



PRINTS CHARMING

HEATHER MOORE GIVES US THE SKINNY

Based in Cape Town, Heather is an illustrator and design genius, and her striking fabric designs adorn everything from cushion covers and tea towels to smock dresses for little girls. Her business has bloomed over the last few years, gaining international attention, and her style has become iconic locally, with a look and feel all her own.

Unlike many other businesses, Skinny laMinx didn't have its genesis in a business plan, but grew organically. In fact, Heather didn't even study design. "I've always drawn pictures and enjoyed making things and selling them, too, but when reviewing our artwork before we made a final subject selection at high school, my art teacher looked at my portfolio rather dubiously, and said that I 'could give it a try', so I did French instead. I studied English and Drama at

If you're not familiar with Heather Moore's name – or her business, Skinny laMinx – you might have still come across her work if you've gone into a boutique anywhere from Cape Town and Clarens to Ballito, browsed a local design magazine, or if you know anyone with a passing interest in décor.

university, and then trained as a high school teacher," she explains. "When I moved to Cape Town after my studies, I had vague notions of helping to run a puppet theatre, but not much more of a plan than that. I fell into illustration work while doing my postgrad teacher training, when I did illustrations for a textbook one of my lecturers was writing. The publishers liked my drawings and started commissioning more, and I ended up being an illustrator for ten years. "After ten years of illustration, I needed a change, so in 2006 I took a half-day job as a comic's scriptwriter, and spent the rest of my day messing around in my studio on Long Street," says Heather. "I started blogging about my work, and opened an online shop on Etsy. People around the world started reading my blog and buying my things, and I got some wholesale orders to the USA, and suddenly I





found that I was a designer with a design business."

The growth of Skinny laMinx has been sensational, and in 2011 Heather made the jump from selling solely online to opening a brick and mortar store on Bree Street in Cape Town. But success can come with a price for a creative person. Says Heather: "I think that the challenge for most people who start a business on the back of their creative work is finding the time in their days for the essential creative work in amongst all the other millions of things that need doing in a small business. Interestingly, finding the solution to this challenge has resulted in one of the great strengths of this business: the awesome team we have put together. The combined efforts of my business partner, Pearl Thompson, as well as the rest of Team Skinny laMinx – who are all busy managing the stores, processing wholesale orders, doing quality control, going to the post office, keeping an eye on communications – are allowing me a lot more time to spend in the studio, dreaming up the next creative leap for Skinny laMinx."

The creative process is what Skinny laMinx owes its existence to, so Heather tries to nurture this as much as possible. "It is easy to get caught up in the day-to-day running of a business, and stuck on the email treadmill, so I try to put aside Fridays as my day for doing non-work-related creative work, where I can simply make whatever takes my fancy. I find that the things I make in

non-directed time like this are often put away for a bit, and then brought out later and built upon, when the time is right. I like to keep a sketchbook with me, and often find that quick sketches I make on the fly end up as starting points for everything."

Heather's designs are simple and clear, and resonate with an unpretentious honesty. They also don't copy international trends. They're South African at a glance, without being ethnic. That local flavour also extends to the production side of the business, with every aspect of a Skinny laMinx product sourced and produced locally. This is especially commendable considering the pressure that imports have put on the local textile industry.

"My products are produced in a way that is determinedly local and human-scale," says Heather. "My base cloth is made in King William's Town, and is professionally printed at a printing works in Maitland. I have a mother-daughter cutting team who cut all my fabric products in my studio, and a single seamstress who has a studio of her own in the Bo-Kaap. I like the idea of Skinny laMinx being something that provides injections of money into the lives of people we know in my local economy, so that's the way we do it."

Skinny laMinx's store is located at 201 Bree Street in Cape Town. For more information, contact +27 21 424 6290, visit <http://skinnylaminx.com>, or follow [instagram.com/skinnylaminx](https://www.instagram.com/skinnylaminx).

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