



# A Passion for Pattern

Decorative artist Lara Koplin paints a different kind of canvas.

by Valley Haggard

**I**ntertwined vines creep across the bedroom wall and peer around the corner into the bathroom. A massive Parcheesi board sprawls across the living-room floor. A child's toy trunk becomes a magical treasure box alive with a rainbow of shapes and colors. If it's a pattern, Lara Koplin can paint it.

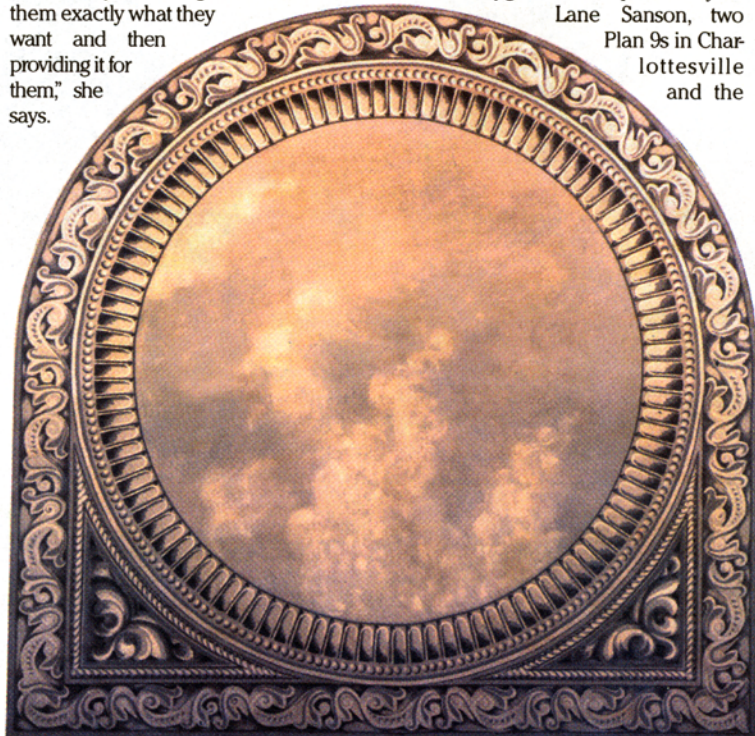
For the past 15 years, Koplin has painted her way through the interiors of Richmond's residences and businesses, leaving walls, ceilings, floors, mirrors and furniture marbled, wooded, striped and ultimately transformed. Although she's adept at drawing and creating form, repetition inspires her. "If there's a common denominator in my work, that would be pattern; that's my forte," she says.

After receiving a double major in crafts and art history at Virginia Commonwealth University in 1992, with an emphasis on textiles and fabric design, Koplin specialized in painting floor cloths, teaching several rounds in that craft at the Visual Arts Center. Through the years, the genres of Koplin's floor cloths have ranged from mosaic tiles, architectural references, historically decorative, Chinese lattice designs, Greek keys and Persian patterns. Each is rendered on canvas or oilcloth, creating durable, unique and highly detailed art for the floor.

Proficient at painting faux stone,

marble, wood and inlay as well as textured walls, Koplin is game to tackle anything related to interior design. She also has a knack for interpreting the desires of the homeowner. "I like talking to people without an artistic vocabulary, drawing out of them exactly what they want and then providing it for them," she says.

Koplin's professional artistry is evident on the walls of the mikvahs, or women's ritual baths, at the Chabad Lubavitch in both Richmond and Fairfax, on the walls of Look salon and World of Mirth, in all of the signage at Bygones, and previously at Lane Sanson, two Plan 9s in Charlottesville and the



## ■ artisan

Grower's Exchange. She has painted a floor cloth for the VCU Alumni House, designed rooms at the 2002 Symphony Designer House and has shown work at the American Craft Council show in Baltimore. She was commissioned by Agecroft Hall to paint shields of two family crests that are currently hanging there, and she has presented her work in a holiday sale at the American Craft Museum in New York.



In January, when Koplín agreed to head up the children's quilting project for Mary Munford Elementary, she decided she'd better learn to quilt. As she learned the craft on the fly, her gift for pattern, layer and texture in paint was easily translated to fabric, and the school-wide quilting project was a success. She is expanding her range with layering and fabric to include both hand appliqué and unique vessels layered with foil, wrapping paper and wall paper that is sandwiched with acetate and crocheted together.

"I'm making objets d'art," Koplín says. But her originally designed genie bottles and vases do a lot more than sit on the shelf looking pretty. "I like things to function," she says. "I'm not the quilt-on-the-wall person. I'm the quilt-on-the-bed person." ■