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DESIGN IDEAS
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HIGH SUMMER STYLE

RELAXED LUXURY

A CONVERTED DOVECOTE

A GRAND

RITA'S PICKS



MOHAIR

Two wonderful mohairs, from top: 'Ash', £252 a metre, from Bruno Triplet; and 'Greville' (in drab and brûlée), £218.40 a metre, from Adam Bray. brunotriplet.com redlohousefabrics.com



Rita explores the abundant selection of fabrics at Howe, in south west London



PATTERN

Raoul Textiles is ideal for a pattern splurge. A particular favourite of mine is 'Nigel' linen, shown here in tobacco, £180 a metre, from George Smith. georgesmith.co.uk



CORDUROY

'Palinuro', corduroy/velvet, by Etro, comes in fantastic colours. Pictured from top are turchese, salvia and cerallo, £82.80 a metre, from Pierre Frey. pierrefrey.com

RITA NOTES

Continuing her series, Rita König offers advice on choosing fabrics for upholstery

The rooms I am always the most envious of are those in which none of the fabric matches but everything works together, like a room full of good friends rather than a board meeting of nicely coordinating upholstery.

Similar to one's address book, this look is best evolved gently over time, with something inherited, something found and another thing made. Obviously, a room is not made up of the soft furnishings alone, but they can feel important – especially when you are at the early design stages and agonising over fabrics.

I find that a good rule of thumb is to mix weights, patterns and materials. When I interviewed the designer Peter Dunham about his sitting room in Los Angeles, he said he loved rush chairs, as too much upholstery has a rather 'pudding' effect. It was such a brilliant analogy and something I have kept in mind. Old leather chairs do a similar job to rush. Richard Steenberg (steenbergs.co.uk) is a great source for vintage English-gentleman-style leather chairs and Alexander von Westenholz (avwantiqs.co.uk) is never without a perfect chair.

If you are looking to upholster in leather, Altfield (altfield.com) has wonderful colours, as do Adam Bray (adambray.info) and Christopher Howe (howelondon.com). Both of the latter also do lambswools and though there is a rush on white woolly chairs at the moment, I would encourage you to try a smart unbleached brown.

While we're on the subject of natural upholstery, horsehair from John Boyd Textiles (johnboydtextiles.co.uk) is a good alternative. It is expensive, but extremely durable – as is mohair. I was amazed to return to a house I decorated eight years ago to find a pair of apple-green mohair chairs looking just as they did when we installed them. While everything around them needed updating in a house full of children and dogs, these had stood up to the onslaught. Mohair also takes colour well, which is a large part of its appeal.

For a good, inexpensive plain, you can't beat 'Manzoni' cotton/linen by Designers Guild (designersguild.com), which comes in 76 colours and costs £35 a metre. However, I think a sofa benefits greatly from a pattern; it is the ultimate pudding and a large print can give it a lighter presence. This could be from Josef Frank (svenskttenn.se) or Allegra Hicks (allegrahicks.com), and I have had great success with the geometric 'Ziggurat' by China Seas (tissusdhelene.co.uk).

For the odd chair, I find a pretty print is irresistible. Just as the cloakroom is a good place to use an outrageous wallpaper, a small chair is perfect for a print, and Décors Barbares by Nathalie Farman-Farma, stocked at Tissus d'Hélène, is one of my go-tos. When my own chair came back covered in her 'Casse-noisette' (0060), I did wonder whether it was a bit loud, but with a plain linen cushion tucked in the back, it has settled into the room terrifically and I love it □

Too much upholstery can have a rather 'pudding' effect