



# drapes *SHAPE* up

Demand for curtain fabrics continues apace, driven by ever more daring approaches to colour, pattern and texture, writes Belinda Smart.

*Studio Arida Velvet by Wilson*

Curtain fabrics have been undergoing a revival for a while now, but if industry commentary is any indication, the category is still ripe for further expansion over the next 12 months and beyond.

An ever smaller world and the gradual return of confidence to the market following the GFC are key influencers of emerging trends, according to Jennifer Donnelly, marketing manager at Wilson Fabrics.

"As we are becoming a more global community, trends are also becoming more global. The speed at which the European trends reach the Australian market is much faster than it used to be. Consumers are becoming much more fashion focused and with the assistance of technology, now have access to worldwide trends [and] influences and expect to see the fabrics and styles that are available in Europe here in Australia."

Donnelly suggests suppliers are now emerging from a conservative period following the global financial crisis to take design in new, more adventurous directions.



*Sophie by Wilson*

"Companies have begun to re-invest in design and product development and want to bring something unique to the market. It has taken a few seasons for people to feel comfortable and confident enough to bring vibrant colours and designs back into drapery. Compared to previous years, we are starting to see colour come back into designs and trends which makes for some very exciting times ahead in the world of window furnishings."

"We did start to see colours creep in over the last 12 months, but it was still fairly conservative."

"There are several key colour trends that we feel will influence curtain fabrics over the next 12 months, which, along with combinations of textures, will provide us with some interesting and exciting fabrics to look forward to. We will start to see colours ranging from vibrant brights to contemporary darks with a sheen, fabrics with a natural or hand crafted look and modern fresh colours."

Vibrant colour is being manifested in horizontal stripes, colour highlights, colour blocking and geometric patterns, she says.

"Amelia is a new fabric that Wilson Fabrics has just released (in February) which follows this emerging trend. Amelia features brightly coloured and coordinating horizontal stripes that add interest and colour in the naturally textured fabric."

Narrow or heavily repeated horizontal stripes have historically been avoided due to influences from makers, who preferred to avoid the complexity inherent in pattern matching, with high quality fabrics and tight control on skewing in production. However Donnelly believes such concerns have been put aside to some extent, with horizontal stripes becoming more popular. Two-tone stripes or multi-coloured stripes with varying stripe width or uniform are key options emerging in window furnishings.





*Carmine by Wilson*

“Following on with this vibrant theme, Wilson Fabrics has also released Sophie, an uncoated jacquard range that is full of vibrant colour. Sophie is available in nine luxurious colours that look fabulous on the fabric, which also features a high lustre. It’s exciting that we are starting to see colour come back into drapery.”

Another emerging trend is for contemporary darker colour palettes such as blacks, charcoal, burgundy and navy, coupled with highlights and touches of metallic yarns and colour. “These combinations give a more luxurious and elegant feel and feature high quality fabrications such as silks, velvets, viscoses and embroidery,” says Donnelly.

“Velvets have started to make a comeback and are a key fabric in this emerging trend. The sheer softness of a drapery velvet allows for a very luxurious and soft drape. Following this trend, we have just released the Avida velvet range under Wilson Studio. Avida is a comprehensive velvet range consisting of 18 sumptuous colours and has been designed to coordinate with two existing Studio ranges; Biltmore and Antler. Avida is made from a polyester and rayon combination, providing a soft feel and excellent draping properties with a beautiful sheen. Avida follows these colour themes by offering a range of colours from deep ebony, warm ruby through to a beautiful azure.”

With growing demand for natural yarns and eco-friendly products, natural and earthy tones and textures will continue to be popular over the next 12 months. “Following on from this eco / natural trend, rather than just the use of natural colours, we will start to see a more hand crafted look dominating this theme, which is coupled with touches of vibrant and deep colour. These colours are inspired by nature and the landscape such as greens, blues, oranges and reds. These colours sit beautifully together and offer a more nature and land inspired colour scheme that obtains its organic feel from the texture of the fabric rather than just the colour itself. Here we will start to see a combination of old and new such as vintage looks, embroideries, natural textured and geometric patterns.

**These both have a hand crafted and natural look and make any room feel warm and homely.**

“The Carmine Collection is a new Studio range we are releasing in April, which follows this theme. Carmine Geo features a diamond pattern coupled with natural earthy tones. This directly coordinates with Carmine Floral which is a more ethnic-inspired design. These both have a hand crafted and natural look and make any room feel warm and homely. Carmine drapes beautifully and is made from a polyester linen blend making it a durable and natural looking fabric that performs well.”



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*Society by Maurice Kain*

“We are finding a large demand for bold bright colour - the market has been full of very safe colour for so long. We are seeing retailers embracing the ability to block colours together. Maurice Kain’s ‘Society’ is certainly a coloured plain catering to the need for those looking to brighten their decor.”

Michelle West  
Basford Brands

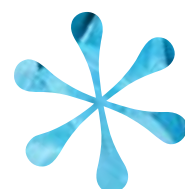
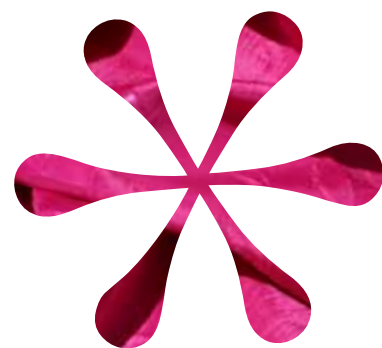
Michelle West, general manager at Basford Brands, says the Maurice Kain brand is witnessing a re-calibration of its neutral palette, as well as renewed interest in bright colour.

“Over the past 12 months we have seen a real move from Beige tonings to Grey toning. The entire spectrum of grey is becoming a focus, from pale soft greys through to rich dark charcoals along with silver and metallic. This also is quite representative of floor coverings and hence the move in drapery to co-ordinate back to these tonings. Having just returned from Heimtextil in Germany, grey was certainly was a strong influence. Other influences driving this trend are also prominent in tiling and Laminates where we are seeing Slate / Stone / Granite / Woodgrain appearing strongly. Maurice Kain’s ‘Pravada’ demonstrates the strength of the Grey colour line.”

Fashion colours for this season are being expressed in a resurgence of both print and bright plains, West adds.

“We are finding a large demand for bold bright colour - the market has been full of very safe colour for so long. We are seeing retailers embracing the ability to block colours together. Maurice Kain’s ‘Society’ is certainly a coloured plain catering to the need for those looking to brighten their decor.”

“We are also expecting to see a strong trend towards Blue - Indigos and Teals were particularly strong this year in Europe in many new ranges.”



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Mokum

John Turvey of Mokum believes enthusiasm for **bolder,**  
brighter colours and patterns is set to grow over coming seasons.

## John Turvey of Mokum believes enthusiasm for bolder, brighter colours and patterns is set to grow over coming seasons.

"For some time curtain fabrics have all been about soft neutral sheers forming more of a background to an interior; we are increasingly asked now for curtains fabrics as a feature or starting point of a room, whether it is a particular colour or bold pattern."

"With more colour confidence around, even neutrals are starting to become soft ice blues and arctic greens - on the cooler side of the spectrum. When it comes to bold colour, we have a 'Moire' in a brilliant chartreuse that clients are eagerly sampling, and a new crisp glazed-linen called 'Kismet' in a rainbow of colours, and it's the Saffron, Avocado, and Cobalt that we can't keep hold of!"

Taking a lead from the world of fashion, interior and soft furnishings fabrics are taking on new edge, Turvey says.

"Fashion continues to be the strongest influence in colour, and interior design in general - as people feel more confident wearing certain colours that may have not been so fashionable, this starts to spill into people's homes too. It may start with an amber glass vase, and next the saffron linen curtains are going up."

As well as colour, a more adventurous approach to texture is coming through "in the way of sheers with slubs or more open weaves - polyesters that look like raw silks - James Dunlop Textiles 'Envoy' for example, and slubby linens."



New developments in fabric construction are also playing a role in driving demand, Turvey says.

"Australian sun and its effect on colour in fabric means that we are still very much asked for some synthetic fibre content to fabrics, however there are so many advances in fibre technology that the mills we work with can produce amazing fabrics that look just like their natural fibre counterpart. This of course means that we can use more saturated colours without fear of fading."

"Demand for curtain fabrics continues to increase, as it is no longer just for sheers and S-fold tracks. Even if clients are looking for plain taffeta, the fullness is being increased so that there is more of a curtain presence to a room - not purely functional anymore, and adding softness to a space. We noticed more clients requesting fabric to add 'dress panels' in front of sheers already installed, so as curtain-confidence continues to grow demand increases."

Jennifer Donnelly of Wilson Fabrics concurs that the market for drapery remains buoyant "as the array of designs available is enormous which gives flexibility and options in matching and designing décor."

Suppliers continue to vaunt the practical, energy efficient merits of curtains, she says. Meanwhile, aesthetics continue to play an important role.

"Not only are curtains more effective at reducing heating costs, they also offer much more variety in terms of colour and design than other window coverings such as plantation shutters and blinds. The sheer flexibility and choice in design, colour and texture of curtain fabric allows consumers to easily match their décor and tastes and also gives the option of further coordinating their home by using a complementary fabric on accessories such as cushions, pillows and upholstery."

Mokum