



Frosted and stained glass alternatives that look good and are affordable

May 13, 2013 - Design / Build

Whether re-purposing space or resolving issues with new space, the most common reasons for having to make changes to windows, glass doors, conference rooms, showers, etc. are the need for privacy, to hide a bad view or to add a decorative element to ordinary glass panels. Until recently, these have been expensive changes to make. Replacing a clear glass door with frosted glass is at least \$300, a leaded glass or decorative door is \$500+ and a stained glass door is much more.

Decorative and privacy window films are the affordable alternative to expensive frosted, leaded and stained glass. The films come in two basic types; adhesive-free vinyl films and adhesive-based poly films. Adhesive films have been around for many years. The original adhesive-based film used for decoration and privacy was contact paper; which was hard to apply, even harder to remove.

In the last 15 -20 years, the home and residential markets have recognized the advantages of adhesive-free "static" vinyl films over the sticky films. Because they are appropriate for both temporary and long-term use, commercial, medical and government buildings have become big adopters of adhesive-free films to add privacy and décor.

Time/labor savings, ease of application and appearance are the three main reasons for the switch from adhesive to adhesive-free films.

Adhesive-films need a professional or experienced installer to apply. When it is time to remove the film, many more hours of labor are needed to scrape the film from the glass. Adhesive-free films are considered a do-it-yourself (DIY) product and can be applied by almost anyone. Years later when it is time to redecorate, adhesive-free films can be removed in minutes without any tools or adhesive-residue left on the glass.

The appearance of privacy and decorative films is important. Like most things, window films vary in quality. Cheap films look cheap and are usually imported from Asia or Germany. The reason cheap films look cheap is due to thin ink deposit/lay down and weak color pigments used. The USA manufactures higher quality films that are very realistic-looking.

As a rule, adhesive films are produced on long rolls and have an ink lay down of 2-8 microns. Adhesive-free films are produced in sheets using a different production method that has an ink lay down of 20-28 microns. The thicker ink lay down produces richer and more vibrant colors. Industry opinion is that adhesive-free vinyl films have a superior appearance when compared to adhesive poly films.

There is a difference in heat and energy savings between vinyl and poly films. Adhesive poly films are typically 2 mil thick and made in two styles, energy saving or privacy/decorative. Energy saving poly films are see-thru or have a mirrored finish and are designed to reflect heat. Decorative and privacy poly films have little heat and energy savings, the film is 2 mil thick and has a high thermal transfer rate. Adhesive-free vinyl films are 7-8 mil thick and have a low thermal transfer rate.

Meaning the vinyl film acts like an insulator on the glass, slowing down the radiant heat buildup and keeping the room cooler. Both types of films filter UV rays to protect carpet and furnishings from fading.

As every reader of New York Real Estate Journal knows, problems are a part of the business. Having reasonable solutions for those situations are key to being successful. When the problem is windows or glass doors that need a decorative lift, need privacy or to hide a bad view; investigate adhesive-free "static" vinyl films for the answer. You will find affordable solutions that look good and provide excellent value. View Window Film Comparison Guide

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