

SA brand Neimil given platform to shine in H&M

 By [Lauren Hartzberg](#)

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"Life-changing" is how the design duo behind South African lifestyle brand Neimil has described their [landmark partnership](#) with retailer H&M.



Source: Supplied

Keneilwe Mothoa and Lubabalo Mxalisa, the creative couple who founded the multidisciplinary design brand in 2018, said they were gobsmacked when they were asked by H&M to create an exclusive home decor collection that will be sold in selected H&M Home shop-in-shops in the country under the Neimil brand.

The partnership presents a significant commercial boost for a small brand like Neimil, which now benefits from a valuable association with one of the world's most recognised retailers.

100% of proceeds to Neimil

H&M won't profit a cent from the Neimil x H&M collection, with all sales proceeds being funnelled to the small business. Caroline Nelsen, country manager for H&M South Africa, told *Bizcommunity* that this is a unique approach undertaken by the company for this particular partnership.

“It’s quite special for us to do this in South Africa, because it’s giving these designers a platform on a massive level that’s really hard to get otherwise. We thought it would be great to give all [the proceeds] from this collaboration completely back to the artists, because we’re in a position where we’re able to do that for people.”

The design collaboration is a project initiated by H&M to support small business and promote South Africa’s design industry. Hinting at possible local collaborations in the future, Nelsen said, “Our ambition is to do more. Whether it’s in this format or not, I’m not 100% sure, but we really want to be closer to the local community here.”

She added, “We believe there is potential to further position H&M as a truly diverse and inclusive global brand with local relevancy in the South African market. Supporting local brands and giving them a space to promote and sell their products will empower them to build and develop their brand even further.”

Made in SA

Officially launched in H&M stores in Sandton City, V&A Waterfront and Menlyn Park on Thursday, 4 November, the Neimil x H&M collection comprises eye-catching cushion covers, placemats, pouches for cosmetics or essentials, and bathroom mats. With material sourced from local fabric suppliers, all Neimil products are locally produced.

The techniques used in the crafting of the collection are called punch needling and tufting; both techniques give the same result of tight wool coils that are gathered to create a soft and textured piece. The materials used in the collection are a vast range of wools and yarns on a linen backing. All offcuts from materials are also used to create artworks.



The design of the range can wholeheartedly be attributed to Neimil, the founders of which were given full creative freedom to create the collection. However, the pair hailed H&M for providing indispensable guidance throughout the partnership, from ideation to implementation.

Source: Supplied



“Our relationship with H&M was so seamless, so beautiful, so effortless and so supportive. There was so much guidance given and that made us feel so comfortable because we knew they had our backs. It wasn't just a transaction. They were like 'guys, we see where you want to be, we want to support you, let's work.' And we rocked,” said Lubabalo Mxalisa, cofounder and operations director for Neimil.

With a focus on handcrafted products, designer Keneilwe Mothoa described Neimil's trademark design language as “eclectic African or African with a modern twist. We like to keep everything very streamlined and very current, but having that little bit of background from our cultures and the things we believe in.”

It was this rootedness in culture and values that attracted H&M to the brand, along with Neimil's obsession with product quality and beautiful design.

Community upliftment

In addition to the core Neimil decor collection, H&M also worked with Bags 4 Good to produce tote bags in polyester felt, made from recycled plastic bottles, and manufactured by women in Elsies River, Cape Town as part of a community upliftment project. The tote bags feature illustrations designed by Neimil and a portion of the sales from the bags will be donated back to the social upliftment project.



Source: Supplied

Expanding on what the H&M collab means for Neimil, Mothoa told *Bizcommunity*, “It's really special. It just goes to show that there's support for small business out there, and for H&M to be an international brand that decided to help a local South African brand to get where they need to go...this is big! It's a great stepping stone and it's them saying 'well done for coming as far as you have, here's an extra push, go forth and shine'.”

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