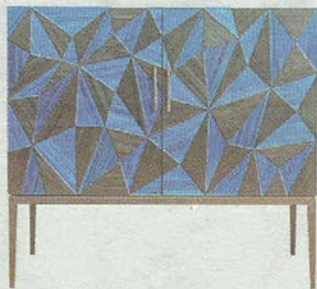
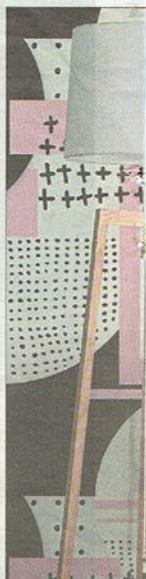
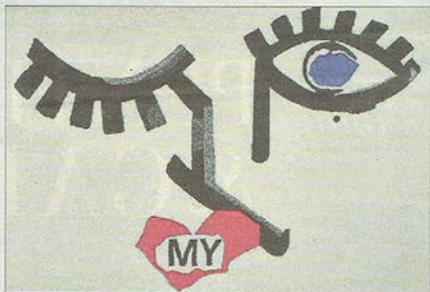


**Modern marquetry:** the Avila cabinet by Chelsea-based furniture maker Simon Orrell, with abstract pattern and bronzed steel base, £8,250 (simonorrelldesigns.com; 020 7371 9339)



**Right:** Quentin Jones for Habitat hand-knuffed wool Eye, Eye, My Love rug (70 x 240cm), £450. Cushions from the collection are £60 (habitat.co.uk)



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## Being alive

Splasy abstract art on wallpaper, rugs and cushions adds drama and echoes new blockbuster shows at Tate Britain and Barbican. By **Barbara Chandler**

**A**BSTRACT art is the focus of two blockbuster summer shows that have just opened in London. Living Colour at Barbican Art Gallery runs until September 1 to celebrate the life and work of American painter and collage specialist Lee Krasner (1908-1984), a pioneer of Abstract Expressionism whose work was too often eclipsed by her marriage to the movement's founder, Jackson Pollock. "I like a canvas to breathe and be alive," she said. "Be alive is the point."

Meanwhile, at Tate Britain until August 26 is the first major retrospective for the 65-year career of British artist Frank Bowling, celebrated for physically pouring, dripping and spilling paint on to large canvases on the wall or floor, to make, for example, his hazy, luminous "maps".

Born in Guyana in 1934, when it was British Guiana, Bowling moved to London aged 19 and studied at the Royal College of Art alongside David Hockney and RB Kitaj. Now 85, he is still painting in his south London studio. With these two shows in mind, we celebrate abstract art in the home.

At home, abstract patterns ooze marks and brush strokes can enhance mood and add drama and mystery, as meanings are never quite clear. Such patterns usually started life as artworks, adding authenticity and depth to furnishings and tableware. They work best when viewed flat on a cushion or pillow, or even better on a large scale for a duvet cover, rug or wall panel.

Launching at Habitat this week is a capsule collection by London artist Quentin Jones. His feisty female illustrator and animator is in high demand from fashion magazines and luxury brands including Chanel, Louis Vuitton and Victoria Beckham. Her zany, multi-layered style fuses film, photography, illustration and collage. Now comes

decoration: vivid jagged rugs and cushions, with broad brush marks, enigmatic scraped-back lettering and the odd surreal eye. Colours are basic. "I'm drawn to the monochromatic and primary palettes of the Bauhaus and the Constructivists," she says. Creating the rugs, priced from £450, was an exciting chance to ratchet up the scale of her art (habitat.co.uk).

"Abstracts have a timeless quality which will ride the fashion waves," remarks interior designer Lisa Mitchell (interiorstylesstudio.co.uk). "And they're versatile, adding edge to a traditional interior, or impact to a plainer contemporary look."

**Artists draw on the countryside for inspiration** for their emotive abstracts for furnishings. Charlotte Beever is in Devon, with a beautiful fabric straight off Dartmoor and splashes bedlinen currently at Made.com. Or get an edge take, with hints of graffiti and peeling paintwork, from maverick Maxine Hall of Blacktop Interiors in Matlock, Derbyshire (blacktop.co.uk).

In Glasgow, FI MacDonald has grown a distinctive softer watercolour look for her brand Bluebellgray (bluebellgray.com). Guildford-based Jo Bound set up Boeme in 2011, developing a painterly aesthetic splashed and streaked with brilliantly blended colour. She makes mixed media panels with paint, ink and collage. These become patterns for digitally printed linen/viscose fabrics, and top-quality velvets (boeme.co.uk).

Thanks to the internet, Londoners can access Mind the Gap, a quixotic pattern brand based in Transylvania, where director Stefan Ormenisan is inspired by his region's "gypsy spirit and diverse ethnic heritage". His team of artists, textile designers and découpage experts have created The Art of Abstract wallpaper collection, at £132 for three rolls (mindthegap.com).

Stefan explains: "The world's most experimental artists have made abstract art their playground since the Forties



**Top:** The Art of Abstract wallpapers from Mind the Gap are priced from £132 for three rolls (mindthegap.com)

**Above:** Rita Does Jazz cushion, £90, from The Monkey Puzzle Tree (themonkeypuzzletree.com)



**Left:** 1.2-litre Jug, £25, (3.5-litre, £28) from the Bohemian Summer range at John Lewis (johnlewis.com)

— from the free-spirited Kandinsky to the chaotic canvases of Pollock. We're capturing that excitement as an escape from the real world."

Wallcovering specialist Arte's new Vanguard collection has large, bright, geometric blocks of colour infused with Fifties and Sixties abstract art. In particular, an Expressionist pattern references the Italian architect Gio Ponti. It's printed on the kind of hi-tech mesh textile used for trainers, for a subtle texture. "Our new designs have their roots in the Bauhaus, a powerful history," says Frederik Decoopman, head

**Above:** the work of Bedfordshire artist Alistair Covell is translated into hand-knotted carpets, or "woven paintings". Email aalstaircovell@gmail.com

of design at the Belgium-based company (arte-international.com)

Ceramicist James Pegg (jdpceramics.com), based at The Arches Studios in Peckham, is making cups and planters to celebrate Lee Krasner in the Barbican shop. Pegg's unique way of working resembles the action painting of the American Expressionists. Carefully chosen colours are splashed into a mould before each vessel is slip-cast in porcelain. Patterns have a spongy texture, with no two the same. Chichester potter Hannah Townsend (hannahtownsend.co.uk) works for weeks on the

abstract prints that she transfers to her huge vessels via her moulds, then adding finishing brushstrokes.

Light-hearted and playful, the Nalvo Shapes collection of wallpapers at Murals Wallpaper, £26 a square metre, evokes the paper cut-outs of Matisse (muralswallpaper.co.uk; 0151 708 6400). Designers Guild has a small edit of fabrics by the late British painter and printer Howard Hodgkin, whose broad brush strokes would spill off boards on to their frames picked up from charity shops and sales (designersguild.com).

Finally, using the Amazon Handmade platform, Birmingham artist Tim Taylor will paint you an abstract watercolour on archival-quality paper, supplied in a mount ready to frame for £45 (amazon.co.uk).

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