

# cosmic collab

Lindi Brownell Meiring takes a closer look at the Cosmic Crafters collection, a collaboration between textile designer and entrepreneur Frances van Hasselt and ceramic artist Eva Shuman, who were inspired by traditional craftsmanship and ancient landscapes

Creating a dialogue between ceramics and textiles, set against the backdrop of one of the oldest landscapes on Earth, became the starting point for this collaboration. ‘Working with two of the most ancient forms of craftsmanship and natural materials – clay and mohair – we used the Karoo to inform the shape, form and subject of this playful mixed media body of work,’ explains Frances van Hasselt, who was raised in the region on a mohair farm that champions ethical practices.

Eva Shuman, who grew up in London and now lives in Cape Town, travelled to the farm to experience the area first-hand. ‘Together, we played with clay and mohair, making them interact and react to the subtle quirks of the land,’ says Frances. ‘The goal was to capture the multifaceted character of the Karoo.’

The collaboration brings to life the innate characteristics of this environment, from its vast, sandy plains and shrub-like vegetation to its rich colour palette and the way the light falls at different times of the day. This is something that complemented Eva’s existing practice. ‘Glazes that I used in previous work echoed the hues of the Karoo,’ says Eva. ‘It was an organic fit

– my palette had already been set and the forms just followed suit.’

Frances translated Eva’s 10 crystal-glazed pieces into abstract forms on a range of five one-off rugs, all of which have been hand-woven by skilled women artisans who work in the region.

The collaboration, which initially came about in December 2019 before the pandemic took hold, is the result, in retrospect, of feeling a sense of freedom. ‘As friends and makers we allowed each other the chance to create from an honest and carefree space,’ says Frances, for whom the collection brings together elements of colour, texture, space, friendship and fun, ‘all of which we currently need so badly.’

Eva and Frances worked with stylist Sanri Pienaar and photographer Manesha Caldi to create an even deeper visual connection between the landscape and the designs, celebrating each piece in the setting that inspired it.

‘We hope to show textiles and ceramics – and the Karoo – in a new light, cosmic and raw,’ says Frances. ‘We hope that in so doing, we will inspire people to connect with their roots and rethink their daily encounters with nature and craftsmanship.’

[evamakesceramics.com](http://evamakesceramics.com)  
[francesvh.com](http://francesvh.com)



**From top** A playful collage of the artists and the works that make up their collection; the duo worked with natural light, tracing the many moods of the desert as the sun moved overhead throughout the day, documented in and around the Karoo the collection captures the effervescent qualities of the landscape.

