Digital makes it magical

Designers are turning hi-tech in 2008, using computers to help create fabulous weaves, wallpapers and interiors. **Barbara Chandler** reports

Jo Angell's pretty Ribbon patterned wallpaper (£25 a roll) for Graham & Brown

Urban Graffiti roller blind (£126; www.digitex.com)

Still, a new year, and what are the most exciting trends that will shape Lombard's homes in 2008? Which are the names to watch out for — And where are we going to shop? Computer technology has revolutionised design, allowing designers to create fabulous weaves, wallpapers, flooring and furniture. But the technology goes much further than every aspect of creating.

Room planning has embraced "virtual reality", permitting them to see imagined structures before we have to commit. Computer panels and tiny bulbs, sensitive systems and screens, and suggest design possibilities at the click of a mouse. Some product code retrieves chair ergonomically changing from and colour according to what is sitting there. For example, Aura Ashworth's Al Light has five sensors that allow it to change its shape to suiting "artificial intelligence".

Pattern power will continue to rule our homes as bold, colourful and often intricate motifs spread over walls, floors and furniture. Wallpaper will mark a modern magic with metallic and geometric designs — for inspiration look at award winning Kenya Hakworth's work at www.principalstore.com. Or Jo Angell's pretty Ribbon patterns for Graham & Brown's new non-wallpapers. Their feature birds, a favourite subject for [illegible] (020 [illegible]; www.grahambrown.com).

Watch out for massive murals, sequestered since again by digital technology that can easily alter hues, wide and colour. Leading the field is Digitex (020 [illegible]; www.digitex.com). Digital printing will put patterns onto ceramics, tiles, blinds and other surfaces as clearly as a photograph. See, for example, custom tiles and papers by Dominic Crisman and the enhanced computer graphics of Alice Shirts printed on tiles and chinaware (www.crisman.com; www.alicemarts.com). Or a subtler note, touch-me textures will be everywhere, from cut pile carpets and moulded ceramics to **luxury** sheers with hybrid and knotted designs in wool, silk and hemp, and geometric "textured" patterns. Metallics will adorn all surfaces.

Global is the keyword. Designs which continentally around the world created in one country, made in another and sold everywhere. Websites with new technology are more interactive. Go and viewing this month will be www.[illegible]. It will compare prices, design and service over a range of home suppliers. Then you will be able to "drag and drop" options into an easily created plan — or an uploaded picture — of your own room, and get your design type.

In the vanguard of design technology will be furniture, lights and accessories made to "hear, interpret", the 21st century way forward. Confusingly, this technique is also known as laser manufacturing and rapid prototyping. A computer-controlled laser makes objects from a very hard plastic, layer by layer and all in one piece. Products seem fragile but have a carefully computed structural strength. Now for 2008 see Jamie Hayasaka's Monarch stacking stools with sweep images of butterflies (available through www.whitechurch.co.uk); hybrid, butterflies and bugs will be big motifs everywhere throughout next year.

Lombards' rooms will be increasingly eclectic, with mixing as a style statement. Street boutiques will be driven by the enthusiasm of individual entrepreneurs (for example, Andrew Ying at 20c in Soho, who has drawn together top talent from the RCA, wonder-shop.com). Larger design specialists will fight their corner. Thomas Cundy's SCP now has a shop in Westbourne Grove.

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Matthew Hilton armchair with solid wood frame. Leather patchwork upholstery by fashion designer Laura Ashley. From £[illegible] (www.matthewhilton.com)

Wallpaper from the Ensemble collection (£12.95 a metre), available in opal, grey or turtle (www.crisman.com)

Jamie Hayasaka, from Finland (right) and his butterfly-print stacking stools (below, pole-on application; www.whitechurch.co.uk)

Giles Wilson Copp has invented the Smart Board, a line cupboard that converts a dining table and four chairs

Birds and bugs will be all the rage this year. This dramatic feature wall (from £21 a square metre) can be adapted to suit any size of room (www.digitex.com)

Mackintosh Wooden Chair (£63 each) by Gendall & Ford in polypropylene, suitable for internal and external use (www.parsons.co.uk)

Unique coffee table by Karim Rashid (£874) from Parsons & Parsons (www.parsons.co.uk)

Erica Maberly and her dazzling metallic and geometric wallpapers (from £35 a roll; www.principalstore.com)

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