

‘JAZZ FROM PARADISE’

MIRI CREATION CONTEMPORARY CARPET MASTERPIECES FROM
THE FARJAM COLLECTION



THE
FARJAM
COLLECTION



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The Hafiz Foundation was founded in 2008 to support outstanding initiatives within the visual arts, with a special emphasis on the Middle East. With the city of Dubai as its base, the Foundation aims to become a center for preservation and promotion of the arts at large. At the heart of the Foundation's goals is the development of educational opportunities for disadvantaged youth. Also central to the Foundation's mission is serving younger artists from the Middle East, students, scholars, curators, and art enthusiasts. As a partner to both local and international cultural initiatives, the Foundation's recent activities include having supported the founding of the award-winning Middle Eastern arts magazine Bidoun, support for local arts education programs, as well as the organization of a series of exhibitions of selected works drawn from The Farjam Collection.

The Farjam Collection is one of the most impressive privately-owned collections in the world today. Featuring Islamic and pre-Islamic art, Contemporary Middle-Eastern art and International Modern and Contemporary Art, the Collection is born of a passion for art, exploration and travel, reflecting the affinities and tastes of a seasoned collector. Through a timeless journey into art, it embodies the fusion of cultures and traditions between East and West.

The Islamic section of the collection spans the entire history of Islam, bringing together items produced throughout the vast region between Andalusia and Mughal India. Its treasures include Quranic manuscripts, miniatures and illustrated books on science, mathematics and poetry, as well as finely-decorated metalwork, lacquer, glasswork, tiles, glazed pottery, woodwork, textiles, coins, jewellery, and fine carpets.

The Modern and Contemporary Middle-Eastern section of the Collection is one of the foremost collections of its kind including pivotal works by Farhad Moshiri, Mohammad Ehsaei, Abdul Qader Al Raes and Ahmed Moustafa to name a few. From established to emerging and cutting edge, the artists featured mirror the rich and dynamic Middle-Eastern art scene.

The Modern and Contemporary section of the Collection includes major pieces from the Impressionist, Expressionist, Modern, Pop, Minimal and Conceptual art movements. Its growing range of works includes international Modern and Contemporary masters such as Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse, Georges Braque, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Joan Miro, Fernand Leger, Alberto Giacometti, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Anselm Kiefer, Anish Kapoor and Gerhard Richter.

Selected works from the collection are on view free of charge to the public through a series of curated exhibitions held at The Farjam Collection at the Dubai International Financial Centre in Dubai (DIFC). A programme of educational events offers audiences the opportunity to learn more about the works on view and the context in which they were produced.

The Farjam Collection at the DIFC is generously supported by The Hafiz Foundation.



INTRODUCTION BY DR. FARHAD FARJAM

The success of our most recent exhibition “*Chants from Paradise*” filled me with huge pride. It was such a pleasure to see people of all ages and from all backgrounds engage with these magnificent works of art, marvelling at the skills and craftsmanship alive in the golden age of carpet-making over four hundred years ago.

This enjoyment of our heritage inspired this sister exhibition “*Jazz from Paradise*”. It is a sad truth that many of the unique characteristics we admired in the Safavid carpets have now been lost in the move towards mass production. A reliance on synthetic materials, chemical colouring and automated manufacture has resulted in a market flooded with poor representations of true carpet weaving.

Miri Creations has single-handedly resurrected the ancient techniques and processes that have been forgotten in the drive towards commercialism. Establishing specialist workshops across Iran which use local methods, materials and designs has allowed regional diversity in carpet-making to flourish once again. Their use of the highest quality hand spun wool, delicately prepared natural colours and their respect for traditional motifs have produced these beautiful masterpieces that fascinate and dazzle as much as their Seventeenth Century counterparts. In bringing historic techniques to contemporary practice the Miris have enabled this glorious art form to be kept alive for future generations.

I am overwhelmed and humbled by the task that the Miris have taken upon themselves, and I feel galvanised by the extent to which they have prospered, despite a difficult market. Their carpets now feature in some of the world’s greatest museums and collections, aside the most celebrated examples of carpet-weaving from Persian history. It therefore seemed right and fitting to celebrate their achievement immediately after honouring their Safavid predecessors.

I would like to take this opportunity to extend my sincere gratitude to Mr. Razi Miri for his dedication to this important art form and for making this exhibition possible, as well as to Mr. Amir Arvand for his ongoing guidance and support.

I hope that you find the symphony of the modern and traditional in “*Jazz from Paradise*” as visually soothing and uplifting as “*Chants from Paradise*”.

Farhad Farjam
February 2012

PREFACE BY RAZI MIRI

The Miri Renaissance began in 1988 and served as the catalyst for many changes in the field of this hand-knotted art in Iran over the last two decades. The renaissance came to fruition with Miri Creations and the resurgence of genuine and unique examples of hand-knotted Persian carpets after a gap of a hundred years in the field. If this renaissance hadn't taken root, we may not have had the opportunity to witness once more what is defined as the genuine handmade Persian carpet.

I believe that evolution of hand-knotted carpets as a form of artwork is based on the continuous and endless challenges between its creators from different ethnicities in this land throughout history. This challenge results in an astonishing diversity of aesthetics based on their particular design, coloring and weaving techniques. Maintaining the ingenuity in the art of these various ethnicities is paramount in the manifest of this renaissance, and the key in achieving the aesthetical beauty and true identity of hand-knotted Persian carpets.

When considering the basic function of a rug, one must only pay attention to the technical and physical aspects of the floor covering. Emphasizing the aesthetics of a Persian carpet heightens its inherent artistic nature, removing its practical usage from attention.

By studying the history and tradition of Iranian communities, one finds that the most important artisanal object produced in nomadic, rural and urban societies are hand-knotted carpets. Persian designers and weavers took tremendous pride in the creative process as it was a sign of their abilities. Providing an identity, as well as a form of competition between all Iranian cities and villages in which carpet weaving has a rich tradition, people believe their hand-knotted carpets are superior. A Qashqai weaver will proudly state there is no carpet more elegant or beautiful than a Qashqai carpet. A Kermani weaver believes the same of his carpets, and so it follows. Each admires their

own creations and has a bias towards them. This reveals the strong metaphysical and sensational relation that happens between the creator and his creation. In other words, the main motivation to create these unique and priceless examples of hand-knotted Persian carpets throughout the ages is simply this close relationship between the artist and his art. A nomadic woman with each knot creates a poem from the designs of her imagination, instilling her emotions and dreams into the carpet, for the enjoyment of the viewer today. Similarly, master designers who designed templates of classical Persian carpets that portrayed gardens of Paradise imagined the resulting carpets serving as a metaphysical utopia for placement in elaborately constructed buildings like Safavid mosques and palaces.

Understanding innovation and creativity in Persian carpets throughout history is possible by researching and referring to historic sources and surviving carpet samples in museums and personal collections, which display the unique handmade artworks to the history of humankind.

In the final decades of the 19th century, multinational European companies appeared in the economical scene of Iran, and commercial and economical relations created the first steps of modifying carpet weaving from an individual art to a group form of art. Funding of these companies paved the way for the development of Persian carpet production in a very positive way. In continuation of this funding, until the first quarter of the 20th century, artists could create individual examples in a variety of styles and this period is considered one of the shining moments for Persian carpets. With the creation of a reliable platform for designers and weavers came great opportunity for innovation. It is almost impossible to analyze all these amazing examples. Many of the great and remaining names of Persian carpet creators such as Mohtasham, Arjmand, and Haj Jalili, are immortalized from this period of creation.

This ability for innovation is only possible when the creation of an artwork is without any reliance on economical and commercial motivations. It is apparent that creating a unique artwork is costlier than reproducing one many times. From a commercial standpoint, an important factor is speed of production and machine spun wool and synthetic colors hasten commercial production. With time, these commercial necessities replaced cultural and artistic needs.

In addition to foreign or commercial companies, local merchants also emphasized mass produced carpets from the third quarter of the 20th century. The influence of Western culture and the demands of Western interior design for minimal, colorless, cold floor coverings was another cause that rid the genuine Persian carpet of its identity. From this point, one could only find true samples of the art in antique carpets held in personal collections or museums. Creation and innovation entirely ceased after thousands of years and the times were ready for a shock in order to avoid the death of this pure art form.

I hope in this short article I could describe my motivations for creating this historic change. I never feel satisfied by what has been done and I believe we have a long way till we achieve the perfection and goals we keep in our minds. It has not been an easy path and will continue to not be so, but what keeps us moving forward is a feeling that we are not alone. My colleagues in Miri Foundation and the weavers and designers who have indescribable urges and minimal facilities yet are constantly innovative, act as torchbearers and preservers of the cultural identity of the nation. It is these weavers who knot weft and warp with love, realizing the fruition of their aims. Finally, Dr. Farhad Farjam, a patron of arts and culture who founded the Hafiz Foundation and gathered The Farjam Collection over the past several decades has provided us with his unlimited support and benevolence.

I am very thankful to him and wish him continued success in his patronage of the arts of the region and wider world.

Razi Miri

THE HISTORY OF PERSIAN CARPETS

The history of carpet weaving in Persia is punctuated with lengthy gaps as the lack of surviving specimens from the long history of the country is due in part to the very materials that form a carpet, as well as its intended purpose. Hundreds of years of treading on the perishable natural fibers has degraded them and very few early examples remain. It is indisputable that carpets were produced throughout the course of history; rug weaving is an integral part of Persian culture, intricately tied with their economy and trade for centuries. Not merely a necessity or accessory, carpets are an expression of community, identity, and artistic creativity for Persians with the knowledge and tradition of weaving passed down through generations. An eloquent symbol of the character and customs of Persian life, it is the harmony of color, form, symmetry, variety of design and immaculate skill in execution which has attained Iran its place as the world leader in carpet weaving.

The formidable carpets are named according to their designs, tribes, or locations of origin and are so engrossed in the culture and people of the land that there is a rug named for practically every city, tribe and village of Iran. Persian carpets may also bear the name of those who famously contributed their unique stylistic elements to this handcrafted art such as Arjmand in Kerman, Mohtasham, Tafazoli, and Dabir al Asanaei in Kashan. Very few of these beautiful art works have been signed by their creators however, and as a result, carpets remain relatively unknown and improperly valued in relation to the other arts of Persia. While Nomadic and Rural carpets never contain the name of the weaver, those created in urban centers rarely contain a signature of the artist. This is due to the Eastern attitude of humbleness and modesty of an artist, and out of respect for their masters if they are alive whilst the apprentice creates. Yet the style is so strong in many cases that experts can identify the artist even without a signature.

The oldest existing carpet dates from 500 B.C., as revealed through carbon 14 dating. It was discovered in 1949 while an archaeological team was excavating a Scythian royal burial mound in the Pazyryk Valley of the Altai Mountains near the border separating Russia and Mongolia. Encased beneath a sheet of ice formed shortly after the burial was complete, the Pazyryk Carpet remains in near perfect condition, shedding a light on the illustrious art of hand-knotted rugs some 2,500 years ago. Measuring 1.83 meters by 1.93 meters with thirty-six symmetrical knots per square centimeter, this finely knotted carpet displays a central field of checkered lotus patterns, reminiscent of a marble floor slab with low relief textile patterning dating two centuries earlier to Assyrian times. Carpet weaving in the fifth century B.C. was thus the product of at least one millennia of skill acquired by rote. The detail and ordered precision of the number of horsemen and deer motifs in this carpet testifies, similar to the reliefs of Persepolis, that this carpet was created from a pre-drawn design template, which bears witness to the level of expertise of the Persian artist in 500 BC.

The Pazyryk Carpet is commonly attributed to Persian weavers of the Achaemenid period due to the design similarities of the horsemen decorating the principle borders with sculptures from Persepolis. The number of horsemen, seven on each side and twenty-eight in total, also carries significance in Persian history as it corresponds to the number of men who carried the throne of Xerxes to Persepolis. Moreover, kilim fragments found at the Pazyryk burial site depict lions similar to those found in Babylonian bas-reliefs.





Though there are no surviving carpets predating the sixth century B.C., there is varied documentary evidence attesting to the existence of the manufacture of woolen products. Mesopotamian tablets of the third millennium B.C. demonstrate a great trade in woolen textiles and ancient Sumerian and Akkadian words apply to fabrics that require shearing, presumably to obtain a soft pile surface. The etymology follows of the present word for carpet, from tapis meaning 'to pluck'. Third millennium B.C. Anatolian statues demonstrate thick, fleece-like looped pile garments again evincing the knowledge required to form the pile of a carpet was acquired at this stage in history. Eighth century sources from Egypt, Greece, Phoenicia, Mesopotamia and Persia recount the adornment of palaces with elaborately woven rugs. In ancient Greece, their colors brighten the pages of Homer, while Herodotus and Strabo tell of the gold and silver rugs strewn upon the floors in Persia. Alexander II of Macedonia is recounted as being dazzled by the opulent carpets lining the tomb of Cyrus the Great at Pasargade. In the Roman encyclopaedia, *Naturalis Historia* (77-79 A.D.), Pliny the Elder praises the skill of the Assyrians in weaving, stating it bore the name of 'Babylonica peristromata' (the seal of its most perfect masters), a title still employed in

the region to the present day. Every author of antiquity whose writings stood the test of time left record of the splendid weavings of Persia.

During the third to mid-seventh century A.D., evocative descriptions of carpets of the Sassanid Dynasty remain. The most valuable Persian carpet was woven during the reign of Sassanian king, Khosrow I (531-578 A.D.) for the main audience hall at the Palace of Ctesiphon. The Bahrestan Carpet, measuring 140 meters by 27 meters, depicted a garden in the full bloom of Spring with flowerbeds of blue, red, white, yellow and green precious and semi-precious stones, earth portrayed with luxurious gold threading, crystals comprising the rapids of a river, and plants of silk threading which bore ripe fruits of colored gemstones.

The history of Persian carpets is heavily interwoven with the history of the land. Even through the ensuing turbulence after the Sassanid Dynasty, there is no doubt that the strength of this cultural product continued in its purest form amongst villagers and nomadic tribes. Remaining fragments attest to this continued production and this period served as a catalyst for spreading Persian motifs to other centers of carpet production throughout the world.

From the eighth century, Persia was under the Caliphate of Baghdad. Though there was not a localized dynasty to promote the art of carpet weaving, historical documents attest that the largest production center at this time was the province of Azerbaijan, and the province of Tabarestan would send six hundred carpets, most likely prayer mats made by nomads, to the courts of the caliphs in Baghdad each year.

Though no carpets remain from the Seljuk period, 1037-1194, it is because of the Seljuks that the Persian techniques of carpet artistry influence carpet design in Anatolia.

In 1219, Persia was devastated by the invasion of Genghis Khan. The Mongolians were notoriously vicious invaders, destroying cities and populations in their wake. Carpets were certainly continued at this time but likely only by nomadic tribes. Yet even in a dire situation as this, weaving triumphed and the palaces of Tabriz and Herat, then belonging to the Mongolian Ghazan Khan (1295-1304), were paved with the spirit and aesthetics of the Persian people.

During the thirteenth century, while Persia lay under Mongolian domination, all was not lost. The Ottoman Turks, who had taken master weavers from Persia, were incorporating the Persian floral

motifs into their own rugs and subsequently those produced further afield in production centers created in Spain, France and even England.

After more than seven centuries of foreign domination, the Persian people regained control of their homeland under the leadership of Shah Ismail I, founder of the Safavid Dynasty (1501-1726). Liberated from oppressive rule and comforted with political stability, the arts of Persia experienced a period of renaissance.

The Safavid Shahs notably took personal roles in the development of their land's artistic renaissance as active patrons of manuscript illumination (Shah Tahmasp I's Shahnameh), urban planning and architecture (Maidan-I Shah, the town square of Isfahan), and even in the innovation of carpet motifs. The Safavids developed court workshops to create luxurious carpets of gilt and silk threading for palaces and foreign nobility, and knotting workshop centers within the cities to further regulate and maintain the elevated standards of production. By ordering their most talented painters to engage in the design of rugs, the Shahs standardized the achievement of balance in composition and elevated the standards of Safavid art and weaving to its very peak of execution.



Shah Abbas I established trade with the great European states through gifts to rulers and ambassadors, commodifying the art form, providing economic stability to the country, and placing Persian carpets at the forefront of the marketplace. The Safavid Dynasty ruled for over two hundred years and its patronage, supervision and commodification of the arts and artisanal works resulted in an elevated execution of design, which to this day remains widely sought after by important institutions and private collections. Safavid era carpet design remains to this day the influence, if not the basis, of the majority carpet designs produced in Iran.

Various wars ensued and the Safavid Dynasty came to a close, and the Qajar Dynasty took root with Agha Mohammad Khan Qajar in 1786. Tehran was made the capital and craftsmanship in the arts of the loom flourished once more. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, merchants from Tabriz began to export Persian weavings to Europe through Istanbul. By the end of the nineteenth century, the intricately woven carpets of Persia had regained their standing as those most prized by the Western markets of Europe and America and an industry for the production of carpets for this particular market was established.



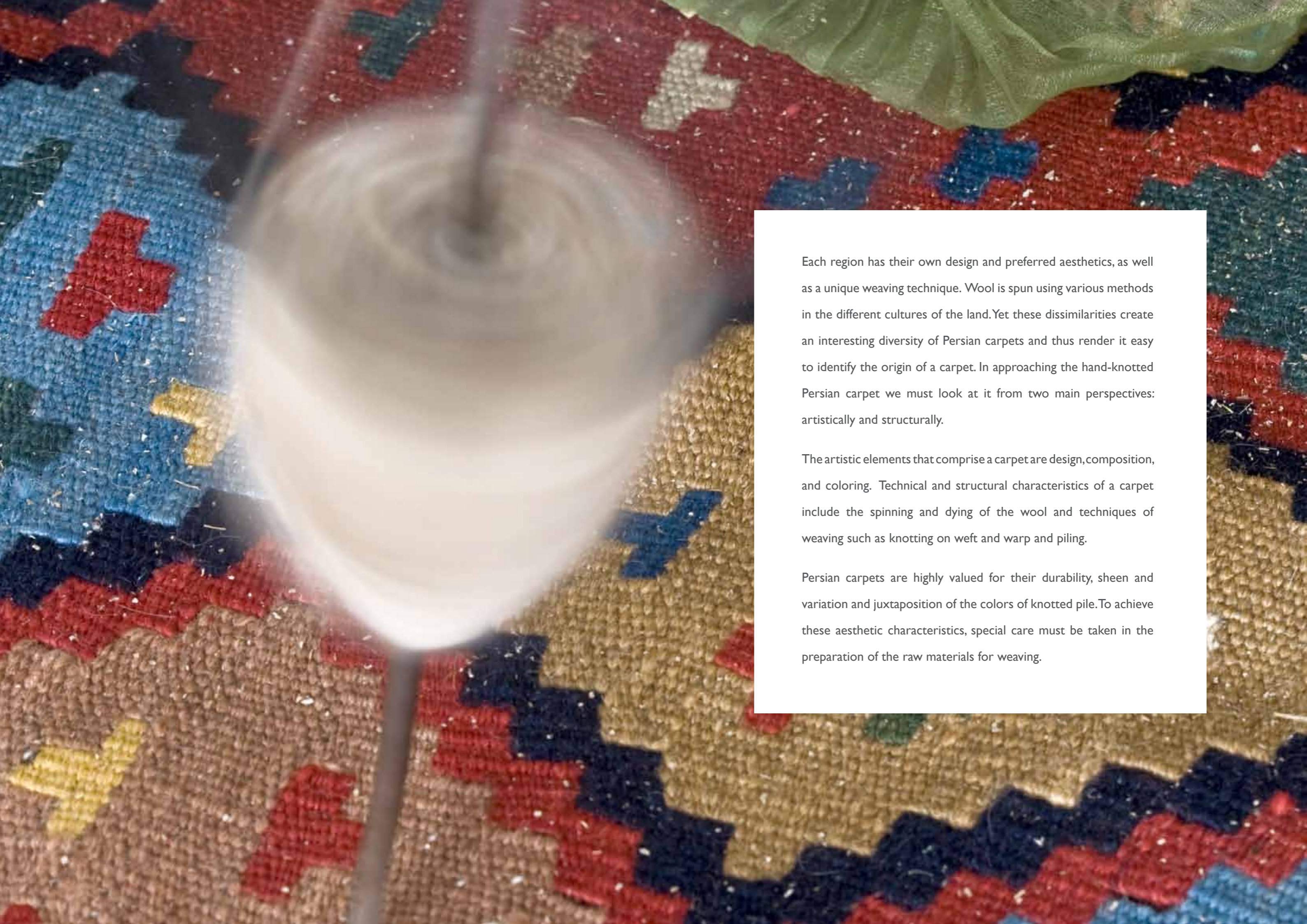
In 1925, Reza Shah took power from the Qajars, founding the Pahlavi Dynasty. In 1935, Iranian National Carpet Company was established with the aim of controlling the standards of Persian hand-knotted carpets to preserve Persian preeminence amongst carpet producers worldwide. In his short reign, many great carpet designers such as Amu, Oqli and Makhmalbaf from the city of Mashad, and Arjmand in Kerman, were able to create magnificent artworks with the support of the royal court and the Iranian National Carpet Company.

Mohammed Reza Pahlavi promoted carpet making with the opening of the Carpet Museum of Tehran in 1978. Despite efforts like founding the Carpet Museum, which served to preserve carpets as a cultural heritage, there was not any special attention paid to the production of the genuine Persian carpet and progressively this craft became more commercial and lost its quality. The role of Iranian and non-Iranian merchants within the country and abroad engaged in the exportation also played a primary role in the degradation of the Persian carpet, affecting design by increasing production on only those which were marketable.

In 1979, the Pahlavi rule ended with the Islamic revolution in Iran. Unfortunately, the aforementioned problems continued after the revolution. It can, therefore, be concluded that most of the great Persian carpet examples were created prior to the 20th century when the mismanagement and development of a very commercial infrastructure replaced the traditional cultural values of the Persian carpet.

THE HAND-KNOTTED PERSIAN CARPET

As carpet weaving was common craft in many of the cities and villages of the land from ancient times and due to the great diversity of Iranian ethnicities and resulting variety of cultural traditions, the process of producing the genuine hand-knotted Persian carpet depends on the region from which it originates.



Each region has their own design and preferred aesthetics, as well as a unique weaving technique. Wool is spun using various methods in the different cultures of the land. Yet these dissimilarities create an interesting diversity of Persian carpets and thus render it easy to identify the origin of a carpet. In approaching the hand-knotted Persian carpet we must look at it from two main perspectives: artistically and structurally.

The artistic elements that comprise a carpet are design, composition, and coloring. Technical and structural characteristics of a carpet include the spinning and dyeing of the wool and techniques of weaving such as knotting on weft and warp and piling.

Persian carpets are highly valued for their durability, sheen and variation and juxtaposition of the colors of knotted pile. To achieve these aesthetic characteristics, special care must be taken in the preparation of the raw materials for weaving.



HANDSPUN NATURAL WOOL

Wool is the most common natural fiber used in a Persian carpet, forming not only the pile, but also the foundation of weft and warp. Throughout Iran, sheep are raised for their wool and each region produces a specific type of fiber based on its prevailing climate and pasturage. Sheep in colder climates produce a fine, long fiber, while those in warm regions produce short, springy fibers. To guarantee fibers of high quality, the wool must be sheared from a live sheep. Tanning wool, which is cut from a dead animal, produces poor quality fiber that does not readily absorb color or hold sheen, and its resistance, elasticity and lifespan is lessened.

The process of procuring raw materials from live sheep is the most time consuming part of readying yarn for weaving. The sheep are first washed with river water. After drying for several days, the wool is sheared with scissors and prepared for carding. Though a special machine is the most time effective way to card, it will mince and shorten the wool, degrading fiber quality. In general, wool which is machine spun is also carded by machine. Two other methods exist apart from the machine, spindle-spun and with the use of a spinning wheel. Hand carding with a comb is a better method to preserve the quality of the wool, and though this method may have the slowest production process and result in further delays when coloring and knotting due to the non-harmonized twists and irregular thickness of the yarn, the resistance and aesthetics of fibers produced in this fashion are of the highest quality. The white delicate, long-staple fibers are finely spun to promote better dye absorption and expression of detail when knotting the pile, while the yarns for warp and weft threads comprising the foundation of the rug are spun from coarser wools to resist stretching while on the loom.





NATURAL COLORS

Once spun, the next step in the preparation of the raw materials is to color the fibers.

The yarn is scoured with carbonate of soda or soap and repeatedly rinsed in water until all dirt and oils have been removed. The clean yarn is immersed in a mordant to enhance the fiber's capacity to absorb the dye, such as potassium alum or aluminum sulphate. Highly concentrated astringents are also combined with the mordants to alter the tonality of the resulting colors.

Comprising the ground in many Persian carpets, red is the most important color and there are substantial variations in shade, hue, and tint achievable from the natural pigment. The common origin of red dyestuff in Persia is found in madder root. The root kernel, once ground, produces a rich vibrant red while the cortex produces a dull brownish red. Another form of red dyestuff is produced from dried cochineal female insects.

Fermenting the leaves of the indigo plant produces the blue pigment used in a Persian carpet. Documents attest this dye was sent to China from Samarkand as early as the eighth century, yet cultivation within Persia seemed to have ceased by the fifteenth century and all natural indigo dyes were subsequently imported.





The extract from the petals of Safflowers, pomegranate rinds, autumn vine leaves, sumac, saffron, and esparak flowers all yield a range of colors from clear yellow to orange. These yellow pigments are combined with indigo dyestuff and mordants to produce the range of green, teal, and turquoise shades. Green walnut hulls and oak bark yield

pigments of brown, beige and tan and compounds of indigo and henna, as well as acorn hulls, will produce a brilliant black. Vegetable, animal, and mineral dyestuffs and mordants were used to color the fibers of Persian carpets until synthetic dyes were introduced in the early nineteenth century. Aniline dyes were much less expensive, did not require the lengthy process of cultivation and compounding that natural dyes required, and increased the tonal range of dyes. Overwhelmingly, artificial dyes were used in place of traditional dyeing methods and the carpets consequently suffered color fading. Though more time consuming and costly to produce, natural dyes do not run when washed or fade when exposed to sunlight and antique carpets are a testimony of their enduring brilliance. The tonal variation produced by the irregular color absorption of natural dyes on handspun fibers, as well as the patina which colors develop through use and the passage of time, are the main factors in the recognition of a carpet's beauty.



WEAVING TECHNIQUES

Following the transformation of the raw materials into vividly colored yarn, there are two further steps taken before commencing the weaving of a carpet: the preparation of the template and loom.

The proposed carpet design is sketched on a template of squared paper in accordance with the dimensions of the carpet. The pattern is then colored and used by the weaver as a template while working. Highly detailed, the sketching and coloring of these patterns may take months to complete.

Carpets are woven on either a horizontal or vertical loom. A horizontal loom, in its basic form, consists of two beams staked to the ground around which the warp is wrapped. There are three types of vertical looms: the fixed village loom,

Tabriz loom, and the Roller beam loom.

The fixed village loom, used mainly in Iran, consists of a fixed upper beam and a moveable lower beam. Weavers sit atop an adjustable plank that is raised according to their progress. The warps of the Tabriz loom or Bunyan loom, used in Northwest Iran, are continuous and pass behind the loom. Instead of the weaver's platform raising as in the fixed village loom, the woven portion of a carpet woven on a Tabriz loom rolls to the back of the loom when the tension is released and after a carpet is completed, the warps are then severed. The warps are attached to two moveable beams fitted with a locking device in the Roller beam or Turkish village loom. The ratchets are unlocked and the carpet, once complete, is rolled onto the lower beam.





The weaving of a rug begins by passing a number of wefts under and over the warps horizontally. Comprised of similar thread strength, the wefts join the warps to comprise the foundation of the rug. After this base is prepared, knots of fine wool or silk are tied around consecutive sets of adjacent warps to create the elaborate designs of the carpet. These knots, as guided by the squares on the template, will form the pile of the resulting carpet. Persian carpets are woven using either the Ghiordes or Senneh knot. In a Ghiordes or Turkish knot, yarn is passed between two neighboring warps, returned under one, then wrapped around both and pulled through the center so both ends emerge between the warps. A Senneh or Persian knot is used in finer rugs as a more symmetrical knot is created when wrapped around a single warp and passed behind a neighboring warp dividing the two ends of the yarn.

Between each row of knots, one or more rows of weft are passed through the warp fibers and packed tightly down to secure the knots in place. The weaver may then run a small comb through the yarn to further clarify the design.

The production of a carpet is an extremely time consuming process. Each hand-woven carpet may contain 16 to 550 knots per square inch. Depending on the size and degree of detail, a Persian carpet may take several months to several years to complete.



NOMADIC CARPETS

Though often dismissed as provincial works and not unanimously considered 'Persian carpets' due to their differing design and construction from the finely knotted floral carpets of the court, Nomadic Carpets possess their own heritage and ought not be overlooked as a mere primitive craft. In fact, these carpets may even be viewed as embodying the true essence of the Persian handcrafted art as they are free of the external influences of design standardization and commercial motivation.



Weavings categorized as Nomadic Carpets incorporate floor and wall coverings, saddle and horse blankets, storage bags, bedding and cushion covers. Nomadic flat weavings are known as kilim, meaning rough carpet. Kilims are quickly woven in a natural shape and are given their color and patterning from the tight intertwining of the weft and warp in the foundation of the rug.

As pastoral nomads, the tribes are always in migration and therefore use easily transportable, horizontal looms to weave small carpets when paused in a location. Kilims are typically limited to a width of roughly four feet as the weaver sits at either side and reaches to weave the breadth of the carpet. Only those carpets made for the chief, or khan, of the tribe are of large proportions.

The warp and weft of Nomadic carpets are generally made from wool, as it is readily available in their shepherding lifestyle. In some cases, undyed camel hair, and on rare occasions, goat hair or silk and cotton may comprise the warp and weft. Once the fibers are slightly spun, they are dyed with natural vegetable dyes, also readily accessible from the surrounding nature. It is due to this authentic production that many nomadic carpets, while appearing inferior in design to the sophisticated curvilinear designs produced at urban workshops, tend to be of overall higher quality.

Among nomadic tribes, the women do all the weaving and designing. Though in some tribes a woman may lead the weaving by sketching a design into the earth, providing wool to the weavers, and chanting the number of wefts and the color in which they are to be filled, the preparatory work of inventing a design, composition, and coloring of a Nomadic carpet was typically carried out by a single weaver. The weaver did not refer to a predesigned plan; she continuously formed it in her imagination while knotting on weft and warp and as a result, Nomadic carpets tend to be disorderly in design. Symmetrical design and colors are rarely seen in Nomadic carpets. It is the independence and freedom of the motifs throughout the design, which is most of interest. The motifs are elaborated on from standardized forms passed down for generations allowing a weaver to work from memory. They are mostly boldly colored, angular shapes reduced to simple geometric, highly stylized abstract forms and though placed adjacently they need not bear any relation to one another.


While carpets produced in the urban centers and rural villages of Persia may have more notoriety, the woven arts of nomadic tribes are a continuous tradition running parallel to that of the city, yet withstanding the external pressures that at times restricted urban weaving. Throughout history, when cities were ransacked and political pressures prevented urban and rural workshops from producing hand woven carpets, nomadic tribes remained alienated from these pressures and kept a continuous production of traditional kilims in these tumultuous times.

Presently, the nomadic way of life is growing ever more stationary. With unavoidable technological advancements and the requirement of governmental permission in order to begin a migration, the tribes have settled into a more rural way of life that is reflected in their art.



RURAL CARPETS

Paralleling the nomadic weavers centuries old creation of the art of hand-knotted rugs are the village weavers of Iran. Exclusively produced as a means for family income, these carpets are produced within a familial setting. As these weavers are fixed in one location, typically outside the family home, the horizontal loom used by the nomads has been overwhelmingly replaced with the vertical loom, though this is dependent on the tradition of the village. The carpets woven on village looms generally have thick sheep wool pile and cotton warp and weft. In rare cases they use wool in warp and weft.



Though the designs of village carpets are, on one hand, simple adaptations of those motifs originating from tribal carpets, they are also considered degenerated versions of the elaborately curvilinear forms that originated in royal court workshops. Rural handmade carpets are quite different from Nomadic carpets in terms of design and composition of motifs. They put to use basic drawn or woven (vagireh) templates but with time, repeating pattern carpet designs were memorized and the templates were no longer used. Symmetry and geometrical order is therefore not of high importance in Rural carpets. Their rectilinear designs echo the nomadic aesthetic, even with the inclusion of a central medallion on many rural examples.

The modification of complex designs and curvilinear forms to angular shapes is necessary for rural weavers. To attain a fine curvilinear design, the intensity of the knots must be increased. Whereas the geometric forms in a nomadic or rural carpet are constructed with widely spaced knots, it is only possible to achieve the sinuous complexity of a court or city workshop carpet when the knotter has a drafted template to guide his closely spaced knots.

URBAN CARPETS

During the Safavid Dynasty (1501-1726), carpet weaving was transformed from a nomadic enterprise to a national industry, securing not only global appreciation for the beauty, superior quality, and skill of execution of Persian hand-knotted carpets. The textile industries of Persia were promoted to neighboring monarchs and foreign dignitaries through ambassadorial gifts and commercial trade agreements were established with European nations. Commercial exports of Persian hand-knotted carpets were transported in the seventeenth century from the Far East to Northern Europe.





Urban carpets were produced in royal and city workshops, where the design was first planned on paper and given to the weaver. In design, symmetry and the flowing curves of islimi motifs were extremely important. Each part of the production was completed by an individual whose specialty lie in the art of design, weaving, spinning, and dyeing, making the creation of these carpets a joint artistic endeavor.

Royal workshops employed court painters to design elaborate curvilinear floral templates and brought the highest skilled weavers to knot carpets for the palace and mosques of the Shah. These court workshops were heavily supervised to maintain elevated standards of production and oversee the creation of luxurious carpets incorporating silk, gold, and silver-gilt threading. It is notable as well that though in nomadic and rural settings the weavers were predominately women, in city workshops and especially those under the patronage of royalty, the best artisans were men.

City workshops met the creation demands of local and foreign consumption. The major weaving centers during the Safavid Dynasty were located in Tabriz, Kashan, Herat and Kerman.

By the latter half of the nineteenth century, increased Western demand caused a resurgence of workshop carpet production in Kerman, Khorassan, Sultanabad, Hamadan, Kashan, Ferahan, Heriz, and Bidjar. The choice of color and design for carpets bound for foreign markets was strictly mandated as the creation of carpets as commercial products differed from those used locally.

MIRI RENAISSANCE

The introduction of the mechanization, synthetic dyes, and cheapened modes of knotting, have caused dramatic changes to carpet weaving, effecting their standards of manufacture and ultimately undermining their quality and prestige.

In the nineteenth century, Western markets once more took notice of Persian carpets and a flourishing trade ensued. American and European companies formed in Iran for the exportation of these woven masterpieces to their markets. Simultaneously, the world was engaged in the Industrial revolution, altering once handcrafted artisanal products to commercial mass manufacture, and carpet weaving in Iran was not spared. Synthetic unstable dyestuffs and machine-spun wools were imported into Iran from Europe and other countries, degrading the fiber durability, fineness, and quality of color absorption, thus diminishing the aesthetic quality of the rugs.

At the dawn of the 20th century, carpets produced from low quality, commercial materials had replaced the creation of artistic hand-knotted carpets with genuine characteristics, subsequently erasing this cultural and artistic heritage. It was still possible, however, to gather second hand samples from homes and the international demand was satisfied until the beginning of the fourth quarter of the twentieth century. Towards the end of 1980, Razi Miri, the fifth generation of a two hundred year antique carpet merchant family, foresaw the grim future of the carpet industry. The continuation of this production method would result in eradication of genuine carpets. He thus decided to adopt a perfectionist approach to revive authentic hand-knotted carpets on the basis of scientific and historical research in order to understand the essence of Persian carpets and recreate old examples by restoring genuine methods with the particular technical characteristics of each region.

Paramount for Miri Creations is maintaining the authenticity of design and traditional weaving methods of each region and tribe. According to the Miri Creations concept, in order to preserve the authenticity of a carpet, design and weaving methods must be faithful to the cultural heritage and traditions of the people to which the carpets belong. Miri Creations unequivocally refuses to combine designs and knotting techniques from separate regions or transfer designs from different areas. The most important aspect of this Persian art is the diversity of design and techniques, which must be preserved at all costs. In practice, this complicates the process for Miri Creations as it broadens the production sphere, requiring carpets of particular regions being knotted in their respective traditional centers of production. The regions in which Miri Creations are produced are Azerbaijan in the north, Kurdistan in the west, Arak and Malayer in central Iran, and Fars.

Believing that originality of design, pattern and weaving technique should be specific to the culture and tradition of the region from which it originates, Razi Miri looked to the rich past for guidance. Thorough study of antique Persian carpets held in the world's museums and private collections, including Miri's personal collection, and their culturally significant designs inspire and inform the carpets created in Miri's design atelier. This atelier creates the unique design templates by hand under the direct supervision of Razi Miri. The aim is to create modern hand-knotted rugs that are congruent and compatible with the regional, cultural, ethnic, and ever Iranian spirit and principles of harmony and balance in the composition.

Loyal to the traditional carpet making methods, Miri Creations developed a workshop in the city of Zarghan dedicated to the production of the raw materials. The Kooch Workshop produces the highest quality vegetable and mineral dyes using both traditional and modern equipment and time-honored recipes. The Miri Foundation, an independent cultural management system, supervises the process, ensuring the standards of production and even resulting waste has no negative environmental impact. The wool fibers of highland sheep used in the knotting of a Miri creation are also of the utmost quality, selected for their uniformity of length, strength, softness, ability of color absorption and flexibility. Moreover, it is the continuous assistance available to weavers and the weekly inspection of the looms and knots throughout the course of hand-knotting each carpet, which secures not only the technical accuracy but also the beauty of each original design.

Incontestably beautiful works of art, these woven tableaus are formed much the way a painting would be; where the design is built in paint with brush on canvas, Razi Miri's tools are natural-dyed wool and knoter's finger on weft and warp. For Miri, art is the journey from the realm of imagination to the domain of the actual. Through his beautiful carpet designs and strenuous care to ensure quality and aesthetics true to the spirit of Persia's rich artistic heritage, Miri's artworks are woven testaments to the beauty and ideals of an embodied imagination and as such, Miri Creations have found their home in some of the world's most renowned institutions.

THE MIRI CREATION CARPETS IN THE FARJAM COLLECTION

AZARBAIJAN

Iran's Azarbaijan province is located in the northwestern part of the country. It is bordered by the Caspian Sea, Turkey and Iraq. Largely mountainous, major parts of this territory are have been deserted and remain uninhabited. The population is comprised of various urban, rural and tribal communities concentrated in the habitable steppes and river valleys.

The long history of Azarbaijan began with the pre-Assyrian, Achaemenid and Sassanid Dynasties and was always the center of art and culture after Islam to the Mogul and Timurid eras.

In the light of the keen patronage of the Safavid rulers who revered art and culture, invaluable and magnificent works of art emerged from the early workshops located in Tabriz, the capital of Iran when Shah Ismail I, founder of the Safavid Dynasty, ascended the throne.

A myriad of variations of weaving techniques, raw materials, and designs exist in carpets from Azarbaijan. This is a formative point in the creation of a collection which caters to diverse tastes and styles, covering a variety ranging from the fine woven classic floral designs of Tabriz and Bakhshayesh, to the coarse, yet decorative geometrical examples of Heriz. Cities and villages around Tabriz, such as Heriz, were influenced artistically by Tabriz, resulting in a mixture of design elements and ultimately a uniquely distinguishable carpet from Heriz. The rare examples of exotic antique silk hand-knotted art of carpets from Heriz and Tabriz and the flat-woven samples created by Shahsavan nomads provide two samples of these different styles, presenting sufficient grounds for corroboration.

TABRIZ

Tabriz rugs originate from the city of Tabriz, one of the largest cities in Iran, and capital of the province of East Azerbaijan. The population of Tabriz is comprised by Azaris, the largest ethnic minority of Iran that speak in the Turkish dialect. An important trading center and border station in centuries past, Tabriz's rich past is revealed in the architectural masterpiece, the Blue Mosque.

One of the oldest weaving centers, Tabriz's carpet manufacture is vast, producing luxurious hand-knotted examples to inexpensive bazaar quality rugs. Tabriz rugs are often woven with wool or silk on a cotton or silk foundation and rarely feature a wool foundation. The colors used in a Tabriz carpet vary from bold, contrasting hues to subtle pastel variations. The hand-knotted arts of Tabriz are typically divided into two subcategories, Tabriz and Ardebil.

Tabriz carpets are of the utmost quality, consisting of high raj counts. A hand-knotted rug of good quality tends to have short pile with the design of the field composed around a central medallion. Scrolling viney, vegetal motifs, pictorial, and even the architectural elements of ancient Persia are common features of a Tabriz carpet and the border is characterized by palmettes. Corner pieces have been known to include icons of Sadi, Hafez, Ferdowsi, and Omar Khayam, the four greatest Persian poets. The most common of designs is the 'Lachak turanj', dating to the 10th century and symbolizing the moon with lozenges that represent the scales of a fish.

P-640

SAFI

TABRIZ, AZARBAIJAN
449 X 284 CM

The most famous and the most important hand-knotted artwork in history prior to discovering the Pazyryk in 1949 is the Ardabil carpet. The significance of this shining and unique example of Persian art is due to its astonishingly complex design, which without any doubt is the work of one of the masters of carpet design and miniature illustration in the Safavid era. The elegance of weaving, precision of the knots, and fine raw materials along with the enormity of its dimensions make it one of the highest valued and appreciated of Persian carpets. There are cartouches along the minor border with calligraphy of the poetry of Hafez and a signature of its creator, Maghsood Kashani, and the date, which revolutionized the study of carpets. Many carpet designers and weavers were influenced by its unique design and countless reproductions have been made, though rarely are these reproductions up to the standards of the original. Miri Creations tried their best to recreate the Ardabil carpet, which is located in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, using the original methods of production when creating their reproduction and they were quite successful. The present example is created with excellent quality, which is incomparable to those reproductions produced in other cities and countries to this day. The most important factor in this success is using natural raw materials and dyes and the high quality weaving of the best weavers in Iran.





P-740

NOORI
TABRIZ, AZARBAIJAN
305 x 255 CM

This Tabriz carpet is undoubtedly one of the most important Miri Creations hand-knotted carpets. In the style of the 19th century Haj Jalili, in design, color, and weaving technique, the main characteristic of this carpet is the red plain field color, use of navy blue for the linear definition of motifs, and maintaining a low contrast in the border, central medallion and corner pieces. Its quite common to see carpets attributed to Jalili to use synthetic colors but this carpet employs pure madder root to obtain the red pigment which results in a harmonious mellow tonality. It is this mellow shade that gives unique beauty to the carpet. The light green of the central medallion remains in balance with the border. The negative space, which is the result of contrast between plain ground and the elaborate decoration of the carpet, creates a beautiful second central lozenge and is aesthetically pleasing.

P-741

DELSETAN

TABRIZ, AZARBAIJAN

158 X 113 CM

This silk carpet is influenced by a 19th century example from Tabriz held in the Carpet Museum of Tehran. In addition to design variations with the original sample, the coloring of the Miri Creations carpet is unique. The bright green ground and very strong indigo of the half broken islimis can be considered the designers most emboldened act, which gives a visual beauty to the carpet. The strong contrast between the design of the main scrollwork and surrounding interlaced floral motifs highlights that this carpet a mixture of Heriz and Tabriz styles.





P-742

BAYRAM

TABRIZ, AZARBAIJAN

460 X 315 CM

P-743

PEDAR-GOLABETOUN

TABRIZ, AZARBAIJAN
203 x 151 CM





P-648

TANNAZ SILK

TABRIZ, AZARBAIJAN
229 X 168 CM

Dated carpets place the origins of the Heriz silk carpet in the mid 19th century. This example of a Heriz silk carpet in The Farjam Collection dates to 1863. As the people of Tabriz originated silk weaving in Heriz, one can assume silk carpets existed in Tabriz simultaneously. Most silk Tabriz carpets from the 19th century are based on Haj Jalili's style. Miri created silk Tabriz and Heriz carpets in very limited quantities and has since stopped.

The color combination of this carpet is novel for silk paisley Tabriz carpets. Green is located close to the navy blue border and this simple border is innovative of Miri Creation carpets. The narrow border and harmonious colors are rarely seen in any other carpet and make it similar to classical Termeh textiles.

P-638

FERDOWS

TABRIZ, AZARBAIJAN
350 X 253 CM

Perfection was first attained in the design of garden carpets with the Bahrestan carpet. It has been noted in *Carpet of Iran*, by Cecil Edwards, that in the 19th century, a well-known Kermani artist created another template of Tabriz carpet design. This design template has been found in small quantities in parts of Iran such as Chahar Mahal Bakhtiyari and Kashan. The example, which has been made in Chahar Mahal Bakhtiyari, has been kept in the Miri Collection and featured in the book of *Glory of Iran*.

Typically in charbagh design, channels link separated garden parcels. In this garden carpet there two systems of repeating forms, one is symmetrical and the other is not; they form ponds and small gardens issue from the branches of flowering trees. An interesting feature of this carpet is its center of design is not located in the center of the carpet, therefore it is not symmetrical which was inevitable yet the best choice aesthetically.



P-639

FARIMAH

TABRIZ, AZARBAIJAN
354 X 267 CM





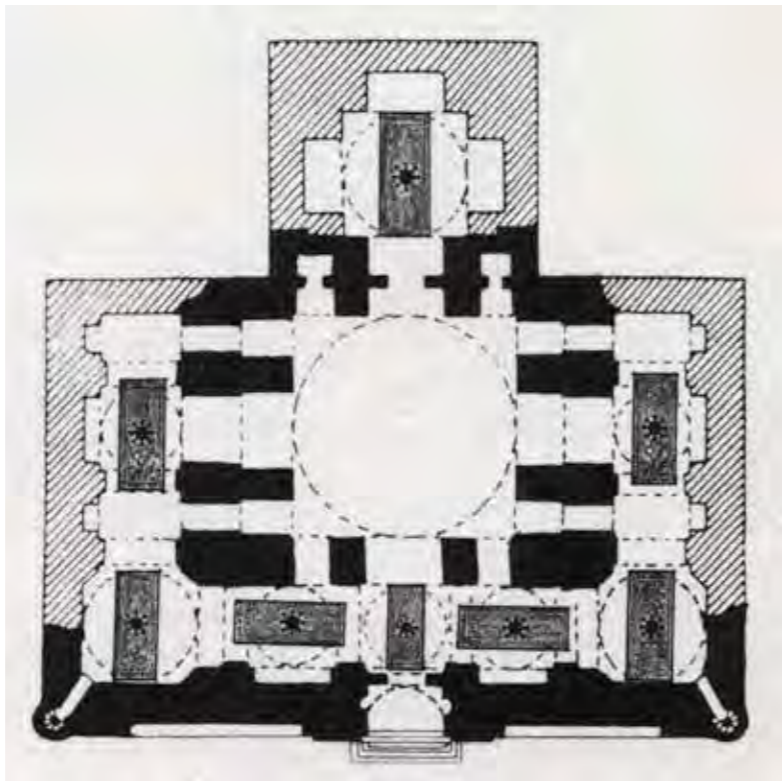
P-643

FARIFTEH

TABRIZ, AZARBAIJAN
414 X 303 CM

The design of this carpet is adapted from a Timurid period carpet, dated approximately to 1465AD, now in the collection of the famous German connoisseur, Hermann Eberhardt in Switzerland. He published an article with photographs of this carpet and documents that point to the Kabood Mosque in Tabriz, the most important remaining building from the Timurid era in Tabriz, as the original location of this carpet. He believes that eight carpets of similar designs were created for this mosque as remaining tile works have very similar designs and motifs to this carpet. From the eight carpets, only one survives in whole and several fragments of the others are kept in the world's museums.

In the Miri Creations adaptation, though the central medallion has been removed due to proportional constraints, the repeating motifs are preserved. The coloring of the cartouches in the Miri example display a balance of color not found in the original Timurid example.



TIMURID TILE WORKS OF THE KABOOD MOSQUE

KABOOD MOSQUE PLAN



TIMURID CARPET

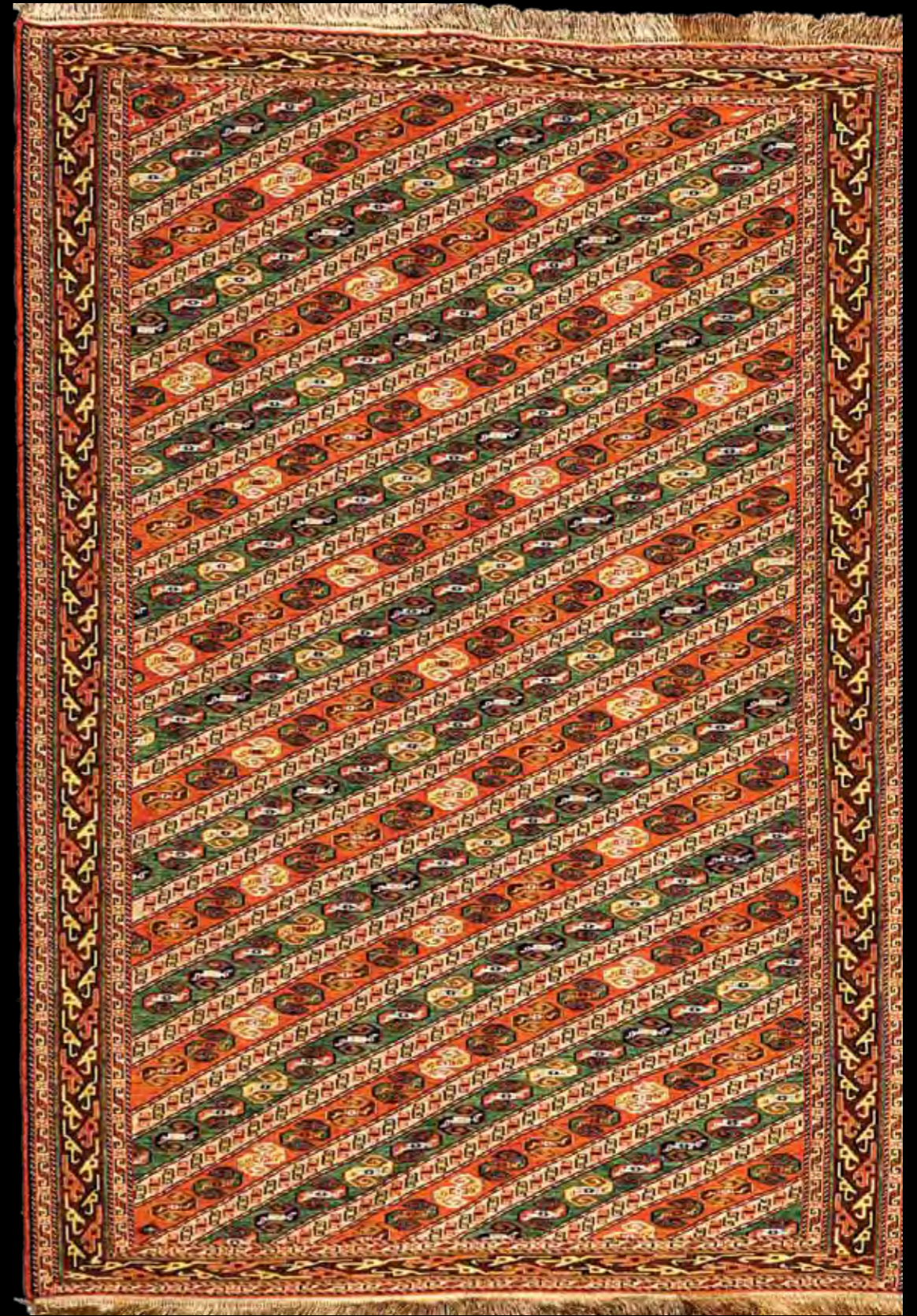


P-744

ALMA SUMAC SILK
SHAHSAVAN, AZARBAIJAN
130 X 94 CM

P-745

OLMAZ SUMAC SILK
SHAHSAVAN, AZARBAIJAN
115 X 78 CM





P-746

ELMIRA SUMAC SILK
SHAHSAVAN, AZARBAIJAN
140 X 90 CM

HERIZ

Heriz rugs originate from the area of Heriz, East Azerbaijan, in northwest Iran, northeast of Tabriz. Such rugs were produced in the village with the same name in the slopes of Mount Sabalan. The wool was excellent in Heriz carpets and they were extremely durable. Heriz hand knotted rugs endured generations and became more beautiful with age. The weavers of Heriz designed them in geometric, bold patterns with a large medallion dominating the field. The immense variety of coarse-knotted designs of Heriz and the large beautiful motifs on simple richly colored backgrounds portrays similitude with a modern abstract painting. The typical Heriz red color and a highly individualized medallion are characteristic of the region where Heriz, Baksheesh, and Sarab are situated. Heriz rugs have warps of cotton and the weft is either cotton or wool in double weft technique. The knots of the pile are symmetrical.

The silk hand-knotted examples created in Heriz are exceptionally fine in texture, utterly beautiful and exotic, and are rare and small in number. It is almost over a century that silk rug weaving has come to a halt in this village. Any remaining silk Heriz carpet has been created over a hundred years ago. It should be noted that one of Miri Creations' tasks was the reinvigoration of these silk Heriz artworks after over a century.

In order to identify the reasons for the success of the Heriz carpet, it is necessary to mention that in addition to its high quality and extreme durability, the simple patterns and beautiful, large motifs along with the rich vegetable dyes and hand-spun wool have made them widely coveted and valuable in the first quarter of the 20th Century.

The preservation of the excellent quality of hand-spun wool and vegetable dyes further sustained the value of these rugs, in spite of the fact that the patterns were not always as precise and as well executed as in previous periods. Heriz rugs were still in demand and sought after by enthusiasts from the 1930's till the 1960's.

Unfortunately, the Heriz rugs started to decline as a result of the substitution of machine spun wools and synthetic dyes. Presently, Heriz rugs are no longer woven according to their traditional and authentic characteristics and only a few in existence follow the ancient hand-knotting methods of weaving, and these represent a small number.

P-748

LEILA SILK

HERIZ, AZARBAIJAN
163 X 131 CM



P-650

SALEH

HERIZ, AZARBAIJAN
220 X 157 CM

This carpet is a rare example of the prominent flower Miri Creations carpets that have been made using the same techniques as Polonaise carpets from the Safavid era. Polonaise carpets are made from silk and are brocaded with gold and gilt metallic threads. This carpet uses only silk in the construction. The design of this Heriz carpet is all over floral vinery. Varying species of blossoms of Abbasid flowers, one of which is of paisley form and the others reminiscent of lilies, flow from the corners and abstractly associate these blossoms with the flow of the wind. The harmony of the reddish-brown and camel coloring adjacent to mauve and indigo, aid in establishing a sense of serenity in this design.





P-749

SALEH

HERIZ, AZARBAIJAN
513 x 370 CM

The design of this Heriz carpet of large dimension, characteristic of all Heriz carpets, is all over floral vinery. Varying species of blossoms of Abbasid flowers of leafy lotus flowers blowing interlaced with delicate leafy vinery. The harmonious warm tones present a vision of calming, fall foliage, which is further enhanced by the widely spaced, undulating indigo serrated leaves comprising the border.

KASHAN

Long famous for its textiles and pottery, the city of Kashan was an important trading route along the Silk Road as it is positioned between Isfahan and Tehran and borders the Dasht-e-Kavir desert.

The carpets woven in Kashan are highly renowned due to belief that the famed Ardebil carpet was woven here. Throughout the Safavid era, many exquisitely hand-knotted examples were created in Kashan.

In the 19th century, the creation of hand-knotted carpets in Kashan experienced a resurgence of beautiful examples incorporating tightly woven wool Senneh knots on cotton foundations.

Kashan carpets are characterized by densely elaborate fields in which floral motifs and sprawling vinery interlace, sometimes towards a central medallion, on indigo, garnet, or cream grounds. It is important to note that when a Kashan carpet employs a central medallion, the design typically incorporates quartered medallion corner pieces.



P-179

DERAKHT-E TOUBA

KASHAN, IRAN

154 X 114 CM

FARS

The province of Fars situated in the Southeast of Iran and is known as Cultural Capital of Iran. The etymology of the word «Persian» (Pars-ian) is derived from Fars and is found in many ancient names associated with Iran. Fars or Pars is the original homeland of the Persian people. The ancient Persians were present in the region from the 9th century BC and became the rulers of a large empire under the Achaemenid Dynasty in the 6th century BC. The ruins of Persepolis are located in the province of Fars, in the vicinity of two capitals of the Achaemenid Empire, Shiraz and Pasargadae. Naturally beautiful and vast, the bounteous land of Fars is considered one of the significant agricultural areas in Iran. This territory, with Shiraz as its center, has always embraced nomadic tribes such as the Qashqai, Khamseh and Lur. Characteristic of tribal life is the production of handcrafts, and the creation of the hand-knotted carpet as an art has gained worldwide recognition for the Qashqai and Khamseh tribes. The nomadic tribes also had a marked affect on the designs of carpets made in rural areas from their time passing through on migration. For example, in Abadeh, influences of Qashqai nomadic weavings abound.

QASHQAI

The Qashqai are the largest and most important group of pastoral nomads who reside in the provinces of Fars, Khuzestan, and southern Isfahan. They speak Qashqai, of the Turkic language family, very similar to that of Azerbaijan. Traditionally pastoral nomads, the Qashqai travel with their flocks each year from the summer highland pastures north of Shiraz to the winter pastures on low-lying lands near the Persian Gulf, some 300 miles away. Since the 1960s, the Qashqai have predominantly become partially or wholly sedentary.

The Qashqais can be divided into five major and three minor tribes. The major tribes such as the Amalah, Darrah Shuri, Kashkuli, and Shish Boluki are each comprised of over 5,000 families, while Farsimadan has 1,500 families. The minor tribes, which are all comprised of fewer than 500 families, are the Qaracha, Rahimi, and Safi Khani. As Shiraz was a major marketplace for the sale of Qashqai products, they are often referred to as 'Shiraz'. The Qashqai are renowned for their magnificent hand-knotted piled rugs and other woven wool products such as kilim and jajim. The diversity of techniques, color combinations and designs between each of the major and minor tribes of the Qashqai is cause for unparalleled innovation. The wool produced in the highlands near Shiraz is unmatched in its rich color absorption, particularly in the deep cobalt blue and ruby red.

Qashqai hand-knotted examples have been said to be some of the most famous of all Persian tribal weavings. The knots of a Qashqai carpet are usually asymmetrical and of differing size. The famous gabbeh carpet has the largest knots with at least 570 per square decimeter, though many other hand woven products have those as small as 6000 per square decimeter.

A principle field of Miri Creations activities is with Qashqai tribes.

P-750

NOOR

QASHQAI, FARS
392 x 298 CM

The innovations brought forth by the Miri Renaissance are quite visible in this example as it employs the icons and local or nomadic motifs to create a unique identity. The aesthetic style of Razi Miri, the designer of this work, and his interpretation of khengesht carpets and combination with his personal artistic taste changed many of the standards to give the carpet a fresh appearance. In this carpet, we see borders narrower than usual and a simple green border at the end of the carpet, which is quite a new yet pleasant move in the design. The juxtaposition of various natural colors creates an overall view that crystalizes in floral and animal figures to create an instant connection between the viewer and nature. Seven medallions throughout the field represent the seven water pools that symbolize eternal life in heaven.





P-513

AROUSHI MAHNAZ
QASHQAI, FARS
140 X 104 CM

P-262

MAHMANZAR

QASHQAI, FARS
158 X 117 CM

This Qashqai sample is interesting for its unification of differing colored motifs. Surrounding the central lozenge medallion, softly formed zig-zag borders, orange hued corner pieces and vivid red central ground of the medallion comprise a beautiful composition for this carpet.





P-158

ALAMBAHA
QASHQAI, FARS
201 X 138 CM

This is a beautiful example of a Qashqai nomadic carpet, which is under influence of urban city designs and decorated with stylized palmettes. Usually in nomadic carpets, motifs are not physically connected. Only in special examples that are influenced by Rural or Urban designs do the mixed motifs such as palmettes, revised according to taste, link to each other through tracery. In the center of the central medallion, there is a famous four-armed Qashqai icon surrounded by four palmettes on dark blue ground. This four-armed element was popular until the second quarter of 20th century amongst the Qashqai. Four green corner pieces containing birds elevate the beauty of this carpet.



P-223

JAVIDAN

QASHQAI, FARS
192 X 162 CM

This carpet represents all aspects of a genuine hand-knotted carpet. The motifs maintain their independence throughout the carpet, with the exception of the border elements. The motifs are asymmetrical, unique, and not repeated. The azure of the medallions present a smooth transition to navy blue ground with the assistance of dark red and ivory. Comparing this carpet to the luxurious urban design carpets is like comparing classical music to jazz.

P-162

ROUDABEH
QASHQAI, FARS
223 X 144 CM

This carpet is an example of Nomadic carpets influenced by Urban carpet design. The main motif used in this carpet is a form of botteh ghobad khani, a paisley form often used by the Qashai, which is considered the basic form of the famous botteh jegheh. Another genuine Qashqai motif is the simplified, angular paisley. The use of these two contrasting motifs is quite interesting and achieves a beautiful balance in the overall composition. The use of ivory in the background of the vivid red four-armed central palmettes is a bold design element.





P-159

SHIRIN

QASHQAI, FARS
200 X 193 CM

This beautiful rectangular carpet is an adaptation of a similar design belonging to the beginning of the 20th century. A large hollow indigo square at the center helps the decorative paisley margin to achieve a three-dimensional quality. These repeating paisleys and the convergence of paisleys and cypress trees in each four corners and central section are a reference to mythology. Different paisley forms in the borders or dark red, green and indigo, create a strong contrast of life against the central void. Because of this void, the surrounding life thrives.

P-431

SAGHAR

QASHQAI, FARS
236 X 189 CM

The primary theme of this well-known city inspired Qashqai millefleurs design, called Nazim, is based on blossoms of fantastic variation and multiple colors growing from a single pot or vase. The presence of the single vase from which the flowers grow in this motif alludes to the pot as a symbol of earth in Assyrian-Elamite mythology. This same symbol is embodied in the Sassanid fantastic trees on the rock reliefs of Taq-e-bostan and, later in the Islamic period, in the 12th century stucco relief panels of Gonbad-e-Alavian in Hamadan. Secondary themes include the elaborate banded halved cypresses trunks flanking the field and a mehrabi-shaped 'drawn-back' curtain. The overall design carries the dual symbolism of heavenly gardens; the curtained window, which simultaneously looks onto the garden of life and afterlife is opened wide, the curtain 'removed', so that man may behold the perishable worldly beauty and the infinite glory of the perennial Garden of Paradise where flowers never fade. Many western scholars have assigned the overall design to a Mogul prototype, overlooking the fact that carpet making was introduced into India by the Moslem Kashmir Sultans in the 15th century and expanded by the Timurid rulers of the 16th century. The pattern, like those within many other Indian carpet designs, is Persian in spirit, concept and design, and long predates its Indian predecessors.





P-642

KATAYOUN

QASHQAI, FARS
271 x 221 CM

This masterpiece of Nomadic carpets is a very fine representation of Khengesht design. Khengesht is a village in Fars near the city of Abadeh which is a thoroughfare for Qashqai in their summer migration. Khengesht hand-knotted crafts are strongly influenced by Qashqai design concepts. In this Miri creations version, the carpet is horizontally symmetrical and bilaterally asymmetrical. The aesthetic of this carpet is the result of unlimited motifs and icons of varying shapes and symbolism alongside floral and animal motifs and three central medallions in which we see the four-armed Qashqai icon and palmettes. The indigo field surrounding the central medallions is separated from the light blue of the field by a pink interior border according to Khengesht tradition. Three central medallions balance and add beauty to the overall composition of this carpet.

P-644

PERSPOLIS

QASHQAI, FARS
357 X 271 CM

This carpet is unique from a design and coloring standpoint and is a great example of innovation based on tradition in Miri Renaissance. Using countless icons and motifs from various Fars nomadic tribes such as Qashqai and Khamseh, and is the result of two years of research in gathering motifs for creating an artwork with a unique identity. As stated earlier, in the evolution of garden carpets, which lead to this abstract form called kheshti, these carpets are created mostly in Bakhtiari villages to the point that when one hears the name kheshti, one instantly thinks of Bakhtiaris. In comparison with the famous Bahrestan garden carpet, these abstract carpets use simple lines as waterways and the tiled segments act as gardens. Using kheshti design, which is repeating same sized rectangles, was quite popular among Qashqai nomads and gabbeh examples of this same design.

This concept was the basic design structure of this carpet, which acts as an abstract paradise with the center symbolizing love of Iran with its icons and methodology. Overall, this design has 108 rectangular forms and an irregular central medallion located within green borders. Each tile has a unique design and though they are similar in size and composition. Coloring is uniform on both axes to create visual balance. At first glance one does not see the differing forms. Using similar colors in the final row creates a strong balance between the border and the ground.

In the central medallion, we have the icon of farvahar, the symbol of good and goodwill in ancient Iran, and also an icon of a lion and sun, which was the official government emblem for centuries. The sword in the lion's hand extends out of the border emphasizing the concept of power in Iranian culture. In the central tile above the medallion, the logo of Miri Creations is found in the form of a flower, which is repeated once in each rectangle.





P-751

SHEKAR-SHEKARLOU

QASHQAI, FARS

2.74 x 175 CM

KHAMSEH

In 1861, Naser ed-Din Shah created the Khamseh Tribal Confederation. Five tribes, the Arab, Nafar, Baharlu, Inalu, and the Basseri, were placed under the control of the Qavam ol-Molk family. Combining tribes was not a novel idea, the Safavid Shahs also created many tribal confederations to counter the gaining power of the tribes. The Khamseh Tribal Confederation's purpose was to counter the strength of the Qashqai tribes of the region. Though these five tribes were a mixture of Turks, Lur and Arab peoples, they all came to be named 'Arabs' in contrast with the Turkic Qashqai.

Khamseh carpets vary between each of the five tribes. In some, symmetrical knots are common, and in others, asymmetrical or a mixture of both are utilized.

The coloring and design of the Khamseh hand-woven crafts are quite unique and easily identifiable. For example, Arab nomadic carpets, called Arab Baaf (woven by Arabs), have dark colors whereas the Baharlu tribe uses bright, joyful colors. As there were many inter-tribal marriages between the Khamseh, the influences of each unique tribal motif resulted in an interesting synthesis of these designs.



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SARA
KHAMSEH, FARS
381 x 196 CM

KURDISTAN

Bijar is a small Kurdish town located in the province of Kurdistan. The hand-knotted pile rugs of this town have gained recognition throughout the world. Cold and yet prosperous, this land, due to its vast and lush meadows has been a source of plentitude to the herds, producing the best quality wool that is fine in texture, shiny, and beautiful.

What the world has known of Bijar knotted pile rugs of Iran was rooted in the fact that embraces a large territory in the provinces of Kurdistan and west Azarbaijan. The creators of these arts were mostly part of Kurdish and, to some extent Afshari tribes in Tekab, who were originally Turks.

A small town today in Western Azarbajan, Tekab began as a small village situated on the border of Kurdistan and Azarbaijan where both Turkish and Kurdish tribes inhabited symbiotically. The same symbiosis is still alive today.

As the perilous roads of older days could not offer safe and easy passage for the transportation of goods and commodities, the weavers had to showcase samples of their hand-knotted crafts in the bazaars of Bijar, in order for the merchants and carpet dealers to view them from closely. This is why these rugs are known as Bijar Rugs.

Characteristic of Bijar rugs are their durability and diversity of designs, including large motifs that are suitable for the spacious modern interiors of the present day. Most Bijar carpets employ double weft technique with both wool and cotton foundations. Bijar hand-knotted rugs with wool foundations are known as 'Garrous'. Miri Creations has recently proceeded to cover both wool and cotton foundations, bestowing more beauty and delicacy upon the texture of these rugs.



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GALIN

BIJAR, KURDISTAN
303 X 252 CM

Though the main body of the carpet is reminiscent of Sarapi design, the delicate lines in the template and design of the borders differentiate it from the carpets of Heriz. The borders lack ratio and the main body of the carpet designs in Heriz carpets. The balance of colors such as various hues of blue alongside red and yellow with beige are very rich in these samples. Balanced fractions and perfect polarity, continuity and discontinuity of designs that can be seen in Rural carpets are very spectacular in these samples. Knots in Bijar carpets are very strong and the carpets retain their original character. Transmission of the motifs was quite common in carpet design amongst Iranian ethnicities and since Kurdistan and Azarbaijan provinces are neighbors, this fact had great impact on their designs.



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GANDOMZAR

BIJAR, KURDISTAN
650 X 420 CM

The most important example of a garden carpet is the famous Bahrestan carpet from the Ctesiphon Palace. Garden carpets have evolved in their design throughout history. The closest examples to the Bahrestan are charbagh carpets from Safavid Dynasty of the 17th century. It is unknown to us the shape of garden carpets before Safavid times as there are no existing samples. Yet remaining samples in private collections and museums, including samples in the Philadelphia Museum, are the source of design for this carpet.

Innovative Persian designers use highly abstract forms in their garden carpets in comparison to other classical styles. Unlike in a charbagh design, in which water channels connect parcels of garden, in this carpet three repeating frameworks, two of which are symmetrical and the largest is asymmetrical, act as individual gardens and water pools which connected to each other with branching florals. The ivory of the blossoms and blue-green of the branches create a perfect balance between the azure background and rich red of the carpet ground.

This design was popular from the mid 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century and we have many variations of size, not only in Bijar but also in Bakhtiari, Malayer, and Hamadan carpets. In this example, the proportion of the repeating framework is altered relative to the overall dimension of the carpet in order to increase the number of frames, making it a unique example.

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