

Managing Light

Motorized interior shading systems block light, but not the view

BY ALLISON THOMAS | PHOTOGRAPHY BY HOLGER OBENAU

Mary Ann Gahafer lightly touches a button on a control panel. Instantly, and almost silently, four window shades unroll simultaneously. Two layers of rich white fabric, one a blackout shade and the other a solar shade, slowly extend from the top of

each window to within an inch of the floor. Then, with the same effortless precision, Gahafer commands the shades to return to their starting point.

Gahafer owns All About Windows, a 10-year-old Daniel Island company offering a full line of high-end windows and doors, interior

window treatments and hurricane shutters. She recently completed the installation of custom-designed motorized shades to create privacy and manage natural light within two distinctly different homes: a carefully restored property in historic downtown Charleston and a new construction on Kiawah Island.

“Every project is unique,” Gahafer said. “We meet with the clients to find out what look and feel they want and what problems they are trying to solve, including aesthetics and controlling light. We are able to offer an abundance of top-of-the-line products that meet our clients’ style and needs.”

Gahafer explains that there are three types of screens: solar, translucent and blackout. The solar and translucent screens range in density. While both do a superior job of blocking UV rays and controlling glare, a looser weave will be more transparent and offer a cleaner view of the outdoors. A tighter weave will block more light, but will also be slightly more difficult to see through. In contrast, the blackout shades completely block any light from penetrating the fabric.

In addition to effectively managing glare on televisions and computers—or completely darkening a room if that is the goal—the shades also help protect furniture, paintings and photographs from damaging UV rays, and they can either absorb or reflect light, depending on the fabric color. The solar and





translucent screens also provide privacy. The weave of the fabric and the reflective outer surface obstruct the view from outside looking in, even on the most transparent of shades.

The shades, which have a motor hidden inside, can be installed inside a window casing, above a window casing or in the ceiling. They are sleek enough to stand on their own; however, they can be concealed within a fascia, a cassette casing or be hidden completely in a ceiling pocket.

"We work closely with the architect and builder in planning the shade installations," Gahafer said. "While trying to achieve the overall aesthetic goals for the homeowners, whether the shades are pocketed in the ceiling, hidden behind woodwork or exposed, the product specifications all have to be carefully considered."

The motorized shades are controlled with a remote and/or a wall panel, or they can be included in a home integration system, allowing the homeowner to control lights, televisions, music, shades and more from a

hand-held remote, wall switch, computer, smart phone or iPad. While the shades are programmed to automatically stop at the top and bottom of its range, the shades can be stopped at any point with the touch of a button.

"In addition to home applications, we have installed solar screen shades in office settings and in more than 20 schools in the Charleston County School District, including all of the new schools that opened in 2009 and 2010," Gahafer said. The shades on these projects were made by Insolroll, which mostly uses fabrics manufactured by Mermet in Cowpens, S.C.

Locally owned and operated by Mary Ann and Roland Gahafer, All About Windows opened more than 10 years ago and originally focused on interior treatments including plantation shutters, natural and Roman shades, blinds and other products. Eventually, the company added exterior products ranging from colonial shutters to hurricane resistant products. The company recently began

offering a selection of lift-slide and bi-fold doors that maximize beautiful views by turning almost any plain wall space into a glass wall. Any of these products can be motorized and wired into a home integration system.

The Gahafer's have always been focused on customer satisfaction and believe the company distinguishes itself from others with its turnkey installation services and commitment to superior customer service.

"We are privileged to work on these projects with homeowners," Mary Ann Gahafer said. "It's rewarding to see each project through and make sure our customers are satisfied." ➡

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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