

Industry News

Slobproof collection features Crypton fabrics

By Gary Evans

SILVER SPRING, Md. — If you're married to a slob who wipes greasy pizza fingers on the drapes, have two active and dirt-prone kids and a dog given to vomiting, what do you do?

Deborah Wiener, an interior designer in this Washington suburb, first wrote a book about it: "Slob-proof! Real Life Design Solutions." Then she designed a collection of upholstery around it.

The line, called Slobproof, was introduced at last year's Architectural Digest Home Design Show in New York. The collection includes 30 pieces, with sofas retailing from \$1,599 to \$2,499 and sectionals from \$2,499 to \$4,599. Styles are clean, soft contemporary and modern.

The line uses Crypton performance fabrics, which are stain-resistant, antimicrobial and moisture proof.

There are any number of fabrics with those characteristics, but Slobproof's covers are particularly supple with "a really soft hand," said Sharon O'Brien, an interior designer

who works with Wiener. Fabrics include a soft twill, suede, chenille and wovens.

"We're a residential design firm and we design for lots of families with children and pets," O'Brien said. "People really do have a lifestyle and they want their room to work for them," she said, but they don't want to spend their lives keeping it clean.

Wiener looked at outdoor and commercial grade fabrics, such as those used in health care, before getting together with Crypton for a collection of more than 50 fabrics.

Thus far, the company has relied on guerilla marketing to get the word out and the Internet (www.slobproof.com) for sales. But O'Brien said the goal is to land a few large national retail accounts and a big box chain (which it's now working on).

"The reason we did this is that in this economy we're not ready to open a bricks and mortar furniture store for a small boutique furniture line," she said.

Instead, Slobproof came up with an interesting merchandising tactic. While it looks for

national retail placements, it has put seating pieces in the showrooms of flooring retailers on a consignment basis.

O'Brien said the plan is beneficial to the flooring stores and to Slobproof because flooring companies usually have the space and need the furniture to make their stores more attractive. And it gives Slobproof a place to send potential online customers for the tush test to check out the goods in real life.

Partly because of the name and Wiener's vibrant personality, the line has gotten press coverage with articles in the New York Times, the Washington Post, the New York Post, the Boston Globe, Real Simple magazine, the Houston Chronicle and other media outlets.

In addition to the upholstery collection, the all-woman company also is working with QVC on a bedding and tabletop line. The plan is to eventually extend the brand into other categories such as rugs.

Besides the stain, moisture and germ-resistant features of the fabrics, O'Brien said the upholstery line includes details such as down filling, tie-downs



Deborah Wiener, left, founder of Slobproof, and colleague Sharon O'Brien approach business with a sense of humor. They're sitting on one of the sofas in their line.



Slobproof's James Chair features Crypton's Floretta Confetti cover with a contrasting welt and buttons in Suede Peapod.

for the pillows ("so you don't come home and find the kids have made a fort of them,"), welting and other features.

O'Brien won't divulge who is manufacturing the furniture, but said it is domestically made in Thomasville, N.C.