



Editor's Note

Andrea Nagel

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COLLABORATION

Kindred spirits connect over forest fantasy in design of new restaurant

Inspired by her childhood imaginings, Saira Essa owner of Mon Amour in Franschhoek worked with wallpaper designer Cara Saven to create these extraordinary wall murals



Wallpaper at Mon Amour at the Yard. Pictures: CARA SAVEN



There are so many different forms of love, but surely one of the most rewarding is a passion for one's creative work. It's exactly this that brought together entrepreneur Saira Essa and wall designer Cara Saven.

Essa is about to open a fantastical restaurant space in Franschhoek. Inspired by her childhood imaginings, Mon Amour is a treasure trove resplendent with Saven's extraordinary wall murals.

"When it came to the overall theme for Mon Amour, without a doubt I knew it had to be an enchanted forest," says Essa. "Vivid memories of my childhood came tumbling out and this immediately unleashed a creative potential. I knew instantly, instinctively and intuitively that the walls had to be the

mainstay and backbone of all the design elements."

After extensive research she found the Cape Town-based Saven, and as the two professionals started working together it promptly became evident the commission would be a valuable partnership.

"Saira had a vision for the space which was both clear and open to collaboration," says Saven. "So we worked together, without a solid vision of what the outcome would be, which allowed for a lot of creativity on both our parts."

"After the initial brief, Cara and her team got to work and presented me with the most stupendous forest scenes [showcased on the cover of Sunday Times Lifestyle on January 30]. It was mesmerising and I was blown

away," says Essa.

"It was however, somewhat lonely and autumnal. For the first time, I confided in Cara that in my childhood enchanted forest there were many imaginary beings (not human) that played pivotal roles as my companions. They made me feel special and unique and helped to boost my confidence. They took the place of my mother and father, I explained.

"Instead of Cara thinking that I'd lost my mind, she showed empathy and was able to relate to my childhood memories. From here on, our forest began to be inhabited by some of the most astonishing animals."

Noor, the resplendent tiger is, like her namesake, the harbinger of light as she welcomes guests into the space. On further

walls there are more animals and deeper forest scenes resplendent with rich and vivid colours: teal, turquoise, Bosphorus blue (midnight blue), gold, bright pinks, orange and guvezi (a dark shade of crimson).

"Working with someone that trusts the process and trusts me has been truly inspiring," says Saven. "I have actually seldom had a client that was so gracious to work with."

Mon Amour opens in March at The Yard, Franschhoek. A delicious eatery and bar, with a fresh flower rose room, Essa has events planned for throughout the year to continually entice and enthrall a local and international clientele. **Staff Reporter**

Visit the space on Instagram [monamourfranschhoek](https://www.instagram.com/monamourfranschhoek)