

Panel Glide Systems

Peter Nias of Roman Blinds (UK) looks at a developing area



Peter Nias – Roman Blinds (UK)



Sliding panels of textile or other fabrics are not new but have started to gain popularity in the window décor market largely as a result of the large areas of glass that architects are incorporating into building design. In residential units such as city living apartments there is little regard by developers to design in the external solar protection devices found on commercial projects. Consequently the occupants, especially in the south side, get a bit over- heated in the summer.

Most blind systems can be incorporated to control this solar gain and also perform the function of privacy but occupants are typically searching for products that are different, can reflect their individuality yet also be a design feature of the room.

Because sliding panels can be used with curtain textile, the consumer gets to choose their own colour and design of a tactile textile. The fabric content is minimal allowing the budget to run to expensive, unusual and Solar Performance textiles with aluminised coatings such as Verosol and Glimmertex.

A note of caution is needed for blind retailers aspiring to market this profitable product. Probably to the dismay of Rollo textile distributors, it is that coated fabrics used as roller blinds are not always the ideal textile. Flatness (no curl) is

paramount and it has to be said that many coated fabrics (but not all) are not designed to permanently hang in a 1:5 aspect ratio. Uncoated fabrics such as Trevira and heat set polyesters will perform admirably, can be washed, will not show creases or coating cracks from everyday usage. Trevira is of course inherently

flame retardant as a bonus. Further advantage with these softer textiles is that they can be heat cut to prevent fraying when washed and in everyday use.

The demand for curtain fabrics for panels can make use of new bonding technology to reduce sewing time of the lining & side hems and ensure greater textile stability. It will even allow the laminating of reflective surfaces to conventional poly-cotton, cotton & Polyester fabrics to achieve a solar performance.

The track itself is very simple with only wheels as moving parts, and being so easy to move, even control cords are unnecessary although available as an



option. The versatility of different multichannel tracks caters for all large glazed areas, patio & French doors or even room dividers and walk in wardrobes. Tracks can be 2, 3, 4 or 5 channel but some systems allow fitting an adjacent track that picks up the connectors from the initial track to give 6, 7, 8 channels etc. There is almost no length limit as steel plate connectors can seamlessly join the extrusion.



A longer term benefit for the consumer comes with the latest trend of a short life span for colours in room design; what is in now is out next year. With panel tracks it is so easy to peel off the covers (on Velcro) and fit new ones to co-ordinate with the new paint job. A second set of panels could be sold to give the consumer a winter opaque set and a summer see through set etc

Now, as will most blinds in this age, electric control is available and a recently announced system has the safe 24 volt motor drive integrated into the 4 or 5 channel track with plug and go features to keep electricians at bay.

The details of track system and the hanging textile can easily be customised to suit consumer preferences such as Silver Anodised track instead of white, often required now as the metal and stainless steel look now prevails. Wood also has an input with wood bottom rails or intermediates that can co-ordinate with timber floors.

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