



MARCH 20-26, 2009

Friday

Dress
for two

Stunning style statements
for mothers-to-be 46

SHAWARMA FOR THE SOUL

Beautiful bits and pieces

There is a sign next to a mosaic mat created by Vanessa Anderson that reads, 'Stand on me.' It makes a change for parents visiting her stall as they don't have to instruct their little ones 'not to touch'. Rather, they can jump and stomp about on her mats because they are strong and long-lasting. They make great showpieces and add vibrant colour to a bare and bland area.

New Zealander Anderson does a range of mosaic work – from jewellery to accessories. But her mosaic mats and mirrors are particularly eye-catching. Anderson comes from a talented family. Her husband, Murray does oil paintings and her six-year-old son helps his mom smash the tiles for her projects. "He loves it!" she says.

The Andersons have lived in Dubai for nearly six years. Arriving in the UAE, Anderson wanted to start a hobby. "I've always enjoyed looking at mosaic art and when a friend suggested I do a course, I thought I should give it a go. It gave me great delight to find that people like my work," she says.

Anderson says that she never thought she would be artistically creative. As a child, she had an ear for music. "I find it amusing [that I got into mosaic art] because as a child I loved playing the guitar and tinkering around on my father's instruments. I was never the 'arty' type. I still love to play guitar and sing. When I discovered my love for mosaic art, I realised I must be creative across the board! I find doing mosaics relaxing and therapeutic; it's like doing a jigsaw puzzle. The only difference is that the outcome is my own creation," she says.

"I do not remember exactly when the idea of making mosaic mats came to me. I often hold up a piece of wood and wonder what I can make with it. Murray likes to tell people that I mosaic everything that isn't moving. For me, mosaic mats are the most interesting items to make. I have clients all over the world. One lady bought a mat to take back to her beach house in the Mediterranean. They are



a point of interest in a house and can be put anywhere. Some people have hung them above doors and one man bought two to use as bed headboards! The most popular spots though are outside the front door, in the bathroom or at the bottom of staircases," she says.

Anderson often cuts her mats in the shape of a semi-circle. "They look more elegant in that shape as opposed to a square or rectangle. I make the bases out of medium density fibreboard. The wood needs to be sized and prepared to ensure that the

tiles will stick and that wood won't warp. I also apply chemicals to help it stay water-resistant. Although the bases are water-resistant, I wouldn't recommend leaving it outside where it may be continually hosed by a gardener. However, because the surface is waterproof, they can be mopped or wiped clean. The tiles used are either porcelain or ceramic or sometimes a mix of both. I also use mirror, glass, beads, paua – anything and everything that I have available at the time," says Anderson.

Anderson adds that the mats are



Vanessa Anderson started making mosaics after moving to Dubai. Her art has acquired international demand.

pretty resilient and that they will only break – like most things – if dropped. "I have only ever had one person come back to me to have their mat repaired," says Anderson. "Once they are lying flat, they are very hardy."

Anderson has a few memorable moments from her mosaic-making and two in particular: "A man once came up to my stall and told me that he didn't like mosaics in general, but that he thought mine were exquisite! It took me a few seconds to register that it was a great compliment.

"I also remember when Murray and I made a beautiful mat for a lady. It was made in three parts and had to fit exactly into a cut-out area of concrete on her front porch. Murray did an excellent job of measuring it and it turned out perfectly. When it was complete and put in its place, the lady started crying because she was so happy with it. That emotion was really special for me. Seeing how my work can make someone happy makes the effort well worth it."

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– Preethi Janice D'Sa is a Dubai-based freelance writer

TECH NEWS

A BOOST FOR CALL-DODGERS

Almost since the dawn of the telephone, people have sought to avoid the unwelcome caller, relying on technologies from the answering machine to caller ID. But pranksters, harassers, bill collectors and telemarketers have found ways to circumvent caller ID by hiding their identities – listing a telephone number as "private caller" or "restricted" with their phone company. Now, new services are aiming to outfox anonymous callers.

TrapCall, offered to US telephone subscribers by TelTech Systems Inc., based in

New Jersey, diverts an anonymous call to an 800 number and then discloses the incoming number and name to the intended recipient, says Meir Cohen, president and co-founder of the company. The caller hears a normal ring tone and is unaware that the call is being traced to its source.

In the four weeks since TrapCall was introduced, 200,000 people have registered for the service, which is free. TrapCall is now available to Verizon Wireless customers in the US.

The billing names and addresses come from commercial databases.

Google Voice offers a similar service. ■

– Elizabeth Olson/New York Times News Service

HERE'S A LOOK AT AN INGENUOUS INVENTION!

Joshua Silver, a lifelong tinkerer, was fiddling around one day with a cheap, water-filled lens he'd built as an optics experiment when he noticed something interesting.

By adding or removing water he could not only change the power of the lens, he found, but he also could use it to very accurately correct his own nearsightedness when he looked through it. "I was struck by the quality of the vision I could get with a device I could make for pennies and I could adjust myself," remembers Silver, an Oxford University atomic physicist. "My immediate thought was, 'If I can correct my own vision so easily, could other people?'"

Eyeglasses using Silver's simple, self-adjusting technology are now poised to revolutionise the way the world's poor – and quite possibly the rest of us – see, potentially coming to the aid of billions who struggle to squint enough to farm, study, drive or hold down any job. "With this technology, you can make your own prescription eyewear," says Silver, who has so far turned out about 30,000 pairs of the cheap glasses. He hopes to find funding to distribute a billion pairs to people too poor to

afford glasses or living in places like sub-Saharan Africa, where the ratio of opticians to residents is purportedly 1 to 1 million.

Silver's glasses are now in use in 15 African and East European nations. Thick lenses sit in dark tortoiseshell frames flanked with a pair of syringes on either temple. By turning dials, the wearer pushes more or less fluid into the lenses, protected between two hard polycarbonate covers, until the prescription is perfect. The syringes can then be removed or left in place to allow continuing changes.

But these glasses have quite a few drawbacks. They don't correct astigmatism. Critics also have argued that the self-adjusting feature could keep people with eye diseases like glaucoma from visiting eye doctors who could catch their problem.

Silver dismisses that as a major concern because in the locations most likely to benefit from the technology "there are insufficient professionals and no infrastructure" anyway to catch such diseases. Perhaps most troubling, both the size and price of

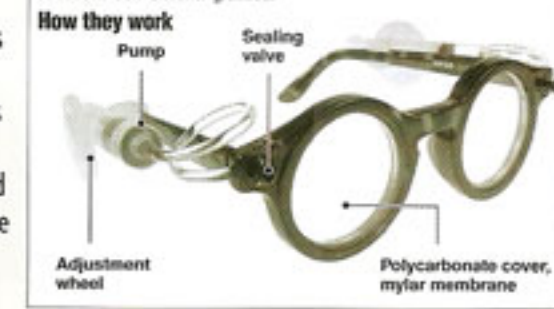
the glasses remain daunting: The current model is going for \$19 a pair. Silver is working on versions, with hopes of getting the cost down to about \$2. ■

– Laurie

Goering/McClatchy-Tribune Information Services

Eyewear for the needy

A British physicist has invented glasses that he says can provide improved vision cheaply to the billions worldwide who do not have access to conventional glasses.



Got a personal story or advice that you would like to share? Something quirky, funny, sad, mad, profound, poignant or a combination of a few or all of these? Then send your ORIGINAL ideas and perspectives to Friday's 'Collage' by e-mailing friday@gulfnews.com