RETAIL

Jaipur Rugs expands its Narain Niwas flagship with carpet-clad curiosities

Designed by Vaishali Kamdar Associates, the new first floor of Jaipur Rugs' flagship is a visual extension of the brand's pathbreaking creativity.

By Nuriyah Johar
Photography by Ishita Sitwala

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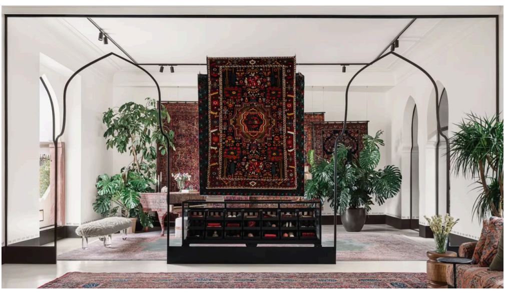

Ishita Sitwala

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When interior designer Vaishali Kamdar was recommissioned to design the new floor of Jaipur Rugs' showroom in their home turf, her lodestar was a single question: What do you place in a rug gallery that genuinely stops someone in their tracks?

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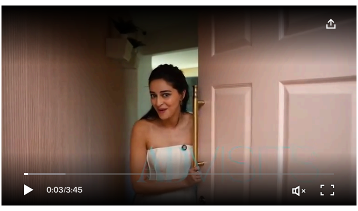
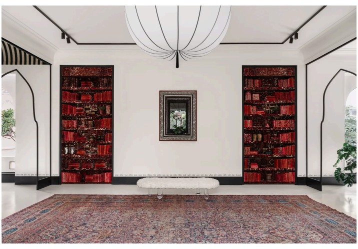


Kamdar had asked herself the same question in 2022 when she designed the brand's original store, a charming space at the Narain Niwas Palace hotel in Jaipur complete with carpet-lined chandeliers and a vintage red bathtub that, I can confirm, stopped me in my tracks when I visited a few years ago.



The bench with acrylic legs is by Yasanche. *Ishita Sitwala*

For this new commission — a 2,000 square foot extension on the first floor of the existing store — what was once an unused service terrace had to be reimagined from the ground up as a retail environment with a distinct visual identity. "The central challenge was one of continuity," Kamdar says. "The original gallery had been designed around a restored heritage structure — the architecture itself was the starting point. Here, we were working with what had essentially been a bare terrace: no inherited character, no existing detail to take cues from. The challenge was to design a space that felt like a natural continuation of the gallery below — familiar in proportion and spirit — yet with its own distinct identity, one that was contemporary and fresh." She adds, "The decision to contemporise rather than replicate the original's historic detailing may sound straightforward, but arriving at that position — and holding it — required discipline and control.

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A narrow stairway with black walls and jute-clad treads marks a sharp visual departure from the heritage structure below. Fabric lights from Atelier Lumys hang overhead. The compression of the stairway, Kamdar says, was entirely intentional — the perfect visual foil to the airiness of the first floor.

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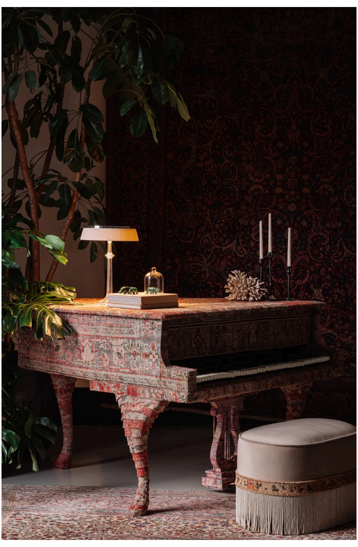
On the floor, a series of arched metal doorways define the different spatial zones without sacrificing its openness. These structures segment the space into three bays, each of which serves a different purpose. "I would say the most distinctive aspect of this project would be the rhythm of freestanding arched metal doorways," says Kamdar. "It's a modest intervention on paper — and that's precisely what makes it compelling. Rather than building walls or partitions, we used these arches to structure the plan while keeping the space entirely visually fluid. Depending on where you stand, it reads as one room or three distinct bays, with each opening framing a curated view of what lies beyond.

A metal console by Sharma Farms sits beneath a brass lamp from Rufre. *Ishita Sitwala*



The vintage piano sourced from Mahendra Doshi takes centre stage in the first bay, accompanied by an ottoman from K2 India and a table lamp by Flos. Planters by Stone Art. *Ishita Sitwala*

In the first bay, the pièce de résistance is undoubtedly a grand piano wrapped entirely in a distressed rug, down to its legs. "The introduction of the piano had its own little backstory," Kamdar says, going back to her initial question of what might stop someone in their tracks at a rug showroom. "A carpet on the floor or wall is expected, but a grand piano, fully clad in a vintage rug, would be something unique and unusual. We dreamt it, but sourcing it was an exercise in patience — weeks of reaching out to antique dealers, scouring listings, and turning down instruments that were too pristine, too imposing, or simply wrong in scale. The brief was specific: the piano needed the right proportions and the right bones. Cut to the present day, it's positioned beside a suspended installation of antique carpets, and the finished piece carries an almost theatrical charge. Visitors find themselves unable to categorise what they're looking at — furniture or sculpture, antique or artwork."

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From this musician's chamber, the central bay shifts into a bibliophile's dream, complete with recessed floor-to-ceiling bookshelves that are, yet again, clad in vintage carpets in different shades of red. A twelve-foot sofa with similar carpeted upholstery and green fringe skirting is framed by a series of three windows that follow the same minimalist silhouettes as the metal archways, flooding the space with light.

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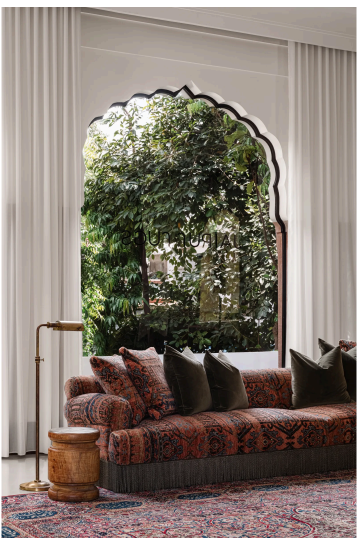
In the third bay, the eye is drawn upward to a striking green-andwhite striped dhurrie that lines the arched vaulted ceiling. Its stripes follow the curvature with meticulous precision. "The vaulted dhurrie ceiling in the third bay was the most technically demanding installation in the entire scheme," Kamdar says. "Getting a striped dhurrie to be precisely seamed, tensioned, and follow the curve of the arch — while keeping the stripe alignment perfectly true — required extraordinary care from the team executing it."



The central bay is anchored by a carpet-clad sofa by Yasanche, paired with brass library lamps from Mahendra Doshi. The wooden end table is by Sharma Farms. Ishita Sitwala

While the formula would seem straightforward enough for a casual observer — just cover an unexpected element with a carpet and voilà, instant spectacle — the dhurrie ceiling goes to show that there's considerably more to the process. Kamdar affirms as much. "Working with carpets at this scale also meant educating ourselves in the material — the weaves, the pile, the stitching, the way a carpet folds and behaves on different surfaces. Knowing which carpet belonged where, and why, took a lot of trial and error."

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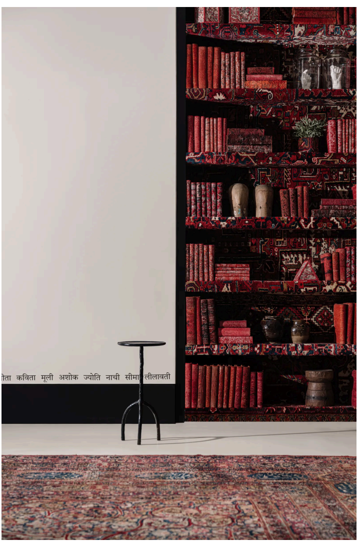
It helps, of course, that Kamdar's genius finds a companion in the Jaipur Rugs ethos. Over the past several years, the brand has cemented itself as one of the most creative, narrative-led design brands in the country — one whose campaigns go viral in ways unheard of for a rug company. It is no surprise, then, that as clients they leaned into Kamdar's vision and gave her not only the creative freedom but also the tools to bring it to life. "Jaipur Rugs was a generous collaborator in the truest sense, giving us access to their vast material library — from the antique weaves to the distressed vintage carpets and the dhurries, etc. — to experiment with," says Kamdar. "We had the freedom to design without limitations, and they trusted us and the process."



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Amid the grand spectacle of carpet-clad pianos and soaring bookcases, it is easy to miss the detail that carries the most meaning. All along the black skirting are the names of the women weavers that Jaipur Rugs works with, written in Devanagari script. Those acquainted with Jaipur Rugs know that the brand's reverence for artisanship is far from performative. The maker is truly at the core of the brand, and Kamdar knows this. "By rooting it in the founding story of the brand — the all-women carpet teams, the ethos of putting makers first — it gives it a permanence within the narrative of the space. The quiet details that take shape only when client and designer are genuinely in conversation about what a space is meant to convey."

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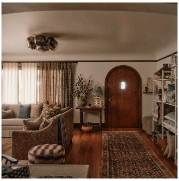

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