

Animals are the focus of latest art collaboration from New York's Kyle & Kath. **Lucy Upward** speaks to street artist Federico 'Iena Cruz' Massa

The birds and the beasts are there

With its strapline 'contemporary rug art' and its annual artist collaborations, it has always been clear that the Jan Kath brand has a fine art focus. Recent ventures of Kyle Clarkson of Kyle & Kath—the New York branch of the German company—include rug designs drawn from museum collections and children's art rugs for the Crossroads Global Design Project (see News). For his latest collection, he has teamed up with Brooklyn-based mural artist Federico 'Iena Cruz' Massa, who began his street art life creating graffiti with the alias 'Cruz'. Massa soon moved into street art and began using the symbol of a hyena (Iena). Now his work covers multiple media from studio painting and printing to street murals and sculpture to collaborations with fashion brands Marc Jacobs and La Perla. One element that unites his creative output is his depiction of animals and nature, driven by his strong beliefs in conservation. Clarkson met Massa at one of the many events held at the New York JK showroom, and the duo began talks about a hand-knotted rug collection. On 20 June, the new rug designs—four 10 x 2.5 ft runners and two 10 x 8 ft rugs—will go on show at the Kyle & Kath. Here I talk to Massa about the upcoming collection.

What is it that drives you to make art for public spaces?

Public art is something that has caught my attention since I was a kid growing up in Milan. My background is in graffiti and street art. In 1997 I held a spray can for the first time, switching from spectator to graffiti artist under the name 'Cruz'. The aspect that I like most about doing public art is the interaction with the spectators, the emotional exchange with people is always a learning experience about life, culture and places.