



dana dubbs

what a feeling

When textile designer Jane Wicks feels the first crisp days of autumn against her skin, she's exhilarated by the thought of enveloping herself, once again, in a comfortable, chunky cotton or fine lambswool sweater.



Dana Dubbs has spent more than a dozen years writing about the changing face of the workplace and its impact on people. Dana also writes for Commercial Property News, Corporate Real Estate Strategies, Health Facilities Management, Operations & Fulfillment, and the National Urban League's Opportunity Journal.

She is currently earning recognition as an art photographer. Her landscapes, abstracts of nature, and portraits of dolls have been exhibited in galleries and shows throughout California.

What a Feeling, continued

With the change of seasons upon us, this seemed like a perfect time to talk about how texture fits into our lives. Jane Wicks is director of design for the healthcare, hospitality, and residential markets at Designtex. Her Cheek to Cheek collection is one of the company's best-selling fabric groups and won the 2003 Best of Neocon Gold Award for Healthcare Fabrics.

Cheek to Cheek by Designtex.



Q. What difference does texture make in the way people perceive their environment?

JW. “We live in a very tactile world. What we experience through touch as children shapes us as adults. I can remember, as a child, marveling at the softness of my grandmother’s hands and all the comfort and safety that feeling provided. Since 9/11, there’s been an enormous resurgence in the craft of hand-knitting. Knitting clubs, knitting classes and little boutique wool stores have blossomed all over the country. Wool, cotton, linen, even silk yarns are being crafted into wonderful handmade articles. People are knitting for the sheer pleasure and comfort this craft provides.

“Recently, I read in *Textile View Magazine* about the mental stimulation that happens when viewing a texture. Seeing a texture can trigger memories and physical sensations in all the same ways as touching a texture. Texture is a mini-pattern. It can be used to make an environment visually arresting or to soften a space and create a sense of warmth and well-being.”

Q. What are the newest textured offerings from Designtex?

JW. “Our Cheek to Cheek collection consists of three chenille fabrics – including the first Crypton-finished chenille fabric on the market – and one nubbly boucle texture. Thanks to the ever-advancing world of textile technology, we can now turn plush fabrics into high-performance materials and apply them in settings that would have been impossible just a couple years ago. Unlike many early Crypton-finished fabrics that felt like vinyl even though they weren’t, our Crypton-finished chenille is stain-resistant, fluid-repellent, anti-microbial and durable, while maintaining the soft, tactile nature of chenille. This fall, we’re bringing out Metta, a vinyl with a very three-dimensional look.”

What a Feeling, continued

Q. Are there rules for applying texture in contract environments?

JW. “Because texture is a very small pattern, too much texture can have the same effect as too much pattern. Mix too many small patterns together, and your eye will go crazy. A lot depends on the application but if a space is big enough, you can use texture to create interest without overdoing it.

“North America is a place of larger landscapes. We are accustomed to having expanses, or solid areas, where we can rest our eyes, and that's reflected in our design schemes. In a big hotel lobby where there are groupings of chairs and sofas, for example, if the sofa has pattern, the chair will probably be a textural solid. Textures are incredibly useful to either offset a pattern, draw attention to a pattern or to create areas where you can rest your eye.

Q. How does texture make a difference in hospitality settings?

JW. “When you're on the road traveling, whether for business or pleasure, you want to feel pampered when you get to your hotel. In some of the big Las Vegas hotel lobbies, it's opulence over the top, and that's all about texture – beautiful brocades, beautiful tapestries. Think how elegant a lobby in a boutique hotel looks with yards and yards of taupe mohair.

“Once you get past the lobby, the ‘dress to impress’ area, you don't want to be shortchanged when you get to your room. You want a chair you can sink into. Cotton bedding that feels so much softer than scratchy polyester sheets. Beautifully textured sheers on the window and a velvet over-drape. You want the room to provide the same comfort as your family room or bedroom at home. You want it to feel good.”



Q. How are hospitals using texture to create healing environments?

JW. “In a healthcare situation, particularly in infectious areas and emergency settings, textured fabrics are not appropriate. Instead, you'd want to use only those fabrics such as high-performance vinyls that can be cleaned by powerful disinfectants. Many newer hospitals are being built with family-doctor consulting areas. These are places where, oftentimes, emotions run high. A soft, textural pattern can be used in those spaces to create a comfort zone – something that feels a little more relaxed, more like your home.

“I attended the Worldwide Healthcare Symposium in Montreal last year and was overwhelmed by the aesthetic revolution that's occurring in healthcare design. Numerous briefs were presented on the benefits of incorporating light, music, water and interesting materials into the healing process.

“At some of the big New York hospitals, the patient room looks like a guest room at a Four Seasons Hotel. There's a beautiful comforter on the bed and beautiful drapery instead of institutional cubicle cloth.

“A real mix of textures is being used in healthcare today, and it's because of advancements in technology and science. Plush can now be a performance fabric. Amazing things are happening in the vinyl industry. With digital printing, you can create faux textures. Vinyls and polyurethanes are being created with a much drier hand, so they don't feel hard, cold and sticky.”