

DIVIDE AND CONQUER

BY ROSEMARY KNOWER, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Using an elegant screen to emphasize a space is an old decorator's trick. Screen panels can be used to set off a space within a room, to shield your porch from the sun (or the neighbors) or to embellish a garden area or a patio — the uses are endless. Companies on the Web offer creations from around the world in styles evoking most periods of decorative art history. It's a good idea when you're Web-walking for a screen to make sure you have the dimensions you need handy; many Web sites allow you to order the individual panels so that you can fit almost any space. Another tip: be sure to ask about shipping costs and whether your screen will require assembly.

www.craftmark.com has screens with traditional "scrap screen" designs taken from Victorian antique prints and drawings. The company also offers make-your-own screen kits, which include routed wooden boards with predrilled hinge holes, heirloom canvas panels and instructions and tips for making and assembling your own screen art.

www.heartyyogi.com is the home of Sunburst Screens, which are based on traditional Japanese shoji screens, but the central panel is curved at the top. The central image is a radiant sun, and the translucent screen is made of vinyl-coated fiberglass, rather than rice paper, "for durability." The company will trans-

fer custom images for you if you want to design your own.

www.maskedflowerimages.com is a vast site with a number of unusual screens: An African-themed carved screen with a sensual pattern of tiger and cheetah markings, wicker and rattan screens in styles from "Gone-with-the-Wind" to "Casablanca," beautifully painted "trompe-l'oeil" screens, wrought iron screens that hold votive candles, a Barbie screen with a mirror and vinyl pockets and screens that hold potted plants or small drawers.

www.thejapaneseconnection.com has screens made by the famed Nozaki family, which has practiced the craft of "Tategu" — making shoji doors, windows and screens — for 350 years. The Nozaki family uses only the choicest cedar, Japanese cypress, spruce, redwood, paulownia and willow, and the site has good illustrations of a number of different styles.

www.e-mosaik.com, specializing in the art of Morocco, offers Moorish-influenced screens in wrought iron and wood, many of which look as if they belong in the graceful gardens of the Alhambra or the harem of a sultan. All the screens are hand made, and the intricacy of the work, especially on the four-panel Moucharabie room divider, is astonishing.

www.artfiberglass.com offers lightweight, translucent fiberglass panels in a number of styles, including whales, birds, butterflies, grapevines and the planets. According to the company's slogan, "Art Fiberglass can be made into anything you can imagine!" The company not only makes screens but also wall panels, inserts to improve the appearance of fluorescent overhead lights and shower doors.

www.shutterhut.com specializes in plain, elegant, louvered Plantation shutters hinged together in sets of three or four panels to form screens. They take custom requests, including for wood species (any hardwood), louver size (they can be either fixed or moveable) and colors of paint and stain.

Finally, no mention of room screens and dividers on the Web would be complete without a nod to Baltimore's homegrown art of screen painting, as pertinent to the rigors of city life as it ever was. While most of us think of screen painting as being for the front windows of a street-front row house, the art can also be adapted to patios, urban porches and funky inside rooms. A few of the sites that link to those who practice and teach this art are: Tom Lipka's (<http://mywebpage.netscape.com/screenpainter/>), www.goddessdesigns.com, Dee Herget's work at www.screenpainter.com and links to others on www.celebratebaltimore.com. •