

DESIGN & DECORATING

Lamps of Luxury

How to ensure that your light never fades into the background?
Have a custom shade made from designer fabrics

BY COURTNEY BARNES

INTERIOR DESIGNER Angie Hranowsky often accessorizes rooms with vintage lamps for a more distinctive, haven't-seen-this-in-every-showroom quality. After she's scored the perfect base, a quest for a shade usually ensues. Older fixtures rarely come with their original lampshades intact, either because the base and shade were cruelly separated at some point or the shade fell victim to the ravages of time. "When I can't find the right-size shade ready-made, or I just want to make a statement with a certain color or print, I have one custom-made," said the Charleston, S.C.-based designer.

This seemingly snooty bespoke route isn't restricted to professional decorators. Whether you share Ms. Hranowsky's desire to bestow a vintage base with born-again beauty or you want to personalize a Pottery Barn basic, lampshade makers in nearly every U.S. city will create custom shades using materials ranging from suede and silk to metallic paper and hemp. And like professional upholsterers, they typically offer retail customers the chance to bring in their own material or select from in-store options.

The first step: choosing your shape. Lampshades fall into two broad categories: hardback, which are simple card structures laminated with fabric or paper; and soft styles, for which fabric is more laboriously stretched or pleated across an internal skeleton. (Not surprisingly, constructing the latter tends to cost more.) Within those categories are a number of possible shapes: drums, tapered rounds, straight-sided rectangles, bells, shields, squares, ovals and more.

Adrienne Casbarian, owner of New Orleans-based vintage-lighting boutique Lum normally relies on a mom-and-pop

shop, Elizabeth II on Magazine Street, for her projects. But before you commit to a shade, she recommends a little show-and-tell to figure out what works. "Bring a picture of a shape you like," said Ms. Casbarian, adding that you should also bring in your lamp base to try on styles you might not have considered. Space should be a consideration too. Ms. Casbarian's go-to custom shape is a rectangle with rounded corners. "When you have sizable lamps, say, on nightstands, they are often going up against a wall and you don't have the space for a large drum," she said.

Also be prepared to discuss the lampshade's interior. Soft types are lined with fabric, while the interiors of hardbacks can be painted. On occasion, New York-based interior designer Muriel Brandolini will line a sheer fabric with a metallic glazed linen so that a hint of shimmer comes through. A less glamorous, but essential, decision must be made about the spider-like metal piece that attaches to the metal harp over the bulb. Use your lamp base to choose coordinating hardware finishes from brass, nickel or bronze options.

It's the exterior, however, where you can really get expressive. "I love an unrelated offbeat pattern on a lampshade," said inveterate traveler and textile designer Lisa Fine. Ms. Casbarian prefers pleats "when there is a smaller, more uniform repeat on the fabric," she said. "But know ahead of time that pleated shades use a lot more fabric than non-pleated styles, usually making them more expensive."

Los Angeles-based decorator Peter Dunham, who also has his own line of fabrics, has rescued one-off bits of cloth from the remnant bin to make bespoke shades, too. In a bold move, he transformed a colorful Japanese banner, positioning its graphic swirls on a tapered frame so that the shade looks like a piece of abstract art. For more ways to work with pattern, see the winning suggestions below.



FLORAL MAJORITY In this Muriel Brandolini-designed room, a custom lampshade zestfully references the room's many patterned fabrics.

CLOTH ENCOUNTERS // DESIGN INSIDERS RECOMMEND TEXTILES FOR SHARPER SHADES

A Tidy Exotic

A regimented Indian floral, Rajkot by textile designer Lisa Fine, could lend bohemian flair to both drum-style and tapered shades. "It's always safe to use a small pattern—it doesn't have to have anything to do with the rest of the room," said Ms. Fine. She lines Rajkot with soft ivory for a rosy glow. Lisa Fine Textiles Rajkot Red Indigo Fabric, \$170 per yard, Hollywood at Home, 310-273-6200

**Organic Charm**

With denser, irregular, winding patterns like this one, lighting-boutique owner Adrienne Casbarian prefers a non-pleated, round tapered shade. She usually adds a decorative trim to the bottom edge of such fabrics. For a more casual look, go without it. Elizabeth Hamilton Fiddlehead Fabric, \$134 per yard, John Russell & Associates, 212-593-2060

**A Small-Scale Classic**

Tucker, a reissued fabric from the archives of Parish-Hadley (the storied 20th-century partnership forged by Albert Hadley and Sister Parish), is just the sort of small, all-over print the firm often used for lampshades, said Ms. Parish's great-granddaughter Eliza Crater, who today works with the company. Tucker Fabric in Tete de Negre, \$78 per yard, Sister Parish Design, 800-970-3366

**True Blooms**

For her own custom shades, interior designer Muriel Brandolini will use larger-scaled florals like this with more solid ground between the wild sprigs. Blackout liners are an option if you want to show off the design without any light filtering through the fabric. Muriel Brandolini Smoke Grey #8 Fabric, \$600 per 5 yards, Holland & Sherry, 212-355-6241

