

FINANCIAL TIMES

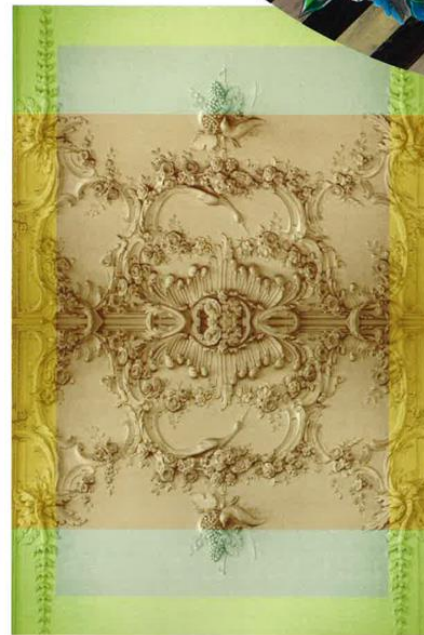
# superior. interiors

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how to spend it interiors edition



Clockwise from left: The Rug Company wool Vivienne's Rose Dust rug by Vivienne Westwood, £985 per sq m. Moooi Carpets polyamide Malmison rug by Maison Christian Lacroix, £1,984. Mogg wool Stucchi rug by Cristina Celestino, from £1,760



**I**f there's a story for next year, it's the rug as a figurative, representational statement," says Rodman Primack, chief creative officer of Design Miami. "Just like in contemporary art, the figurative and fantastical are returning to the fore after years of domination by the abstract."

Witness one of the hits of this year's Design Miami/Basel, a metallic mixed-media rug (price on request) featuring the national flower of every country in the Americas, designed by Hechizoo's Jorge Lizarazo. Or US studio New Moon's remarkably detailed botanical studies on black backgrounds (\$170 per sq ft) – one of a range of figurative rugs on display at Hannover's Domotex show.

The Hechizoo rug went to a Portuguese art collector, and for Primack this represents an evolution in collecting, with buyers increasingly focusing on rugs. "Collectors tend to start out with chairs, then move onto furniture and lighting. And now they're looking into textiles with a deeper understanding and interest," he says.

The result is a rise in exciting and experimental designs. Paris-based Studio Marc Hertrich & Nicolas Adnet, for example, has produced four new line-drawn designs on dramatic dark printed backgrounds,





Even Jennifer Manners, queen of abstracted geometric, has caught the figurative fever, as her Lotus rug shows

including two graphic city illustrations: Paris Est Une Fête (from €2,800) and Reflets de Minuit (from €3,100, pictured above).

Even Jennifer Manners, queen of abstracted geometric, has got the figurative fever, as seen in her Lotus rug (from £3,049, pictured on final page), which is strewn with representations of the flower. East London specialist store Floor Story has a range of representational designs, including by artist Eve Spencer, such as the Damselily (£1,495), which features an oversized image of an insect at its centre. And at Italian furniture company Mogg designer-to-watch Cristina Celestino's Stucchi rug (from £1,760, pictured on previous pages) is one of the most striking designs of the year, with its gorgeous representation of stuccoed Italian plasterwork.

Front, meanwhile, has added to its photorealistic offering with the pioneering Tunnel (£2,400 per sq m) by Michaela Schleypen, who has developed a new way of hand-tufting (the shooting of coloured strands of thread into a rug's backing rather than using knots) by twisting extra colours into the threads pre-weave. The design, inspired by Greenwich Foot Tunnel in London, features greys in around 120 shades – far more than is usual in rug design – while her limited



Clockwise from top left: Galerie B wool/nylon Reflets de Minuit rug by Studio Marc Hertrich & Nicolas Adnet, from €3,100. Ted Baker wool/Tencel Technibloom rug, £1,199. Moooi Carpets polyamide Fool's Paradise rug by Marcel Wanders, from £1,466

edition Aquarium I and II (£3,140 per sq m) use more than 1,000 different coloured threads to create underwater scenes complete with swimming fish and turtles.

"There's an appetite from designers and architects for increasingly statement pieces," says Aneeqa Khan, CEO and founder of Eporta, the fledgling online trade marketplace where buyers can source new brands from around the world. Her team has charted a 43 per cent rise in requests for such rugs – particularly those with figurative designs – in the past few months alone.

Signs of this representational revolution began to appear in 2010 with The Rug Company's production of an Alexander McQueen-designed piece, which

used the hummingbird motif that had inspired a fabric in the late designer's collection. Then in 2012 came Hermann August Weizenegger's Ocean rug (£15,750), sold by Haw, which features gradients of blue silk tones as waves; and Luke Irwin's 2014 Ockham's Razor collection (from £1,300 per sq m), featuring Manhattan and Paris street scenes based on vintage pictures of the cities.

The McQueen design was so intricate that it required The Rug Company to adopt techniques from Aubusson tapestry stitching, rather than traditional hand-knotting. Since then, increasingly nuanced and sophisticated designs have pushed makers to greater lengths to produce rugs that capture the full spectrum of designers' visions.

"We always encourage our designers to focus on the creative side of things, and we'll worry about how to make it," says The Rug Company's co-founder Christopher Sharp. A case in point is the firm's newest design, Vivienne's Rose Dust rug (£985 per sq m, pictured on previous pages), designed by Vivienne Westwood. Featuring large-scale painterly rose blooms, it is made by hand-knotting three-ply threads, meaning the rug uses more blending of strand lengths than the company ever has before and mixes more hues of wool, in this case 100 per cent Tibetan. "In theory this is



story-telling rugs based on a Finnish poem (£1,553, example pictured on previous page), via Maison Christian Lacroix's circular eye-popping Malmaison flower power designs (£1,984, example pictured on opening pages).

These technical advances mean that manufacturers are prioritising smaller runs of experimental designs for higher-end clients, says Eporta's Khan. And inevitably, this is also leading to the customised and bespoke rug. Moooi, which only began Moooi Carpets in 2015 as well as its "Your Own Design" service, launched

From top: **Alternative Flooring** wool/nylon **Strawberry Meadow rug** by Liberty **Fabrics, £149 per sq m. Jennifer Manners wool/bamboo silk Lotus rug, from £3,049**

an online "rug designer" Works Configurator this spring, allowing the individualisation of several of its designs through recolouring, resizing and reshaping. And Front allows customers to commission their own photorealistic rugs using a tonal approach echoing that employed in Schleypen's Tunnel design. "To me there are no practical limitations to designing this way," Schleypen says. "The only limitation is the time it takes to weave, which can be up to five months. Otherwise, whatever you see can be turned into a rug." ♦

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
**Alternative Flooring**, 01264-335 111; www.alternativeflooring.com. **Amara**, 0800-587 7645; www.amara.com. **Cristina Grajales Gallery**, +1212-219 9941; www.cristinagrajalesinc.com. **Floor Story**, 020-7871 3013; www.floorstory.co.uk. **Front**, 20 Bruton Pl, London W1 (020-7495 0740; www.frontrugs.com). **Galerie B**, +337-6289 4110; www.carredexception-galerieb.com. **Go Modern**, 565 King's Rd, London SW6 (020-7731 9540; www.gomodern.co.uk). **Haw**, www.hermannaugustweizenegger.de. **Hechizoo**, www.hechizoo.com and see Cristina Grajales Gallery. **Jennifer Manners**, by apt. 52 Pembroke Rd, London W8 (020-3648 6865; www.jennifermanners.co.uk). **Luke Irwin**, 20-22 Pimlico Rd, London SW1 (020-7730 6070; www.lukeirwin.com). **Mogg**, www.mogg.it and see Go Modern. **Moooi Carpets**, 23 Great Titchfield St, London W1 (020-8962 5691; www.mooiocarpets.com). **New Moon**, +1302-654 0442; www.newmoonrugs.com. **The Rug Company**, 555 King's Rd, London SW6 (020-7384 0980; www.therugcompany.com). **Studio Marc Hertrich & Nicolas Adnet**, +337-6289 4110; www.studiomhna.com and see Galerie B. **Ted Baker**, see Amara.