



Sally Arnold's stand at Design Indaba.

# sally arnold: Contemporary Mohair Designer at Design Indaba 2009

**Linda Henderson**

After a love affair with Europe and a sojourn on the continent that enabled her to master three new languages while acquiring her Master's degree in Modern Art History, Sally Arnold has come home to South Africa and mohair.



This Karoo girl, who grew up barefoot on a Corriedale stud farm near Baroda Station in the Cradock district during the sixties and actually wanted to study architecture, was lured to Europe after completing her diploma in Fine Art at the Cape Town Technicon.

'I had no idea what to do with my qualification so I applied for a bursary to continue studying at the Royal Academy in Antwerp in 1975,' says Sally.

'I learnt the art of working with stained glass, and the experience of studying in Europe was a culture shock for this Karoo girl! However any further adventures came to an abrupt end for I had to return home, as this period coincided with the political turmoil our country was experiencing.'

Two years later she enrolled as a student at Frankfurt University in Germany where she obtained her Master's degree in Modern Art.

'I always stayed in touch with local art and design in South Africa. There is a part of you that remains African, despite all the European influences.'

'Our country was now going through exciting times politically and when we were



finally welcomed back into the international fold after 1992, I was perfectly placed to assist at the *Venice Biennale*, a world famous contemporary art platform that gives massive exposure to artists and creates international renown.'

She was able to work on the project enabling twenty seven artists from South Africa to exhibit at the Biennale, assisting them to emerge from the cultural isolation South African artists found themselves in at the time.

'It was very rewarding but I knew that I wanted to do my own thing.'

### Sally's New Karoo style in Prince Albert

After she and her husband parted ways and her children left for university, Sally decided to come home to South Africa in 2006. She made Prince Albert her home.

Here she was seduced by the mohair from Clive van Hasselt's farm and immediately saw the potential for extending her creativity to this medium.

'I loved the natural sheen of mohair and liked that it is a sustainable resource that will not add to the earth's contamination

and destruction,' she adds.

'I decided to concentrate on carpets and soft furniture including huge floor cushions and soft tables™ (ottomans). I had mastered every discipline in the creative fine art field and was bursting to combine them in a way that expressed who I had become,' she continues.

Sally is a designer who outsources all her production, but has established her New Karoo design studio and retail outlet, *Karoo Star Interiors* in the main street of Prince Albert, a small town that several other artistic kindred spirits also call home. She shares the delightful historical building Seven Arches with an art gallery and a gourmet restaurant that makes award winning cappuccinos! The perfect creative spot to dream up award winning designs.

Her first mohair flat weave designs were executed by Petra and Hannes van der Merwe of the Wolskuur Spinners in Prince Albert in 2007. They use hand spun mohair on four shaft hand looms to construct carpets and rugs. Sally designed these first carpets and soft tables™ for her Swedish partner, Anders Paulsson, who has opened a beautiful South African show room in his old family farmhouse near Malmo – about half an hour from Copenhagen in Denmark. These carpets and soft furnishings are beginning to attract attention in the Swedish market.

Sally also works with merino wool and her tufted three dimensional designs are executed by Rugalia, in Cape Town from Nouwens yarns, produced and dyed in Harrismith in the Free State. She includes tanned merino fleeces from Beaufort West in a delightful array of colours for the tactile sides of the soft tables™ from her 2008 collection.



A soft table™ and floor cushion in mohair.

I loved the natural sheen of mohair and liked that it is a sustainable resource



### Off to Design Indaba

Sally has taken the plunge and decided that the only way to be recognised as a serious professional designer is to get exposure to the market. She has trademarked and registered several of her designs, which have been accepted for the internationally acclaimed *DESIGN INDABA* (Lifestyle and Product Design category) from 27 February to 1 March 2009 at the International Conference Centre in Cape Town. Here she will be rubbing shoulders with a trendy cross-section of national and international traders, who will have no choice but to be inspired by her contemporary cutting edge designs.

### Her Design Inspirations

'I used three themes for my present collection: Floral, Geometric and Marine.'

For the floral themes she uses orchids and Turkish lilies as inspiration, while kelp and seaweed are used in her marine pieces. The geometric shapes are inspirations from fractal geometry, in essence the nature of all creation. It is found in the symmetry of flowers, crystals and much more.

'But I'm also inspired by writing patterns, Xhosa beadwork and classic symmetry.'

Sally Arnold may be diminutive in stature but her designs have the potential to ignite an explosion in the décor world. ■



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