as close as possible to being the correct length," he says. "The steaming also gives it a nice finish."



## **ACMEDA RELEASES ENHANCED ROMAN SYSTEM**

Acmeda is releasing a new roman blind program for smooth and effortless operation.

Acmeda enlisted the assistance of one of Europe's leading roman blind manufacturers for the development of its new SS38 Chain Control System.

The successor to its current SS31 system, this new roman blind program was launched at the recent R+T Stuttgart and is due for imminent release in Australia with the full choice of options to be available in July.

Listing its main prerequisites for the SS38 as function, aesthetics, flexibility and cost efficiency, Acmeda sought out assistance from Copa Home in Belgium, a firm that produces more than 30,000 romans a year. Acmeda was seeking to meet strict aesthetic requirements while maintaining a smooth and effortless operation across a wide size and application range. The SS38 system has the ability to achieve four metre width and drops of up to four metres using planetary and direct drive chain controls within strict sound and user effort parameters.

Acmeda points out the system is housed in an elegant slimline head rail, providing the traditional fabric attachment option of Velcro as well as the addition of open slot at the top for a flat spline fabric attachment to allow fabricators to remove the head board, conventionally used to give a clean stitch free finish to fabrics. Low profile brackets are designed to allow for a discreet installation to be hidden from view.

Additional control options include motorisation and crank gear and the system is also suitable for angled window frames and sloped window applications.

Also in the firm's range is the SS40 Motorised Roman system for larger applications.