

PERIOD LIVING

CELEBRATING CLASSIC HOMES AND TIMELESS STYLE

NOVEMBER 2023

Live the **DREAM**

Beautiful real homes full
of interiors inspiration

TOP OF THE PILE

Tread softly with the
best rugs and carpets

PLUS

● Expert tips
on buying an
old house

● Time to
organise your
potting shed

● How to
maintain and
repair fireplaces

COUNTRY APPEAL

Design a kitchen that
celebrates rural charm

SEASONAL PALETTE

Decorate with autumn's warming spectrum of shades



LEFT Printed velvets are a relatively modern technical development, adding further decorative choice to this already tactile textile. Designs are applied through digital printing to the surface of the woven velvet cloth. This Grand Floral 100 per cent cotton satin velvet features exotic birds and foliage. Suitable for curtains or upholstery, it is available in three colourways, including Mulberry – seen here. It costs £162 per m from The Design Archives

OPPOSITE This living room by interior designer Victoria Wormsley of French-Brooks Interiors, showcases her use of a velvet upholstered sofa as an elegant way to add richness to the room scheme



RIGHT Cashmere Velvet, seen here in Fire Opal, by De Le Cuona, £426 per m from Jane Clayton, uses the finest extra-long cashmere fibres combined with mercerised cotton. Special production processes include brushing the pile numerous times to separate and open up the fine fibres, for an exquisitely soft handle and lustre

FAR RIGHT This 100 per cent cotton pile Epoque velvet from Mark Alexander, shown here in Ochre, costs £160 per m



IMAGE (RIGHT) FRENCH BROOKES INTERIORS

excavated from between the third and sixth centuries in Akhmim in Egypt are deemed to be the earliest surviving examples of warp velvet weaving. ‘Evidence for velvet weaving is scant and ambiguous until the late medieval period,’ says Wendy Landry. Her research suggests that the practice of velvet weaving was introduced in the mid- to late-13th century to northern Italian centres: Lucca, Florence, Siena, Venice and Genoa, as well as to France, and by the 14th and 15th centuries had also extended to other European cities and capitals, India and east Asia. The desirability and refinement of the complex textile arguably reached its zenith in the Renaissance period – particularly in Italy. Certainly its role as signifier of social standing was heavily echoed in art of the time. Today, only a small number of artisan studios around the world continue to offer handloomed velvets, including

Venetian workshop Tessitura Luigi Bevilacqua, where individual weavers can handloom at a rate of just 20 to 25cm of bespoke cloth a day. Since the Industrial Revolution, the vast majority of velvets are made on mechanic looms. **Decorating with velvet** From cushions and curtaining to upholstery, velvet undoubtedly elevates an interior. Durability and cost depend on variables including fibre type, pile density and intricacy of design, as well as the production methods. ‘Velvet is an incredibly hardwearing material, which often surprises people who regard it as a luxury fabric that is hard to maintain,’ says Sharon Crowson, founder and creative director of the Design Archives. ‘For me, it is important to look out for a composition of 100 per cent cotton pile as this ensures the characteristically lustrous finish and soft handle that makes velvet

so attractive. I have always loved printed, patterned velvet, which can enhance any interior; a beautiful print can only intensify velvet’s already luxe qualities,’ she explains. Interior designer Victoria Wormsley of French-Brooks Interiors is also a keen advocate. ‘I almost always use velvet in a decorating scheme as it adds a luxurious textural contrast that sets off other fabrics,’ she reveals. ‘The pile brings a lustre which changes in the light, adding richness to the colour. Some clients can be put off by bad memories of synthetic Dralon, but I tend to avoid overly shiny polyester and viscose velvet, sticking instead to cotton or linen velvet, which is more subtle. I often use a darker velvet for sofas as a wonderful foil for decorative cushions. It helps to anchor the scheme in a large room. Velvet can also elevate a plain rectangular headboard – especially when set off by narrow satin piping. ➤