

HOW TO Create a Couture Window Treatment

Pay Attention to the Details
Every Step of the Way

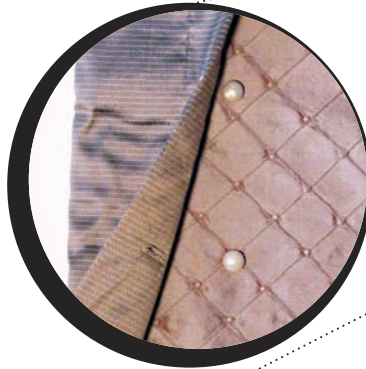
By **DEB BARRETT**

What makes a couture window treatment? In our industry, we've borrowed the term to mean high-end custom-made treatments, a small percentage of the custom treatments produced every day that are held to a different set of standards. Check out the following details to see how to add couture elements to your next project.

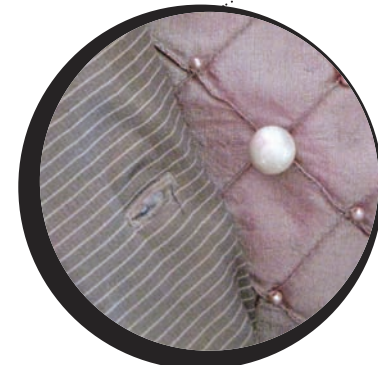
PLEATS PLEASE: The hand sewn Tuxedo pleated heading has two fingers that fold back like lapels, made by finger pressing with the help of the buckram underpinning. The interlining adds volume and softness. A machine-sewn French or Euro pleat would have required the very visible beads to be broken before stitching the pleat space together. Not a bead was sacrificed.

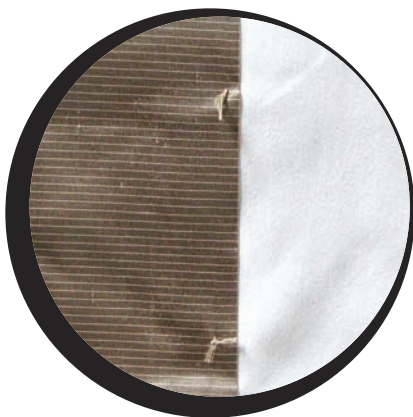


FRENCH MASTERS: Masterful techniques make for a quality product. For this panel, the couture approach is exemplified by the French cuff banding: An 8" contrast fabric sleeve sewn to the leading edge and then wrapped back onto the face like a cuff with button details holding it in place.

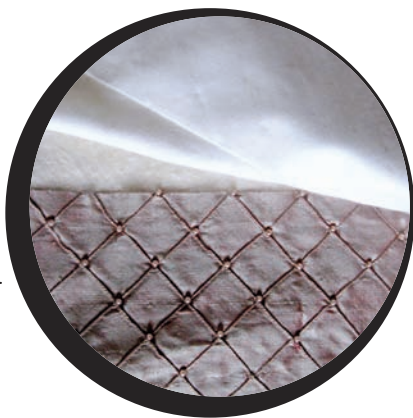


EXTRA EFFORT: Details, details, details: A great window treatment is filled with them. The banding could have very easily been topstitched down the leading edge with the pearl buttons centered and sewn on top. It could have even had mock buttonholes to further define the look. But the effort of using real buttonholes creates a layering and character to a panel that could not have been achieved with the simpler technique.





HIDDEN DETAILS: Check the hems, trim or pleats for hand-stitched work. Here the buttons down the leading edge were attached with thread shanks to handle the bulk of the French cuff banding. The side hems are hand finished so they don't get caught in the blind hemmer. This type of work is a point of pride for any accomplished seamstress, where the exact and uniform placement of the buttons proves their skill.



INFRASTRUCTURE MATTERS: Check the lining and interlining. The lining choice should always be driven by the face fabric as fabrics have a natural tendency to repel each other; compatible fiber contents are essential. Other clues: If the lining is something other than standard white or ivory, the panel has had a thoughtful designer take into account curb appeal, back lighting and color bleed. Interlinings should have serged hems, French tacks at the seams and overlapped seams hanging 1" shorter than the lining, unless, like here, the design intent is a wadded hem.



THINK SOFT: Hems and edges are rarely intended to be pressed knife sharp. Softer, fuller edges are created here by wrapping the interlining into the side hem and leading edge. The key is a proper press. (Pressing is NOT ironing! It's lifting the iron and setting it down again in the proper position.) Hold the iron 2-3" from hem, steaming thoroughly. Don't rest the iron directly on the fabric. If needed, pat the hem with a pounding block to mold it. Steaming the edge creases out at the install can also help achieve the look.



SIGNATURE APPEAL: Artists sign their work and tailors label their garments; window fashion artisans should take a cue from their efforts and label their work.

Author's Note:

This is an excerpt from my upcoming book *What Makes a Great Window Treatment* (title subject to change), due to launch this winter. For those who have attended my seminars over the years, you'll know this is a subject near and dear to my heart.

If you share my interest in couture fashion or are looking for inspiration and just can't wait for my book, here are just a few of my "secret sources."

- The *Vogue Sewing* book is out of print but I urge you to check in used book stores and eBay—it's been an invaluable resource since my college days.


- *The Art of Manipulating Fabric* by Colette Wolff is another of my must-haves. Fortunately this one is still in print.

If you're more into instant gratification ...

- The Sewing Divas cover everything from appliqué to menswear and detail it all with great photos. thesewingdivas.wordpress.com

- Alison at Six and a Half Stitches explains every element of a project, from fabric selection to hems. She has a very artistic eye and her work is amazing. sixandahalfstitches.typepad.com

Deb Barrett is an award-winning designer, speaker and author. Barrett combined her twin passions—design and windows—when she founded Window Dressings, her couture soft furnishings firm. As a designer and principal of Window Dressings, she has built a reputation for cutting-edge couture treatments. This fall she will be celebrating two decades of exceptional soft furnishings with the launch of Window Dressings Privé and WD Prêt.

CLOSER LOOK 

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