Drapery & Design PROFESSIONAL

Volume 2011, Issue 3

Serving the Custom Home Furnishings Industry since 1993

DRAPERY & DESIGN PROFESSIONAL

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CUSTOM HOME FURNISHINGS ACADEMY

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DRAPERY & DESIGN PROFESSIONAL is a bimonthly trade publication specifically for those who sell, design or create custom window treatments, upholstery, slipcovers and related services. Contributions from readers are welcomed. We look for articles that teach new techniques, inspire readers to tackle new projects and inform readers of current trends in fabrication and design.
To request submission guidelines, please e-mail Michele@CHFAcademy.com.
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From the Editor-in-Chief

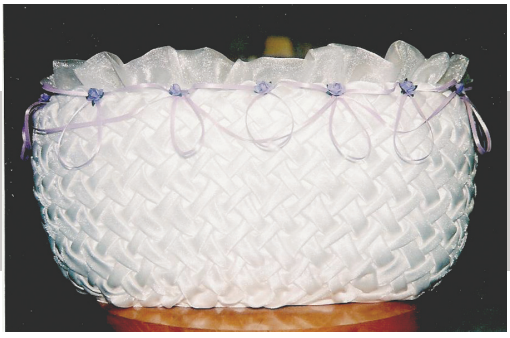
Michele Williams

We love hearing from you! Often in life we're asked to provide feedback or follow up on information regarding a service or product — yet we think that our input is ignored. Not so with CHF Academy. In February, we hosted the Hand Smocking webinar. After the webinar we asked you to send us a picture of something you fabricated. Below is a beautiful pillow made by Kate Kissell and a lovely basket made by Brenda Houghton. Many of you also asked us to add a diagram to follow for the different types of smocking. Cathy Tucker quickly created the file and you can find it on the CHF Forum in the webinar section for February. We read every e-mail that you send us and really let the information sink in.

Feedback, constructive criticism and input — if delivered professionally and respectfully is welcomed by any business willing to grow, learn and prosper. As business owners, we should all be willing to hear what we are doing well and where we have areas to improve or grow. Learn to welcome this in your own business. Reach out to your clients and invest time in understanding how they view you and your products and services. Your opportunity to improve and create loyalty will benefit from this exploration!

So, let us know how we're doing, what articles you might be interested in, and where we can meet your needs!

Michele Williams



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Making a Feather Seat Cushion Insert

Part 1: Making the Template

By Liz Cox
Hampshire, England

While I am very happy to work with foam and contemporary furniture, my love is antiques that are steeped in history and are traditionally constructed. Being in England, there is no shortage of antique furniture.

Feathers are traditional cushion filler here, but foam was introduced to the furniture market after World War II when there was a pressing shortage of affordable furniture. While foam filled that need, foam also has a relatively short life span, however, and will dry out and deteriorate in about 10 years. It's also adversely affected by harsh climates. Feathers, on the other hand, will last considerably longer. I frequently am asked to reupholster antique furniture that still has its original materials that remain serviceable. Also, I'm often asked to make feather cushions for modern furniture since the feathers give a wonderfully soft, cozy feel to the cushions.

If you are working on a chair where the original cushion fits perfectly after you have completed the rest of the reupholstery, then you can take that cushion apart and use this as your template. This is not usually the case, however. The new upholstery may give a slightly different shape or it may be that the original cushion just didn't fit properly — the opening photo at left is a good example of a poorly fitting original cushion.

In this article I'll show you how to make a template for a feather cushion so it fits just right in the chair. Then, in Part 2 next issue, we'll evaluate your stuffing options and other insert materials. And in Part 3, I'll show you how to construct the cushion insert. Just as with foam, feather cushions can be in various shapes, such as T, curved, round, teardrop or domed, to name a few. Once you've mastered the process, all the shapes are doable.

Materials, Supplies and Decisions

The materials you need to make the template are simple: pattern paper or scrap fabric or lining, straight pins, and marking materials (chalk, pencil or marker). The more challenging part is making some decisions. When deciding on the cushion height, the overriding consideration is to ensure that the cushion is in proportion with the size of the chair. For example, if you were working on a small child's chair with an inside back measurement of 40 cm (15-16 inches) and inside arm measurements of 20 cm (8 inches), adding a cushion with a finished height of 15 cm (6 inches) would look completely out of proportion, as would a skinny little 2.5 cm (1 inch) cushion. A cushion of about 8 cm (3 inches) high is likely to look the best.

You must also consider the comfort and practicality of the cushion. With these two points in mind you don't want a cushion with so little stuffing that the user will feel the seat platform when he sits on the chair. Conversely, neither do you want a cushion that is so heavily stuffed or overstuffed that it becomes a gym-room arm exercise workout just to plump the

cushions. Balance is the key — aesthetic balance, comfort balance, taste balance, fashion balance and historical period balance.

The key to ensuring a superbly fitting cushion is to make sure you make the template at the exact location where you want the finished cushion to be. And that's where the seat lift comes in. The seat lift is a temporary form that is placed on the seat platform to allow you to make your template at the correct seat cushion height. You could use a spare piece of foam or several bits of foam that you've cobbled together. (For a shaped cushion you may find that using bits of foam enables you to achieve the shaping.) Alternatively, an old feather or foam cushion will work, as will layers of blankets or a duvet. In short, use anything that you have to give you the correct finished height long enough for you to create your template.

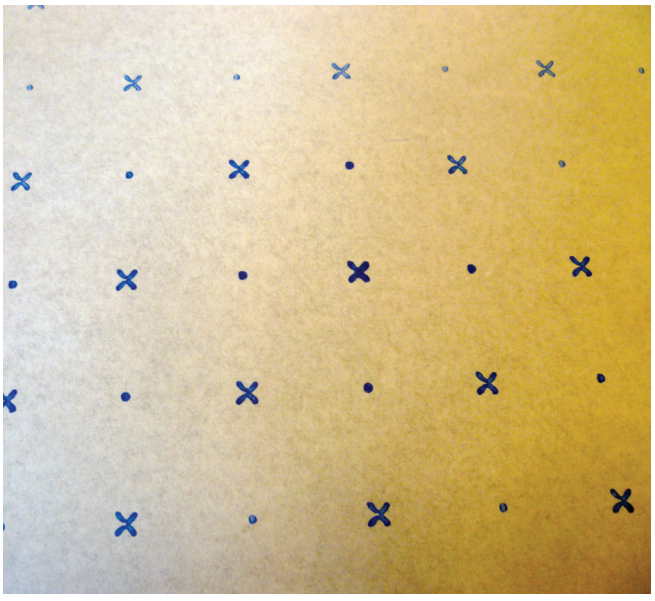
Whether you later transfer the pattern onto firm pattern card will rather depend on the type of furniture you usually work on. Antique furniture seldom has the same size seat twice and you will, therefore, be making a new template for each piece. Modern or contemporary furniture sometimes offers carbon copy seats, as they have been machine made to a set pattern, and therefore you may want to safely store these templates.

For this demonstration I'm using a pair of wingback chairs that have recently come to me for reupholstery. The client purchased them from an auction.

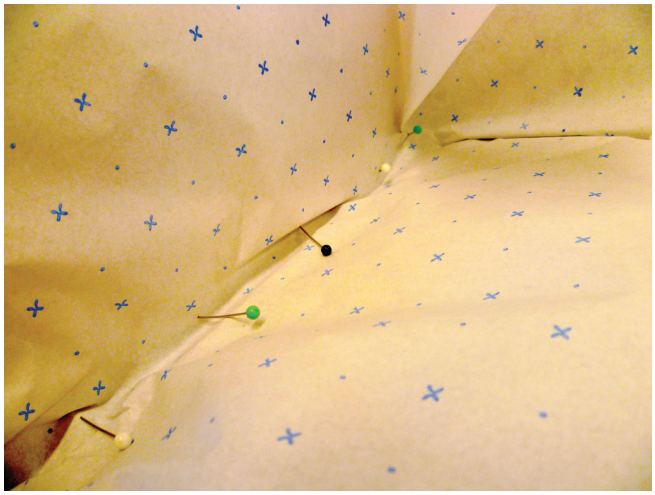
Step 1 Decide on the cushion height. The height of a cushion is the measurement from the seat platform up to where the finished cushion will be. For these chairs I plan to use a cushion height of 12 cm (5 inches).

Step 2 Decide on your seat lift. For this example I've used the old cushion to make the seat lift as it's the correct height for the chair. You can see that the cushion is not the correct size for the chair, though, as the front edge of the seat platform extends well beyond the cushion.

Step 3 Pull out your purpose-made pattern paper, which is premarked with a measured grid of stars or dots. The advantage of this paper is that it is easy to keep your lines straight. You can also use almost any piece of spare or scrap fabric, lining or calico that you have on hand.



Step 4 Put the pattern paper or fabric onto the seat lift. Carefully stab pin the paper/fabric all around the edge to the inside arms and the inside back of the chair.



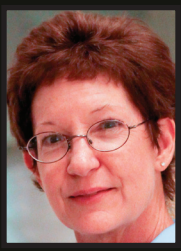
Step 5 Stab pin the front edge of the cushion. To do this, either look down the front edge from on top and decide where the edge should be, or place a ruler vertically up the front edge of the chair. Remember that you want the cushion to overhang the front edge of the chair a little so the user's legs will be more comfortable. Therefore, add about 2.5 cm (1 inch) to the ruler line.

Step 6 Carefully remove the pattern form, leaving the pins in place, and use a marker (chalk, pencil, fabric pencil, etc.) to draw a smooth line joining up the pin points.

Step 7 Carefully fold the pattern form on this line so you have the exact template shape. Place this back on the seat lift on the chair and check the fit of the template. Make any necessary adjustments to ensure a snug fit. When that's complete, add your seam allowance by adding on 1 cm (½ inch) and mark a second line around the template. Cut out the template on this outer line.

Meet The Writers

Jenna Abbott is the sole proprietor of Sew Elegant by Jenna, a to-the-trade workroom founded in 2001 and located in Sacramento California. She is a founding member of the Northern California Chapter of the WCAA, the Executive Director of the National WCAA and a proud alumnus of the Custom Home Furnishings Academy.



Donna Cash operates a workroom in Flowery Branch, GA. She's a 20-year veteran of the window coverings industry and has an associates degree from the Art Institute of Atlanta. She's a WFCP Associate, and a member of WCAA, DraperyPro and the Designers Workroom Council in Georgia. Donna is also a certified yoga instructor.

Liz Cox is the owner of Signature Interiors, a custom soft furnishing and upholstery business providing bespoke service to residential and commercial customers in Bermuda and the United Kingdom. Liz specialises in the use of traditional materials and methods while also meeting the needs of the modern market. Liz is a member of the Association of Master Upholsterers and Soft Furnishers.

Sarah Devaney-O'Neil is the owner of Storibook Designs Inc., a custom home furnishings and design business providing design and advice for both residential and commercial clients. She has 20-plus years of leadership experience, including sales training and upper management positions for two large home furnishings retailers.

Beth Hodges is the owner of Soft Furnishings, a retail/wholesale workroom located in Elberton, Georgia. In business for over twenty years, Soft Furnishings provides wholesale workroom services to higher end designers both locally and around the country. Beth is a popular presenter of seminars and classes covering workroom construction and installation to customer service and communication.

Deb Kirkland lives in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, home of the Crimson Tide. She founded Deb's Home after retiring as a speech therapist and 5th grade teacher in 2005. Deb is married to a wonderful husband who is an electrical engineer. Besides sewing, Deb participates in local wildlife rehabilitation activities, especially raising orphaned gray squirrels.

Nancy Letts is the owner of Pine House Drapery, a full service workroom started in 2001 that serves interior designers and a few retail clients in beautiful northern Michigan. Nancy and husband Rob fabricate everything from window treatments to upholstery. Nancy is a member of the D&D Pro Network, DraperyPro, WCAA, and is a CHFA Career Professional in Slipcovers.

Pamela Lin of Snellville, Ga, is the owner of the Sophisticated Touch, LLC, a custom furnishings workroom servicing Retail customers and Designers since 1995. She is an active member of the National and Local Atlanta WCAA and Designer Workroom Council in Georgia. Pamela is very detail oriented.

Laurie Medford is the Business Development Manager / Expert Services for Rowley Company, the leading supplier in the interior design industry. Before joining Rowley, Medford owned Centsible Creations, a professional Design, Fabrication and Installation Company for both wholesale and retail customers. Medford is an instructor for Custom Home Furnishings Academy and is member of WCAA and WFCP.

Sydney Schwartz-Hardiman is the owner of The Silken Scissor, a retail and wholesale workroom, based in Pittsburgh, PA. Sydney is the winner of PA's Best 50 Women in Business and Pittsburgh's Top 40 Under 40. She is also the founder of the Western PA Window Treatment Association. She can be reached at 412-734-1364 or visit her website at www.TheSilkenScissor.com.

Judi Turner started her business while in Germany from 1991-1992. It began with a client base of expatriates who wanted the American style of window treatments for their German homes. Upon relocating stateside, Judy chose to remain in the home décor field and now, 17 years later, works with clients in several states and 3 countries.

Susan Woodcock is Brand Experience Manager for Rowley Company. Prior to joining Rowley, Susan owned Tavern Hill, a professional drapery workroom founded in 1988. She is an instructor for CHF Academy and a popular industry speaker. Susan has been featured in many books, magazines and CHF Academy workroom videos. She's a member of the WCAA and a WFCP Expert.