



# IT'S A MATTER OF STYLE

Meet the new team of ceramic artists contributing to SA's renowned design reputation.

Words Thuveshnie Govender

## The History

Five years ago, Sharon and Ryan Kensley embarked on a brand-new journey of creating tiles. It began when their good friends decided to immigrate to America and sell their handmade tile business, Renwick Tiles. With Sharon and Ryan already being creators within the ceramics industry, this was the next step of their journey, and everything fell into place. "It was more of a handing down." They had already shared similar energy as the previous owners. Still, once they started to create their own designs and found their mojo, Renwick Tiles was reborn as Akashic Tiles.

"From the moment we began creating tiles, it felt like something so natural, like we were made to be doing this." From then on, they have

tapped into the understanding and formula of making tiles and patterns that just flow and now have an internationally revered business.

Muse chats with Sharon and Ryan about Akashic and the art of tile making.

## What sets Akashic apart?

That's a hard one, as there are so many beautiful tiles out there. Our tiles are not for everyone. They are very elaborate and over the top in some respects, but we try to push the boundaries within the tile medium. We have been so lucky that the design industry has liked our ideas and designs. I always think of that saying: "Create what sets your heart on fire, and it will illuminate the path ahead."

## The Process

To produce a tile, you must create the original artwork out of clay. You then make a cavity mould from that piece and a silicone master. From that master, you can start building more plaster moulds to produce the tiles in numbers. Once the tile is dry, sanded and clean, you glaze it with a colour. Lastly, you fire it to the correct temperature, and voila, you have made your tile.

## The Training

No training is needed when creating a good tile design. However, when it comes to glazing, firing, moulding, clay mixes, and such, that is something that you need to be taught the basics of. After that, through trial and error



## in the hot seat

### Signature style?

Textured tiles.

### Where can we buy your tiles?

Only through us directly.

### Plans for the future?

Currently, we are busy exploring getting into floor tiles, as our focus is mostly on decorative wall tiles.

### What is your personal favourite design?

The shell and fish design.

and years of experimenting, you will learn to fine-tune your skills. There is always something new to learn. With ceramics, it's a lifetime of learning.

### Time and Care

It's hard to say how long it takes to create our tiles as we have so many designs, and some are far more complex than others. To put it into perspective, we work on an eight-week lead time. There always has to be room for unforeseen circumstances, accidents or errors. If something goes wrong in the kiln, we might have to remake the order, so giving ourselves enough time is very important when working on a delicate process. You can't rush anything with ceramics because the universe will teach you a lesson very quickly.

### Teamwork makes the dream work

All the people at Akashic Tiles have become our family. We are so close; it feels like we have past life connections. We genuinely love each other and the work we do. We have also learnt that it's not about chasing achievements; it's about being present every day and finding joy in the people around you. We believe this energy of love is felt in your products.

### Design Inspiration

We find it everywhere! The one thing we try to do is to follow our inspiration

and instincts, which are forever changing. The secret is to never look back at your designs. Just keep moving forward.

### Colour Profiles

We can glaze any of our designs in any colour choice. Sometimes a client will want to match a new colour, or hue of their choice. I'm often blown away by how incredible their colour choices are. Inspiration is everywhere.

### Homebase

We are based in Knysna, which is the best place ever. Born and bred! The energy of the forest and nature definitely helps as it is so beautiful. It always makes me so happy to think that we are a studio in little Knysna but can be as big as the world. Most of our work goes out of Knysna and all around South Africa and abroad, but we hardly ever leave Bokmakierie Street. 📍

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