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National College of Art and Design
Department of Fashion and Textiles - Printed Textiles

**“THE USE OF TEXTILES
IN HOTEL INTERIORS,
DUBLIN”**

BY
ELEANOR HARPUR

Submitted to the Faculty of History and Art and Design and
Complimentary studies in Candidacy for the Degree of
Bachelor of Design - Printed Textiles.

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INTRODUCTION

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My thesis will investigate the use of textiles in hotel interiors and for practical reasons, I have limited myself to hotels situated in and around Dublin. I began to research the subject in the NCAD library and when I realised that there was a huge shortage of written material I approached the hotels themselves and began interviewing and taking photographs to gather my own first hand information. However, this proved more difficult than I had imagined. Most of the new modern hotels have strict regulations limiting photography and also have an obligation to protect the privacy of their guests. This began a long struggle with many P.R. companies. Many hotels such as Bewley's, the Temple Bar and Jury's allowed me to photograph the rooms then and there whereas the more expensive the hotel, the more difficult it seemed to be. However, after many phone calls, letters and faxes most obliged quite willingly and helpfully with the exception of a few, such as the Shelbourne and the Clarence, which wouldn't allow me photograph under any circumstances.

Most of my information was collected through photography and by talking to hotel staff. I also interviewed the Manager of Pattons, which are a major Interior Design Firm and who have the account for many hotels.

Other Interviews included Ian Black (Interior Designer/Architect) who at the time was in the process of designing a new hotel for designer John Rocha and the owner of the trendy new pub, Pravda. Other information was gathered by looking at press cuttings, conducting other interviews and consulting relevant books.

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In my thesis I aim to examine the use of textiles in hotel interiors across the three market levels: lower, middle and upper. I have defined these markets in terms of the price of the rooms. For example, the price of a room in the lower market ranges between £49 and £59 per night per room, in the middle market it can be anything from £85 to £100 per room per night and when we look at the upper market, the prices vary from £160 to £650 per night. Many things, such as location, level of comfort and services available determine the price of these rooms.

I also aim to contrast the use of textiles in contemporary hotels with that of the more established older hotels. I will take one main case study from each market and use the other examples to back up my observations. I aim to examine how hotels use textiles to create style and mood through the use of colour, pattern and texture.

In the last 5 - 10 years there has been a dramatic increase in the number of hotels in Dublin. The style of these hotels has also changed and designers have demonstrated a greater respect for the use of quality, well designed fabrics.

Some hotels have moved towards an austere pared-down aesthetic, while others have remained filled with more decorative pelmets, cushions and ornate fabrics. Both approaches are equally valid and have been executed successfully in certain places. The idea of booking into a hotel for a night, no longer serves the purpose of just providing somewhere to sleep but also allows the guest to buy into a lifestyle that he/she may not have the resources

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to create for themselves. This class of hotel may be minimal and uncluttered, or in contrast, there is the other class of hotel that surrounds the guest with pattern, antique furniture, drapes and cushions, "good old fashioned luxury". Both types of hotel decor stretch across the three markets and each market and stylistic approach has a very different use of textiles.

Textiles are hugely important in all of our everyday lives. Beautifully designed fabrics used in the right context can distinguish rooms that are tasteful and fashionable from those that are ordinary (Parsons interview 1998) This idea spills over into all areas of interior design including hotels. Textiles have strong links with comfort and security and this makes them one of the most important design features in all hotels, as a hotel's function is to create a feeling of comfort and security for the guests.

In the following chapters I will examine the three market levels and evaluate their success in their use of textiles.

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CHAPTER 1

LOWER MARKET

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The main difference between the lower and the upper ends of the market is their price, which largely determines the expectations of their clients. Clients that stay in expensive places such as the Fitzwilliam and the Clarence are buying into a type of lifestyle that they may wish to achieve. They are there to be seen by others in the bar or restaurant and to appear fashionable. Those staying in places like Jury's Inn and Bewley's are there purely for function. They are presented with the minimum facilities at a budget price and they expect no more than a comfortable bed and a shower. This class of hotel is accessible to a wider public, because of its price and informality. More often than not, reservations do not need to be made and the price is decided per room rather than the number of people staying. This type of approach has made them very successful and thus they may not see any point in upgrading their style or choice of decor.

The lower end of the market can also often be defined by location. Many of these large budget hotels are situated in the suburbs and are therefore not as expensive as those situated in the city centre. The level of comfort is often basic and the services provided are minimal.

In some of these hotels the decor seems to be very haphazardly thrown together (e.g. Bewley's Hotel, Temple Bar) where often more than five contrasting patterns have been used in the same room. (See fig. 1). In some circumstances this number of patterns in one room could work quite well, but it needs to be properly planned and very well executed. This style, I believe, has been

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successfully achieved in the Merrion Hotel, where many heavily patterned and coloured fabrics have been fused together in one room to create a luxurious and warm atmosphere (See fig. 2). This contrasts greatly with the same style of fabrics in Bewley's. On the other hand, Jury's has reached a middle ground by using lots of contrasting fabrics in the same room and making the link through complimentary colours (See fig. 3 & 4).

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FIG 1. JURY'S HOTEL SOFA AND CARPET



FIG 2. MERRION HOTEL SOFA IN RECEPTION

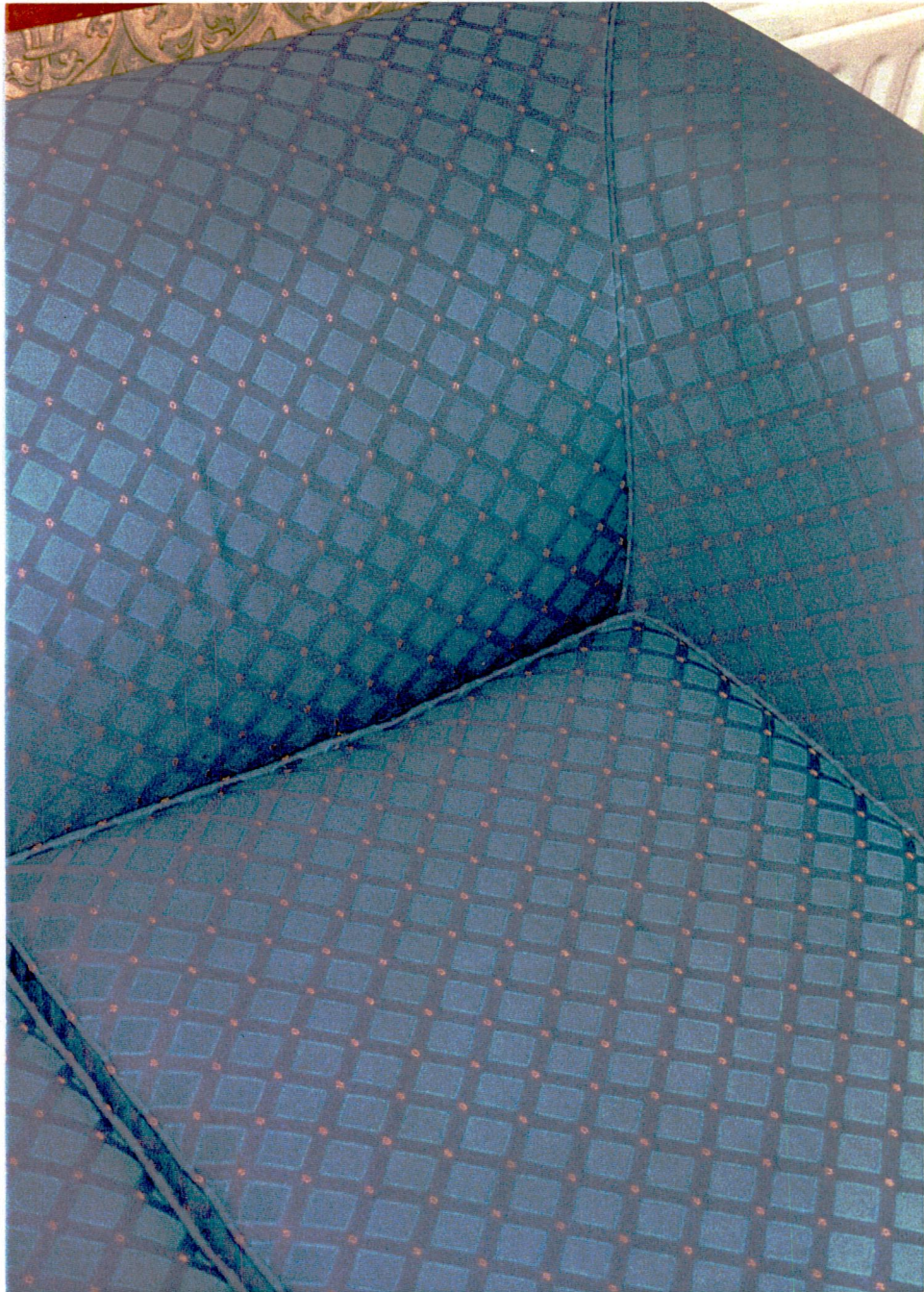


FIG 3. JURY'S INN SOFA IN RECEPTION

Jury's Inn

At £59 per night per room in the centre of Dublin (at Christchurch) this hotel, if it has nothing else, has affordability and comfort. It is a relatively new hotel as it was opened late in 1992. The interior designers here were, as with Bewley's, were Pattons of Dublin. It is for this reason that many of these large franchise hotels look very similar in design.

This hotel consists of 182 rooms, all of which are the same price and decorated in a very similar fashion. From the exterior, it is quite impressive, overlooking Christchurch Cathedral with a large glass entrance. Unfortunately, as you move further inside the aesthetics deteriorate. The reception is relatively large with a mirror-fronted desk and four receptionists who look like air hostesses in their bright green uniforms. In the lobby there are many seating areas, all of which use similar fabric in different colourways (See fig. 3 & 4). In contrast to other budget hotels such as Bewley's Hotel in Temple Bar, Jury's Inn has kept some colour consistency throughout the hotel.

The sofas in the lobby are upholstered with finely woven fabrics of a geometric striped motif. These relatively ordinary fabrics are set on a carpet of large diamond shapes which can make the whole area seem a little confused (See fig. 4). However, it has to be said that this area works much better than the bedrooms. After all, it is in the reception that the guest decides whether to stay or not.

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FIG 4. JURY'S INN SOFA AND CARPET

This area also is the only one seen by all guests. Therefore, it is important that the reception gives the right impression of warmth and comfort. The hotel's image is born at the reception and this feeling should be reflected consistently throughout the hotel. Although first impressions are made in the reception, it is the level of comfort in the bedroom and service provided by the staff that determines whether or not the guest will return.

It is evident that the most effort has been put into the reception area because of its importance. By the very nature of this hotel, most guests walk in off the street rather than making a reservation (Cleary, Philip interview 1998) The reception area therefore is the selling point of the hotel. And so too are the fabrics. Having said this, the fabrics used are not of the highest quality or originality. But for the budget, they do portray a feeling of comfort and warmth. Unfortunately, things change dramatically when you enter the bedrooms. Gone are the vibrant colours found in the lobby and they are replaced with florals, chintz and elaborate drapes. The use of fabrics in the rooms makes the whole atmosphere dark, dreary and to be honest, very boring (See fig 5). The beds are covered in patterned, quilted chintz of a dark maroon colour, which looks worn, old and faded from too much washing. The one interesting feature of the room, which is the triangular window, is ruined by a combination of drapes and white plastic blinds. (See fig. 6). It makes you wonder why they bothered to decorate the window at all. After all, at this height on the 4th floor you don't need privacy and it takes away from the attractive view of Christchurch Cathedral just yards away.

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FIG 5. JURY'S INN BED SPREAD



FIG 6. JURY'S INN WINDOW

In contrast the chair in the room is upholstered with a very different fabric (See fig. 7). This fabric is more reflective of those used in the lobby. It is dark green and geometric in pattern. I imagine this fabric was chosen for a reason: it sits at the desk and is more sombre, like what one would choose for a study. I believe the pattern used on the bed was chosen to portray a homely and comfortable mood. In this way we can see that there was some thought put into the choice of fabrics, however they fight with each other instead of merging together to create the mood. Contrasting fabrics of different patterns and colours can be very effective as you can see in the Merrion Hotel (See fig. 2), but unfortunately a higher price must be paid for this type of luxury.

Furthermore, the bathroom in Jury's Inn is void of any pattern whatsoever. It is small and poky, which may be the reason that the designers chose to use only white in this area. (See fig. 8)

In conclusion, for £59 per night for three people this hotel is an affordable option for those guests who require the basics. There is very little consideration taken for the choice and placement of the textiles. However, they serve the purpose for which they are required, that is warmth and comfort. More importantly are the expectations of the guests, which more often than not is a cheap room for the night with a bed and a shower.

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FIG 7. JURY'S INN STUDY CHAIR



FIG 8. JURY'S INN BATHROOM

Bewley's Hotel

I visited Bewley's Hotel in Temple Bar, which is one of the oldest established of this chain. It is a relatively small hotel with just 70 rooms and offers the client basic functional facilities. The interior of the hotel was designed by Pattons of Dublin. "It was a difficult job because the style of Bewley's (a well known Dublin cafe) was already well established before we were contracted for the hotels" (Patton, John - Interview Dublin 1998). Bewley's cafes have an oriental theme and this is what Pattons wanted to translate into the hotels. Many of the more recently decorated Bewley's hotels have a more modern and luxurious feel, however the one I visited in Temple Bar was dull, badly lit and badly in need of refurbishment.

You enter the hotel through a small side door at the side of Bewley's cafe (See fig. 9). No receptionist or concierge greets you. First you must walk up a narrow stairs, carpeted with old-fashioned heavily patterned fabric in a deep red. The walls are prepared with flocked wallpaper that you might find in a Chinese restaurant. After finding the reception, you enter an even smaller room with a tiny reception desk. The most striking thing about this room is the amount of contrasting patterns used. I counted more than seven elaborate patterns in the reception alone. There were ogees, stripes, geometrics, florals & figurative patterns (See fig 10). I also felt that there was a lack of colour consistency in this room, the only consideration being its Orientalism.

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FIG 9. BEWLEY'S HOTEL TEMPLE BAR



FIG 10. BEWLEY'S HOTEL CURTAINS AND PAPER

The use of textiles in this hotel seems to be a little confused. John Patton explained by telling me that they "wanted to give something to everyone: we wanted it to have an appeal to the ordinary person who wants comfort, guests want to feel like they are in their own home. " (Patton, John - Interview Dublin 1998). Although the choice of fabrics used seems to be somewhat unconsidered, there is evidence of an oriental theme. This displayed not subtly but is quite obviously apparent in the figures on the curtains (See fig.11). There is also some orientalism evident in the choice of pattern used on the walls. However, it doesn't seem to be reflected in the other textiles used in the same room. For example, the small couch supports a heavy geometric floral pattern with only some colour similarities to the wallpaper and carpet (See fig.1). Each pattern in this room seems to be fighting with each other for the eye's attention. To be truthful, it is really quite difficult to look at and for a lobby where people are supposed to relax, I find it difficult to imagine how one could.

As we move into the bedroom there is no evidence of an oriental theme. The designer seems to have resorted to using the most ordinary and usual fabrics: floral curtains, and striped bedspread. (See fig. 12 & 13)

In the bar of the hotel, which is almost the same size as the hotel, there seems to be a more confused style. I cannot tell if it is supposed to be Georgian, Scottish or Islamic (See fig.14 & 15). The fabrics used here again could be found in any highstreet shop. There is nothing original or interesting about the choice of pattern.

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As we move into the bedroom there is no evidence of an oriental theme. The designer seems to have resorted to using the most ordinary and usual fabrics, floral curtains, and striped bedspread. (See fig. 12 & 13)

In the bar of the hotel, which is almost the same size as the hotel, there seems to be a more confused style. I cannot tell if it is supposed to be Georgian, Scottish or Islamic (See fig. 14 & 15). The fabrics used here again could be found in any highstreet shop. There is nothing original or interesting about the choice of pattern.



FIG 11. BEWLEY'S HOTEL RECEPTION CURTAINS



FIG 12. BEWLEY'S HOTEL BED SPREAD



FIG 13. BEWLEY'S HOTEL BEDROOM CURTAINS



FIG 14. BEWLEY'S HOTEL BAR



FIG 15. BEWLEY'S HOTEL BAR

The only interesting thing is the context in which they are used. These more expensive and relatively more attractive fabrics are saved for the bar which is one place that all the guests and non-guests will see. They may have been used to give a false expectation of what the rooms may be like.

The use of too many patterns in one room is evidently unsuccessful in Bewley's hotel, however it is possible for it to work well in some circumstances. This can be found in the Merrion Hotel and in the bar of the Trinity Arch Hotel.

The Fabrics used in the lower end of the market reflect those that we could find in any high street fabric shop. They are attainable and affordable for the average person thus giving them no exclusivity or originality. They are used simply for practical decorative reasons giving the guests no feeling of luxury. If we look at these fabrics in the more general terms of interiors, it could be said that they are of an average design and quality content. They are designed not for a specific design purpose, but more so to appeal to a wide range of tastes and functions such as upholstery or curtains. The main difference between fabrics used in the lower market and the upper market is their lack of exclusivity. Many fabrics used in the upper end of the market are especially designed and chosen for the specific purpose and image that is to be portrayed. They are often void of pattern and require the guests to appreciate the fabrics for what they are rather than the pattern that they bear. Fabrics in the lower market often have a huge amount of pattern and colour, almost as if to distract the eye.

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CHAPTER 2

MIDDLE MARKET

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I have defined the middle market in terms of price and use of materials. Compared to the lower market the price is almost double ranging from about £85 to £100 per night. Although at a glance these hotels can have the same feel as some budget hotels, at a closer inspection they tend to use more considered quality materials. There is somewhat more colour consistency throughout these hotels and the fabrics that are chosen tend to relate to each other by colour and pattern. The scale of many of these patterns tends to be generally the same.

This class of hotel provides the client with the basic needs but are a little more comfortable and “stylish” than the average budget hotel. They have a tendency to be over styled and dramatised. This use of a theme, whether it is Georgian, minimal or medieval, can distract the eye from the other finer details, which have been overlooked. There is not a huge amount of difference between the budget and the middle market hotels except for their price. The price however, may be due to the location rather than the style or measure of luxury. The two middle market hotels I have chosen are The Temple Bar Hotel in Temple Bar and the Trinity Arch Hotel on Dame Street.

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Trinity Arch Hotel

This hotel is situated on Dame Street, in a beautiful 19th century listed building. This building lay dormant for many years before a hotelier named Dermot Branigan bought it and turned it into a 29 roomed hotel and a 3 floored bar/restaurant.

The bar is decorated very successfully using many different patterned fabrics in small areas and plainer damask fabrics for larger areas such as curtains. The curtains use mountains of fabrics for a luxurious effect. They are also braided alternatively with gold or maroon (See fig. 16 & 17). The use of fabric in these curtains really makes them look luxurious and rich although they are bare of pattern except that which is in the weave (See fig. 16 & 17) Because there is less pattern used on the larger pieces of fabric this makes room to use pattern more effectively in smaller areas.

In the bar, many patterns are used effectively in the one room. Almost all of the bar stools are upholstered with a different fabric yet care has been taken to ensure that these fabrics work well together as well as on their own. I believe that because these fabrics are used in small areas it makes them all the more attractive. The upholstery on the bar stools is held together through the use of colour and scale. All the patterns use a similar colour palette and scale (See fig. 18,19 & 20) except for the high bar stools which are made unique through the use of fabric, (i.e. the green embossed velvet See fig. 21).

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FIG 16. TRINITY ARCH CURTAINS IN BAR



FIG 17. TRINITY ARCH CURTAINS IN BAR



FIG 18. TRINITY ARCH BAR STOOL



FIG 19. TRINITY ARCH BAR STOOL



FIG 20. TRINITY ARCH BAR STOOL

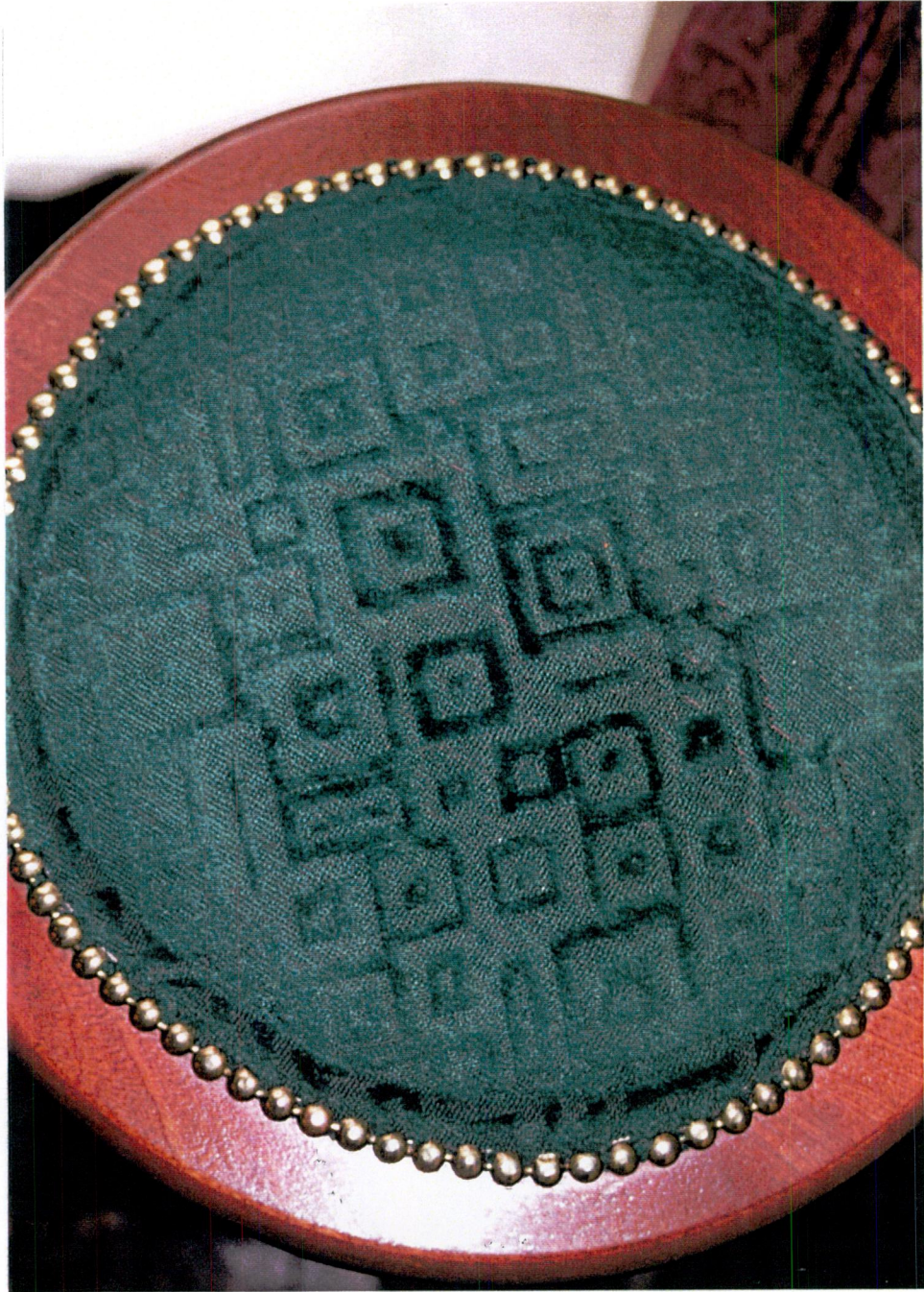


FIG 21 TRINITY ARCH BAR STOOL

As a whole this room works very well by the addition of certain fabrics for specific areas, in contrast to Bewley's hotel (page 24) where many fabrics in the same room work against instead of with each other.

After seeing the bar I was expecting the bedrooms to be of a similar standard. However, I was mistaken. Again I was faced with an uninteresting choice of fabric and pattern. The only thing that holds the room together is the use of colour. Navy, red and cream are apparent in the curtains, carpet and bed, except for the study chair at the desk. This could easily be confused with the one in Jury's. The shape, colour and pattern of the fabric are almost identical. (See fig. 22). However, unlike Jury's there is a definite consistency of colour through the rooms and is taken in different proportions. The curtains are mainly navy with a floral border (See fig. 23). The bedspread almost exactly matches the border of the curtains, which shows some thought process (See fig. 24) and the colour of the carpet is also reflected in the bedspread (See fig. 25). The significance of florals in the bedroom is one that interests me. It seems that most designers think "bedroom = floral". I spoke to Ian Black about this theme throughout many hotels. He said that "the bedroom has often been described as a feminine room in the house, like the kitchen, and what is more feminine than a flower? I believe this is why floral fabrics are extensively used in the hotel bedrooms. They are supposed to make you feel at home. Frankly they just give me hay-fever" (Ian Black - Interview Dublin 1998)

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FIG 22. TRINITY ARCH STUDY CHAIR



FIG 23. TRINITY ARCH BEDROOM CURTAINS



FIG 24. TRINITY ARCH BED SPREAD



FIG 25. TRINITY ARCH DETAIL OF CARPET

The Temple Bar Hotel

The Temple Bar Hotel is situated in the heart of Temple Bar and I believe it is for this reason that it can be classified in the middle market. Although it has some good design qualities its price is more determined by location rather than aesthetic content. A double room for one night in this hotel could cost you anything up to £98 per night per person.

Many of the fabrics used in this hotel are of no better quality than those used in the lower market establishments, however, the rates are reflective of the location and the type of guests that stay there. Deirdre Barry (Manager) explained to me that the majority of their clients are tourists or large groups of businessmen. (Barry Deirdre – Interview Dublin 1998) It is in this way that many hotels can increase their prices without having to engage themselves in extravagant interior decoration.

This hotel consists of 48 bedrooms, a bar and lobby. In the lobby we are greeted by a central reception desk with seating to either side. Again as with many other hotels there are a number of contrasting patterns being used in a relatively small area. In the reception area alone there are florals, stripes, geometrics and checks. However, it has to be said that there is a consistent colour scheme of yellow and burgundy. There are three different upholstery fabrics in this room. There is firstly a small arm chair covered in a fabric not unlike that we saw on the study chair in Jury's Inn. This fabric sports a small geometric diamond pattern in

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quite sombre colours, which have faded badly with the sun (See fig. 26). In the same room we can see another armchair covered in a large-scale check pattern. This pattern, because of the size, overpowers any other pattern in the room (See fig. 27). It seems that this factor was not taken into consideration when choosing these fabrics.

As I moved into the bedrooms I could sense a more considered design. The one thing that strikes you most is the continuity of colour, everything from the carpet to the curtains and bedding matches. Blue is the dominant colour in this room, the colour of relaxation. Again we find the study chair situated at a small desk. The pattern here is blue and geometric; it has a bland utilitarian feel to it (See fig. 28). The colour of the chair is reflected in the bedspread. Here there is no dominant pattern; instead we find a subtle monochromatic floral pattern which is only realised when inspected up close (See fig.29). This makes a welcome relief from the louder fabrics that we are used to seeing in this class of hotel. Unfortunately the fabric used in the curtains is not as subtle (See fig. 30). Here a loud striped fabric is used to somehow lift the atmosphere of the room; however, it tends to grab too much attention and so takes away from the rest of the room.

In summary this hotel can afford to charge higher rates because of its location rather than the quality of the design. Although there are many design faults in this hotel the colour consistency evident in the bedrooms shows some degree of design consideration.

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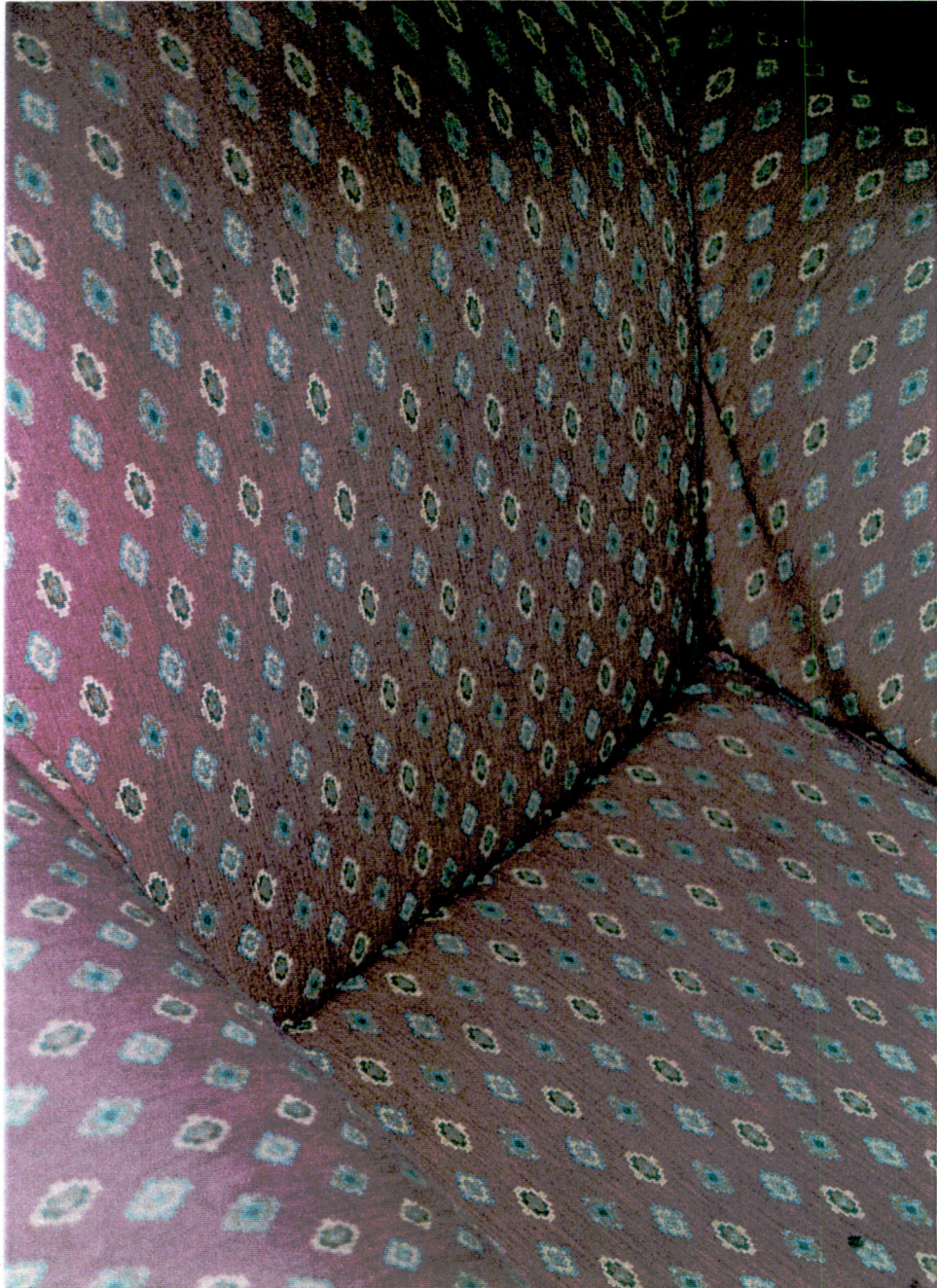


FIG 26. TEMPLE BAR HOTEL SOFA IN RECEPTION



FIG 27. TEMPLE BAR HOTEL ARM CHAIR

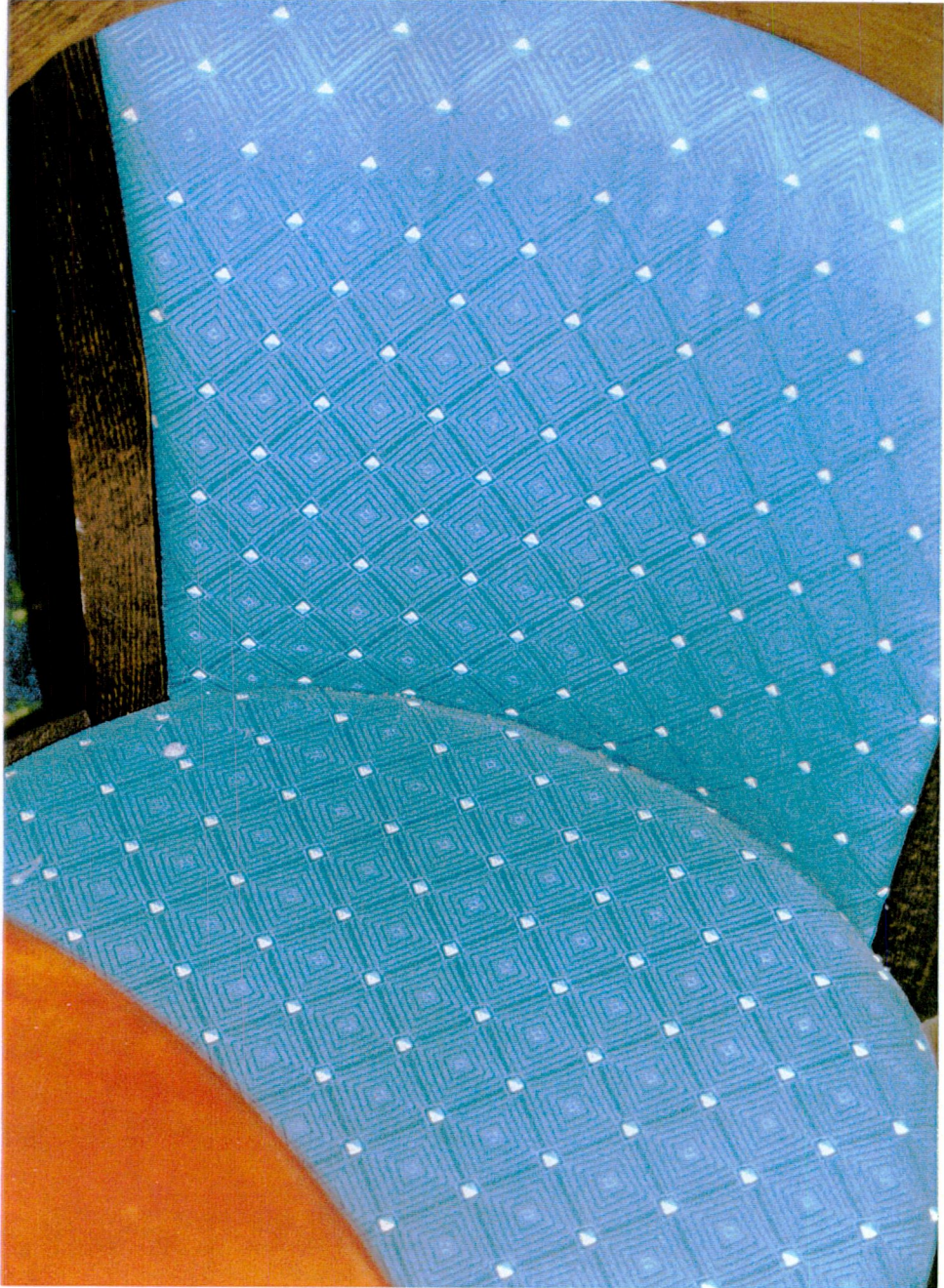


FIG 28. TEMPLE BAR HOTEL STUDY CHAIR

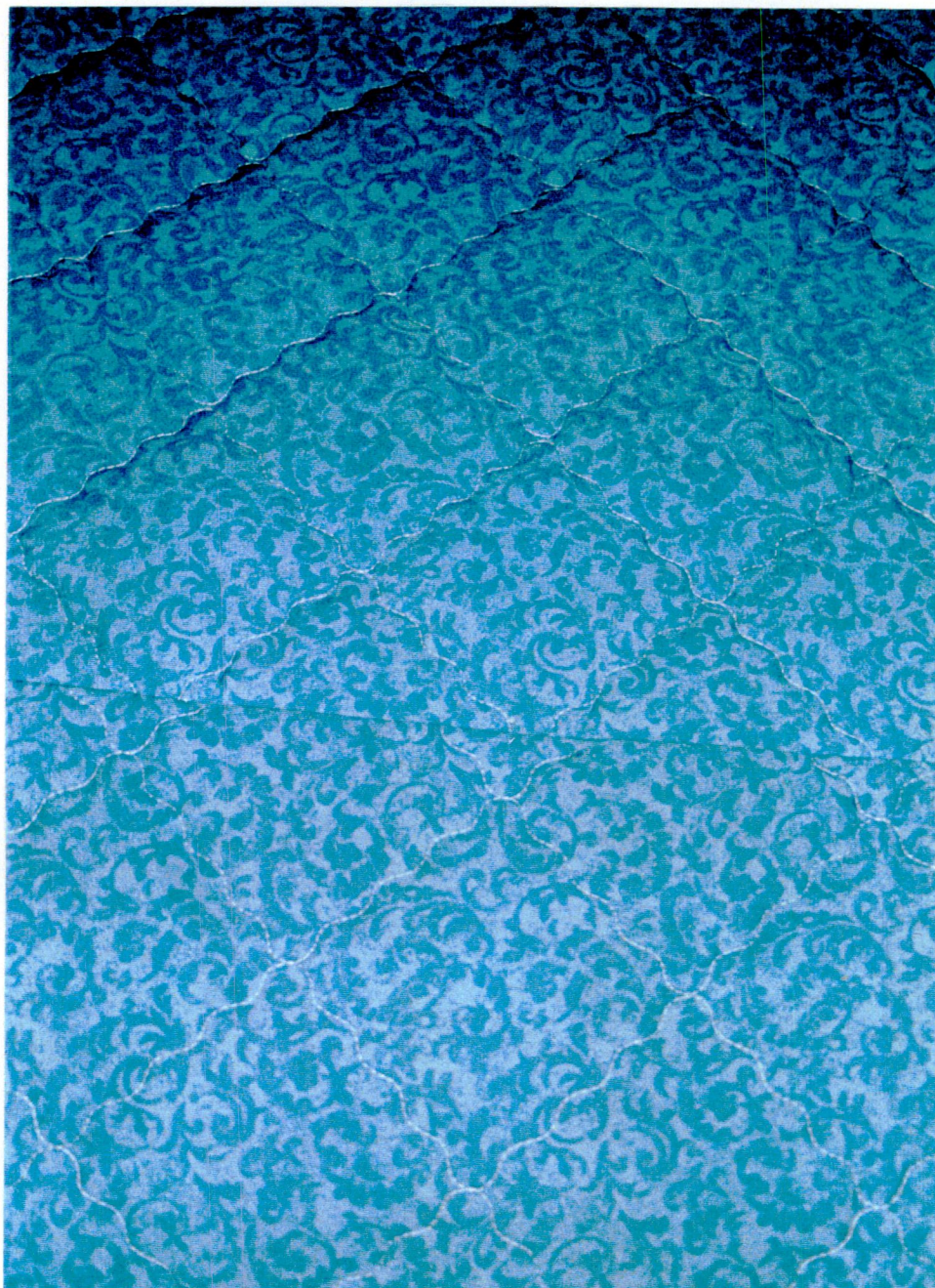


FIG 29. TEMPLE BAR HOTEL DETAIL BED SPREAD



FIG 30. TEMPLE BAR HOTEL BEDROOM CURTAINS

CHAPTER 3

UPPER MARKET

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In this sector of the market things become dramatically different in terms of price and design quality. Designers are much more aware of the importance of quality materials and beautifully designed fabrics. In many cases everything down to the cutlery is designed exclusively for that hotel. This gives the guests a feeling of superiority, which they are willing to pay substantial amounts of money for. It may also imply that the customer has a more highly developed taste and it is this type of notoriety and superiority that these guests want.

With the exception of the Merrion and the Shelbourne, most of these hotels show a dramatic absence of pattern and colour. This, explained Ian Black, is due to the demand for a more pared down minimal type of luxury. "Guests in this class of hotel want to escape from the stresses of life and relax in an area that is designed to be kind to the eye." (Black Ian – Interview Dublin 1998) It is perhaps because of this that this style of luxury has taken centre stage in many new upper class hotels.

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The Fitzwilliam Hotel

The Fitzwilliam is described as being "Uniquely positioned on St. Stephen's Green, just paces away from Grafton Street, Ireland's premier shopping location. " (brochure, Fitzwilliam Hotel 1998).

This hotel is undoubtedly designed to appeal to all senses. It was opened in early 1998 and since then has enjoyed maximum occupancy due to its central location and understated luxury. It was the vision of Terence Conran the renowned entrepreneur and designer. "He had an idea to create something truly modern, using rich materials that remained unpretentious and comfortable" (O'Brien, Connor - Interview Dublin 1998). This vision is brought to the fore by the use of contrasting materials, such as leather in the bar, suedes, velvets, natural linen and fine tweed. Looking at this hotel from a textiles point of view, it has achieved all that Conran wanted through the use of fabrics.

This hotel consists of 135 rooms, including 3 penthouses, where I was not permitted to photograph. However, after many phone calls and letters to the PR official in England I was given permission to photograph the bar, the lobby and two of the bedrooms, one of which is a deluxe room. A one night stay would set you back £220 for the privilege of the experience.

A hotels image is born at the reception area. It is here that the guests will make the first contact with the employees and from this that they will decide whether to stay or not. The entrance should

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A hotel's image is born at the reception area. It is here that the guests will make the first contact with the employees and from this that they will decide whether to stay or not. The entrance should

act like a hall in the home. It must be welcoming and give you a feel of the whole set up. (Black, Ian - Interview Dublin 1998). In the Fitzwilliam hotel it does just that. Two huge glass doors open into the extensive lobby with its stone floors and white walls. This harshness is successfully contrasted with the seating area which is soft, warm and comfortable. Grey fine tweed armchairs are positioned on a dark purple carpet with one of two soft brown leather sofas set in between. (See fig. 31&32) The fabrics used in the lobby reflect the feeling of the whole hotel. It immediately appeals to the senses, it makes you want to touch the fabrics and sit in the chairs, which are set off by the huge open fire in the centre of the lobby.

For such a large room, there is plenty of atmosphere, which is created by the noise from the restaurant on the mezzanine. The only fault I can pick with the lobby is the position of the reception desk. When you walk into the lobby, the desk is not visible. You are forced to walk all the way to the end of the room and then the desk appears from behind a pillar. It makes the experience a little intimidating, as you have to walk some distance before you actually know where you are going. Having said this, when you arrive you are greeted by very friendly staff that work behind a long narrow black marble desk. From the desk you can see into the bar with its red and white leather chairs and dark mahogany woodwork (See fig. 33&34) In a few short minutes all your senses are bombarded from the sounds of the restaurant to the sight of the materials, such as glass, stone, wood, leather, velvet, tweed, the open fire and the black marble reception.

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FIG 31. FITZWILLIAM HOTEL LOBBY



FIG 32. FITZWILLIAM HOTEL ARM CHAIR IN LOBBY



FIG 33. FITZWILLIAM HOTEL BAR



FIG 34. FITZWILLIAM HOTEL BAR

The scene is set and you know there is a treat in store as you near the bedrooms. When you arrive it really looks like any other hotel, long corridors, carpeted, plain walls and hundreds of doors. All the carpets have a border decorated with the "F" logo, which appears throughout the hotel (See fig. 35). The first room I looked at was the deluxe suite. Overall it has a paired down look without being minimal or uncompromising. It is very simple and bare without being cold or uncomfortable. The room is quite small, but good use of space makes it very practical and comfortable. There is a large double bed with two small lockers, a desk, three chairs, a chest of drawers and a wardrobe. In this type of room it is difficult to tell if form follows function or function follows form. In my opinion it is the latter. It is for style's sake rather than function that the TV, hairdryer and stereo are hidden behind the doors of cabinets. They are not the best-designed objects and so they are hidden.

The use of Textiles in this room, as I expected, are reflected in the lobby, very little pattern or imagery, just rich, tactile, natural fabrics in natural colours. The only pattern that appears is in the weave of the fabric, such as the fine cord bedspread (See fig. 36). Pattern can also be found in small squares in the linen curtains, which are also reflected in the bathroom tiles (See fig. 37&38). The absence of pattern on these fabrics forces you into appreciating them for what they are. It gives you a message that they are beautiful enough without decoration and therefore it is better to leave them that way: "less is more"

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FIG 35. FITZWILLIAM HOTEL F LOGO IN CARPET



FIG 36. FITZWILLIAM HOTEL DETAIL - BEDSPREAD

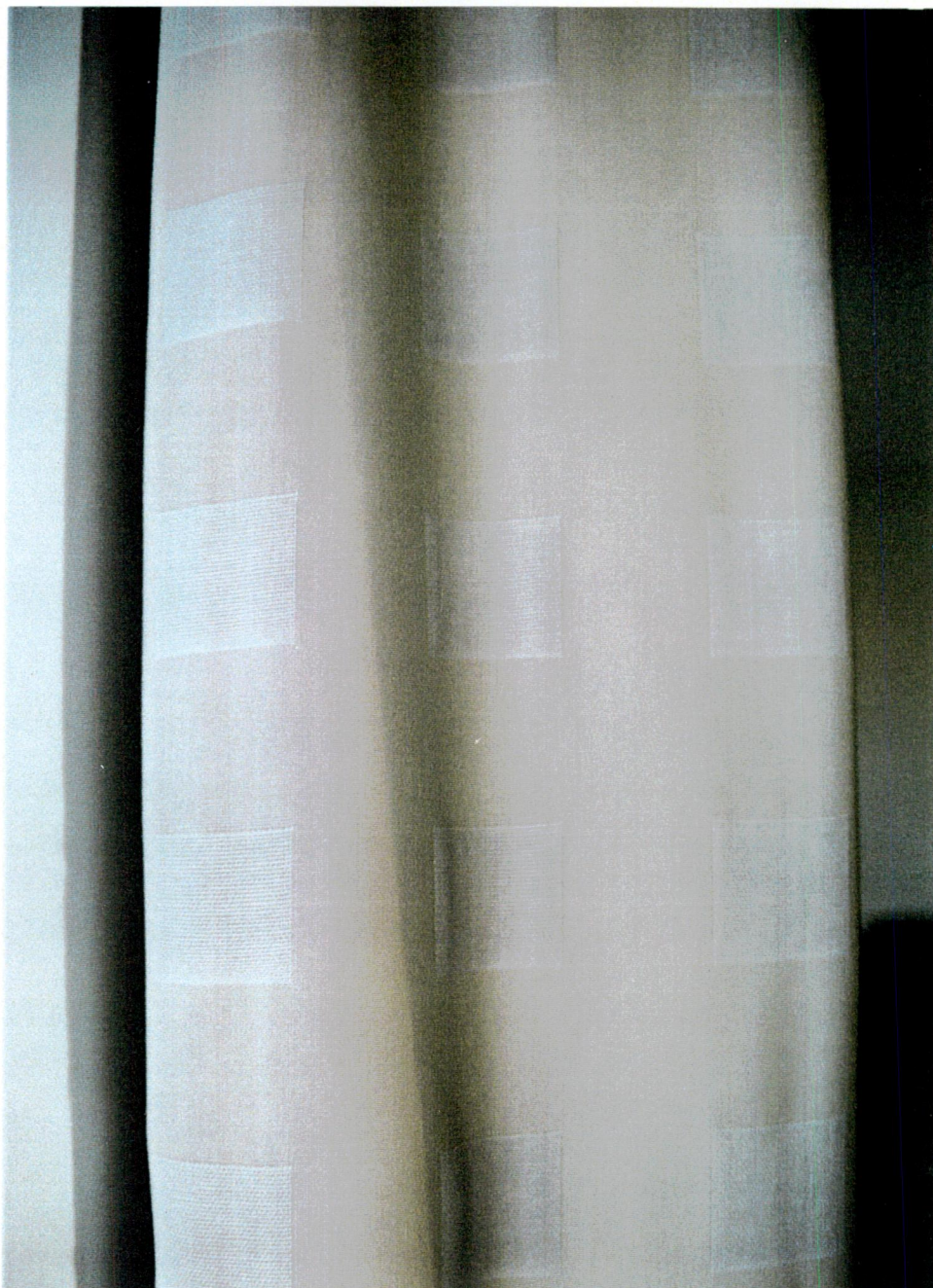


FIG 37. FITZWILLIAM HOTEL BEDROOM CURTAINS



FIG 38. FITZWILLIAM HOTEL BATHROOM

In the Fitzwilliam Hotel bedrooms, there are numerous fabrics used to appeal to all the senses. Fine beige quilted cord edged with purple satin is used for the bedspread (See fig. 39). Sheets and pillowcases are of crisp white cotton. A panel of white linen hangs behind the bed that is embroidered with the Fitzwilliam logo in purple (See fig. 39). The box chairs in the room are upholstered in matching purple/blue velvet (See fig. 40). The carpet in the bedroom bears no pattern. It is plain beige, maybe impractical, but it really lifts the whole room and ties in nicely with the curtains. What really strikes you in this room is the successful use of so many fabrics in such a small space, but the use of plain fabrics here is very considered.

As you move into the bathroom, obviously there is less use of textiles, but where they are used i.e. on the windows, it is again very successful. Instead of using frosted glass in the bathroom window, a stylish mess roller blind is used so you can still enjoy the view over St. Stephen's Green (See fig. 41)

Very little pattern appears in the bathroom either except for the small square tiles (See fig. 42) There is again many contrasts in this room such as the use of marble, wood, ceramic, stainless steel and the embroidered towels and bathrobes, again with their logo in purple (See fig. 43)

Overall this hotel is designed to appeal to the senses. Every fabric is used without pattern but gets its strength from purity and how they contrast with each other. Colour is also very pure with muted

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As you move into the bathroom, obviously there is less use of textiles, but where they are used i.e. on the windows, it is again very successful. Instead of using frosted glass in the bathroom window, a stylish mesh roller blind is used so you can still enjoy the view over St. Stephen's Green (See fig. 41).

Very little pattern appears in the bathroom either except for the small square tiles (See fig. 42). There is again many contrasts in this room such as the use of marble, wood, ceramic, stainless steel and the embroidered towels and bathrobes, again with their logo in purple (See fig. 43).

Overall this hotel is designed to appeal to the senses. Every fabric is used without pattern but gets its strength from purity and how they contrast with each other. Colour is also very pure with muted

tones of blue, grey and beige with accents of purple, black and dark brown. "Understated luxury, a fresh approach and impeccable service makes the Fitzwilliam a modern classic and a perfect retreat for business and pleasure travellers " (Brochure 1998)

It was in this hotel that I observed the strongest consideration for the textiles used. I also feel that the fabrics are integral to the mood and atmosphere that is created here.

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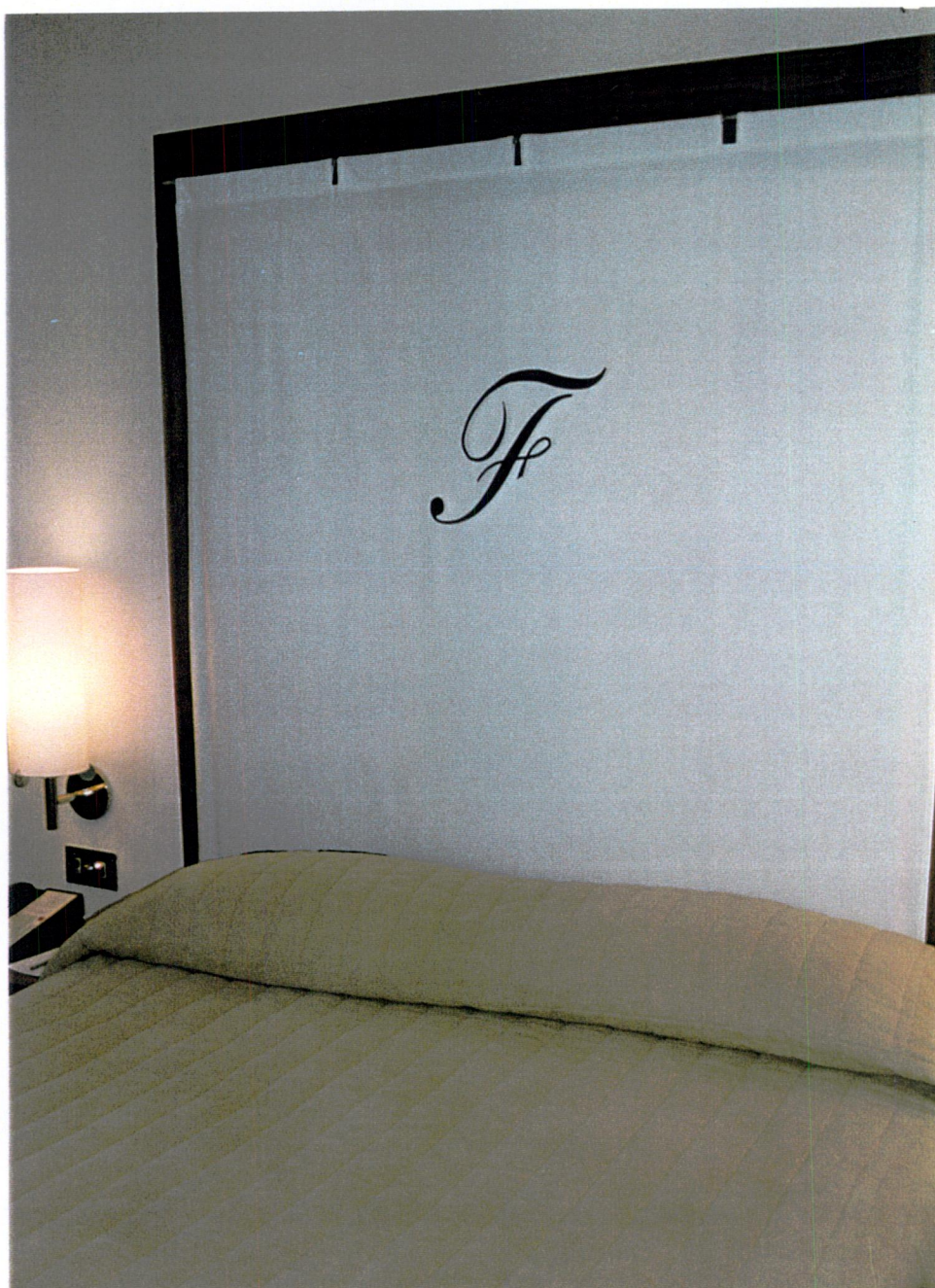


FIG 39. FITZWILLIAM HOTEL BEDROOM



FIG 40. FITZWILLIAM HOTEL OCCASIONAL CHAIR



FIG 41. FITZWILLIAM HOTEL MESH BLINDS



IG 42. FITZWILLIAM HOTEL BATHROOM



FIG 43. FITZWILLIAM HOTEL F LOGO

The Merrion Hotel

This hotel is saturated in history and it is this feature that gives it its charm and character. It is situated just off Merrion Square in four restored Georgian houses. The interior designer, Alice Rodin (who interestingly is a textile designer, rather than an interior designer) kept accurately to historical fashion by adopting an 18th century colour scheme and suitable fabrics.

This hotel was the most expensive per room that I visited - the cheapest room, a single, being £190. Evidently with all the newer minimal modern hotels being built in Dublin there is still a market for old style indulgence and luxury. The atmosphere is one of warmth and intimacy. As you walk through the marble hall you are greeted by a waft of warm air from the fire in the tea-rooms. All the colours of richness are here, gold, deep reds, burgundy and green. Although the same colour schemes have been also adopted by the likes of Jury's it could never compare to the authenticity of the Merrion. Everything is authentic, from the antique furniture to the original artwork. Unfortunately, I wasn't permitted to photograph the bedrooms there are some good illustrations in the brochure, which can give you a taste of the sheer luxury and elegance.

However, there were plenty of textiles to examine just in the reception and tea-rooms. The placement of the furniture in the reception adds to the intimacy and warmth, as all the seating surrounds a huge round antique table. The seating is upholstered with many different fabrics, all of which are woven beautifully.

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They consist of rich woven fabrics in elaborate patterns, unlike some of the fabrics in Bewley's that are printed to look as if they are woven. These fabrics are all authentic. The element that makes so many fabrics work together in one room is the type of pattern that is used. All of these patterns historically from the same era and have relatively the same scale and complimentary patterns (See fig. 44&45).

There is also evidence of the hotel's attention to detail in the way in which the chairs have been upholstered. In fig. 46 you can see how care has been taken to button the back of the chairs in accordance to the pattern of the fabric. It is this type of detail which many hotels make the mistake of overlooking.

In conclusion this is a hotel which makes no excuses for offering their guests the ultimate in luxury. The design here leaves no room for the imagination: everything is on show for the guests to enjoy: wealth and exuberance oozes from every corner.

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I conclude this is a hotel which makes no excuses for offering their guests the ultimate in luxury. The design here leaves no room for the imagination; everything is on show for the guests to enjoy. wealth and experience oozes from every corner.



FIG 44. MERRION HOTEL DETAIL OF SOFA



FIG 45. MERRION HOTEL DETAIL OF CURTAINS



FIG 46. MERRION HOTEL BUTTON BACK CHAIR

CONCLUSION

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It is evident from my findings that in recent year's designers seem to have a greater awareness and respect for the importance and strength of well designed fabrics. This however has only been implemented in the more expensive modern hotels such as the Fitzwilliam and the Merrion. It is not clear as to why hotels in other sectors of the market cannot do the same. Its not as if these fabrics are hugely expensive or hard to find but still the middle and lower ends of the market resort to the "safe" option of heavy patterned fabrics in strong colours, with no appreciation for their historical context or compatibility to each other in a design context.

Unfortunately, there is a price to be paid for the luxury of a good design in the Fitzwilliam or the Merrion. This, however, does reflect on the market and what the guests want and expect. It almost gives us a message that only the wealthy and cultured can appreciate beautiful fabrics, so why bother implementing them in the lower market hotels. Ian Black had a different angle on this saying - "middle market hotels need to be very careful in their choice of style. If they do anything too dramatic or different they may loose the very market they are aiming at. Use ordinary fabrics for ordinary people" (Black, Ian - Interview Dublin 1998)

From the hotels I looked at, it was difficult to find a beautifully designed hotel at a reasonable price in Dublin.

Luxury, whether understated or dramatised, has a price that only the wealthy can afford, thus it makes these appear to appear to appreciate good design and quality materials.

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There certainly is a new breed of hotels being born in Dublin. The paired down, clean lined, crispness of the Fitzwilliam, Clarence and Morgan hotels are becoming more and more popular and fashionable. The use of textiles in all these hotels is quite similar, the idea being, that without pattern or strong colour, fabrics can be appreciated for what they are in a pure form.

More and more market research has gone into this new breed of hotel before any decisions are being made, explains the manager of the Fitzwilliam Hotel. The owner must decide what market he wants to attract and then create the appropriate lifestyle for them.

Architects and designers are becoming increasingly aware that the needs of the user must be evaluated and then an environment created to meet those needs. (Design week, July 1997 page. 15) Textiles too are becoming an integral design feature in all these hotels.

Fabrics play a vital role in all our everyday lives as clothing, bedding, carpets etc. They also have a deeper meaning in that they symbolise man's successful struggle to control his environment by taking shelter, warmth and protection in textiles. (King - 1996 page 45). It is for this reason that textiles can so strongly control a mood or atmosphere in a room. The simple textiles evident in the Fitzwilliam Hotel create a cool relaxed atmosphere, which is very refreshing after so much pattern. This type of clarity is much more difficult to create than any other type of

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style that I have looked at. Maybe it is for this reason that the price is so high.

There has evidently been a dramatic shift in trends in interiors in the choice of fabrics in current interior design. In the last 5 years especially, trends in interiors have become much more minimal and more concerned with the use of these beautiful materials rather than embellishing cheaper materials with elaborate colour pattern. This change can be seen in all areas of interiors, not just hotel interiors. New interior shops such as Foko, Minima and Urbana reflect this shift. This purer type of design spans all areas of interior design. Floral wallpaper has been replaced with plain painted walls, carpets are replaced with slate or wooden flooring and fabrics are more often than not void of any pattern, using plain colours and quality natural materials.

"In a modern world with all its vulgar surplus and clutter, the less is more attitude represents a challenge which has as its objective not bland utilitarianism but the thrill of refined sensuous pleasure. It's far more difficult to make things easy rather than complicated. Mystification is easy, clarity is much more demanding." (Bailey, 1991 page 39).

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