

The long and the short of choosing drapes

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The giant flag draped over the window may seem cool by the frat house set, but it's not the kind of statement you want to make when you proudly take possession of your very own condo. In fact, most condos have rules about what is acceptable as window coverage.

And a haphazardly tacked up bed sheet won't pass muster.

Attractive drapes should be a priority says designer Sarah Richardson especially since condo units often face one another. Richardson hosts the popular HGTV decorating show *Room Service*. As on other interior decorating shows, amid the wealth of ideas and advice about every conceivable decorating problem, drapery treatments figure prominently. They are one of the key elements that help define a room. And they help soften décor.

Some programs may show you how to achieve spectacular faux effects with lengths of fabric, Velcro and staple guns. This wins no points with Richardson.

"Staple guns and mock treatments always look like staple guns and mock treatments," she says. "Yes, they can make it look good for a TV show, but when you walk into a room with good design and good quality you know it.

"If drapes are well constructed they will look expensive. But even expensive fabric will look cheap if (the drapes) are poorly made, she says.

"Do not fling (fabric) over a rod and call it a drape," Richardson adds. "I had a 30 foot wide window in a 14 foot high loft and I used (inexpensive) drapery lining fabric. It's all in the execution."

Many stores like offer an array of ready made drapery panels with a wide range of accompanying hardware. But surprisingly, custom made drapes may even cost less. And Richardson is a firm believer in custom work.

"A professional seamstress or drapery manufacturer will charge \$20 to \$30 per panel and it's better construction than ready made which can easily cost \$50 per panel," she says.

“Quality doesn’t mean you can not find inexpensive fabric. Designers Fabric Outlet, 1360 Queen St. West and King Textiles, 445 Richmond St. offer good fabrics at reasonable prices.

“People wonder why their place feels cold when at night you have a wall of windows that look black. If you cover them with even a semi transparent fabric, it’s softer and cozier. And full length drapes can always be repurposed,”Richardson says.