

Cleaning Chintz

A plain woven fabric of white, beige or light colored cotton, chintz originated in India. Patterns, often large Floral designs were originally printed using wooden blocks. These early chintz fabrics were used for drapes, curtains, bed spreads and similar home furnishings. Later they were used for clothing and upholstery fabric. Patterns have also gotten smaller and denser over the years.



Originally, the cotton used for chintz was not as refined as some other cotton fabrics. This less expensive cotton, together with the plain weave and the large prints that eventually came to be seen as gaudy, led to the adjective form of the word, chintzy meaning cheap or gaudily decorated and of a person, tight-fisted.

Some chintz is glazed or has a wax-like coating to the fibers making it shiny. This is also called polished cotton. These finishes may not be durable. A few decades ago, these were one of the most common problem fabrics for upholstery cleaners, although popularity declined in the 1980's and 1990's. But in 2014, one popular designer declared that, "Chintz is back." So, you may begin to encounter chintz and polished cotton in newer upholstery as well as older pieces.

The glaze often wears off in the heavy use areas,

but may remain on outside of arms and back. This can give an uneven appearance. Some glazes are removed by hot water, so don't expect the glaze to be there after the dirt has been removed. Either it was worn off or cleaned off.

To achieve this shiny, polished appearance, the fabric undergoes a two-step process.

1) Calendering is a process utilizing heat and pressure along with smooth rollers to achieve an enhanced sheen on the surface of the fabric. This is done by passing the fabric through two or more rollers, alternating hot on one roller and cold on the next. A pressure of 40 to 100 tons is applied by the rollers, and the combination of pressure and heat produces a shine on the face of the fabric. The fabric will be smoother and thinner.

2) Glazing (or Polishing) adds a couple of steps to calendering with the addition of friction and a starch, glue, resin or shellac, to produce a very high sheen. The process starts with cotton chintz (plain woven) which is treated with the shellac, starch, or glue prior to exposure to the calendering rollers. The fabric is then passed through the pressure rollers while the hot roller is rotated faster than the cold roller. The combination of chemical, heat and friction caused by the rotating roller produces an extremely high polish on the face of the material.

This luster will be fairly resistant to dust and spots, however, it is not always permanent. Normal use can gradually wear the sheen away, as will the application of agitation and chemicals used in cleaning processes. For example, polished cotton may lose its glazed finish on arms and heavy use areas over time due to exposure to oily soils and abrasive wear. Years ago procedures to attempt and replace the sheen were developed, but they were only partially successful, and not practical.

Other potential issues associated with glazed chintz and polished cotton include:

- Cellulosic browning, which is exacerbated by use of highly alkaline cleaning agents and slow drying,
- Shrinking

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- Dulling or loss of color in the printed pattern.

Although most chintz fits the description above, there are some glazed fabrics that are synthetic fibers rather than cotton and some that are solid color rather than printed.

So, how can you clean this potential nightmare fabric?

When dealing with a polished cotton, it is especially important to inform the customer of the possibility of the reduction (or removal) of the sheen and other anticipated limitations prior to beginning your cleaning procedures.

Avenge Fabric Prespray works well and is neutral. In some cases, the finish coating may still be present tend to resist water. A stronger than standard dilution along with heat provides more surfactant and helps drop the surface tension low enough to penetrate the fibers and reach the soil.



Another option is to clean with foam and then rinse with HWE. Foam can be created with Bridgepoint Fabric Shampoo that is diluted with hot water and then whipped into a foam. Apply the foam and work into the cloth with a horse hair brush. Extract with Avenge Clean Rinse.

The pattern may appear faded due to color loss from exposure to UV light over time. Cleaning cannot

replace lost color. However, often the issue is the background field has browned or soil has obscured the color. Adding Boost All can assist in bringing the color back to life. Be careful not to overdo the use of Boost All or any oxidizer on cotton as it can weaken the fabric. When done carefully, the results can be impressive. Check out these before and after photos from upholstery instructor Steve Andrews -



Before



After

-Scott Warrington