

SOFT FURNISHING DESIGNER BASICS: RAILROADED FABRIC EXPLAINED

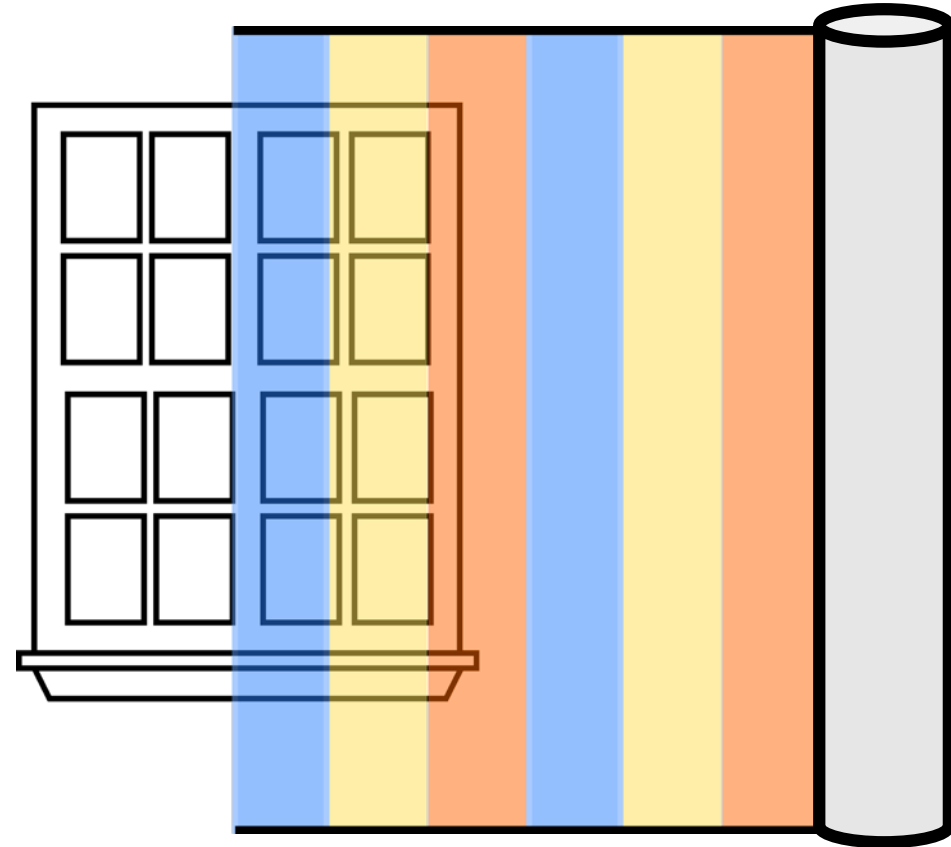
Rose Mary LeBlanc and Amanda Deal Smith



SEAMLESS

WORKROOM

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Pattern repeats can run two ways on fabric – **Railroaded** and **Up the Bolt**.

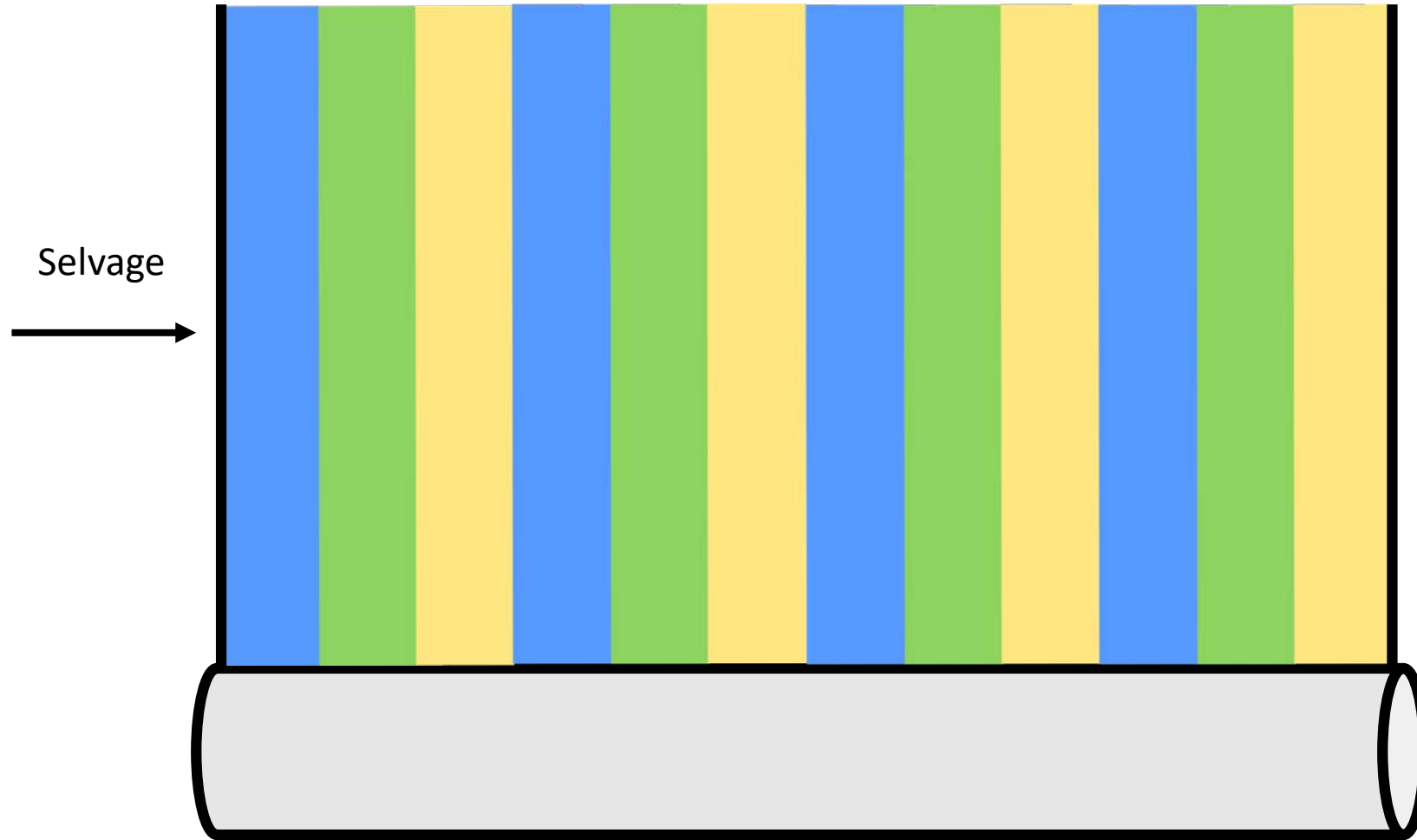
This is a very important aspect of fabrics and can determine if a pattern repeat is suitable for the application. It is also one of the hardest concepts to grasp. The best way to explain it is visually in the following diagrams and photo examples.

Railroaded means that the pattern repeat is *perpendicular* to the selvage instead of parallel to the selvage. On railroaded sheers there aren't any seams in the drapery panels. On railroaded upholstery fabric there aren't any seams on sofa backs.

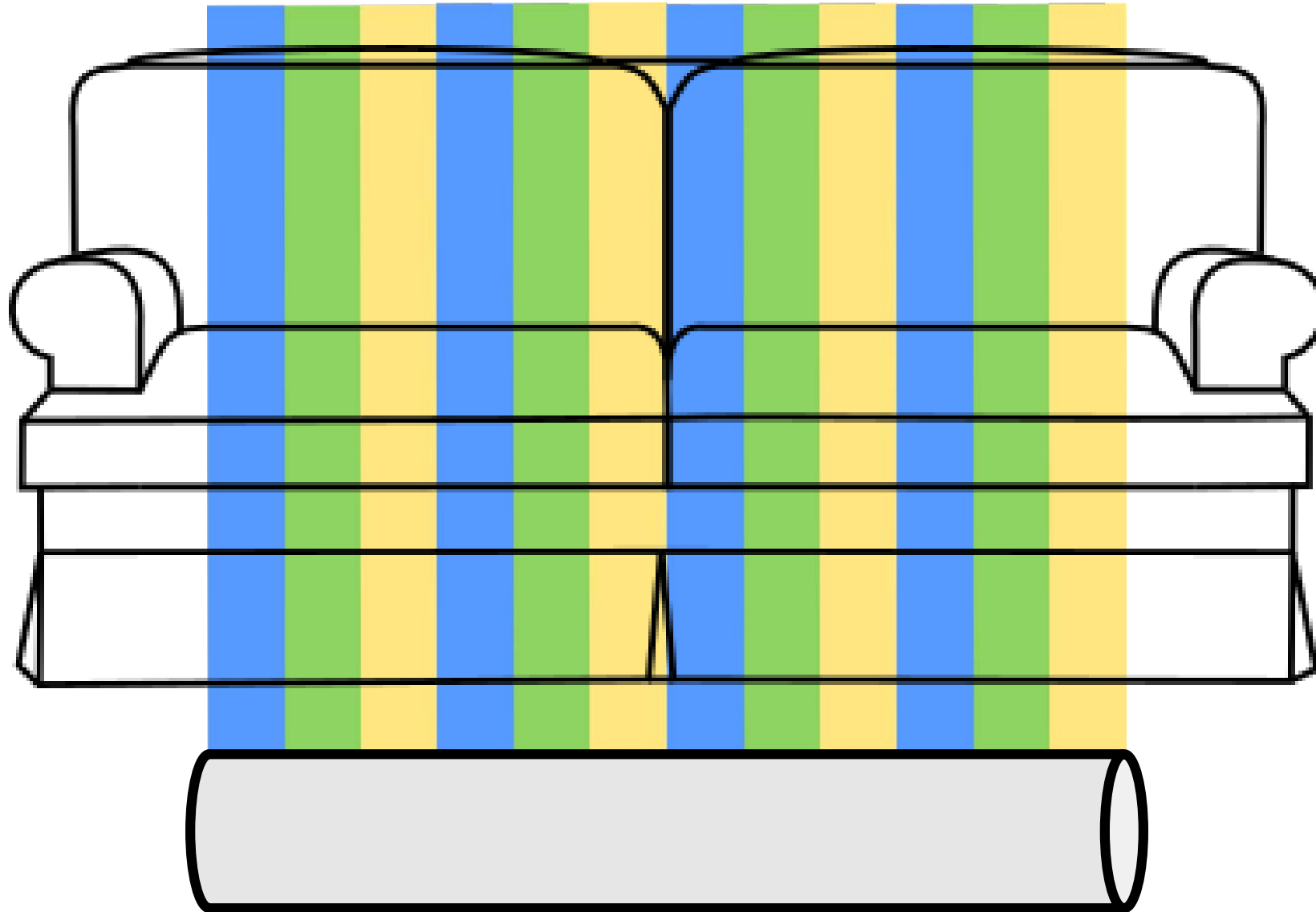
Up the Bolt means that the pattern repeat is *parallel* with the selvages.

Railroad is not only a *descriptive* term, but is also a *verb* as in, "Let's railroad this fabric", meaning that we want to turn the bolt and use the fabric in the railroaded direction instead of Up The Bolt. Non directional pattern repeats can be used either way depending on the application. This opens up new and exciting design possibilities. Some upholstery fabrics and most sheers have railroaded patterns.

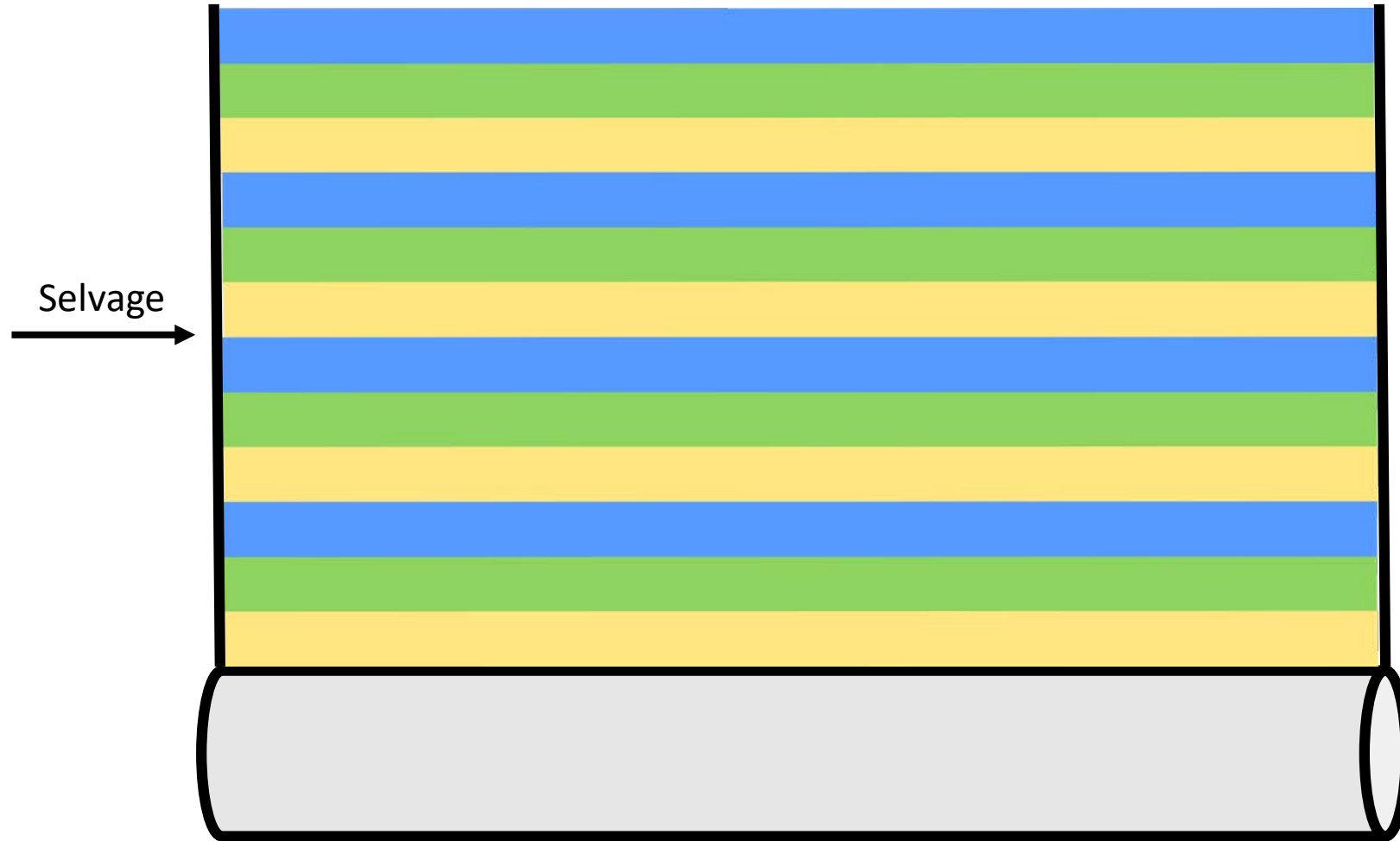
Fabric Running Up the Bolt



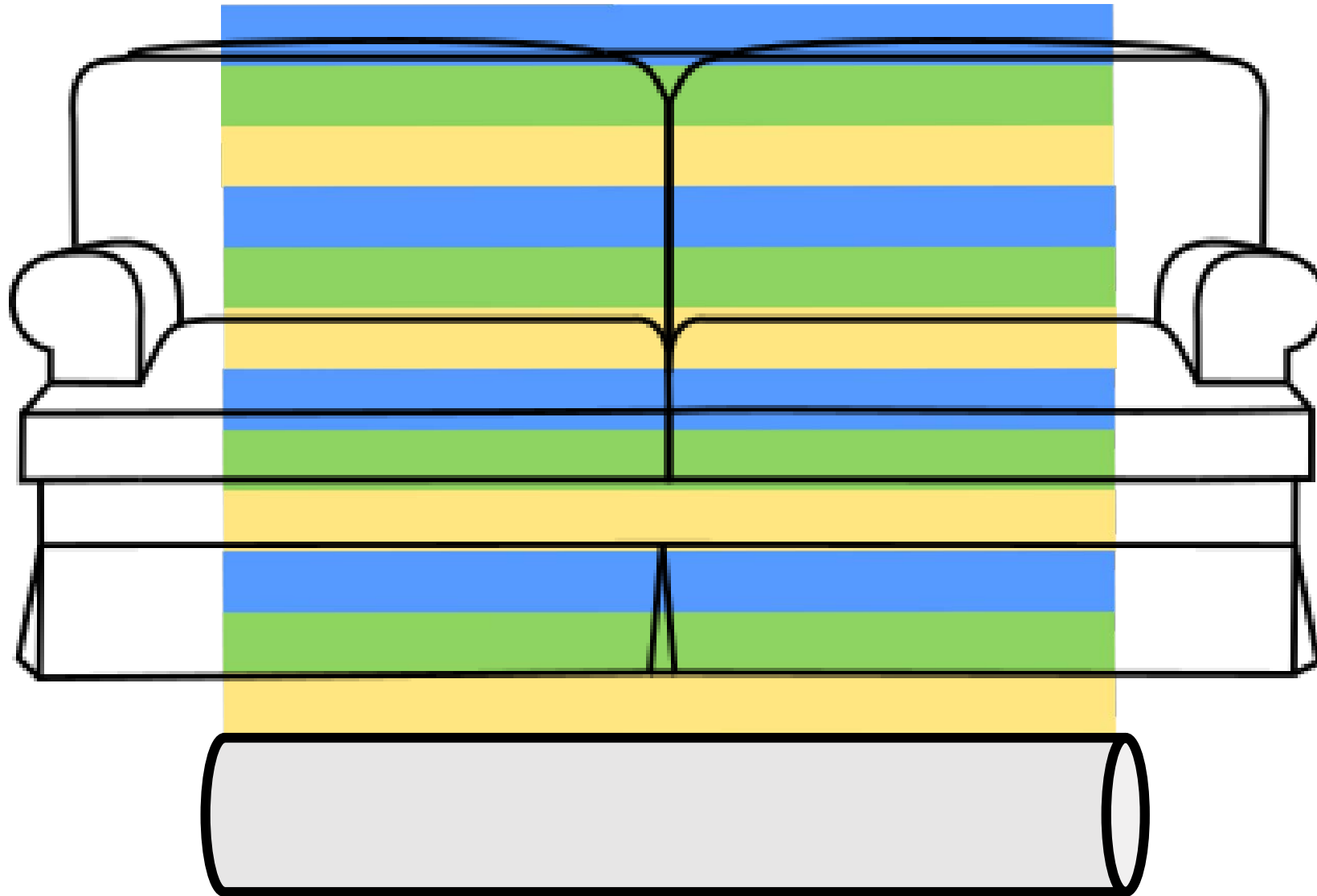
Fabric Running Up The Bolt On A Sofa



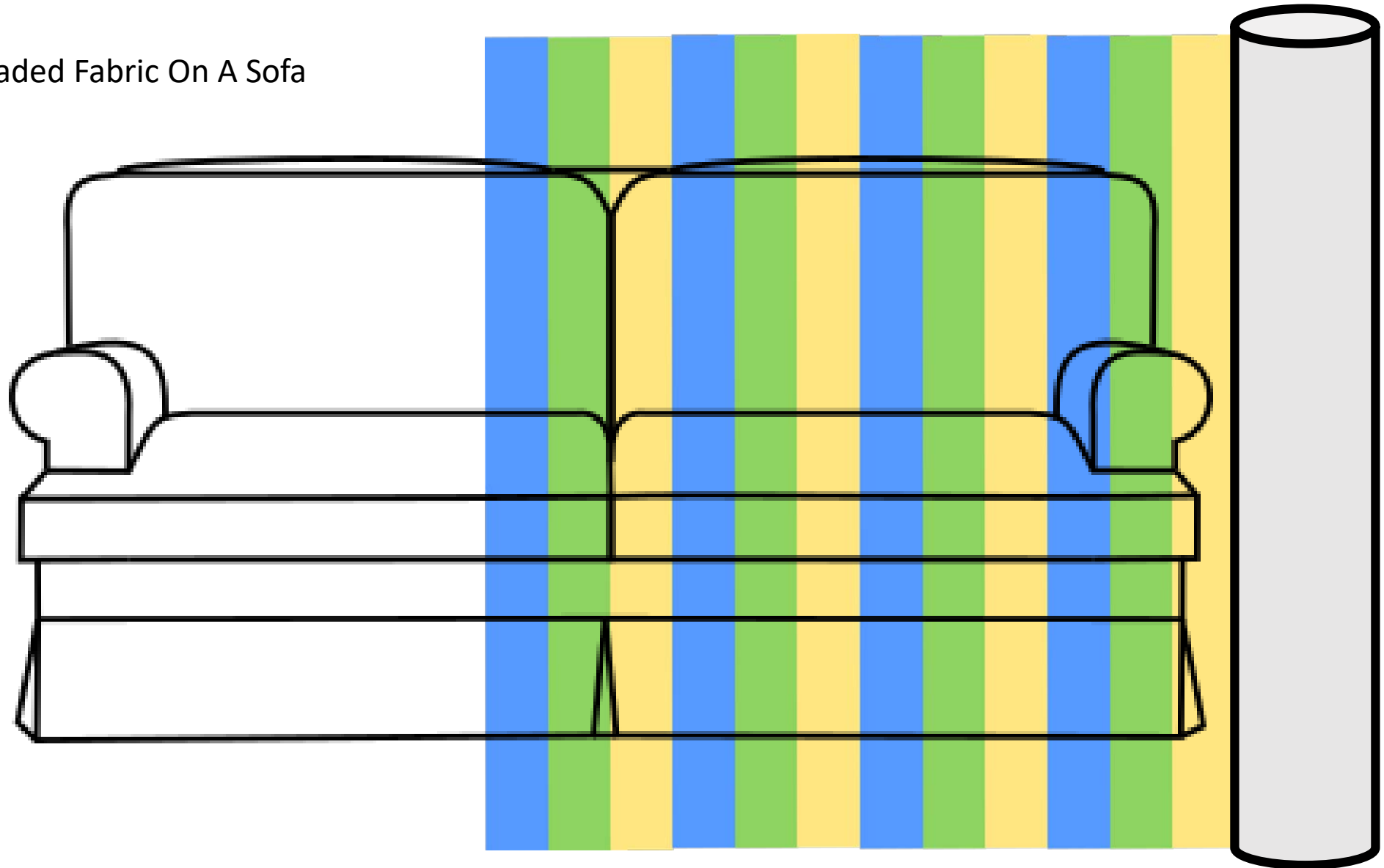
Railroaded Fabric



Railroaded fabric On A Sofa



Railroaded Fabric On A Sofa

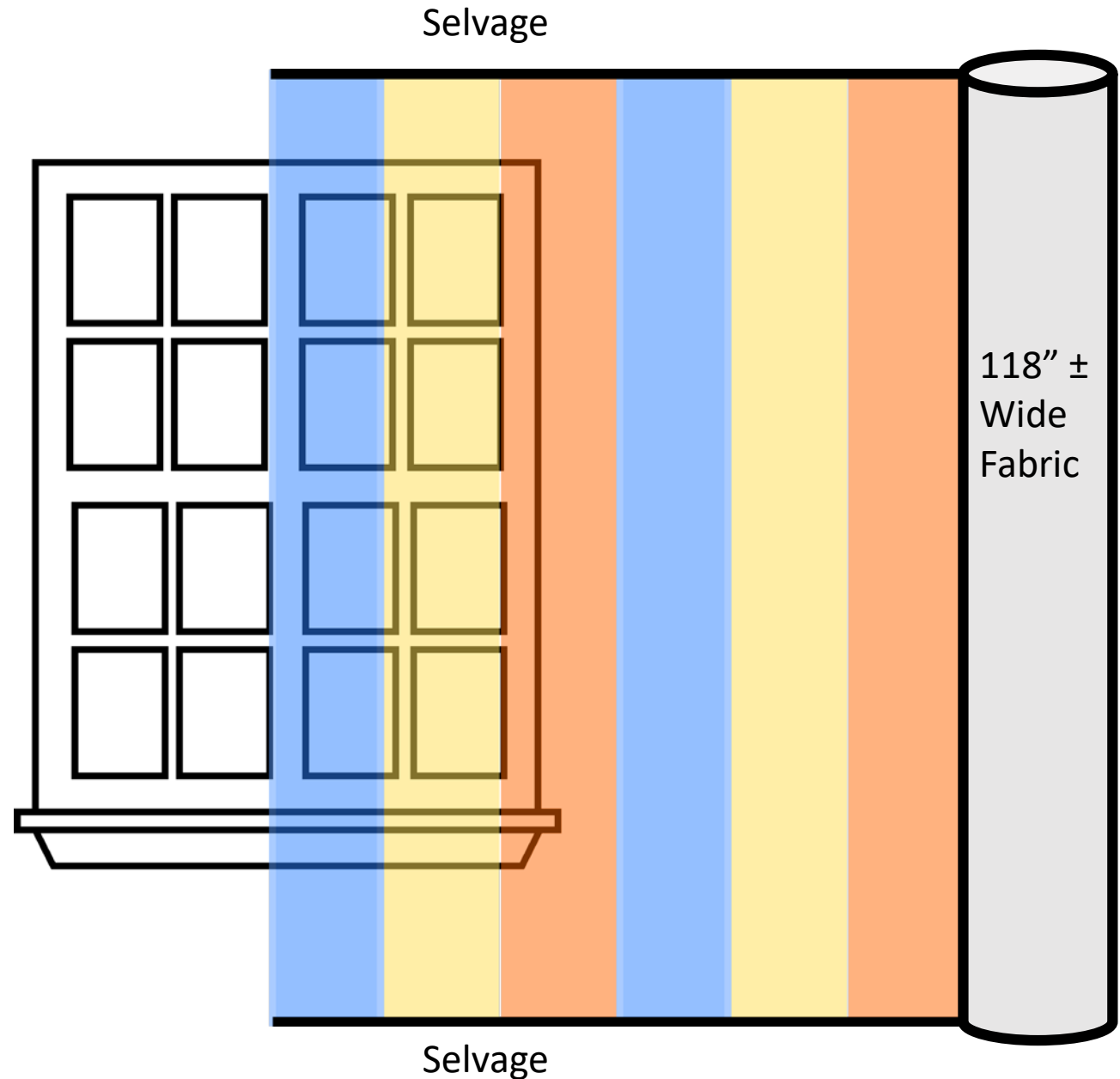


Railroaded Sheer Fabric

This diagram shows striped sheer fabric coming off of the bolt.

The standard is for the pattern on sheer fabrics to be railroaded so that the sheers can be fabricated without any seams.

Some sheers are not railroaded so always ask if the sheer is railroaded or not!



Drapery Panels fabricated with a railroaded horizontal stripe. Stripes don't always have to go vertical. By running the panels Up The Bolt, Cathy used a railroaded stripe (stripes going from selvage to selvage) to fabricate these panels without a horizontal seam.

Cathy Stich
Cathy's Curtains



Striped sheer panels fabricated using wide railroaded stripe fabric. The stripes run from selvage to selvage.



Image from Ebay

Sometimes a seam will totally ruin a design as is the case with this wide M'Fay Moreland valance used for these two story windows. The fabric was railroaded so that there wouldn't be any seams in the valance.

Rosemarie Garner
R Garner Custom Designs, LLC



Valance with shaped bottom.
Non directional fabric was
railroaded to eliminate seams.

Rosemarie Garner
R Garner Custom Designs, LLC





Photo Above
13 foot cornice in railroaded plaid – no seams

Sherri Bowman
Decorating With Style

Photo Below
Valance with fabric used both ways in the same
window treatment – Railroaded and Up The Bolt

Cathy Stich
Cathy's Curtains



This is a good example of choosing a fabric with a non directional swirl design perfect for railroading. The fabric selection fits the application. Seams in these giant swags would not have looked good.

Diana Nolan

Diana Nolan Custom Window Treatments



Faux roman shades with railroaded fabric.

Christina Price
Main Line Window Decor





Cathy Stich
Cathy's Curtains

Cushions fabricated by railroading
the fabrics. No seams!



Bonnie Haugh
Designing Windows



Railroaded Cornice or Pelmet

This is an example of using an Up The Bolt pattern repeat both ways. On the cornice the fabric is Railroaded to eliminate seams. The fabric on the drapery panels is used Up the Bolt. Not all fabrics can be used both ways.



Fabric Up the Bolt

Embroidered fabric from Villa Nova

Catherine Lepreux

Catherine Lepreux Interiors, UK

Stripes and geometrics are perfect for railroading. Here are 2 examples of headboards with railroaded fabric.

Karen Ballard
The Fabricsmith LLC
Design by S. Bogan Designs



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