

Symbol-minded designs

FINISHING TOUCHES

Barbara Chandler

AUSTRALIA colourfully comes to London this month with the launch of a new range of home furnishings inspired by modern Aboriginal art. This coincides with the Hayward Gallery's impressive Aboriginal exhibition on the South Bank.

Vibrant sheets, cushions, towels and rugs feature the work of Jimmy Pike, who now lives in a bush camp on the edge of the Great Sandy Desert, where he was born 55 years ago. In 1980, Jimmy, convicted of tribal murder, was sent to Fremantle prison, where he served four years. Here he met art teacher Stephen Culley, who, with partner David Wroth, founded Desert Designs in 1983 to gain a wider audience for Jimmy's work.

"We formally taught Jimmy how to paint," Stephen says, "but he taught us about art." The symbols, lines and motifs that make up Pike's intricate patterns go back 40,000 years, to the creation myths the Aboriginals call "dreamtime". The same legends have influenced Doris Ginginara, who also paints for Desert Designs, from the outback mining town of Mount Magnet where she lives with her French husband.



Devine and Gwenda Hall, directors of Desert Designs for Europe, are enthusiastic about a design and marketing exercise which has involved eight different manufacturers, including Rectella for household textiles, Bomat for rugs, and Poplar Linens for towels and napkins. "There's something wonderfully friendly about patterns that are generations old," says Alan. You can even buy a DD silk tie, like the ones Jeremy Paxman often wears on TV. More details from Desert Designs, 67 Neal Street, WC2; or phone 0280 824926.

AFFORDABLE Aboriginal art is the speciality of 36-year-old Rebecca Hossack, who was one of the first to bring it to London in 1988. At her galleries in Windmill Street, W1 (071 409

3599), and at 197 Piccadilly (entrance in Church Place), she has paintings from £100. Or there's a poster book of 10 ready-to-frame prints for £19. The rich earthy pigments of terracotta and sienna are a perfect foil for today's natural furnishings. "But just remember, the paintings came first," Rebecca stresses.

"Aboriginal art is the last great art movement of the 20th century and will outlast any passing furnishing fashions." She is also selling coolamons — curved wooden containers used for carrying anything from bread to babies. They are beautifully decorated on the underside with distinctive dot designs, and look splendid hung inverted on the wall like a shield (£275).

The fine batiks made by

the Utopia Women's Group, who live around 250 miles north-east of Alice Springs in the Northern Territory, are exhibited in virtually every major Australian art museum. Rebecca Hossack has textile wallhangings from £200, and is currently exhibiting paintings by Emily Kame Kngwarreye, an 80-year-old Aboriginal artist who has never left the desert for more than a day or so.

ARATJARA — Art of the First Australians, is at the Hayward Gallery, SE1, until 10 October. The gallery shop sells authentic hand-painted boomerangs from Torres Strait Island in three sizes from £10.95. A 4ft didgeridoo costs £120. Plus posters, cards, prints and T-shirts.

STALL OF THE WEEK



DOLLY has been a fixture at Woolwich Market since she was nine years old — a mere 60 years ago. Dearsley's fish stall, number 92, has passed down through the family from grandmother to mother and now to daughter Dolly, who goes off to Billingsgate market at 5am to catch the best fish.

She sells shellfish, wet and dried fish — fresh crabs, red snappers, herrings, Scottish salmon — at very reasonable prices: extra large prawns 60p a half pint, lovely salmon trout £1.50 each. Dolly says that markets are not as good as they used to be because of the growth of supermarkets, but Woolwich is still one of the best.

● Woolwich Market, Beresford Square, SE18, Mon-Sat 9am-5pm, half-day closing on Thursdays (Dolly is not there on Mondays).

TRICIA PHILLIPS

Danny Elwes



Desert delights: top, Alan Devine and Gwenda Hall with furnishings based on Aboriginal designs; above, Rebecca Hossack with a decorated curved wooden container

Sales Snips

Allied Carpets (phone 0345 212400 for nearest store). Half-price 80 per cent wool Craigmoor twist, £7.99 sq yd. High Sierra all-wool Berber, £8.99 sq yd (from £13.99). Free fitting on orders over £399.

Texas (phone 081 200 0200 for nearest store). Crown Matchpoint wallpapers, £1.99 (from £4.99). Coloroll vinyls, £4.99 (from £6.99). Many other branded bargains. Crown Soft White emulsion, £8.99 (from £12.99).

The Bed Centre, 514 Victoria Road, South Ruislip; 081 845 9176. Up to 50 per cent off Sleepzee; solid pine bunks from £139; two-in-one beds from £159.

Living, King's Mall, King Street, Hammer-smith; 081 748 3061. Half-price made-to-measure curtains; 30 per cent off large selection of ready-mades.

Amazing Grates, 61-63 High Road, N2; 081 883 9590. Ten per cent off fireplaces/accessories.

Shop Talk

● **DON'T** miss the August exhibition reflecting the four elements at Paperchase, 213 Tottenham Court Road, W1. Earth contributes twigs and branches for baskets, screens and tables (from £30). Also sawdust, coconut and banana leaves for vases, bowls and pots, plus inexpensive papier mache and banks of beautiful hand-made papers. Air is reflected in silver, white and transparent shades for mirrors, muslin, glass, pewter and paper (eg white hand-pleated paper lanterns from £25). Fire burns in fierce hues of vermilion, saffron, fuchsia and purple colouring primitive masks and carvings. Representing water are shells and bleached driftwood, plus fish motifs for candleholders, chairs, and trays.

● **STITCHES** and Daughters, of Greenwich and Blackheath, now has a third shop at 36 Horselydown Lane, Tower Bridge, SE1; 071 357 6905: antiques, dried flowers, china, stylish home accessories.

● **ELIZABETH** Eaton, Knightsbridge interior decorating company for more than 50 years, has moved to 85 Bournemouth, SW1; 071 730 2262. Speciality is decorative ormolu chandelier chains. ● **ROMAN** Tiles & Bathrooms (Lea Bridge Road, E10) has a new large showroom at 140/144 Uxbridge Road, W13; 081 567 3666: special offers include 25 per cent off tiles if you buy a bathroom suite.

● **LET** it Loose is a personal service for chair and sofa covers: your furniture never leaves home; 071 582 1437.