



Stephanie Hoppen

photography by Fritz von der Schulenburg

THE  
**NEW CURTAIN BOOK**

master-classes with today's top designers



#### KEITH IRVINE & JASON BELL

Keith Irvine, pictured here on the right, was born in Scotland and studied interior design at London's Royal College of Art. He served his apprenticeship under John Fowler, then started his own decorating business in the USA. His clients have included the Frick and Kennedy families, Cary Grant and Diana Ross. Jason Bell (on the left above) became interested in interior design at a young age as, he says, his mother was always 'dabbling with decorating'. He studied marketing and interior design at the University of Alabama, and is now a full partner of the newly named company Irvine, Fleming, Bell, LLC.

“ John Fowler was an omnivorous reader who absorbed so much of the detail and progression of curtain design. He bought many old eighteenth-century costumes and had them cut carefully apart. In this way, he could observe the cuts and stitching of gathered flounces, swags and floating panels. This led to the rediscovery of pinked edges on ruffles and unusual braids and trims, such as the fan-edging Colefax & Fowler still sells.

#### KEITH IRVINE

Colefax & Fowler was a brilliant apprenticeship for me and served me in very good stead when I came to America and started my own business. Though I am a traditionalist and classicist, American life opened my eyes and enthusiasms to a much wider and more open approach to decoration. My first consideration has always been to make the room work brilliantly. Today people want as much natural light to flood into their rooms as possible and much less fussy detail. I prefer plain fabrics used with stripes, accented with some pattern, and I tend to use pure cotton, voiles and silk taffetas in abundance. The design must be suitable to the house. I've done curtains hung with Indian spears for a Ranch house and portières in a Victorian house, and I'll use screens and shutters if I'm working in Florida or California. Suitability to the purpose is what curtains are all about.

LEFT  
A red-painted room gets pretty elegant curtains that give the room an enclosed, tented feeling. Double-lined salmon curtains are added on the leading edge with a wide band of floral print, framing ornate leaded windows.

RIGHT  
A row of arched French windows is dressed with simple, straight curtains that break gently on the floor. The striped green, yellow and cream fabric has been cleverly layered so the green dominates at the top, finishing them off fully without pelmet or trim.



JASON BELL  
I start with the architecture first. I believe window treatments must not fight the architecture or vice versa. I enjoy sitting in a space, looking at how the atmosphere changes at different times of the day. It's the use of the space and the atmosphere of the space that determine my initial approach. My starting point is usually a general agreement on these things with the clients, and then I begin working myself on how I can break the mould of what is expected.

I like using solid plain colours, stripes and floral fabrics, and I like to add intrajections of great classics. By that I mean fabrics like chintz and toile de Jouy and designs like batik, because most of the clients I work with appreciate a splash of chintz here and there. I prefer mixing plain fabrics with patterned ones, although I think some spaces look better when there is no mixing at all and everything is the same.

There's a desire for something different, and new ideas to be incorporated with the traditional aspects of design. Take pelmets, for instance,

which are ripe for re-interpretation. I think they've been forgotten, which is a shame, because they can provide clever solutions to many difficult window treatments. Pelmets in the twenty-first century are about to get a new meaning – at least they will when I have finished with them! Throughout the history of art and design, a group of people pop up every twenty or thirty years and change things, and I believe the young designers of today are on the verge of creating another new look. 77

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Jason Bell Jason D. Bell

#### TOP LEFT

The totally successful pattern-on-pattern look requires immense skill – and a good dose of plain colour. Here, shiny plain walls provide a plain background for floral curtains hanging simply from a grand rod and trimmed on the leading edge with fringing.

#### ABOVE LEFT

This is a perfect example of a window treatment that makes a room work brilliantly. The elegant sheer curtains take the eye up and beyond the period cornice and allow light to flood into the room.

#### ABOVE RIGHT

These awning style pelmets by Jason Bell are built like a boat, with a wooden framework and a teal and cream striped cotton covering. The curtains are double lined at the bottom, so they look as if they've crashed onto the floor.