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Observations

and Design: Interview:
John Murse, Rugs as Art

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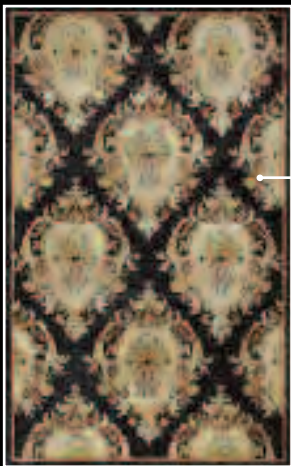
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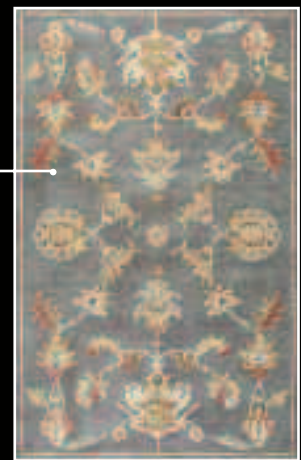
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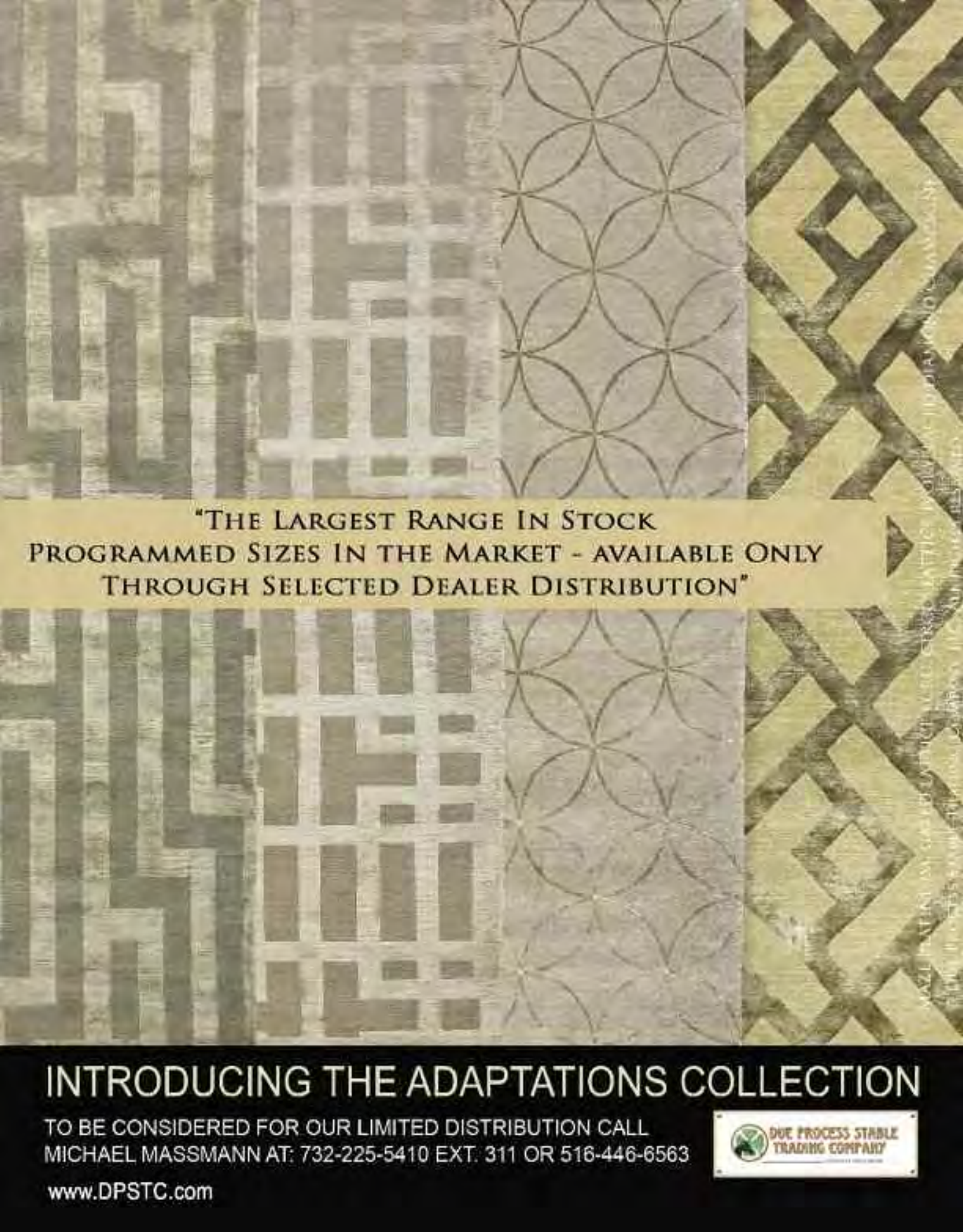
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**DUE PROCESS STABLE
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andDesign Interview: John Murse, Rugs As Art

By Leslie Stroh

At the recent America's Magnificent Carpet Awards, Rugs as Art was recognized as winner of one of the three Retailer of the Year Awards. In last month's issue of *Rug News andDesign*, we interviewed David Mink, Vice Chairman of the Mink Company that runs the leased department at Macy's who also won a Retailer of the Year Award.

John and Lucy Murse are a formidable team in their approach to the business of rugs. At the end of the interview we got talking about how Rugs as Art positions and brands their products. According to John Murse, every area rug carries a Rugs as Art label and their own inventory number. As he puts it, "the vendors' rugs are part of the Rugs as Art brand, Rugs as Art is not part of the vendor's brand."

As he observes, the vendors cannot protect your territory, so a vendor has to fit into what Rugs as Art does. You don't want it to be your store and his mix. As this was being written, I thought of restaurants that let the wine salesperson design the wine list, rather than the owner organizing the wine list. I know from other conversations that the vendor can often manage a store's inventory better than the store itself. The difference is of course the owner.

BRANDING RUGS AS ART

Murse takes the view that it is not his job to promote a vendor instead of himself. And he believes in regular advertising in every available local media including the local style magazines. That means he puts banners everywhere he can on local internet sites targeting the community, but still puts an ad in the Yellow Pages for the over 60's/70's that don't use the Internet. He also has his own website with edu-

cational material. He uses local print media for local coverage, TV to reach beyond local, and the Internet to reach further than TV. He acknowledges that he trimmed his advertising budget after the crash, but kept it going throughout the period since then to remind people that their store is still open and doing business. Murse said that advertising does not build traffic unless it is regular and consistent. His take is consumers need to see your name on a regular basis.

He also focuses very strongly on the image of the store when the customer walks in. All his rugs are on racks, and the store is meant to be clean and orderly at all times. The goods are priced well and lit well. He used the example of a smorgasbord/buffet to explain his philosophy about maintaining appearance. When the first customer walks in, the smorgasbord/buffet looks perfect. If by the end of the day, it looks disarranged and empty the last customer sees it as sloppy and unappealing. His point is that it is the last customer of the day that determines your reputation so the smorgasbord/buffet has to be as appealing a half hour before you close as it was when you opened. The expectation that the potential customer has from your advertising has to correlate with their in-store experience.

CLOSE RATIOS ON TRAFFIC

As it turned out, Murse and his staff had just finished a discussion of their close rate the day before the interview. In the 26 business days of January — they are open six days a week (closed Sunday) — they had written 1200 tickets, an average of 46 a day, six an hour. The next question is, what is the close rate? Their answer is nine out of ten in their main

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13808 • (P.O. Box 441) Tel. 607-263-5411

SENIOR EDITOR AND PUBLISHER: • Leslie Stroh • publisher@rugnewsanddesign.com

DESIGNERS NOTEBOOK AND COLLECTIONS EDITOR: • Dasha Morgan • 828-676-6011

dasha.morgan@rugnewsanddesign.com

andDesign EDITOR • Sarah Stroh • sarah.stroh@rugnewsanddesign.com

ART DIRECTOR/PRODUCTION DIRECTOR • Ellen G Bair • ellen.bair@rugnewsanddesign.com

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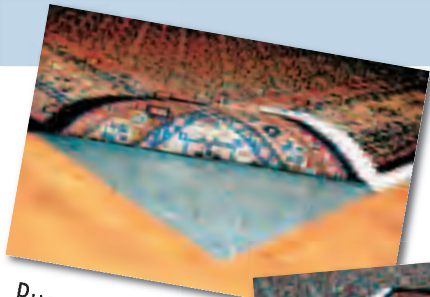
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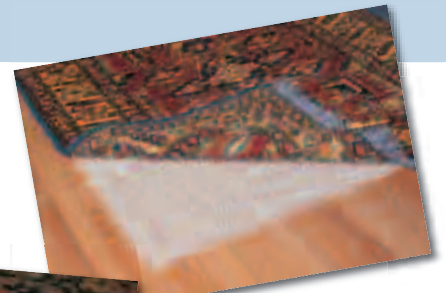
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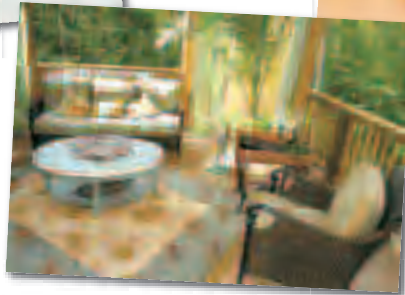
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Rug Pads for Every Price Point!

Interview: John Murse

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store (details later), although it may take three or four visits before the customer makes the buy. Murse's point was that the customer comes in the store to buy something, it is the job of Murse and his staff to find out what it is and provide it. Eventually the customer tells you what they want, it is your job to listen. Murse also pointed out that women take 3 to 4 visits to decide, while men take 1 or 2 visits to decide.

The other thing Murse and his staff do after they have made the sale, is to ask the customer to tell their neighbor about them. They look at themselves as a community resource where rugs are their products.

WORKING WITH THE CUSTOMER

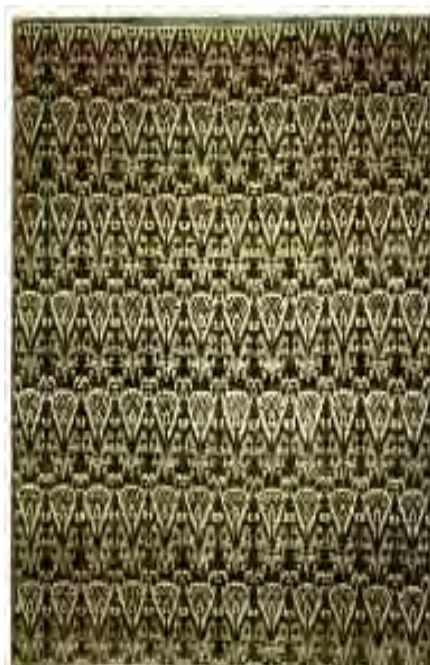
Also, at Rugs as Art, the customer is not always right, but they have to be treated as if they were. Being honest and fair, treating the customer like a guest in your family, means that after you identify the problem, you resolve it in the customer's favor. Murse's example was a customer who was in a rush for a custom rug, and wouldn't wait for a strike-off. The rug came and it wasn't what they expected. Rugs as Art took the \$3,500 rug back, and made it again. This time the customer acknowledged that they needed a strike off, and accepted the fact that they had been wrong. One rug generated a lot of good word of mouth, both on how to buy a custom rug, and who to buy it from.

John Murse said that their customers look for color, design, size,
continued on page 16

collections



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Observations

By Sarah Stroh- Under 40

When my father and I discuss what we see in the market place, there are times when we see eye-to-eye and even more times when we don't. His observations and synapses are based on experience and knowledge. My observations and synapses come from new eyes to old problems, a better understanding of social media and the ability to watch, listen, absorb and learn because of my youth. After every day at a trade show, we sit down with a bottle of wine and discuss what we saw. I am always surprised at the things he saw that I did not see and vice versa. We have come to accept that the marketplace (be it for the better or not) treats and/or reacts to the over 40 age group and the under 40 age group differently. For this reason, we have added my column of observations to the magazine.

The beginning of every year brings the onslaught of tradeshow. 2012 was no different. We started out with AmericasMart in Atlanta, followed by Domotex in Germany, Maison & Objet in France, Surfaces in Las Vegas and to round it out, NYIGF in New York City. This year I made it to AmericasMart and NYIGF. I followed our walkingthemarket.com blog for updates on Las Vegas. To attend the European tradeshow would be a treat. For now I am focusing on understanding the American market while keeping a close eye on Europe.

If you haven't been to AmericasMart, I can only describe it as going to a place as big as the Louvre, in the sense that there is tons of stuff to see, never enough

time, and by the end you're so exhausted things start to blur together. The seasoned attendee maps out the shortest, most direct route and goes on autopilot to get things done. Just like at a museum you attend often, going only to specific artwork, you lose sight of and can forget about the rest of the museum and what it has to offer. When I go to market, I walk 2/3rds of the floors in five days. I look at how showrooms are displaying their wares and what color continually pops out at me. I catch snippets of buyers' conversations – no, it is not eavesdropping. I watch, throughout the week, the movement of people. My overall conclusion is: you will find it here if you know how to look beyond your area of expertise. If you're a rug buyer you know to go directly to the four rug floors in Building One. Yes, the majority of rug merchants are on these four floors. However, there are some interesting non-rug and rug companies on other floors. Rugs can be found in AMC B1 floors 7, 10, 12-14 and Building 2 floors 4, 7, 9, 11. When I walked these "non-rug" floors, I found products to be very diverse. In the same moment, a buyer could get candles, porch chairs and rugs. Seems to me Outdoor Living is living large. The colors I constantly saw were grouped in the light shades of green and blue and the bright shades of orange and red. Buyers who were "non-rug" buyers but still wanted to buy rugs seemed to be troubled as to where to turn. I continually heard people asking who carried what, did they do small shipments and what were the minimums. These buyers had

no problem purchasing rugs on "non-rug" floors, but still seemed a bit intimidated by the rug floors. One conversation I overheard that made me smile, and I am repeating it knowing that it is a bit self-promoting is as follows. Two female "non-rug" buyers are talking and looking at the list of rug companies in our magazine. Lady one says, "Who should we go see?" The second lady says, "lets go to Company X, I see them advertise everywhere. Lets check them out." Lady one says, "yes, I like their ads, let's see if they have something we want." I bet when they went to Company X, no one there asked them why they walked in. Needless to say, repetitive print ads do lead to sales.

NYIGF at Javits and the Piers is very different than AmericasMart. There are no permanent showrooms, just a week-long exhibition of companies displaying their wares from around the globe. As I walked the aisle of Germany and England, I noticed a lot of felt work. Felting seems to be a hot

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Interview: John Murse

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quality and then price. When I mentioned texture he agreed and immediately mentioned Dream Weavers, saying that they had taken it to the next level.

WORKING WITH VENDORS

One of the features of these interviews is to ask the question: What do you expect from your vendors? Murse said that of his primary vendors he expects them to have in stock and available for delivery “what they say they have.” Continuity means that the vendor has the same rug available in advertised sizes — not just when he needs both, not just the more popular. Otherwise, says Murse, “charge me the stock goods price, not the continuity goods price.” He also wants geographic loyalty, in other words, some level of exclusivity for goods he samples.

Murse, who works with approximately 100 vendors, sees them as larger and smaller, not more or less important. He wants the vendors to support him if he buys one rug or a thousand, because the one rug can be the most important rug he sells. He gave as an example one vendor from whom he has bought just one design for years but who is a valued and stable part of the overall business.

WORKING THE MARKETS

Lucy and John Murse go to eight markets a year; two in Atlanta, two in Las Vegas, two in High Point, and make two trips a year to NYC, buying trips that take the same energy as markets. For example, in Atlanta, they work the

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collections



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10 Points About Rugs: 4 of 10

By David Lew

POINT 4: CONSTRUCTION

The foundation of a carpet would refer to how the rug is woven. One would examine the back of the rug in order to determine how the rug was constructed. The widely used hand knot system is called the single knot or Persian Senneh system. The knot would be tied asymmetrically with one loop around a warp between two warp threads.

Another knot system was called the Turkish (symmetric “Ghiordes”) knot, with a knot tied wrapping around two warp threads with the pile coming up through the middle.

There is another unique knot system called the Tibetan double knot, used in Nepalese and Tibetan weaving, where knots are tied by using a metal rod to keep the knots in shape.

Yet another weave technique to be mentioned is a

flat woven rug that is called a kilim or soumac. The face of the rug has no pile. Also, there are the needle-point rugs, made by needle and thread.

Most Oriental carpets’ knots are counted based upon a knot per square inch count in the English speaking world. One would simply count the number of knots from an inch measured from the width, multiplied to the knot count measured one inch along the length. A per square inch count would result. A high knot count does not necessarily mean the carpet is the best. One must take under consideration the other factors like material, content, and/or age.

David Lew started in the rug business with ABC Oriental Carpets in 1982, worked for a series of well known and well respected retailers and wholesalers, and since 2000 has worked for the Bokara Rug Co. To be continued.



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Interview: John Murse

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accessory market on Wednesday before the rug market opens. They then work the rug floors Thursday, Friday and Saturday. They go first to floors three and four, then four and five, then six and then go back to any vendors they missed the previous three days, finishing Saturday.

In Las Vegas, which follows Atlanta, they work the remaining misses from Atlanta, and vendors not showing in Atlanta.

In High Point, they spend a week, with one day in Showplace, two days in Market Square, and three days in the IHFC. Rugs as Art sells furniture and accessories along with rugs. For that reason, Atlanta and High Point are also accessory markets.

WORKING THE INTERNET

Dealing with the Internet is always a question, and vendors and retailers have to factor it into their business strategy to survive as a brick and mortar store. Every rug in a Rugs as Art store has a private label and a private UPC code, period. This gets to Murse's position that he is not in the business of promoting his vendor's brand. As he says, when you buy a car, you don't care who made the carburetor. When I pointed out that some retailers felt that it costs too much money to go to all that trouble, he said that it costs too much money if you don't do it.

From *Rug News and Design's* perspective, the younger consumer wants an open book on the process by which the product is produced and distributed, but the commer-

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collections



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Observations

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trend. I saw felt work in clothing, artwork, bedding, linens and even in rugs. The color breakdown matched what I saw in Atlanta. The other consistency was showrooms that had Eco-friendly products or Made in America products made a point of stating it in their banners or posters. It was easily readable as you walked by. These two aspects of a product's origin are a hot selling point in today's market. What I like about NYIGF is that there are a lot of up and coming companies. I kept seeing innovative ideas, designs and products for the home.

As a buyer, it is impossible to make it to all markets or see every single option out there to put in your store. The problem facing retailers is the end consumer can see everything, visualize the potential of something new, all with the click of a button.

Knowledge is power, as the old saying goes. Social Media has truly taken knowledge and the need to fit in with the Joneses (whoever your Jones group is) into a whole new stratosphere. To better understand the different aspects of social media, I went straight to Wikipedia.com to help break down what the main outlets are.

Let us remember that social media is not new. Prodigy came out in 1984 and, while defunct now, was among the first consumer online services. It offered subscribers "access to a network of services, including news, weather, shopping, banking, stocks and a variety of other features." Sounds familiar. During that time we had the dot.com fad,

everyone was trying to get on board; some succeeded and some failed. The end result was that a solid social media industry was born.

Social Media is "web-based and mobile technologies used to turn communication into interactive dialogue." It allows for "the creation and exchange of user-generated content." Wikipedia's distinction between social media and industrial media was phrased very well: "People obtain information, education, news and other data from electronic and print media. Social media are distinct from industrial or traditional media, such as newspapers, television and film. They are relatively inexpensive and accessible to anyone (even private individuals) to publish or access information, compared to industrial media, which generally require significant resources to publish information." While both social and industrial media have the capacity to reach small or large audiences, social media has

REACH – global audience,

ACCESSIBILITY – available at little to no cost,

USABILITY – anyone with access can use it,

IMMEDIACY – instantaneous responses,

PERMANENCE – It is not. It can be altered almost instantaneously by comments or editing.

Wow, with that backing Social Media looks like a godsend for inexpensive marketing of goods. Notice the last line – Permanence. Social media is not permanent. It

can be changed instantaneously. So while many end consumers use social media to guide purchases, it is fickle. Industrial media is still very important to maintain the correct stream of information and fact checking.

Google.com started in 1998, a

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major search engine for finding information online, and directing people to your website. 2003, LinkedIn was launched with the main purpose of professional networking. By the end of 2011, it reported more than 135 million registered users in more than 200 countries and territories, with 21.4 million monthly unique U.S. visitors and 47.6 million globally. 2004, Facebook came out. Today there are over 845 million active users, who share their lives, their likes and dislikes, with their friends. Two years later, in 2006, Twitter came out: “an online social networking service and microblogging service that enables its users to send and read text-based posts of up to 140 characters.” It had over 300 million users in 2011, generating over 300 million tweets and handling over 1.6 billion search queries per day.

What does all this mean? Google and LinkedIn are two searchable ways that people can find out who you are and what your companies do. It is the way you can control your online presence. Facebook and Twitter are how the public can talk about you. You

can't control what is said, good or bad. It is a conversation among friends and followers.

Most recently, Pinterest.com has joined the social media. It began in 2010 as a closed beta program. Currently you can join Pinterest through an invitation a friend has sent you. Pinterest is a “vision board-styled social photo sharing website.” The site's mission statement is to “connect everyone in the world through the ‘things’ they find interesting.” I am a recent member and have already become addicted. In just scrolling thru Rugs, I saw many pictures of rugs where I recognized the company but did not have names listed. I also saw that a few rug companies did have their name attached to the picture, if I entered the rug company's name. Pinterest is the modern day scrapbook of dreams. It's like tearing out a picture in a magazine and pinning it to a board as something you like and might want in the future. The difference is you can now share it with anyone who is also a Pinterest member. By the end of 2011, Pinterest entered the top 10 social networks with 11 million visits per week. In January 2012, it drove more referral traffic to retailers than LinkedIn or Google.

Still, all these social media sites are just that, social. They change at the drop of a hat. You have very little control over what is being said. On the plus side, your name and product are reaching a larger market than yourself. I equate social media to being picked up at a bar. It's fun, it's different, you get exposed to new people, and the one-liners can be real wing-dingers. At the end of the day, a pick-up line, while it might stick in your head, is not going to be how you base your daily decisions.

There has to be a balance in every company's social media and traditional media. You cannot have one without the other. We are all trying to find the balance. Here at *Rug News and Design*, we are using social media networks to get noticed. We must keep up with the trends. We do this to give our advertisers the benefit of both worlds, traditional media advertising, on-line advertising, and the safety of knowing that we are a factual base source of correct information.

As the under 40 writer for this publication, it is my job to keep abreast of not only what goes on at



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High Point Design Forecast

The High Point Market sent the following press release (*edited for space and content*) which we found interesting.

For 2012, ethnic embellishments abound, oversized botanicals are in bloom, metallics make their mark on all things home decor and bold graphic patterns make furnishings come alive

ALL THAT GLITTERS

This year, look for a range of metals, from bronze and copper to platinum, gold and silver. Metallic, gilded and shimmering finishes turn ordinary decor into luxurious pieces that pack a punch. And at last fall's High Point, designers experimented with new ways of applying metal to fabrics.

PATTERN-HAPPY

Reproduced on textiles and incorporated into accent furniture, geometrics now lead the way. Graphic patterns come alive in brightly contrasting color combinations or look elegantly subdued in chic neutrals.

CULTURAL INFLUENCE

Inspired by global trends, 2012's patterns and motifs blend the texture and color of old-world looks with modern decor. Textiles are inspired by temples in Thailand, while rugs feature Moorish motifs and Moroccan patterning. Also look for African kuba cloths, Central Asian suzani prints, ikats, Scandinavian designs, intricate Indian handiwork and Chinese medallions, lotus blooms and anything dragon-related.

FRESH BLOOMS

This thriving tropical trend showcases bold, unexpected color palettes on upholstery, pillows, tablecloths, rugs and wallpaper, and botanical prints as wall decor.

Editors Note: We would add that we hear that "It is all about texture". --LS



If you're in **home textiles**
New York is the market

And the **market in New York** is the...

Interview: John Murse

continued from page 18

cial reality is that different channels of distribution have different margin requirements. Reconciling this conflict is a major challenge for brick and mortar retailers.

As a practical matter for Internet competition, when a customer does come into the store — and coming in means they want to buy from you — Murse says he never lets the customer out the door, so he matches the Internet price, terms and conditions. It is about word of mouth, and making the customer happy. (We have heard over the years that most people do not have color memory, or the combination of design and color memory. However, to be successful in the rug business, color and design memory is one of the most important characteristics, and the industry self-selects from the general population for that skill.) Rugs are a blind item to most consumers, so they are reduced to keywords and identification numbers to cross shop.

3 STORES - 3 STRATEGIES -
3 MARKETS: ONE BRAND

Rugs as Art is actually three stores. The flagship store with rugs and accessories is 18,000 square feet serving designers and consumers. The new Designer Showroom (boutique) has about 3,600 square feet and is located in a mall with 20 furniture vendors (and no other rug retailers). The medium and lower priced store has 2,500 square feet and is located in a medium/lower price area.

With this structure, Rugs as Art can be everything to someone, but it takes a positive attitude to treat the \$29 sale as if it is as important as the \$2,900 sale, although to the customer it is.

The balance comes in from the team of Lucy and John. They are part of a community and they are working for the good of the community. In a way the three stores are competing against themselves.

Part of this comes from diversifying the product mix, not by large pieces like bedding and sofas but

continued from page 24

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Bacova Guild	295 Fifth Ave, Suite 814	Nance Carpet & Rug	230 Fifth Ave, Suite 1609
Balta US	295 Fifth Ave, Suite 1504	Natco Products Corp	295 Fifth Ave, Suite 212
Carpet Art Deco	295 Fifth Ave, Suite 303	Newmark	295 Fifth Ave, Suite 1412
Catalina Rugs	230 Fifth Ave, Suite 1513	Nourison	295 Fifth Ave, Suite 104
Central Oriental/Natco	295 Fifth Ave, Suite 212	Orian	7 W 34th St, Suite 307
Concord Global Trading	295 Fifth Ave, Suite 810	Oriental Weavers	295 Fifth Ave, Suite 719
Creative Home Ideas	295 Fifth Ave, Suite 1714	Park B. Smith	230 Fifth Ave, Suite 1818
Devigiri Exports / ABC Industries	7 W 34th St, Suite 817	Rizzy Rugs	7 W 34th St, Suite 733
Dynamic Rugs	295 Fifth Ave, Suite 1604	Rug & Décor	230 Fifth Ave, Suite 1808
Feizy Rugs	230 Fifth Ave, Suite 904-905	RUIA Home	295 Fifth Ave, Suite 819
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Garland Carpet & Rug	295 Fifth Ave, Suite 1501	Shaw Living	295 Fifth Ave, Suite 306
Glenoit Rugs	295 Fifth Ave, Suite 612	Sphinx by Oriental Weavers	295 Fifth Ave, Suite 719
Home Dynamix	295 Fifth Ave, Suite 1619	Surya Rugs	7 W 34th St, Suite 439
Kalaty	7 W 34th St, Suite 807	Trans-Ocean Import Co	210 11th Ave, 7th floor
Kaleen	7 W 34th St, Suite 820	Veratex	261 Fifth Ave, Suite 2205
KAS Rugs and Home	295 Fifth Ave, Suite 819	Vista Home Fashions	230 Fifth Ave, Suite 705
Linon Home Décor Products	230 Fifth Ave, Suite 1008	YMF Carpets	295 Fifth Ave, Suite 1714
Liora Manne	210 11th Ave, 7th floor		
Log Cabin Rug Co	295 Fifth Ave, Suite 1501		
Loloi Rugs	295 Fifth Ave, Suite 1009		
Maples Industries	295 Fifth Ave, Suite 218		

Interview: John Murse

continued from page 18

side tables, floor lamps, and accent furniture.

In the designer showroom where they sell custom broadloom installations, they allow for more vendor branding, backed by Rugs as Art as the local service vendor.

Fairness and the perception of fairness, along with customer service, counts for a lot. Dedication to the

business and the industry is communicated very quickly to the consumer. The ability to evolve the business and the inventory with changes in the consumer environment is also important. Price is at the bottom of the list. People are looking for a rug they can afford. Helping them find it makes for good word of mouth, and that is still the best form of advertising. It also wins Retailer of the Year awards. 🌟

Observations

continued from page 20

tradeshows and in the market place, but also what is going on in the viral universe. At tradeshows, when I see buyers questioning about rugs, entering showrooms, wondering where to go and how to proceed, I try to help out. Many times it's to give them a name

to match what they are looking for. It's not playing favorites. Many times it's just to help them get a foot in the door, to be comfortable to look further. Of course, the more visual print advertising they see with product and company name together, the more likelihood they will enter your store. 🌟

Floor Covering Sales Turned Positive In 3rd Quarter 2011

Rug News *and* Design has come across US Census Bureau data indicating floorcovering stores turned the corner in the 3rd Quarter of 2011. Furniture store sales turned the corner and started improving (weakly) in the 2nd Quarter of 2009. Despite the slow recovery in furniture store sales, area rug sales in furniture stores likely followed the recovery pattern for floorcovering stores, trending upward since 3rd quarter 2011.

The Census Bureau data reported here does not report on area rug sales. They reports on retail store sales — specifically on furniture and on floorcovering retail establishments. These two types of stores are the primary brick and mortar sellers of area rugs. If you add in the Internet and mass merchants then the picture looks even better.

For those that think the high end depends on the stock market, you know the Dow Jones Industrials are recovering. And for those selling in Europe, you can spell Greece.

We saw a lot of new product in the spring markets positioned for lower price points and better margins.

And we heard from a few vendors that retailers are now saying that they need to buy.

January 9, 2012 – Data collected by the US Census Bureau indicate that the rug market has finally turned around.

In its series on retail trade, the Census Bureau reports that, for the first time since 2006, sales in floorcovering stores were greater than sales in such stores in the same month of the previous year. The trend began in August 2011, when sales in floorcovering stores reached \$1.51 billion, compared with \$1.46 billion in August 2010. Through November 2011, the last month for which the Department has reported, monthly sales in 2011 continued to exceed those

of the same month in 2010.

Sales at floorcovering stores peaked in 2006 at \$23.3 billion. This was a year before the recession officially began in late 2007, but more or less coincident with the peak of the housing market (new home prices plateaued in 2006 and began falling in 2007). As the recession took hold in 2007, sales declined 5%. As the recession deepened, sales declined further – by an additional 14% in 2008, and a further 17% in 2009. After 2009, the decline in sales moderated dramatically, falling only 2.4% in 2010 and a projected 1.5% in 2011. Projected sales for 2011, at \$15.1 billion, are fully 35% below those of 2006.

Sales at furniture stores, another primary brick-and-mortar outlet for rugs, also peaked in 2006, at \$60.1 billion. However, sales at furniture stores fell less and recovered sooner. The trough in furniture store sales occurred in the spring of 2009. Sales in 2009 totaled \$26.6 billion, a decline of 23% from the 2009 peak. Between 2009 and 2011, furniture store sales grew 4%, putting 2011 sales down 20% from the 2006 peak. (Note that the furniture store sales measured here include all sales at these stores, not just rug sales.)

By comparison, total retail sales in the United States (as measured in this data series) did not peak until 2008 – the first full year of the recession – at \$4.0 trillion. They declined a total of 9%, to \$3.6 trillion in 2009, and, at \$4.2 trillion in 2011, surpassed the 2008 peak.

Note: this report was researched and written by Rug News *and* Design. The Census Bureau data can be found at <http://www.census.gov/retail/>. Available data is through November 2011. Rug News *and* Design projected sales for December 2011 to obtain annual 2011 figures; these projections were based on sales for the preceding three months.

Please note that this report is presented the way Census collects the data. That means area rug stores and broadloom stores are in the same category. Obviously furniture stores sell more than rugs.

Given the definitional problem, Census is probably right in terms of direction (not down), but turning up. As we write this, consumer confidence is also reported as improving.

The other problem is one of mix. Mass merchants have tried to buy cheaper, and the rest of the market has had to face the reality of rising costs for labor and materials. Mass merchants are in a race to the bottom, leaving room for the Internet and Bricks and Mortar. Anecdotally we hear business has improved.

Susan Seaman

Susan Seaman Designs, Kalispell, MT

WHEN AND HOW DO YOU CHOOSE THE FLOOR COVERING?

I work closely with my clients to determine both their design aesthetic and their practical needs. Do you have small children or pets? Do they remove their shoes in their home? Living in Montana, our weather can be pretty fierce. It helps to consider all of these factors together, so that the end result looks stunning and lasts for a long time in spite of normal use.

WHERE DO YOU SOURCE YOUR RUGS?

I am a loyal customer of Dawn Platke at Carpet Studio in Whitefish, Montana. I always try to source everything locally, if possible. I learned a lot from a rug dealer in Pakistan, about 18 years ago, and I have carried that knowledge with me to inform my purchases now.

WHAT MARKETS OR MARKET CENTERS DO YOU ATTEND?

When I was learning about design, I regularly attended shows at the Atlanta Merchandise Mart. Over the years I have streamlined my operation to keep my costs down — both for weathering the economic storms and for my customers. I don't have a retail store, so unless I have a really large project going, I can rarely meet minimums. And shipping is a nightmare. I find it best to rely on local experts, so that I can be in the business of design.

DO YOU HAVE A FAVORITE STYLE OR FIBER OF AREA RUG?

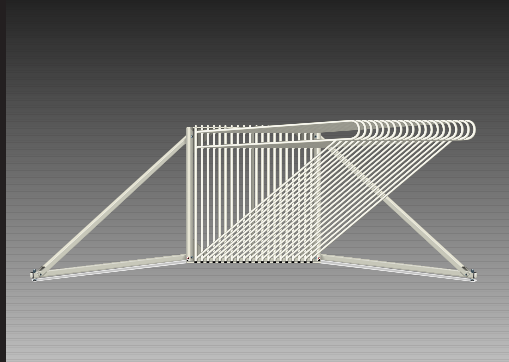
For me quality is everything. A great quality rug will make the room! I like to purchase natural fibers like wool, cotton, silk and bamboo with natural eco-conscious dyes.

DO YOU FOLLOW ANY DESIGN RULES SPECIFICALLY OR ARE THERE ONES YOU LIKE TO BREAK?

My philosophy is that a client's home is their soft place to land at the end of the day. It should be a place that is peaceful and makes them happy. So, if achieving that goal for them means that I have to put disparate styles together or follow a carefully scripted rule book, so be it, as long as it is done well. I also realize that a home or an office is a sort of living thing, in that it is constantly changing to reflect the people living there. So I don't have a huge ownership in the finished product. It has to be beautiful to the client.



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Melanie Turner, ASID

Melanie Turner Interiors, Atlanta, GA

WHEN DO YOU CHOSE YOUR FLOOR COVERING?

It can be either right at the beginning or near the end, depending on the job. If the client has a lot of furniture and items, I sometimes use the rug to tie it all together or to add punch to the room. I prefer to choose the carpet first as it can set the tone.

WHAT MARKETS DO YOU ATTEND?

I often go to the High Point and Atlanta markets. I do go to the D&D Building in New York, The Merchandise Mart in Chicago and sometimes shop in Los Angeles. It often has to do with convenience, depending on where my client may live or have a home.

WHERE DO YOU SOURCE YOUR RUGS?

I really like Stark, Keivan Woven Arts, Asia Minor Carpets, The Rug Market, Merida Meridian and Mastour. Stark is always coming up with new ideas, fresh ideas. I mostly purchase custom rugs to get the correct size or color.

DO YOU HAVE A FAVORITE STYLE OR FIBER OF AREA RUG?

It depends on the look and style needed. I love old oushaks. Of course I love wool. I do have to decide on whether a casual or traditional rug is needed and the price point. That all makes a big difference. Stylewise, I do like geometrics and graphics.

ARE THERE ANY DESIGN RULES YOU CARE A LOT ABOUT?

I care a lot about the size of the carpet. People don't buy them large enough, which looks ridiculous. The furniture should all be on the carpet, even if they have to buy two carpets and get them put together. Or all the furniture should be off the carpet, but not half on and half off. The scale gets thrown off.

DO YOU SHOP ONLINE OR USE CATALOGS?

I do shop online for indoor/outdoor rugs, as I consider the color of the rug to be less important then. I often buy Flor modular carpet tiles online.

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