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Fabric Finds

An eco-conscious website that salvages designer fabrics from overstock

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Designer fabrics have a limited lifespan in furniture showrooms: When a custom piece is upholstered, a designer cancels an order, or a new line is introduced, overflow fabric is stacked in showroom storage closets and forgotten. At least that was the case before James and Ewa Powell stepped in.

The couple started purchasing leftover fabrics from furniture manufacturers in North Carolina, amassing a collection of bolts and short ends from designers such as [Cowan & Tout](#), [Lee Jofa](#), [Schumacher](#), [Designers Guild](#), and [Pindler & Pindler](#) to sell in their Charlotte, North Carolina, shop and on their website, [Modern-fabrics.com](#). Fabrics are priced at 50 to 80 percent below retail. But making a profit isn't the only reason this couple went into business.

"We hated seeing top-quality designer fabrics being tossed into Dumpsters, headed for landfills," says James Powell. "We knew we could start a business that helped the environment and turned a profit." Though they don't have exact numbers, James and Ewa estimate they have diverted tens of thousands of yards from the waste stream since 2007.

New fabrics arrive weekly, and availability ranges from a few yards of colorful wool felt to entire leather hides ranging in size from 45 to 70 square feet. But make no mistake: Modern Fabrics specializes in high-end designer textiles, including European brands with innovative patterns and technical construction. In fact, James and Ewa go to great lengths to ID the fabrics, making it easier to find fabrics by designer or pattern—you can even locate old favorites that have been discontinued.

"We have limited amounts of each fabric and, once it sells, we can't just reorder a new bolt," notes James. "Our inventory moves fast; even we have no idea which fabrics will be here from one day to the next."

[Modern-fabrics.com](#)

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