

magazine



backpage
Eight banknotes and the story of a growing nation

BY TO, PAGE 4

INSIDE
Independence Day | History as quirky stories for children

BY TO, PAGE 3

LITERARY REVIEW
Nehru's "radical political vision" for foreign policy

BY TO, PAGE 2

Track the latest stories via #TheMagazine on Instagram and X (formerly Twitter)

Get connected - www.thehindu.com



Prasad Ramaswamy

Back in 2019, to mark a decade of his brand from Marigold, designer Sangee Singh commissioned a set of 21 objects that were listed as collectibles. They included items like the backrest of a Thyssen chair made of acrylic, a teacup set inspired by an ancient Indian art form, and decorative pendant made in beautiful wood and brass tones.

While both painting and a poster were featured on the surface they appeared attached to the beautiful cane backrest of a chair, and yet there was a charm from the audience base to possess it.

"Creative people are not one-dimensional," Gopi tells me, as she places items like this in Thailand, where she's traveling through a two-month. "I wanted to share with people the things I love - antiquities, culture, food - which in a way are a part of my brand. And I wanted them to be seen as such." Since then, the number of craft and design-centric brands in India that have launched over time dedicated to collectibles has exploded.

These collectibles are often items that are extensions of the brand's main product lines, but created with more labour and in single piece or limited numbers. Examples include embroidered patches that reproduce the logo of renowned artists such as Stella McCartney, Stella McCartney and Viktor Chapaev by Marigold Art Gallery, lamps and decorative objects made from hand-blown glass that mirror the aesthetic of hand-blown lamps, by the creative studio behind India's three leading decorative homes and heirloom by the House of India (which is the primary company specialising in residential manufacturing). And paper bags collectible objects like, bags, which will produce antique, and, as the brand's artistic director Sangee Singh puts it,

"examples of the future designed by prestigious names from contemporary culture". The time passed by their launch at India Art Fair 2020, which featured limited edition objects conceived by artist Rishi Bhatia.

Shift in meaning and approach
All of this, some argue, has led to the loss of the traditional definition of a collectible, which conventionally is described as an object that by virtue of its age, rarity and history is considered valuable by a collector. For example, an antique chair from a past era, the small manuscript of a famous writer, with author's notes, and in the design space, chairs designed by some of the most famous designers, in the 1930s, when he was building Chandigarh.

"It's human nature to collect rare things like shells, coins, medals. An object becomes a collectible (in the monetary sense) if someone is willing to sell up a museum and would pay a value far higher than its true value," says Anish Kapoor, founder of Chiswick Art and collectibles gallery Adina's. "But that no longer happens, it takes time, the object has to become rare and have a backstory that moves the market. You're essentially that's rare and to say that it's collectible."



THE CURIOUS CASE OF THE COLLECTIBLE

As designers and brands embrace limited-edition objects of art, the meaning of 'collectible' is shifting - from rare antiques to items with contemporary artistic value

gilded, limited-edition, rare, it is made of hand-crafted. I think there are less marketing labels than a true collectible."

Butter that, a good collector of art and antiques, counters this. "I think everyone who is an antique dealer or a collector of rare objects, which are a part of our own history, a good collector of art and design-centric objects. It's not just about the object, it's about the story behind it. People like to buy things, for instance, collectible (hand-crafted) for adults, relating to the specific history of the particular brand, accessories and decorative objects. Today a legacy brand, its vintage products are considered highly valuable by collectors. "They may be received moment, he could buy

something he could afford, thinking about appreciation in value. And they have a lot of things to buy for 10 lakh that goes up in value to over 10 lakh."

Another example comes from India's designer, or founder of Mumbai-based design gallery P&A and creator of their brand, a digital marketplace that regularly hosts online sales of art and design-centric collectibles. "All the available work that I have discovered about them, especially the (hand-crafted) is a great example. People like my mother and I are looking for it, they're looking for it. Today, retrospectives of his work are held at top galleries, which makes his work collectible, in my opinion. If someone is willing to pay a premium for an object that they want to keep in their house, then it's collectible," she says.

When craft takes centre stage in the Indian context, many of the commercially available objects that are labelled as collectible are not meant to be used in one or more traditional craft. If the intention is to create a collectible, you have to be clear, as founder of Bangalore design gallery K&M. The space was to give more traditionally-trained designers and hereditary Indian craftspeople to create unique

A Collector from 1971 began their journey for their collectible objects, Sangee Singh. They're busy working, a small brand from collectible, vintage collectibles from India's, and an Indian (Singapore) that's been in the market for a long time.



design-centric objects, such as light created by Italian designer Andrea Anastasio, collaborating with Indian property artists from studios Pratik, and furniture inspired by Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's era, designed by Bangalore-based artist Rishi Bhatia. "By virtue of being handmade, such objects are hard to make. They are usually the product of a special collectible story and you're not going to be able to buy them elsewhere. In fact, you are buying into a craft legacy that may not exist in the future."

There's also an argument to be made, my industry insiders such as the founder of India's, or founder of India's, that sometimes in the form of limited-edition collectibles are a direct way to expand a brand's reach by appealing to a key reason of why an individual collects - to become a part of a community that appreciates the same things you do. "In the end, you're not going to buy into your brand at a very important level by buying whatever your first product is," says Sharma, who counts among her co-owners design company Sangee Singh. "But how do you get them to go beyond that? Adding objects that explain who you are, in a lovely way to expand your brand and your community to a new, you're deepening the linkage between your creation and your community."

To do just that, lighting designers Pratik and Pratik, who created a sub-brand, collectibles, the other design collections smaller products that are extensions of what they create for their main brand like teapots. Examples of these brands work can be found in the field, experimental, handmade, limited-edition such as the brand The P&A. "The market there's an opportunity to create a good product, who appreciate good design," says Singh, explaining why they decided to introduce smaller objects in a great way. (She earned 25,000 more annually than their business distribution).

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6



Adding objects that explain who you are, in a lovely way to expand your brand and your community to a new, you're deepening the linkage between your creation and your community.

SANGEETIKA SHARMA
Designer



Further, the U.S. has over 40 million people, 10% of our population are Indian. Clearly, they're drawn to the craftsmanship and connection to their culture.

VEDANT BHASKAR
Designer, design strategy gallery



Created objects are not one-dimensional, it's about the story behind the object. It's not just about the object, it's about the story behind it.

SANGEETIKA SHARMA
Designer



When it does arrive in India through our own, we're people more than just collectibles. Design and their own, it's about the story behind the object. It's not just about the object, it's about the story behind it.

SANGEETIKA SHARMA
Designer, design strategy



THE ROYAL RUG RENAISSANCE

From heirlooms to artwork, rugs have evolved to become an inseparable aspect of luxury home decor. HELLO! unravels the beauty of these deeply personal tapestries of tales, heritage, and heart — one thread at a time



This hand-knotted artwork by Jaipur Rugs is part of the Picture Perfect® 'Playful with Tradition' collection

Circa 2022. A renowned global artist from Rajasthan, redecorating his home, decided to collaborate with Jaipur Rugs, rather than pick something ready-made. His brief: a piece that would reflect his deep love for music and cinema. The artist, a musician based in a remote village in Rajasthan, brought his vision to life entirely through her imagination — without ever having met him.

She wove in motifs inspired by jazz, films, and viral rhythms, perceived through the prism of her own cultural lens and innate artistry. What emerged was a seamless convergence of two worlds — miles apart yet spiritually aligned. Deeply moved by the emotional resonance of

“A rug is the first thing your feet touch and often the last detail people notice. But it does more than complete a space — it reveals something deeply personal about people”

Yogesh Choudhary, Director, Jaipur Rugs

the final creation, the client responded with a handwritten letter of gratitude.

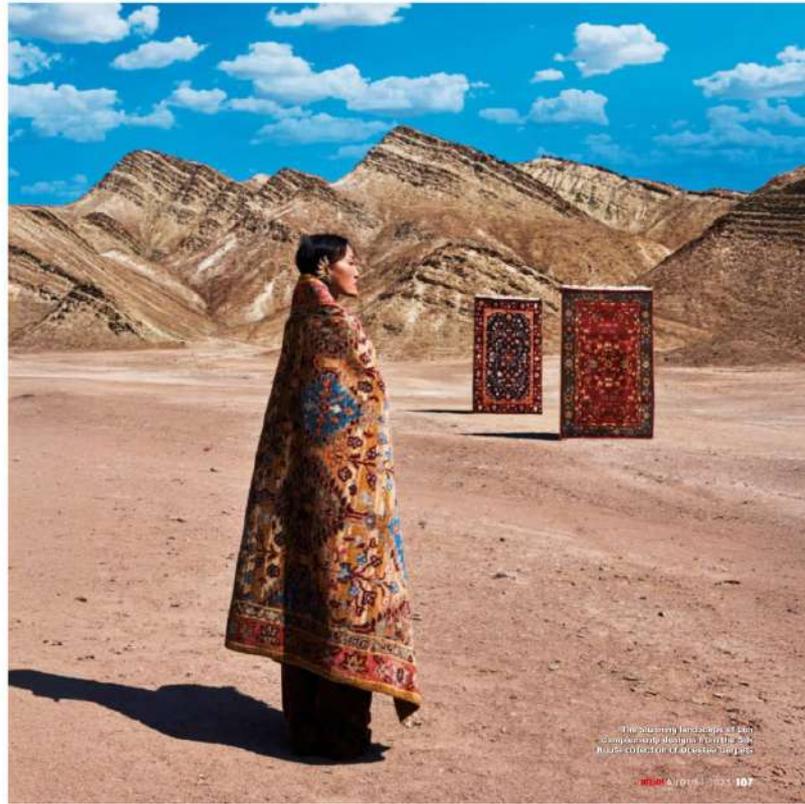
Down south, in the land of the Nizams, a family approached the design team at Clouston Carpets with a handwritten love poem by their grandfather, wanting it embedded into a

carpet. The result was a bespoke creation that preserved the soul of that memory — now immortalized in the heart of their home.

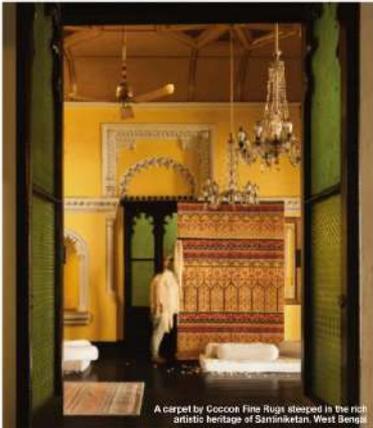
In each of these moving stories, the rug is a memory, a unique canvas and a thread that intertwines tales of identity. Their warp

“India has amazing historical processes. We’re borrowing from that tradition to create timeless works of art as carpets”

— Dhruv Chawla, Managing Director, Carpet Cellar



The stunning landscape of Rajasthan complements designs from the Silk Rugs collection of Clouston Carpets



A carpet by Cocoon Fine Rugs displayed in the rich artistic heritage of Saminiketan, West Bengal



This above Persian rug by Carpet Cell is woven in the legendry city of Kashmir, a part of the world's oldest carpet weaving tradition

Every rug has a story to tell, an emotion behind the way it's been woven, an inspiration behind the design

— *Smriti Chowdhury, MD, Cocoon Fine Rugs*

and well carry narratives of emotion and inheritance, and are a reminder of woven diaries that capture sentiment, history, and imagination.

As discerning taste and luxury permeate every aspect of home decor today, rugs are at the core of this evolution. They could be passed down as heirlooms by a grandmother, a parting gift from a friend moving cities, a bespoke artwork at a wedding toast, or an artwork for a wall.

THE TALES THEY NARRATE

Long before carpets became design statements, they were part of folklore — like the mythical living carpet in Indian Agni, or King Solomon's enchanted rug that carried armies across the sky. Even in the present day, there's magic in how India's carpets are changing the narrative of homes.

"Today, a rug is often regarded as the grounding element that unites colours, textures, and stories," says Yogesh Choudhary, Director at Jaipur Rugs. "Homeowners now seek rugs that reflect their personalities, tastes, and values. Hand-knotted and hand-dyed rugs, in particular, have become prized possessions."

Yogesh has had a front-row seat to the evolution of Indian rugs — it was in 1978 when his father, Nand Kishore Choudhary, founded Jaipur Rugs with just two looms and five weavers.

"What started in a small town has grown into one of the world's largest hand-knotted carpet companies, with over 40,000 artisans working across 600 villages in India," he adds.

"Rugs aren't just statement pieces — they often become the centrepiece of a home, can work as a painting and, of course, as a floor accessory," Smriti Chowdhary, Managing Director, Cocoon Fine Rugs, agrees. "Rugs are functional at their core because they are canvases of 'real' and design," she says. "Every rug has a story to tell, an emotion behind the way it's been woven, and an inspiration behind the design."

Cocoon Fine Rugs was tasked with creating an 'artwork' with large birds, other elements of nature, and specific colours for a home in Delhi. And when the rug was placed in the house, Smriti recalls, "It truly transformed their entire living room. Once the rug went up, the wall told a story."

As is evident, carpets carry with them tales told through generations, more often than not.

"A statement rug with its intricate design, bold scale, unique colours, or heritage craftsmanship becomes a story in itself. Sometimes, it's the narrative — a mosaic piece inspired by a client's personal story, or cultural roots. For me, it's a mix of artistry and authenticity that gives a rug its 'statement' status," says Anagha Elbaum, President at Oboret Carpets, whose legacy dates back to 1930 on the banks of the Ganges in Mirzapur, a small town in Uttar Pradesh, known for its weaving tradition.

Carpet Cellar, another legacy brand, is also known for its large collection of original museum-worthy Persian carpets commissioned for the Maharajas of India and earned from high-profile estates around India. Managing Director Divya Choudha adds to the narrative.

"Many top international and Indian decorators are now choosing vintage tribal carpets, which are more geometric and go well with contemporary interiors. Their vibrant colours and character adds a pop to otherwise mundane colour palettes."



CONVERSATION STARTERS

Once a simple source of comfort under our feet, the humble carpet has now formed many avatars. Think rugs as artwork, rugs as table runners, rugs as coasters, rugs as bathroom layers of texture in a walk-in closet...

"Whether they're plush, patterned, modern, or minimal, rugs in luxury homes act as silent storytellers, lending harmony, style, and soul to every room," says Yogesh.

Take, for instance, when Cocoon Fine Rugs collaborated with interior designer and architect Ajay Arya, and translated the traditional artwork of West Bengal into custom carpets.

"Everything from the old Rabindranath Tagore style of art to the typical Bengali *Dhaka* sarees was translated into carpets," says Smriti.

THE STORYTELLERS

If the carpet is a woven story, the artisans are the storytellers. In a country bursting at the seams with talent, artisans are the legacy-weavers who pass their skills down generation after generation.

"A carpet is woven with intense love, passion, and respect for its place in homes: none of our carpets are produced in factories," says Divya. "These master craftspeople usually tend to dairy cattle or fruit orchards, and devote a few hours a day to the painstaking task of weaving. This craft is passed on from father to son, and mother to daughter."

Cocoon Fine Rugs works closely with artisans, many of whom are third-generation weavers, and collaborate with designers who bring fresh perspectives. For Jaipur Rugs too, artisans are the heart and soul of their practice. Most of them are women from India's rural heartlands. In fact, their criteria for choosing designers goes beyond just aesthetics.

"We look for those who are empathetic, curious, and willing to cooperate with our artisans rather than design for them," explains Yogesh.

In the quiet corners of India's villages, stories are still being spun — one knot at a time — carrying with them the warmth of hands, hearts, and homes.

TEXT: PRAWAL



Hand-knotted rug by Cocoon Fine Rugs, a carpet from the 'Artwork of Weaves' collection by designer, Smriti & Anagha for artist, Anurag Singh, 'The World by Cheeky's Carpet'

Indian buyers today appreciate bespoke artistry and are investing in heirloom pieces

— *Anagha Elbaum, President, Oboret Carpets*

