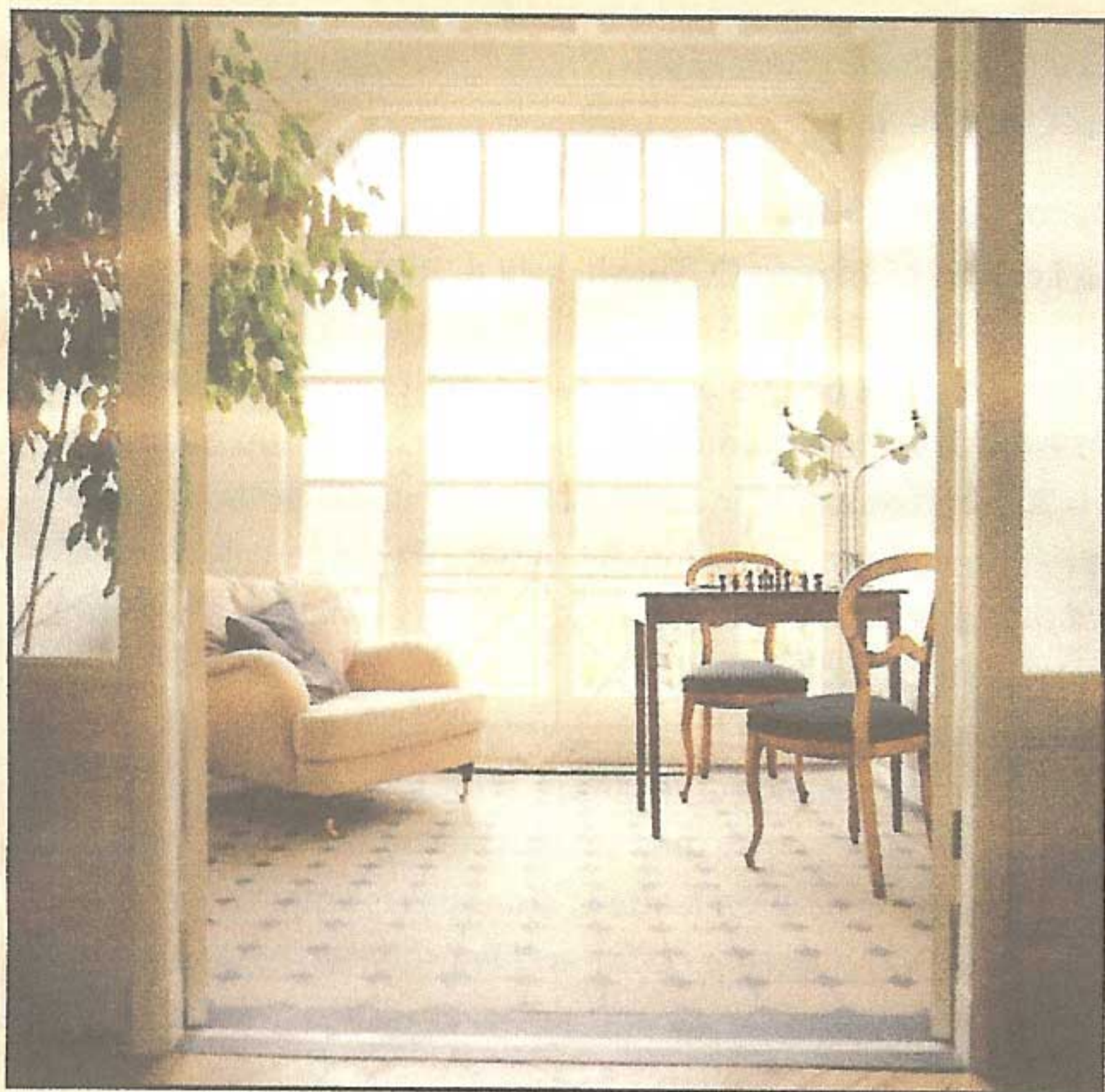


DESIGNER FYI:

Windows: to cover or not to cover



By Kris Linder

Windows are our link to the outside world while we relax on the inside. They let in light and sun and they warm the home. They are also decorative and break up large expanses of wall. Sometimes they are very expensive, dramatically stunning and

can stand alone as a focal point of a room. So why cover them at all? And deciding exactly *how* to cover them can be a dilemma.

Privacy is usually the concern. Today's new windows are double-paned and energy efficient, so covering them is no longer about keeping warmth on the inside or cold on the outside (or vice versa). It's about dressing them up like the rest of the room. By softening the wall around the window, you bring additional color and texture to the area.

If it's privacy you're after, there are many products on the market that will do the job. They don't always look finished enough for some homeowners, but for those seeking a minimalist flair, they may look just right.

These products include rolling shades, duets and silhouettes. They come in plastic, metal or wood, and can fit into most budgets. These products are a good choice for the first layer of window treatments — what I like to call the "privacy layer." The

next grade up for privacy are shutters, high-end fabric Romans and woven shades. With this type of treatment, you can add a valance or cornice to soften the look.

To add to the aesthetics, a luxurious choice is to drape the wall around your window in fabric appropriate to the style of your room. It is not uncommon to have two or three treatments on a single window. Most designers will suggest you coordinate the window treatment with the architecture and design of your home, not just with its furnishings.

To make rooms appear taller (or ceilings appear higher), hang cornices and valances right at the top of the wall, just slightly below the ceiling. This tricks the eye and adds height and elegance to the room.

Contiguous rooms always should be considered as part of the flow of the home, so make sure some thought is given into coordinating the window treatments from room to room — never allow two radically different types of fabrics or styles to be visible at the same time, unless you've provided a way to tie them together, perhaps with furnishings or matching accessories.

A stunning window treatment will make a bold statement in a room — but so can just the stunning window itself.

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