Photo 2

Embellishment options abound. This linen features self-covered buttons at the base of each pleat and button trim on the leading edge
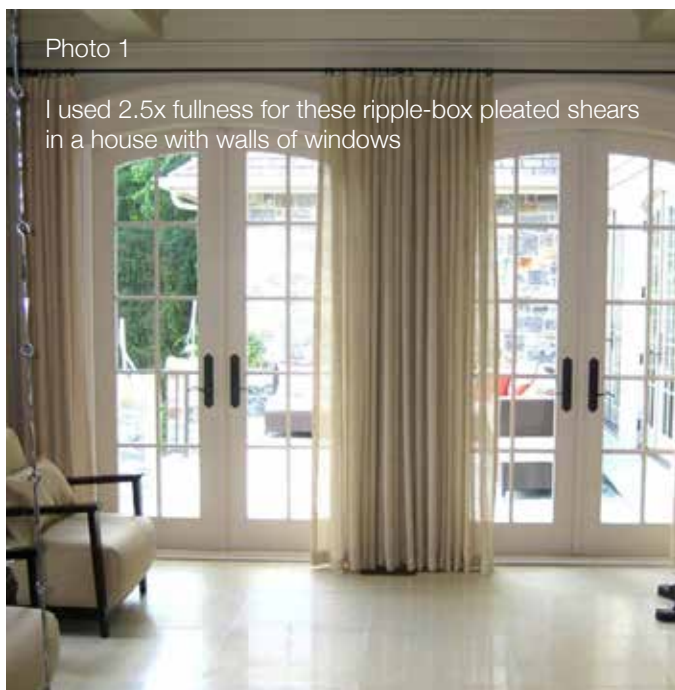
By Karen Lander
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A Versatile Hybrid Drapery Pleat

The Ripple Box Pleat

Photo 1

I used 2.5x fullness for these ripple-box pleated shears in a house with walls of windows

Drapery heading styles seem to go through phases. One year, goblets are all the rage, and the next it's French pleats. Lately, my clients have been choosing simpler, less fussy looks. I started getting orders for roll-pleat draperies (Kirsch's Ripplefold is the primary example), but I wasn't always happy with the results. There were limited hardware choices, and certain fabrics just were not well-suited to that look. The clean look of the inverted-box pleat was appealing, but it just didn't stack very well. So I combined the two looks and named it the "ripple box pleat."

Through some adaptations, I discovered ways to make an inverted-box pleat drapery heading stack better, which has led to it becoming the most popular choice of pleat for my customers. It has turned out to be a very versatile pleat in that can be made at many different fullness ratios, and stacks beautifully.

When stacked it looks like a roll pleat. When flat it looks like an inverted box pleat (see Photo 3 at the top of the next page). It has the clean modern look, but can be used on a conventional rod with rings rather than needing the specialty track.
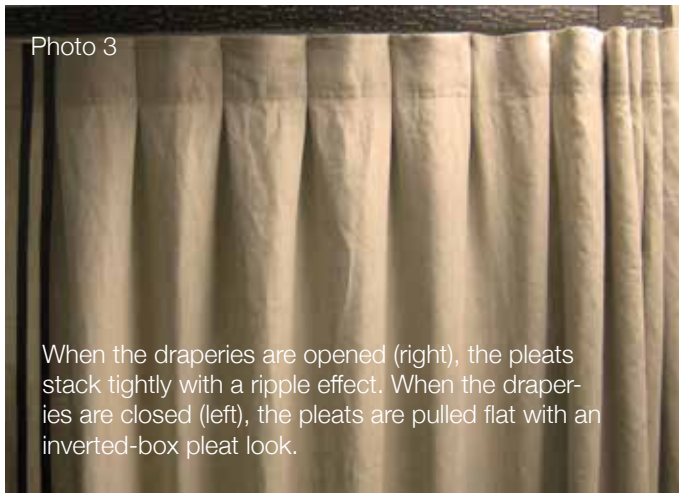
Photo 3

When the draperies are opened (right), the pleats stack tightly with a ripple effect. When the draperies are closed (left), the pleats are pulled flat with an inverted-box pleat look.

One huge advantage of using this pleat is that you can use it with so many types of fabric: sheers, relaxed linens, silks, and so much more. This pleat can also be dressed up or down to adapt to many design styles. You can enhance it with bandings and trims placed horizontally or vertically (see opening photo on the previous page). When it is to be stationary, buttons or nail heads with backs work well at the base of each pleat. Contrast headings, microcording and ruching (see Photo 4 below) also look great.
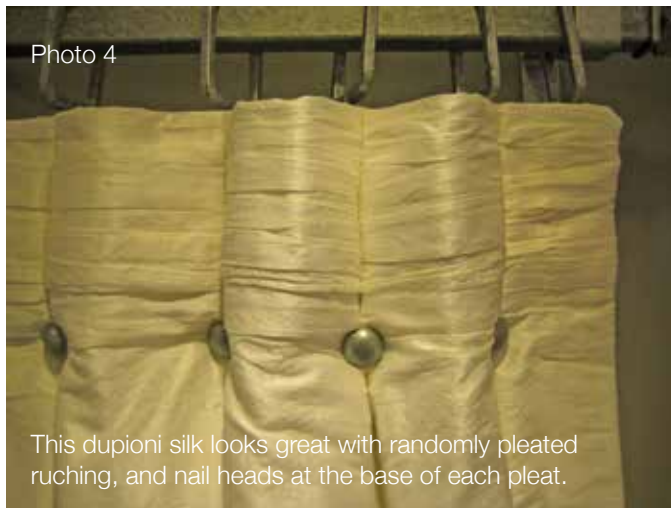

Photo 4

This dupioni silk looks great with randomly pleated ruching, and nail heads at the base of each pleat.

Construction Techniques

The trick to getting the pleats to stack is to not tack them at the top corners like a traditional box or inverted-box pleat. When the corners are tacked, the pleat cannot fold. If the corners are not tacked, the pleats can fold to the back when the drapery is opened to form the stack back (see Photo 5 above, right). If the draperies are to be stationary, they also need to be made this way so the front can ripple forward. Once the pleat has been stitched, the back folds need to be held in place somehow. The best way I found to do this is to stitch in the ditch from the front (see Photo 6 at right). Then you can place the drapery pin next to the stitching line in the back of the drapery (see Photo 7 at the top of the next page).

Photo 5

The back folds of the pleat must be free to fold back to stack, as well as allow the front to ripple forward.

Photo 6

Stitch your pleat, and then hold it all together by stitching in the ditch from the front.

Photo 7

Place the drapery pin in the center next to the stitching line.

This pleat is very adaptable to different fullness ratios. It can be made very full looking at 3x fullness with 5-6 inches in each pleat, or, for 2x full, put about 4 inches into each pleat.

You can even do a very shallow pleat with 2 inches into each pleat. Using small pleats works beautifully for very large windows when the draperies need to be closed. The advantage of this is that you need less fabric to cover the window, which means smaller stacking space, and the customer on a tight budget saves money.

The spacing of the pleats should be around 5-6 inches. This allows enough fabric for the front to ripple forward. Use buckram in the heading to get the right look for the pleats.

There are two ways I found for making the returns. These examples show rod hardware with a 3-inch bracket return. Option 1 (see Photo 8 below, right) is to use a standard 3- to 4-inch fabric return from the last pleat at the corner. Option 2 (see Photo 9 below) is to use a 6- to 7-inch fabric return and let the return ripple around the last pleat before it returns to the wall. ✂

Photo 8

One option for the return is to stitch a pleat 3-4 inches from the hemmed edge.

Photo 9

Another option for the return is to stitch the last pleat 6-7 inches from the hemmed edge.

Karen Lander is the principal window fashions designer of Drapery Design, which she founded in 1991 as a wholesale workroom. Today, Drapery Design has a retail showroom to showcase the latest products and styles in the industry. Karen is very involved with the WCAA as a National board member, and past president of the local Pennsylvania chapter.