



Room design by Meadowbank Designs. Photo by Tom Crane

DESIGNING *Beauty*

Kirsten McCoy, Allied ASID, a partner in Meadowbank Designs in suburban Philadelphia, sometimes runs into people who shy away from motorized shades or screens because they think they'll detract from the beauty of a finished room. That couldn't be further from the truth. "Today, there are so many great options available that you can do them with almost any style of window treatment," she says. "Don't be afraid to work with them. They're not going to ruin your design."

BY SOPHIA BENNETT

Motorized window coverings, whether they're single roller shades or the most ornate of draperies, can do a lot to add function as well as form. Three designers share tips for creating gorgeous designs with motorized window treatments.

Seek out the right fabrics and hardware

Gone are the days when shade and screen fabric is black or white. "Suppliers of shades have these beautiful fabrics now, and that makes such a difference to our clients, especially at nighttime, when they're looking at these pretty fabrics with textures," says McCoy. "They're almost as pretty as some of the drapery fabrics."

Get client buy-in quickly

A designer can dream up the most beautiful treatments imaginable, but if they client says no, they'll never make it off the page or computer screen. "What I've noticed with working with consumers is it's important to mention early the words motorization and automation and how everything can be operated through Google or Alexa," says Emma Messerschmidt, principal designer at 7 Sisters Interiors in Del Mar, CA. "Ask early if they're familiar with these products and if they'd like to add the option of motorized treatments."

Another way to get consumers to buy into motorized window treatments is to present a beautiful drawing of what the final installation will look like—especially if it will be a combination treatment or one with decorative features. "If you can show good layers and textures and colors, a lot of people will go for more expensive, higher-end motorization," Messerschmidt says.



Photo by Kim Boynton

Hidden treasures

Cords, clunky rods and battery packs can take away from the beauty of motorized treatments. But it's getting easier to find window covering housings that are unobtrusive. "One of the things we like are these newer, thinner products where the housing can be obscured in the window," says McCoy. "Unless you're really looking for them, you don't really see them. We aren't limited by having to have a valance to hide the mechanisms."

Even products that are left exposed can be enclosed in attractive casings. "We can get them custom powder-coated if you have a (paint) swatch that matches the walls or window frames," says Kim Boynton, owner of 3/8 and Co. in Sarasota, FL.

Builders can also create cavities that the shades and screen can hide in when retracted, or craft decorative fascias or soffits that cover up equipment mounted to walls, window frames and ceilings. That way, they're completely hidden when not in use.

If power cords in an existing home can't be encased in the wall or ceiling, Messerschmidt will often use drapery panels to hide them. Valances and other top treatments can also be used to obscure tracks, rods and battery packs at the top of the window.



The beauty of built-ins

With new construction projects, there are ways to partner with the contractor and subcontractors to create installations where all of the non-shade elements are completely "out of sight, out of mind." "During framing is when they build the cavities where the casing and roller assemblies are going to hide. The tracks are mounted to the inner portion of the columns rather than the outside, and the power can be placed inside the trusses and walls so you don't have to look at plugs and cords," says Boynton. "If you get involved in a project early, you can have everything built in a way where the motorized shades and screens look like part of the house instead of an afterthought."

Fully integrating motorized window coverings into a home's design requires good and regular communication with many of the skilled tradespeople involved in a home's construction, including the architect, electrician and finish carpenters. "You don't want to give the builder a set of plans and walk away," Boynton says. "Make sure that during the course of construction, you go in and check in on the project." Otherwise, those important hidden components may not be put in the right place or make it into the project at all.

Find the right workroom and installer

Window treatments lose their attractiveness if they aren't correctly made or installed. Messerschmidt recommends working with workrooms who have experience with motorized treatments. "Building relationships with installers who do these kinds of jobs is very important because they represent your company, and if they don't know what they're doing it can ruin the project," she adds. A good relationship with these professionals, just like a strong relationship with tradespeople, will ensure a design delivers a final product that clients will love. **V**