

MOST INTRIGUING PEOPLE



Photo by Andrew James

Jill Abelman Downtown's Organic Glamourist

By Melinda Sheckells

Three renderings on the wall of Jill Abelman's new showroom chronicle the moving of her business, Inside Style, from a sleepy business park a few miles up the road to these new digs downtown. What's shown in the final panel is a storefront complete with fresh, new signage—a dream board of sorts, and a hint at what's to come. “The exterior is next,” are the hopeful words on the frame.

Abelman took over the 65-year-old building in September. It sits along the Main Street corridor between Wyoming

Avenue and Charleston Boulevard, amid a ramshackle collection of discount furniture stores and tire shops, among other signs of urban blight that have plagued downtown over the last 20 years. In this area, even something as simple as a new sign and fresh coat of paint is an accomplishment to be heralded. But Abelman's studio offers an even greater spark than that. It's a showcase of good design that will soon include a retail store as well.

While the nearby Fremont East district has been rapidly gaining new tenants, this area has been slow to develop. Abelman went out on a limb, moving her 7-year-old interior-design business right into its epicenter. Hailing from Southern California where such studios are plentiful in culturally rich communities, Abelman hopes to create a similar synergy in her new neighborhood.

Things weren't always so optimistic. Her dream of owning a space was put on hold for several years while searching for the right location at the right price, and also while weathering the recession. Abelman says her many out-of-town clients—as well as the ability to tackle smaller projects at a reasonable price—kept Inside Style alive. Things are improving rapidly, she says, but business has changed. “People are now asking, ‘How can you make my old house new?’ Before, they would just get rid of that house and move on to the next one.”

Abelman's self-described “Organiglam” style fits in nicely as a way to spruce up an existing interior. Think a warm, whitewashed wooden bookcase accented by metallic vases and a bold red chair—part earth mother, part showgirl. That unique aesthetic—a mix of organic elements with glamorous touches—helped Abelman become one of the most sought after (and last standing) interior designers in the Valley.

While many floated away once hard times hit, Abelman credits her 13 years in town and great reputation as reasons her business was able to stick it out. “Keep in a positive place,” she says, “and do the very best job you can with what is on your plate.”