

METALLIC PRINTS

WHAT IS A METALLIC PRINT?

Pigments have long been used as beautiful and unusual surface colorants for textiles. When fine metallic particles are used in place of pigments, the effects can be even more dramatic. The reflective properties of these fabrics are indeed elegant, but they are also fragile.

The fabric below has a very distinctive look. This fabric is from Fortuny, Inc. Fortuny fabrics are created in Italy using long-staple cotton as the base material. The background dye and the gold print on the fabric are applied in a multi-step process. The actual dyeing and printing processes for these fabrics, all done by hand are closely guarded secrets. The processes are said to use only natural dyes.



Note: Some of the Fortuny fabrics are created without metallic pigments. This Textile Tip will cover only the metallics.

PROCEED WITH CAUTION

As our founder used to say, we need to develop a "healthy respect" for the fabrics

we help maintain. This is certainly true with Fortuny fabrics. The fabric on this page retails for \$400 per yard. The other Fortuny fabrics are similarly expensive.

MANUFACTURER'S CLEANING RECOMMENDATIONS

Fabric and furniture manufacturers tend to try to limit their liability by recommending only the very safest methods of cleaning. It is for this reason that so many fabrics are coded "S" (meaning "solvent" cleaning (dry cleaning) is the only acceptable method). A look at Fortuny's recommended cleaning guidelines may be helpful here. Their written instructions are as follows:

- *Do not wash or apply any water-based chemical to Fortuny fabrics.*
- *Do not steam clean.*
- *Dry clean only, using reputable firms; chemical used should be perchloroethylene*.*
- *Brush, or vacuum frequently to remove dust.*

(*Perchloroethylene is a common dry cleaning solvent that is similar to our ReZolv.)

Well-meaning though they may be, these instructions fall somewhat short in the "real world". When little Johnny spills chocolate milk on the Fortuny fabric sofa, perchloroethylene is not the ideal first choice for a spot removal product. Many of the most common stains that happen in the home are water-based or combination stains. As such, these stains are typically not removable by non-aqueous chemicals.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

We purchased a quantity of the fabric shown on this page and ran our own tests. Our tests showed that the fabric tends to dry crock (a characteristic which the showroom readily admitted). The colorfastness of the gold pigment was good in both water-based cleaning tests and solvent-based cleaning.

Our general recommendations, therefore, are as follows:

1. Always pre-test. Never assume that similar-looking fabrics will react the same. Fabrics can vary from one dye lot to the next (we've seen this several times).
2. Avoid rubbing as much as possible. This is especially important on fabrics with metallic pigments.
3. Light brushing with the fabric sponge is acceptable.
4. Kleen-Tec is a suitable cleaner, though it should be used sparingly.
5. The fabric seems to be colorfast to ColorReneu and pHnominal, but these cleaners should not be used unless absolutely necessary. Again, agitation (rubbing and brushing) should always be minimized
6. If general cleaning is required and dry cleaning does not seem to be a suitable method, pre-test your proposed wet cleaning chemicals and carefully explain the situation and your results to the client. Let the client make the decision.

FLAME RETARDANTS

As is true with any metallic-printed fabric, flame-retardants should be used with caution. The acidic nature of most of these chemicals can cause long-term corrosion of the metals. Our testing has shown that the gold in these fabrics will tarnish on exposure to most flame-retardants. The gold in some fabrics can also turn green from oxidation.

CLIENT CARE

It is best to make clients aware of the difficulties they may encounter when spot cleaning. Kleen-Tec is safe for these fabrics as long as it is used without rubbing. Vacuuming is one of the best and safest ways a client can help maintain these fabrics.

As mentioned above, the metallic pigments on Fortuny fabrics will dry crock. Heavy-handed damp dusting can also cause the pigments to dislodge, spreading them outside their intended patterns. Frequent light cleanings are preferred, rather than allowing the fabric to become noticeably soiled. Heavily soiled fabrics may not be correctable without causing damage to the pigments.

ALWAYS TEST CHEMICALS AND/OR PROCEDURES FIRST ON AN INCONSPICUOUS AREA OF THE FABRIC.