

Cultivating an eye for color

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Colors for the home move in and out of favor, cycling from fresh to current to tired. Some colorists, such as Kate Korten, principal of Kate Korten Design Strategies, New York, seem to have a knack for knowing what's right for the moment and the market.

"Fashion is not something that's dictated," says Korten. "We're all cogs in a wheel, building on what's out there."

Research, interviews and intuition guide one colorist's palette.

For Korten, color development is a three-part process. One third of her work relies on submerging herself in what's out there in magazines, trade shows and kids on the street.

Another third of the job is interviewing customers. To provide her with the best data in developing the color lines for Crypton, Korten bypasses jobbers and goes straight to the designers using the product. "We show the range of colors we've agreed to offer, and see what reception they receive," she says. "I talk to designers to get inside their heads. I want to know what works for them, and what doesn't. After we obtain the designer feedback, we set the color line."

Instinct counts

The other third of the equation is intuition. "Instinct is very valid," Korten contends. "If you don't trust your own instincts, you'll never know where to go with the information you gather."

When Korten graduated from the Univer-

sity of Michigan with a fine arts degree, she was a painter with a flair for color. She began a career in apparel and was soon drawn to home furnishings. "Silhouettes don't change much in apparel," says Korten. "I found the real creativity is in the fabric itself."

Korten worked as a textile designer for Sunbury before forming her own firm. At Sunbury her intuition led her to create the Still Life pattern — a fabric that's since inspired many change shuttle constructions.

More recently, Korten coordinated licensing programs for Dakota Jackson and the Victoria and Albert Museum.

For Hi-Text, the manufacturer of Crypton fabric, Korten does color development.

Korten has been coloring a new line called Crypton Style, geared to residential clients. Crypton's stain resistance, key to its contract popularity, is finding a welcome audience with consumers. "Designers who'd used Crypton for contract applications were specifying it for their homes," Korten says.

The residential palette includes lighter mid-range colors such as plum, mango, ice blue, neutral wasabi, lichen and deep russet. Also important are colored neutrals, including metallic beige, warm nickel and a range of off-whites.

"In the home you want to blend and add freshness, but work with what the consumer has," Korten says. "We're looking for flexible, complex colors — usually those you can't quite put your finger on, that can go in more than one direction." ■

Crypton Twill is being introduced in a range of fresh colors that should be perfect for the residential market.



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