

Meet: Eskayel Founder Q+A

The founder of Eskayel explains how her painting inspires the company's line of textiles.

At Eskayel, it starts with a brush stroke. The Brooklyn-based textile studio creates hand-tied rugs, wallpaper and much more, designed from the original artwork of its founder, Shanan Campanaro. Shanan travels the globe looking for the shapes and patterns that inspire her watercolors and in turn Eskayel. Since 2008, the company has nurtured an aesthetic that despite numerous imitations remains uniquely their own.

360 sat down with Shanan to hear about the origins of Eskayel and how her passion for remote locations became the inspiration for the Brooklyn-based textile studio.

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360: How did you start Eskayel? Was it something you'd been planning for a long time?

Shanan Campanaro: I started Eskayel ten years ago. I have a fine art background but after graduating I went more into graphic design and fashion, and that's what I was doing when I started Eskayel. Because I was working with graphics - I was also making repeating patterns and actually started making some large scale patterns for a few art exhibitions that I helped organize with friends. That was the first time that I made patterns that were based off of paintings that I had done and I think someone gave me contact info for a printer who printed wallpaper for the exhibitions. That gave me the idea to do some wallpaper for my house as well. I had always wanted to do my own thing so I decided to do a wallpaper collection. Then after two years we started doing fabrics. Then four years in we started designing rugs - first as a license deal for another company then four years ago for myself.

360: And people were immediately drawn to your products? What do you think drew them to your work?

SC: Since everything we do comes from my paintings - I think we have a very recognizable and original aesthetic that appeals to people. It also has a really specific color story that has really become "Eskayel". We work with interior designers and we've been able to cultivate a lot of relationships that have lead to repeat business. It also helps that we have a pretty big line so people can use us over and over again without having to use repeat patterns. Our look is pretty unique. Watercolor looks have gotten popular, I think partly because of us, but ours still has its own unique feel because it's done by my hand. We're also very eco-friendly and I think that's also something that people consider.

360: Tell us about the process. How does your work become Eskayel products?

SC: I paint a lot from photography that I take while traveling. Then I paint a lot of stuff specifically for patterns. Then I also paint things that maybe become a part of a pattern later. For instance, my older work was really symmetrical. I'd take pieces of my work and use it to make patterns. For a lot of my newer work, I use entire paintings or I'll collage paintings together to create patterns. But they all come from paintings, and often they're on handmade paper so there's that texture and feel to the patterns as well. I've also licensed some work from a couple of artists where they painted from the same specific brief that I was also painting from. My last collection was inspired by a trip I took to Morocco, and I made a Pinterest board with my favorite photos from my trip on it. Then they painted from those photos while I was doing the same, and I licensed a few of those paintings. They've been working with me for years and they understand the hand-feel of Eskayel.

We scan the artwork in and we come up with different color waves in photoshop. For printed wallpaper and fabrics it's digitally printed so it's basically a reproduction. For rugs, which is what we're doing for Steelcase, we have to create these pixel maps which we draw over the painting in the computer so it can specify the color for those areas. Then we also have to specify different techniques within each area to get the water color feel back into the rug. It's kind of complicated but it's really cool. It's almost like we're creating a map for the weavers. So we're breaking apart our design and then reassembling it with all the different cool techniques you can do with rugs - different dye techniques and different blending options with the yarns. You're basically making them a CAD.

360: Was that something you knew how to do?

SC: Part of it is similar to what you have to do when designing for silk screens which I knew how to do from doing fashion graphics. That's like the separation part. But all the different weaves and dye techniques and different yarn combinations - I had to learn all that. I thought I knew everything when we were licensing rugs, but then I went to our factory in Nepal and I learned so much more. I feel like I'm always learning more now every time I go there. Every time they show me new samples - there are new techniques and new things for me to learn how to specify. It's really cool and it's really challenging. After ten years of working with printed pieces it's really great to work on something a little more complicated and difficult.

360: After ten years, how do you continue to find inspiration for your work?

SC: I live in New York City, but I'm not that visually inspired by New York. So I travel a lot and I try to go places that I've never been that are kind of remote. It also helps that I surf so it's really fun to find places that no one knows about. A lot of times I'm mixing a remote surf destination and nature photography. I take a lot of pictures and then I paint them when I get back home. It's really cool because there's a lot of different types of terrain in a lot of weird places but because there's a surf break there's like an infrastructure to travel and stay there. Recently I have done some things that have been inspired by city structures - such as when I went to Marakesh. So it's not necessarily nature but it's still from my travels.

ESKAYEL

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