

TRANSCENDING THE AGES



Image courtesy of Loloi Rugs, Empress Collection

With rich, vibrant colors, intricate designs and a storied past that’s thousands of years in the making, Oriental rugs can transform a space like few other objects can. These handmade works of art are a singular combination of craft and aesthetic vision.

Having been around since before Jesus’ time, the earliest known record dates 2,400 years ago. Excavated in 1949 from the grave of a Scythian nobleman in the Pazyryk Valley in Siberia, the carpet was determined to have been woven in the 4th century B.C. The design consists of 24 cross-shaped figures framed by a border of griffins, which are framed again by a border of deer.

So how is it possible that a centuries-old design piece transcends time and lands happily in the most modern spaces? Beauty, that’s how — because no matter what color, scale, origin or pattern, a quality Oriental rug never goes out of style.

With so many patterns, weaves and colors, it can be difficult to distinguish one type of Oriental rug from another. Here’s a handy guide to help.

AUBUSSON



Origin: Villages of Aubusson and Felletin in central France, however, Aubusson-style rugs are currently produced in China, India and Pakistan
Colors: Soft pastels (especially blue and dusky rose) and ivories
Design: Floral motifs and pretty painterly patterns

KAZAK



Origin: Traditionally woven in Afghanistan and Armenia
Colors: 3-7 colors and a common palette of deep indigo, red and ivory
Design: Geometric motifs of animals, flowers and tribal medallions

BALUCHI



Origin: Concentrated near the border of Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan
Colors: 6-10 bright, unexpected colors
Design: Hallmarked by playful patterns with geometric designs and tribal symbols

KHOTAN



Origin: The ancient city of Khotan in the southern region of Xinjiang (Chinese Turkistan)
Colors: Can be rich and warm (deep reds and golds) or light and pastel (pale pinks and light grays)
Design: Chinese and central Asian influences; stylized geometric and floral patterns

BOKHARA



Origin: Pakistan, Afghanistan and central Asia
Colors: Solid, jewel-toned background color with 5-8 repeating colors
Design: Highly stylized pattern of usually three rows of octagonal medallions

KILIM (FLATWEAVE)



Origin: The former Ottoman Empire
Colors: 3-8 colors from turquoise and purple to the more traditional red, pink, ivory, green and blue
Design: Predominantly geometric; most commonly medallions, multiple connected diamond-shaped medallions and all-over octagonal shapes.



Origin: Uşak, Turkey
Colors: Silky, shimmery wool in shades of cinnamon, terracotta, grey and soft pastels
Design: Large-scale geometric floral patterns



Image courtesy of Loloi Rugs, Nyla Collection



Origin: Iran and Pakistan
Colors: Diverse palette of 15-25 colors
Design: Floral and arabesques motifs with unique central medallion



Origin: Iran
Colors: Typically features 6-9 alternating colors (typically deep indigo blue, red or gold/yellow)
Design: Bold, geometric designs interspersed with tribal symbols

Oriental rugs can be woven into the design matrix of any room with a keen eye and the right mix of pieces. Ideally, start from the rug and build up. Your rug will most likely be the most important piece in your room and set the stage for the quality of your other belongings. Here are just a few examples of how to incorporate one (or many!) in any part of your home.

DILUTE — This might seem like sacrilege, but if you worry about the rug clashing with other patterns, diluting the rug with neutral surroundings is actually the best way to highlight it. Think white walls, hardwood floors and a soft color palette.

ALL IN THE FAMILY — Celebrate the overall look of your Oriental by selecting one color family in the rug and carrying it through your design. For example, if one of the background colors is a deep plum color, pick pillow patterns, throws or artwork that have plum colorways.

EMBRACE — Sometimes, the mis-match is what makes design special. Embrace the oddity in pairing a beautiful red Persian with a cobalt blue velvet sofa, bringing just the perfect sense of completion to a room.

COMBINE CLASSICS — Oriental rugs themselves are classic designs so pair them with other mainstays like paisley, plaid and even hides to give an overall feeling of timeless compatibility.

WHIMSICAL WORKS — Though Oriental rugs can seem formal, adding whimsy to your design can tone down the stuffiness and dial up the comfort. Pair a club chair covered in cheeky fabric with a Persian underneath and you’ve created a space that’s unassuming and humble. Additionally, many contemporary rugs come in up-to-the-minute shades and innovative designs to suit a more modern lifestyle. ♦