



THE GREAT COVERUP

Chair covers bring off-the-runway style to special event seating

BY KELLY WARDLE



All dressed up: Chameleon's Chloe chair cover (left) and Wildflower Linen's chiffon cover (above) exude red-carpet chic.

THE latest chair cover styles are taking inspiration from the catwalk's lush fabrics and well-cut designs.

PASSION FOR FASHION New Chloe chair covers from Inglewood, Calif.-based Chameleon Chair Collection have caught the eye of fashion-forward clients, notes vice president of sales and marketing Rhonda Couchigian. Created to fit the company's Bella Fleur chair, the satin stretch-knit covers resemble a form-

Linen, finds design inspiration in the fashions worn by celebrities on the red carpet. "We have a flounced, layered chiffon design that's almost more of an evening dress than a chair cover—it was inspired by something I saw Nicole Kidman wearing at an awards event," she says. "Popular right now are fanciful, thematic chair covers with a sense of playfulness," such as the company's ballerina-inspired "Tutu" cover made from tulle embellished with sequins and rhinestones. More-masculine styles include tailored designs that "convey a kind of Savile Row look with classic herringbones and tweeds trimmed with leather," Martin says.

SLEEK SEATS While some covers completely conceal the chair underneath, adding simply a chair back or chair cap can enhance a stylish seat.

"Certainly when you have an ugly ballroom chair, the best thing to do is just cover it, but if the budget allows for a chiavari chair and a tuxedo or box-pleated chair back, it's a nice look," says Susie Perelman, owner of Pittsburgh-based linen company Mosaic. "We're finding people are paying more attention to chairs—they are a great way to put a personal stamp on an event," she explains. "A chair cover is the best place to see that because at most events, there are so many of them, and they make a tremendous impact."

At Henderson, Nev.-based Settings by Mona, "We're seeing more clients wanting the silhouette of the chair to show through while adding a soft color to the chair," says owner Mona Steck. The company's chair covers, available in more than

50 colors and featuring box pleats and a bow on the back, are made of a sheer cotton organza that enhances the chair underneath. Designer details are also in fashion, Steck says: "We are seeing more interest in our chair runners and chair ties with full-coverage embroidery, sequins and tassel trims."

MAKE AN IMPACT Perelman notes that because of the variety of colors and textures available, chair covers are a great resource for planners on a budget. "I think that the most bang for the buck is to use brightly colored lamour or bengaline—we recently did an event where we color-blocked the room in four colors using chair covers with a bengaline stripe, and that linear stripe down the back made a really terrific statement." Options for those low on funds, she says, include using covers on every third or fourth chair at a table, or covering the chairs at every other table, adding elegance without great expense.

Couchigian points to both the versatility and timesaving qualities of chair covers as a boon to event planners. "We just did an event in San Diego where the producers changed the look of the room five times without having to move the chairs—they put on covers in different colors, used chair caps, removed the covers to show the bare metal, etc. Chair covers can be turned over very quickly to completely transform the room." ■

RESOURCES *Chameleon Chair Collection*, 310/677-2500; *Mosaic*, 412/562-2880; *Settings by Mona*, 866/380-6222; *Wildflower Linen*, 714/965-7775



Fly style: Feathers add flirtatious flair to satin chair backs from Mosaic.

fitting designer dress. "We've taken references from couture fashion and brought them to the special event industry," Couchigian says. "People admire the chair covers the way they might admire a woman in a beautiful Chanel gown." The Chloe cover, which comes in silver, white, black and gold shades, is also available in a bar stool design, which clients "just swoon over," she adds.

Youngsong Martin, president of Fountain Valley, Calif.-based Wildflower