

Try decorating your home walls with fabric

By Diana Fagen Johnson
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Decorating the home need not always be the complicated business of furniture marts and wallpaper samples. A trend-setting shop in suburban Wilmette, called Clothworks, heralds a different approach to that old problem of what to put on the walls. Owner Kristina Lapham contends that putting fabric on walls is inexpensive in comparison to more traditional solutions. "For \$25 or \$35, you can change a life style," she says, "and you have the advantage of being able to take apart your wall hanging for cleaning or convenient packing when you move."

Custom-made by the customer. That's the theme of the shop. And what the customer can produce includes graphic wall panels, wall hangings, stuffed animals from cut-and-sew kits, and quilts. Many of the projects require only a bottle of white glue, some stretcher sticks, and a staple gun to produce professional results.

One morning, customers were amused by the whimsical window display of multi-colored stuffed elephants arranged by Barbara Doepke, window-designer for the shop. Clusters of baby elephants were sitting back-to-back; some were swinging on wooden swings. (The elephants sell for \$20 complete, or you can make one for the price of the Butterick pattern and materials.)

The shop stocks more than 300 fabrics from 30 countries, ranging from Metsovaara of Finland, Stromma of Sweden, and Indonesian batiks, to French country prints and Indian screen prints. They come with an easy-care finish, are 48 to 60 inches wide, and are priced at \$7 to \$14 a yard. Graphic wall panels

Chicago



Chicago's Clothworks: everything from fabric flying fish to wall cloth coverings

run from \$25 to \$120 per panel.

This morning, Kristina was stitching a quilt of sky-blue and white waves. She sews standing up with the quilt resting on one of the two white formica "activity islands" in the shop. These islands furnish space for cutting fabric and for demonstrating construction techniques. Kristina recommends sewing the fiber-fill backing to the top and bottom of the quilt in one process rather than basting it all first. Later, she will whip the edges closed.

Kristina is not new to sewing. Even in high school, she was an accomplished seamstress, although she was always frustrated by her inability to find the quality fabrics she needed.

Some years later, while pursuing a degree in business ad-

ministration at Harvard, she discovered the Fabrications shop in Harvard Square, a store specializing in fabrics by the yard. She not only continued her sewing, but for her graduate paper on a small business, she used Fabrications as her subject. From then on, she wanted her own shop.

After a stint at IBM in Boston, Kristina worked as an assistant buyer at Macy's in San Francisco. Then a relocation of her husband's work brought her to Chicago. The time was right and Clothworks was born. With the help of the Fabrications people, she established the Wilmette shop.

Clothworks next plans to stock natural fabrics suitable for clothing, but the emphasis, says Kristina, will still be on new developments in the decorating field.