

SHOW 'N TELL

Local flavour global flair



A perfect mix – The Design Team launched a collection of fabrics at this year's 'Rooms on View' exhibition with colours and subject matters that are uniquely South African.

After graduating from the Technikon Pretoria in 2000 with B Tech degrees in Textile Design, Lise Butler and Amanda Haupt were eager to catapult their unique vision into the world. *Threads* visited their workshop and chatted to Lise about following their passion and realising a dream.

Determined to attempt it on their own rather than succumb to the mass production monster, Amanda and Lise showcased their outlandishly fresh collection of scatter cushions at Decorex 2001. The collection was eagerly devoured by industry critics and the Team was soon supplying lifestyle store, Loads of Living,

with seasonal ranges comprising scatter cushions, kitchen accessories and bags. Lise recalls the pressure of having to get their first order out before they had the production line they have now. She and Amanda garnered all the help they could. "I remember my mother hemming tea towels like crazy," Lise laughs.

With their skilful artistry, The Design Team needs just two girls, a few metres of fabric and some ink to 'wow' the fabric world. Apart from an abundance of talent, it took keen business sense and steely perseverance to conquer the textile industry

Text Lee-Ann Orton Photography Carien Rooseboom



Amanda Haupt and Lise Butler, the talents behind The Design Team.

Things run much more smoothly now at their premises in Centurion where they currently produce an extensive range of products. All fabric is silk-screened by hand and the range now extends to custom designed T-shirts, lampshades and a full fabric selection, which they launched at 'Rooms on View' 2006.

Their potential to stand among the best in textile design was first recognised by fabric house St. Leger & Viney, which now stocks their range. The team is also targeting the international market by moving away from their finished product line and focusing on fabrics. "With our finished products, it is harder for us to compete on price with Chinese products, whereas our fabric range is Eurocentric enough to join the big names internationally and still be justified in price," Lise explains.

Amanda and Lise often reflect botanical and ornamental elements in their designs, all the while depicting South African culture, history, social commentary and daily life.

Even though they have a team handling

production, they are still very much in charge of design. "We are constantly inspired by our environment," says Lise, and many of their references also include traditionalist Afrikaans values and cultural heritage, revived with a Design Team twist. The iconic 'Protea' printed silk exudes elegance, creating a striking contrast to the bold and contemporary 'Towns' print. Ironically enough, the two work wonderfully together. What makes these designs so appealing is that every South African can relate to something in them, and also appreciate the quirky elements in the designs!

With a 2005 Elle Decoration International Design Award in the South African Fabric category under their belts, these lasses are more driven than ever to see their business soar to new heights. They will continue launching new selections of fabrics and products annually and a corporate endeavour in the shape of gifts may be on the cards. Keep an eye out for the invigorating colours, shapes and textures of The Design Team and revel in their distinct South African flavour. 

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Selected items from The Design Team range include a custom-designed T-shirt made for Big Blue (top), 100% South African printed scatters (middle) and a retro-printed lampshade (bottom).