

## PLATFORM

# HANDWOVEN MASTERPIECES

Move over paintings and fine jewellery. Luxury rugs are fast gaining popularity as a new way for practical, long-term investments, doubling up as tangible pieces of art.

BY PRIYANKA ELHENCE

**O**riental rugs, also known as hand-knotted rugs, are entirely handmade on a vertical loom, painstakingly created by millions of tiny knots, compared to their woven counterparts, which are, as the name suggests, hand-woven on a loom.

Knotting, a highly specialized 2,000-year-old craft, requires precision, patience for fine details, and craftsmanship from skilled artisans, making hand-knotted rugs more expensive than hand-woven rugs, as a result of their longer, complex, and tedious production process.

Whether on the floor or hung on the wall, good quality Oriental rugs (especially from Turkey, India, Iran, and Afghanistan) are becoming more expensive as younger generations are trading in their local industries of rug weaving for office jobs, thus driving down production quantities.

To find out more, we spoke to two experts in the field of luxury rugs - Tappeti Fine Hand-Crafted Rugs + Carpets, and Jaipur Rugs, both known and respected in the world of premium, handmade rugs and carpets.

Founded in 2006 in Australia, Tappeti, which means rug in Italian, boasts Italian heritage and is founder Karinna Gobbo's way of honoring her vision of bespoke textile rug + carpet making, steeped in traditions of crafting and the work of skilled human hands. Says Gobbo, "Tappeti rugs are not manufactured on an industrial



TAPPETI'S KARINNA GOBBO WITH ELLIOT BARRATT,  
FOUNDER OF ELLIOT JAMES



THE PATTERN ON THIS RUG IS INSPIRED BY CHINESE PAPER FANS AND WAS DESIGNED BY TERRENCE QUAH, CO-FOUNDER OF ARCHITOLOGY



**JAIPUR RUGS' CREATIONS ARE INSPIRED BY INDIA'S RICH CULTURAL HERITAGE**

scale; each rug or carpet is unique and made by hand, each a promise of unsurpassed quality, uniqueness, and sustainability. We combine the best of both worlds, focusing on craftsmanship and sustainability, while embracing traditional techniques with the flexibility of modern design, making our rugs a valuable addition, whether vintage or new."

Likewise, based in Jaipur, the capital city of Rajasthan, Jaipur Rugs is a household name in India, known for their quality handmade rugs. Inspired by India's rich heritage, Jaipur Rugs weaves together traditional Indian artistry with modern design, with each rug undergoing a meticulous process involving 180 skilled hands, embodying a 2,500-year-old weaving tradition that is ethical and sustainable.

Says Yogesh Chaudhary, Director, Jaipur Rugs, "Founded in 1978 by (my father) Nand Kishore Chaudhary, Jaipur Rugs has grown from humble origins – two looms and nine artisans – into India's largest manufacturer of handmade rugs, present in 60 countries worldwide (including Singapore, where it just launched its showroom in October). He started the business on the principles of dignity, removing middlemen to connect directly with Jaipur's tribal artisans, and is often still referred to as the 'Gandhi of the

Carpet Industry'. In the 16th century, our artisans adopted Persian weaving techniques and reinterpreted them according to their own creativity, creating their own unique style of carpet weaving. The masterpieces in our collections are the hand-knotted rugs. Turn one upside down and notice countless pixel-like tiny knots; the more knots per square inch, the longer it has taken the artisan to weave the rug, hence the more precious it is."

#### **How do factors such as provenance, materials, and design contribute to the value and appeal of a rug?**

*Karina Gobbo (KG):* At Tappeti, we view our rugs as carefully curated art pieces, designed in-house and tailored to meet our clients' needs. The provenance of our rugs is chosen by our client's requirements, whether it's an intricate hand-knotted Tibetan rug or a custom piece requiring a shorter lead-time. This story enhances their appeal, making them not just functional items, but also conversation starters.

Premium materials are integral to our craftsmanship. By using natural fibers, we ensure durability and a luxurious texture that improves with age. Materials like wool, hemp, nettle, or silk not only elevate the tactile experience, but also contribute to the longevity of the rugs. Each Tappeti rug showcases innovative



**YOGESH CHAUDHARY, DIRECTOR OF JAIPUR RUGS**

design that reflects both contemporary aesthetics and traditional techniques, ensuring that every piece is distinctive and resonates with our clients' personal style and is not seen in any corner shop. Our ethos is anchored in quality, ethics, and celebrating the time-honored craft of hand-making rugs and carpets, creating statement pieces that push the boundaries of what is possible with fibres and design.

*Yogesh Chaudhary (YC):* The value of a rug is traditionally influenced by its provenance, with regions like Turkey and Iran historically dominating the market due to their craftsmanship and expertise. However, in recent years, the focus has shifted more towards the quality of raw materials and design intricacy. While the origin of the rug still matters, materials like wool, silk, and sustainable fibres, as well as the complexity of the design, have become key factors. Additionally, the brand behind the rug plays a significant role in its value, especially if the piece is part of a designer collection, limited edition, or is one-of-a-kind, further elevating its market worth.

When purchasing a vintage or brand-new rug, personal taste should be the primary factor guiding your decision. Vintage rugs typically carry traditional designs, while modern rugs blend traditional and contemporary elements, so your vision for your interior space matters more than the perceived value of the rug. Authenticity is also key to ensure transparency from the seller about the rug's origin and details to avoid mis-selling.

#### **Why invest in a hand-knotted rug?**

*YC:* Hand-knotted rugs are of the finest quality and make for good investments as they last a long period of time, add functional value to homes, are easier to maintain, and continue to appreciate in value even after many years. Hand-knotted rugs absorb sound, add visual value to your interiors, and generate employment, bringing prosperity and blessings to any home they go to.

*KG:* People invest in hand-crafted rugs for several reasons. They embody unique craftsmanship and design, functioning as art pieces within homes. High-quality rugs can last a lifetime and provide warmth and comfort. At Tappeti, our timeless pieces not only serve as functional art, but also hold intrinsic value for years to come.

#### **How does the value of fine rugs appreciate over time, and what factors influence this?**

*KG:* Rarity plays a significant role, as limited editions or unique designs are more sought after. The condition of the rug is crucial as well-maintained pieces tend to hold their value better than those that show signs of wear. Additionally, the designer involved in creating the rug can significantly impact its value, as rugs made by renowned artisans or designers are often considered more valuable due to their craftsmanship and artistic merit.

*YC:* Fine rugs have seen an appreciation in value over the last decade thanks to the prosperity of the economy and an increase in labor wages. The rarity of a rug also increases value appreciation. Jaipur Rugs also collaborates with several designers and different artists wherein each rug is a unique piece, thus offering and adding value. Additionally, they are often limited in production, making them rare and adding long-term value. Purchasing a handcrafted rug also supports artisans and their communities, promoting ethical and sustainable production practices.

#### **What makes your rugs and carpets unique?**

*KG:* Tappeti's uniqueness lies in the bespoke rugs we create that perfectly reflect each client's unique vision and identity. Every piece is crafted using innovative design processes combined with traditional handcrafting techniques, exclusively with premium, natural fibers. Our commitment to sustainability ensures that each rug is made responsibly, without mass production, creating beautiful, ethically produced luxurious rugs.

*YC:* Jaipur Rugs' success model lies in its association of the 40,000+ artisans in 600 villages, of which over 90% are women who work from home. The traditional carpet industry usually functions with middlemen, whereas we have reached the homes of artisans directly, even in the most remote parts of the country, eliminating the need for middlemen and empowering artisans by generating employment. Impacting so many rural artisans' lives, Jaipur Rugs pays higher wages than the market, resulting in happier weavers, helping the brand offer superior quality carpets. 