



Design teams are keen to use light colours in upholstery. Here, too, leather has a role to play.

IMAGE: FOUR SEASONS HOTEL GROUP



Cortina's secret weapon

Cortina Leather has built a strong partnership with Crypton, a provider of stain-, moisture- and odour-resistant solutions, and helped it adapt its technology to work on leather. Cortina has served the furniture market for 115 years, but this breakthrough has enhanced the popularity of its easy-clean leathers among furniture companies, especially those making product for use in high-traffic public spaces.

Cortina Leather has a secret weapon that it believes is helping it to make a series of breakthroughs in furniture market niches. Serving the upholstery industry since 1903, it has built a good reputation in providing leather for furniture in residential properties, hotels, bars, restaurants and coffee shops, offices, marine environments and healthcare facilities. Cortina is New York-based, but to be able to supply leather for such a wide range of projects, the company imports crust from Mexico and South America and finishes it at its own finishing plant in the town of Conneaut, Ohio. It also imports finished hides from Germany and Italy.

Sales vice-president, Paul Clynch, explains that work the company has done to help Crypton, a well established Michigan-based provider of stain-, moisture- and odour-resistant solutions, adapt its technology to work on leather, has allowed Cortina to make a particular impression on customers whose furniture will go into multi-user settings.

Crypton protects the leather from stain damage and

extends the life of furniture. This protection is available on around 50% of the 600 leather articles Cortina currently offers, and comes as standard on around 20% of them. It can't be used on naked, full-aniline products, only on semi-aniline and pigmented articles, but the company can engineer custom leathers in any hue incorporating the Crypton treatment.

"It makes the leather easy to clean," Mr Clynch says. "We have a global coffee-shop brand as a major user of our leather and the attraction is that its maintenance staff are able to clean the upholstery quickly and easily at the end of a long day, after multiple people have sat in each seat and all the spillages and marks that go with that."

Bright options

And because of its cleanability, leathers from Cortina can be used in public spaces in white, cream and other light colours, which designers like immensely. Paul Clynch relates the tale of a globally famous architectural practice



Leather finished in Cortina's own finishing plant in Ohio. The material uses Crypton technology to guard against stains and odours and is, therefore suitable for use in high-traffic areas.



High-performance top-grain leather powered by Crypton from Cortina's Florence range.

CREDIT: CORTINA LEATHERS

having its mind changed in favour of leather and against vinyl for an upholstery project at a major luxury hotel in Philadelphia at the end of 2017. The designers wanted seating in the restaurant to be white; the architects said that meant the upholstery had to be plastic. The hotel group protested because it felt, understandably, that vinyl would detract from the exclusive environment it wanted to create. "If you use mahogany and have high wool content in your carpets, you don't want vinyl upholstery," Mr Clynch says. "A high-end textile would work, too, I suppose, but definitely not vinyl. Everybody loves leather, though, and we were able to make it possible for them to use leather and stick to the plan of making the upholstery white."

He explains that it is sometimes necessary to demonstrate that it really is possible to clean the leather because customers are still not used to the idea. Leather from Cortina is also in use, and also in white, on chairs and sofas in a staff break-out area at the plush headquarters in Manhattan of a prominent business media organisation. Paul Clynch found himself summoned there one day because of complaints that the white leather was beginning to look dirty. "I went and told them they had to explain to their cleaning staff that they are able to keep the seats clean," he says. "I asked them to pass me a cloth, put a little, not much, washing-up liquid on it, and wiped a chair clean. Everyone could see the difference immediately."

Social need

Applying exactly the same principle, his colleague, sales representative Daniel Dietrich, believes Cortina Leather is close to carving out an extremely important new niche for itself: protected leather for use in seating in care homes for older people. He went recently to an exhibition in Savannah, Georgia, that showcases a whole range of solutions for care homes. A furniture manufacturer customer specifically asked Mr Dietrich to go and present Crypton leathers to representatives of care home provider companies attending the event. He was amazed at their reaction. "It really got to me," he says. "It's something that really hit me in the heart. Lots of these companies want to use leather in their chairs and sofas because it's beautiful and lasts a long time. But because older people sometimes suffer from incontinence, the companies wanted to know if our leather can also resist the challenges resulting from that, and I explained that, of course, they can."

Most families have, or have had, or will have relatives facing this sort of situation and Mr Dietrich says that his Savannah experience made him realise that there is a real social need here that leather can fulfil. Older people deserve the comfort and luxury that a leather armchair or sofa can offer them. They also deserve the dignity and respect that easy-to-maintain upholstery can offer. ☺