

Window Shopping

To keep the heat out, or let the light in? Shutters, blinds or shades? Work out these answers and more with casement coverings expert Hunter Douglas

The windows of a house are its eyes to the world. While lending a view to the outdoors, they also let in natural light and, in Singapore's case, the much-loved tropical breeze.

Yet, while the tendency is to have them as large as possible, the density of our residential estates and merciless sun are strong deterrents to do exactly that. If you are not at liberty to dictate your window size, the next best alternative is to ensure it is well covered up (or not, depending on your preference).

Cue Hunter Douglas. The Netherlands-headquartered, 96-year-old window coverings company is a market leader in its field, offering quality and innovation. "For us, dressing windows is more than just another item on your decorating checklist," says Teo Hee Hwee, the business manager for the Windows Fashion Division of Hunter Douglas Singapore.

"It's an essential and inspiring way of letting light and beauty into your life, while providing solutions for every day, practical needs – from privacy to safety to light control."

THIS PAGE

The UltraGlide system features a retractable cord, which lets users raise and lower window treatments without unsightly, dangling cords.

OPPOSITE

The Luminette vertical sheers offer 180-degree rotating fabric vanes and are ideal for larger windows and sliding doors



BY LOW SHI PING IMAGES COURTESY OF HUNTER DOUGLAS

This translates into energy and cost savings with a reduced reliance on electricity to light up the interiors. Its products also offer protection against harmful UV-rays emitted by the sun. And for households with children and pets, Teo says Hunter Douglas has developed window fashions that help reduce the risk of accidents.

Working on creating innovations that marry the latest in engineering and design are specialised research and development centres spread throughout the US, the Netherlands, Germany and Asia. Not surprisingly, an important focus is the environment. "We remain at the forefront of developing sustainable product concepts by constantly innovating to 'play with, and manage light'," explains Teo.

With its goal to help customers save energy by exploiting the power of the sun, Hunter Douglas started on this path as far back in 1985. Back then, it invented the Duette Honeycomb Shades, which are still available

"DRESSING WINDOWS IS MORE THAN JUST ANOTHER ITEM ON YOUR DECORATING CHECKLIST."

today. With the cross-section designed in the shape of a honeycomb, it allows for the air caught inside to act as an insulator against heat and cold, depending on the weather.

Teo reveals that Hunter Douglas has also introduced the Architella Renewal, a fabric made from more than 25 per cent recycled materials and is textured with a subtle reflectivity. She points out: "We are committed to lowering our own energy usage, including reducing our carbon footprint by 20 per cent."



UNIQUELY SINGAPORE

The weather and high population density present a set of challenges for dressing windows here. Hunter Douglas offers its solutions.

HEAT AND HUMIDITY

Designed to withstand heat and humidity, the EverWood Collection are wooden blinds that come with Performance Plus Protection, guarding against fading, yellowing, warping and bowing.

Also available are the Palm Beach Shutters. Manufactured from an exclusive polysatin compound, they are UV-resistant and unaffected by temperature, humidity and moisture. This solution also prevents mold or mildew to grow on it, and is built to last.

COOL AND BRIGHT

Keeping the interiors cool without compromising on the amount of light are the Duette Honeycomb Shades. Each vane is an air pocket that insulates against the heat, keeping the indoors cool on hot days. In addition, it is available in four opacities that provide a range of privacy and lighting control options.

PRIVATE AND LIGHT

With developments built so close to each other, and often with glass as a façade, homeowners are faced with compromising privacy or natural light. Fortunately, Hunter Douglas has a range of window fashions that can strike the right balance. Whether it is shades, sheers, blinds or shutters, Teo says its fabrics come in varying degrees of opacities: "From preferring low-light calm, to full-sun brilliance, or a mix, defining your lighting needs is key."

Something For Every Space

Regardless of the room, Hunter Douglas has a myriad of options to choose from



1. BALCONY

For easy access to the coolest part of the house, the Luminette Privacy Sheers is the ideal choice. Stacking off to the side of the sliding doors, this system features translucent fabrics and vanes that rotate 180 degrees. Up to 99 per cent of UV-rays are blocked when the vanes are shut, yet light is effectively diffused into the room, reducing the need for interior lighting.

2. LIVING ROOM

Because it will probably offer the best view and has the largest windows, the living room is often most subjected to the ravages of the sun. Teo recommends the Pirouette Window Shadings as a viable solution.

"It blocks up to 81 per cent of harmful UV-rays with the vanes open, and 99 per cent with the vanes closed; protecting your wood flooring, furniture or artwork," she explains.

With the living room also a space to rest and relax, the use of plush and soft textures are important. Pirouette offers just that, with its adjustable fabric vanes attached to a single sheer fabric backing to create an almost ethereal feel. Unsightly cords and tapes are hidden away with the use of the patented Invisi-Lift that allows the vanes to open or shut neatly.

3. BEDROOM

A high degree of privacy and light control is necessary in a bedroom, which is why Teo says the Duette Honeycomb Shades are a great option. In addition to having built-in insulating properties, its fabrics have a high sound absorption feature that creates a quieter environment for a good night's rest.

Duette is available in four levels of opacities – sheer for ultimate daylighting and view-through; semi-sheer for view-through and increased privacy; semi-opaque for diffused light and excellent privacy; and opaque for room darkening and maximum privacy.

If having natural light and privacy are both priorities, opt for the Top-down/Bottom-up system, where the shades can be operated in both directions.

HOW TO CHOOSE THE RIGHT WINDOW TREATMENT

UNDERSTAND HOW PRIVATE THE ROOM IS

The level of privacy needed between the living room and a bathroom differs significantly. For instance, with the latter, an opaque solution is necessary, yet should also allow for easy ventilation.

DECIDE WHAT THE ROOM IS FOR

A nursery should be bright and airy, while an entertainment room should be dark and cosy – using the right window treatment can help to further set the tone of a space.

REALISE WHERE THE SUN RISES AND SETS

An east-facing window should have coverings that block off the bright morning sun. A west-facing window will need a treatment with excellent light control from the glaring, hot afternoon sun.

FIGURE OUT YOUR PERSONAL STYLE

Traditional, contemporary, sleek, warm, eclectic or sophisticated? Pick a window treatment with the right fabric and material that complements your style and conveys your personality.

PAINT YOUR SPACE WITH COLOUR

Surrounding yourself with the right colour can make your day. If angling for a classic treatment, select a neutral tone closest to that of the window trim.



4. CHILDREN'S ROOM

Safety is the number one priority in this space. In addition to containing non-toxic materials, it should also be free of loose or looped pull cords and wands. UltraGlide is a retractable pull-cord system that ensures whether the shade is raised or lowered, the cord maintains a constant length and is inaccessible.

An alternative is LiteRise, a cordless system operated by hand to raise or lower the covering. Other solutions offer motorised options that provide convenience and can even be operated from a mobile device.

