

OCTOBER 2004 £3.20

# ELLE<sup>®</sup>

TREAT YOURSELF  
TREAT YOUR HOME

# DECORATION

## SAVVY SHOPPING

GORGEOUS GLASSWARE  
THE BEST ACCESSORIES  
WALLS & WINDOWS SPECIAL  
TOP TILES TO NET CURTAINS!

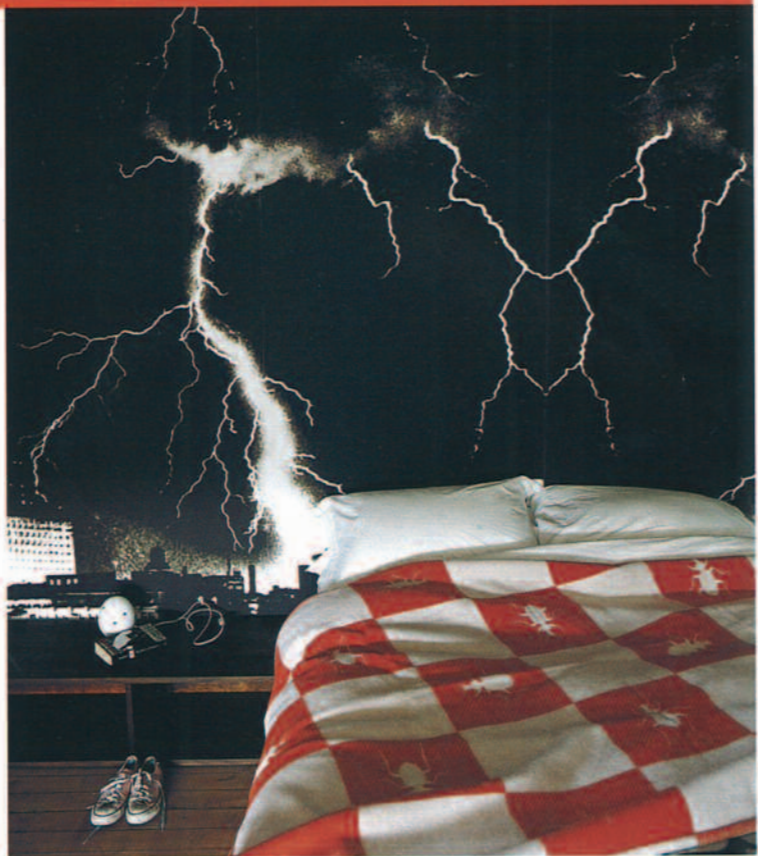
### STEP INSIDE

DECORATION IS BACK!  
31 WALLPAPERS  
RETRO TO FLORAL  
CLEVER COLOUR COMBINING

INTERIOR DESIGN  
AS SEEN ON TV  
GOOD, BAD OR JUST PLAIN UGLY?







**LEFT:** Abigail surrounded by the books and photos she uses as inspiration for Showroom Dummies  
**ABOVE:** her bedroom is decorated with an electric storm mural ('I think it's funny to put it over the bed'); a checked cashmere blanket with a bug print; and a prototype egg-shaped table lamp.

## ABIGAIL LANE

Artist Abigail Lane (one of the young British art set) uses photography and rather gothic imagery to produce wall art and textiles through her company Showroom Dummies. This is her home-cum-studio.

**Tell us about your home.** 'It's 560 square metres of live/work space in an ex-Burberry warehouse by the canal in Hackney Wick, east London. When I moved in four years ago, it was derelict and full of junk, with no gas or electricity, so I had to do a lot of work on it.'

**What's it like to have home and work in the same space?** 'I hate the nine-to-five normality of a regular studio existence, so it made sense. Whether I'm cooking or making art, it can all be part of the same process.'

**How would you describe your style?** 'That's impossible to do. It's a culmination of 37 years of being in the world. I think you can tell a lot about where someone's coming from and going to by looking at their bookshelves. My business partner Brigitte says hers is full of diet books at one end and cookery books at the other – mine's slightly more worrying, going from scene-of-the-crime tomes to magic!'

**Tell us about Showroom Dummies.** 'It's a design company and an extension of what I do. We – that's myself and co-partners Brigitte Stepputtis, head of couture for Vivienne

Westwood, and Bob Pain, who runs specialist printing company Omnicolour – launched the company in October 2003. The product range is an ongoing thing, but we create photo-image murals, furniture, wallpapers and textiles to order. It's principally my aesthetic and style, with, broadly speaking, Brigitte overseeing textiles and Bob on the screens and wallpaper.'

**How did it start?** 'It was very casual at first. I met Brigitte at the Vivienne Westwood shop, and we became friends and produced some fashion designs together – including uniforms for the launch of the BBC4 arts channel.'

**Does the collection relate to your art?** 'I'm not claiming these pieces are art, but the crossover is there. Showroom Dummies is a much easier way of being creative – more lighthearted, whereas with art there's always the fear of being misunderstood. I'll always approach things in an artistic, ideas-based way, but why not make commercial wallpaper too?'

**And the murals?** 'I like the 70s idea of having a life-sized slice of the world in your house, but to do it now feels a bit kitsch. Still, I think black

and white images of disasters and extreme weather are glamorous in a movie sort of way. The possibilities for puns are endless – a storm above the bed or an explosion around a fireplace. I also prefer not to make anything too comforting.'

**Where does your inspiration come from?** 'I've always taken photographs for my artwork. The images are a mixture of photos and cuttings accumulated over the years, which I blow up on the computer and mess around with. The 'Erupting Volcano' image on my fireplace wall is from an old book on weather.'

**What are you working on now?** 'A Christmas package for Mulberry, based on the image of reindeers and bones. There'll also be cashmere blankets featuring incubuses [demons]. Art-wise, I'm going to make a sculpture using black crows, a vitrine and bird shit!'

**And the future?** 'I'm following my instincts and developing the company day-to-day.' **DECO** ▸  
*All designs are made to order. For details, email [info@showroomdummies.com](mailto:info@showroomdummies.com) or visit [www.showroomdummies.com](http://www.showroomdummies.com). Murals from around £900 for a 450W x 300cm H size.*



# WHO'S NEXT



'I THINK YOU CAN TELL A LOT ABOUT WHERE SOMEONE'S COMING FROM AND GOING TO BY LOOKING AT THEIR BOOKSHELVES.'

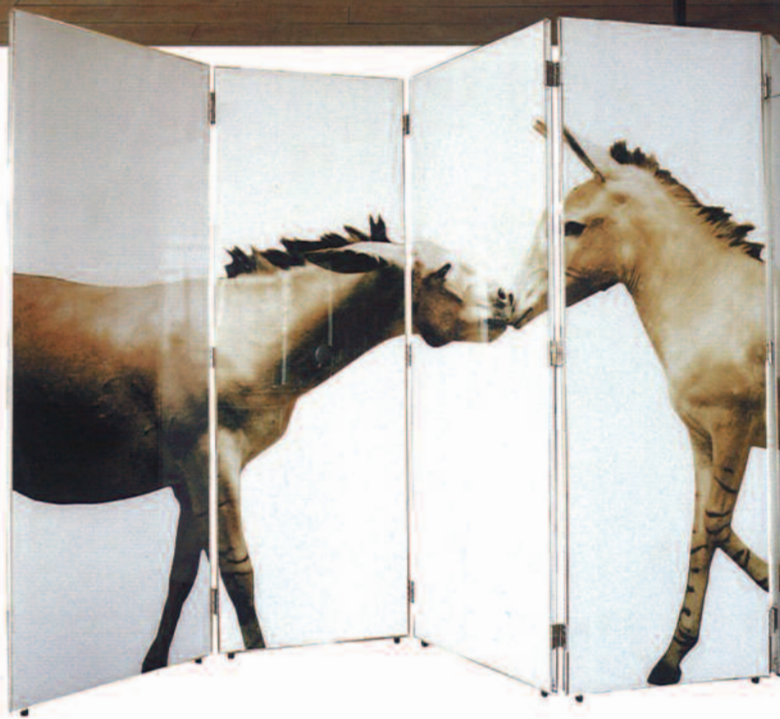


**THIS PAGE:** in the hallway, decorated with a woodland mural, a framed photo by Abigail (entitled "It was on the tip of her tongue") hangs above a corrugated card bookcase, a gift from a friend.



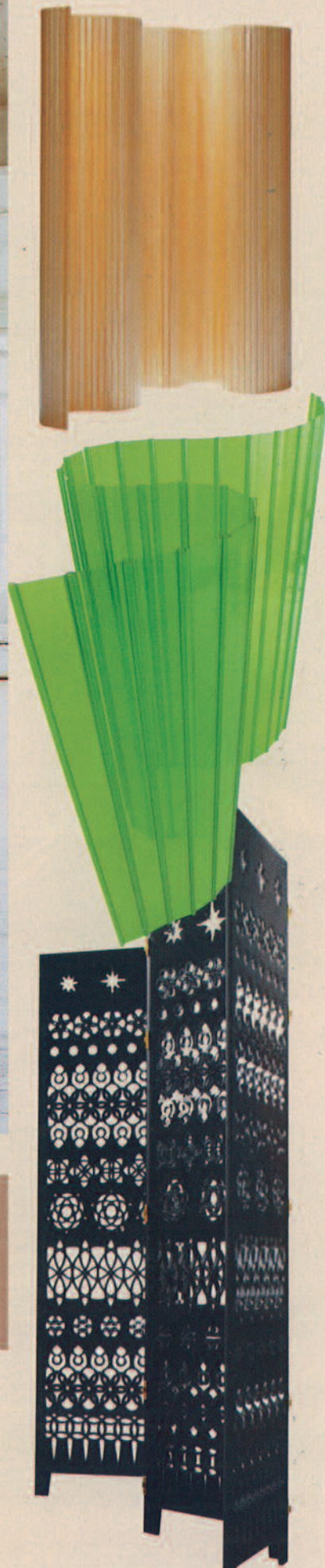


'I LIKE THE IDEA OF HAVING A LIFE-SIZED SLICE OF THE WORLD IN YOUR HOUSE.'



**TOP LEFT:** the lounge walls are covered in silkscreen-print 'Skeleton' wallpaper by Showroom Dummies. On the floor is a huge cowhide rug from a leather wholesalers in Dalston. **TOP RIGHT:** Abigail's fireplace is surrounded by an 'Erupting Volcano' mural. 'The fireplace was made as a prop when we launched the company - I only make things I would want to live with,' she explains. 'Sometimes I pile plaster bones on the floor to make a "bone fire" in front of the "Skeleton" tiles.' **ABOVE:** Showroom Dummies' photo-print Perspex 'Kissing Asses' screen. **LEFT, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:** the same screen in Abigail's open-plan lounge and kitchen, where the warehouse's pipework lends an industrial feel. Four glass-topped 'Fly in the Sky' tables are pushed together in the dining area. Glass and American black walnut 'Lizard' chairs and a matching table nestle on a landing. Designs for antler-print wallpaper for Mulberry in Abigail's studio; the matador print on the floor, called 'Bull Rhapsody', is a new piece.





## SCREENS

IF YOU DON'T HAVE ENOUGH WALLS...

As the designer of this bespoke screen (above), artist Abigail Lane, says, 'Screens provide an opportunity to have images in a room with no wall space. I think they've been mistakenly forgotten for some time. I also like the way an image is broken by the panels to become three as well as two-dimensional.' (For more of Abigail's designs, see page 61).

Practical and mobile, folding screens offer privacy in large rooms, and can also be placed in front of windows. Their zigzag or sinuous geometry makes them beautiful pieces of furniture. Classic examples include Alvar Aalto's flowing pine screen (top right). ▷

**TOP RIGHT:** 30s pine screen by Alvar Aalto (200W x 149cm H), from £725, Skandium. **CENTRE RIGHT:** Perspex screen by Tom Dixon (100W x 180cm H), £225, Selfridges. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** cast-acrylic 'Diva' screen by Adam and Victoria (220W x 188cm H), £4,100, Mint and Twentytwentyone.