

MARCH 31, 2007 SECTION I

digs

DESIGN INTERIORS

GARDENS SPACES

**STRUCK BY
LIGHTING:**
Jil Smith creates
artsy, happy
lampshades

PLUS: Hoppy
Easter décor

April gardening





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JIL SMITH CREATES ARTSY LAMPSHADES THAT LIGHT UP LIVES

STORY BY NICOLE TSONG SEATTLE TIMES STAFF REPORTER
PHOTOGRAPHY BY ALAN BERNER SEATTLE TIMES STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER



TOP: Jil Smith is surrounded by her creations in her Green Lake showroom.
BELOW LEFT: Smith's lampshades dry in her studio as they're assembled.
BELOW CENTER: Lampshades dot the ceiling in her showroom.
BELOW RIGHT: It's not sheepskin, but it is a fanciful sheep-as-meat lampshade.

JIL SMITH CREATES ARTSY LAMP THAT LIGHT

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Shades of happiness

Jil Smith's hands are swift and precise as she cuts paper, using an Xacto knife to carve the shapes. While the colorful forms can be as simple as a graphic red flower enhanced with brown diamond-shaped leaves, designs of complex chandeliers, sassy shoes and sea creatures also unfold.

The forms come to life when glued on their ultimate destination — lampshades.

Smith makes lampshades by hand, building each from such basic materials as metal, paper and glue. But her paper artistry turns a functional piece into a creative romp.

"I think these (lamps) make you happy," she said. "In a few places in my neighborhood, I can see them hanging in the window, and they really look happy."

Smith, owner of Insatiable Studios, has been making lampshades by hand for a decade, the last four years in her Green Lake studio. Her lampshades show up in some Nordstrom dressing rooms and restaurants around town, but she is best known for the luminous lanterns and lampshades at Dahlia Lounge in Seattle.

Her tiny showroom is stacked floor-to-ceiling with brightly dressed lampshades, ceiling mounts and pendant lamps. With a flourish, Smith moves shades on and off a bare floor lamp.

Shoppers can buy straight off the floor — the average price of lamps is \$225 — or commission a custom piece for \$75 more.

The process starts with metal frames Smith orders in custom shapes. She glues layers of white kinwashi, a Japanese paper, on the frame to form the shade's base. After the lampshade dries tightly like a drum, she moves it to her "color room," where she cuts paper and applies colorful shapes with a paintbrush dipped in a mixture of water and glue.

Her studio floors are sticky, and paper scraps cluster around the floor lamp she uses to test her creations and dry the lampshades. Lampshades in progress hang from the ceiling. Huge drawers filled with high-end paper occupy one corner.

Some papers are too dark to use. The color from one type of Tibetan paper runs when wet, so she lets the paper bleed in striped lamps to create

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ARROWS POINT THE WAY from the front of Smith's Green Lake house to the showroom in back.