

Portrait

JEFF CANE

An Englishman in L.A.

BY SUSAN DICKENSON

JEFF CANE IS the Englishman of “An Englishman in L.A.,” designer and maker of realistic European archival art re-creations on tiles, wood tablets, platters, candles and parchment prints.

Cane, who was born and raised in London, first came to know Los Angeles in 1991 while visiting a friend. In the years leading up to that visit, Cane had turned an early career as a club disc jockey into a vocation that involved broadcasting via telephone answering machines. For six years, he profited from humorous program sketches he wrote in the style of Monty Python and Benny Hill. Satisfied with his success and ready to try something new, he began thinking about a change of scenery. It was during the 1991 trip that Cane decided to trade London for the City of Angels.

Soon after his move, he launched a business making personalized documents and wedding certificates using handmade gilded parchment paper and gained a celebrity following.

to another and highlighted their life achievements.”

Not long after, a colleague invited Cane to join her booth at a gift show and challenged him to come up with something a little more commercial. His first product was an authentic-looking aged wooden tablet with parchment art. In time he learned how to apply the historical images, documents and themes to platters, framed prints, art cards, candles, cement tiles and masonry crosses. Today, most of Cane’s products feature old artwork found in old U.K. bookstores and on the ceilings and walls of old churches. Everything is designed and developed in-house and made in America.

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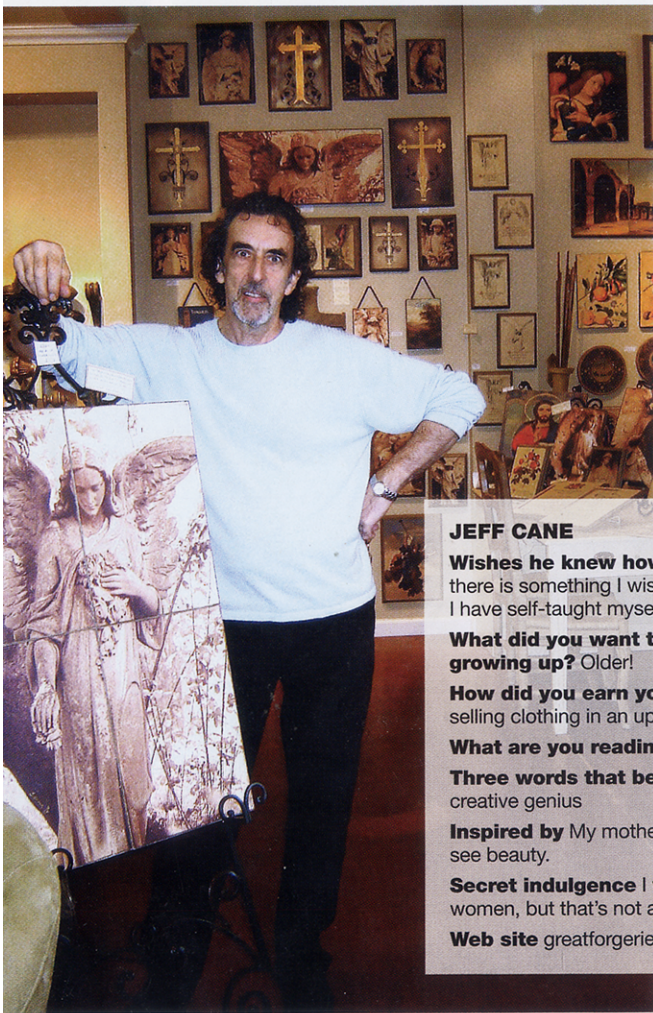
His re-created artifacts have been carried in several catalog collections including Ballard Designs and Horchow. In 2004, he described his “relics” to an L.A. Times reporter as “something that looks extremely real, like it costs a fortune, but doesn’t; something a burglar would stuff into his coat liner if he came across it at a Beverly Hills home.” One tile design is called “Stolen from

Windsor Castle,” so named because the 6-inch square tile is surrounded by aged pieces of terra cotta “to make it look as if it had been taken from a castle wall.”

One of the company’s most successful lines to date is a series of platters, tiles and wood tablets with Cane’s own photographic images of angels and crosses from statuary and tombstones in London’s Highgate Cemetery. For Cane, putting his angels into so many homes and knowing how they affect people emotionally is one of his greatest career rewards. E-mails and correspondence from buyers of his work indicate the angels and inspirational tablets are especially popular as gifts:

“Jeff, I purchased one of your marriage certificates at one of the happiest times in my life. I then had a dear friend pass away and another friend gave me one of your angels, and today I went into one of my favorite stores in Santa Clarita and was amazed to see all of your pieces on display. I was looking for a gift for my father and found your wooden ‘Footprints in the Sand’ plaque... He is a man of great faith and was diagnosed with cancer two days ago. This will have such meaning to him at this time.” — Lisa

Today, the Englishman lives in Sylmar, Calif., in a house decorated in a style he describes as museum shabby-chic. In his spare moments, Cane enjoys spending time with his three dogs, having Saturday morning coffee on Sunset Plaza in West Hollywood, and watching any film directed by Mike Leigh. He loves “books, books, books, museums, designing, people-watching hiking, photography, tennis and boxing. And,” he added, “did I mention books?” ■



JEFF CANE

Wishes he knew how to I can honestly say that if there is something I wish I knew how to do, I learn it. I have self-taught myself everything in life.

What did you want to be when you were growing up? Older!

How did you earn your first paycheck? Legally: selling clothing in an up-market menswear store.

What are you reading right now? *War and Peace*

Three words that best describe him Unique creative genius

Inspired by My mother. She always wanted me to see beauty.

Secret indulgence I was going to say great-looking women, but that’s not a secret.

Web site greatforgeries.com

“I thought L.A. needed a combination of European history, personalization and a gift,” Cane said. “What I created to fill this void was parchment poetry. Being a good writer and not a bad poet, I set about creating a parchment document that had a three-verse poem, each verse starting with the recipient’s initials. The poem was a love gift from one person