

# Damask

## CHAPTER 7

Long possessing status as a luxury fabric, damask got its name when Western traders were first able to purchase it in Damascus, a popular textile-trading hub along the Silk Road during the Middle Ages. What makes damask distinct is that its pattern is woven into the cloth, so the fabric is always reversible (fabrics that use multiple colors and are not reversible are called brocades).

“I love damasks,” says Italian designer Alessandra Branca. “I love playing them against more current modern items and using them in unexpected ways: either

on a modern chair or by upholstering the walls with them or juxtaposing them with contemporary art or photography. I always wash them to soften the material and make them feel warmer and less high style.” Typically woven of silk, damask has a pattern that beautifully reflects light and shows an elegant variation in tone. While we tend to associate damask with very traditional, if not somber interiors, textile companies such as London-based Timorous Beasties as well as Branca’s own collection for Schumacher, are determined to maintain damask’s relevancy with punchier, more modern patterns and colors.

Background: Luciana Damask in Raspberry from Scalamandre

Inset: A damask can unify large-scale pieces in a room with dignity and grace. Here designer Markham Roberts uses Bennison Fabrics’s Lorenzo in Brown on Oyster, its splendid shapes echoing the curves of the chandelier.

