



## Smooth shades

INNOVATION: ENERGY-SAVING KEY-ACTIVATED SUN BLOCKERS

Eco-developer Phil Sherburne's new hotel in Yountville, **Bardessono**, achieves much of its green cachet—it's currently under review for platinum LEED certification—by doing without. The \$500-a-night guestrooms have no drapery, no bedspreads, and no carpeting.

This unusual design choice was based on an old *60 Minutes* episode Sherburne had seen in which those decor staples were revealed to be the most polluted places in a hotel room. Forgoing them at Bardessono eliminated the need for deep cleanings that release volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and make hotel rooms less allergenic. (Drapery, carpeting, and

bedspreads are notorious havens for dust mites.)

But the drapeless look created a design dilemma. Without window coverings, the rooms lacked privacy, as well as protection from the wine-country sun. After researching his options, Sherburne concluded that the best way to keep heat out of a room—and substantially reduce the need for air-conditioning—was to put a barrier outside the window. In Seattle, where he lives most of the time, Sherburne discovered exterior venetian blinds in two downtown buildings and tracked down their German manufacturer. The custom-made product the company came up with opens automatically

when guests put their key in the door and closes when they leave. The blinds also retract automatically if winds exceed 35 miles an hour, and they can be operated manually.

At first, guests tend to be put off by the drapeless look, says Sherburne. "They often say the rooms feel too austere, as if something's missing." But it doesn't take long to win them over, he adds. "After five minutes of explanation, they get it and ask, 'How can I do this in my own home?'"