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JUNE 2012

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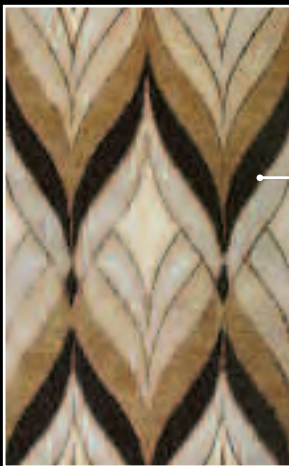
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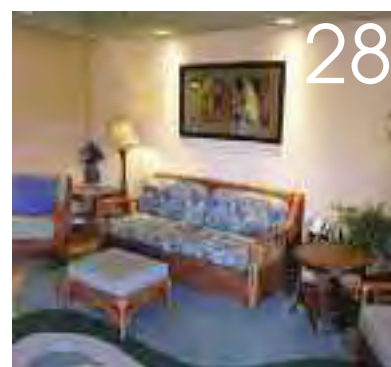
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Observations

By Leslie Stroh

SIGNALING

Just before I sat down to write this, I read an article about information overload on the Internet. Just Google “rugs,” and you will get twenty two million hits. Put in “area rug store” and you will get almost ten million hits. That is overload. Of course Google sorts that out with its ranking system, and its pay-per-click pricing to vendors.

The article I was reading, which was written by Adam Davidson for the New York Times Magazine, May 20th <http://rugne.ws/nytsignaling> was about signaling. If you wear an expensive watch you must have money (or buy from a guy on the street corner). If you can afford to advertise on Google, you must have some success, because you can pay the bill. And if you are on the list of citations on Google's first page of results, you must meet some hurdle that puts you in front of at least 10 million others. And being first it is more likely the next viewer will click on that citation.

Either paying for position in the ads, or getting position in the citations, a vendor can signal that they are a major resource for rugs. That is great for national distribution. While online competition generally drives down commodity prices, consumers, according to the article, have proved willing to pay more for their favorite specialty products.

The problem is not national for a local retailer, it is local. The

web works on a national basis for commodity products. The trick is to bring it down to your store in your locality. If consumers are willing to pay more for a specialty product, or pay more for service, or pay more to a local retailer, the retailer still has the problem of getting the foot traffic in the front door. This gets back to a communication problem at the local level.

COLLECTIONS

We have started themed Collections pages. This issue was a test, and the rug vendors responded with vigor. As is our policy, there is a mix of advertiser and non-advertiser submissions. The theme this month is Indoor/Outdoor. If you go online to www.rugnewsanddesign.com, and enter “outdoor” as a search

term, you will get 52 different rugs displayed. That is the power of the Internet and Rug News *and* Design. In one place you can see a range of looks and styles from a variety of vendors, and it helps you plan how you spend your time when you go to markets.

We are trying to focus on lifestyle choices rather than method of manufacture or country of origin. However, having said that, next month (July) we will focus on flatwoven rugs. We think that there is growing interest in flatweaves, partly because the consumer can buy texture and look for a reasonable price.

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

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

dasha.morgan@rugnewsanddesign.com

and DESIGN EDITOR • Sarah Stroh • sarah.stroh@rugnewsanddesign.com

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

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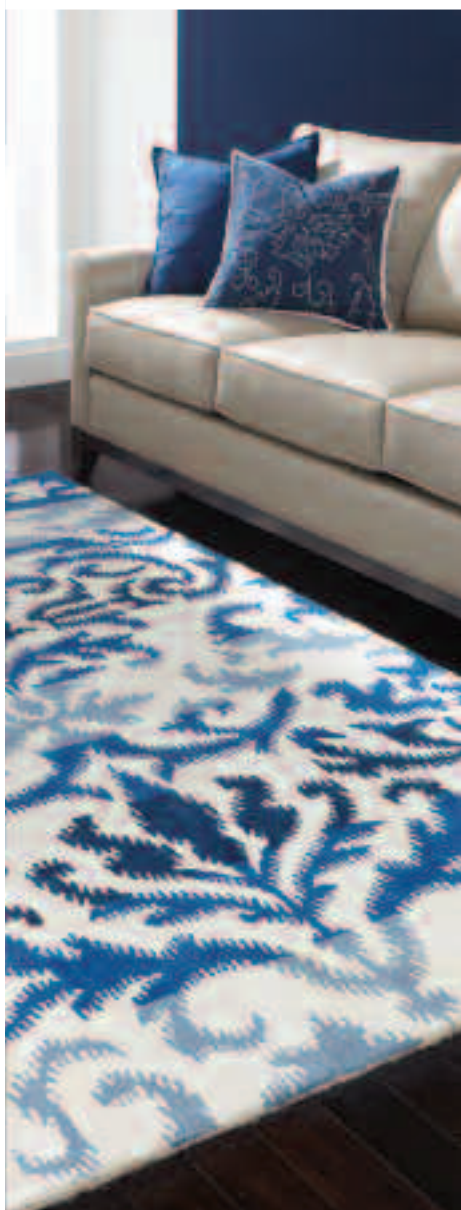
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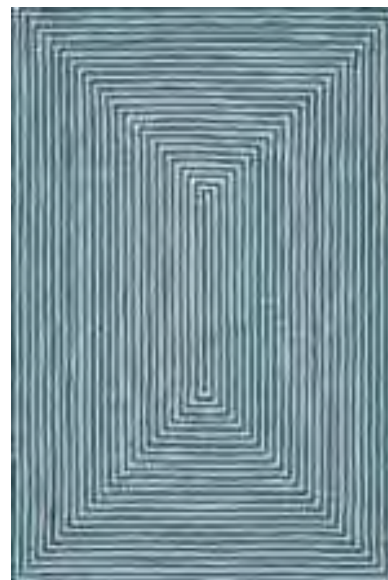


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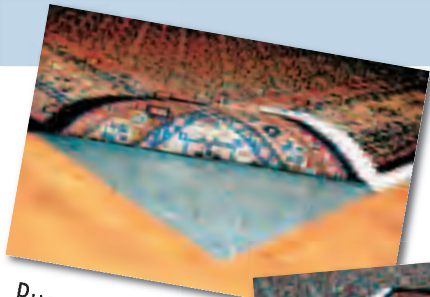
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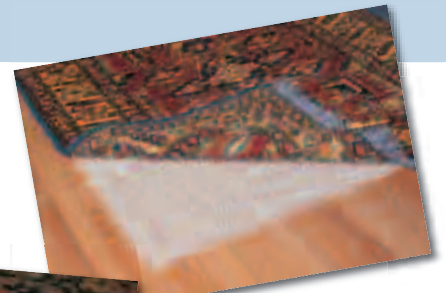
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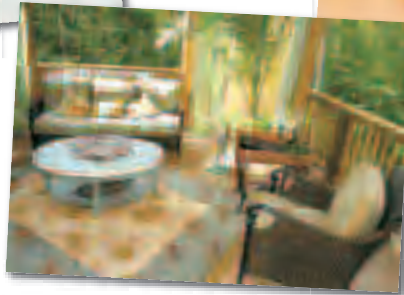
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Observations

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In some stores, rugs are sold as an accessory. We are going to try varied approaches to Collections to reflect changes that we think we see in rug retailing, including other accessories (pillows and chairs) that we think behave like rugs. We see both pillows and chairs as a stand-alone accessory that can change a room.

GROWTH OF THE NICHE VENDOR

The Internet retailers have done an excellent job of expanding the market for 5' x 7'-8' rugs, and for 8'x10' rugs, and selling at an average ticket of \$400. (In theory all the business is going to go to the Internet.) The mass merchants have done an excellent job of expanding the market for 5'x 7/8' rugs and smaller with prices under \$149 for the nominal 5'x 8'.

One thing complicating this picture is the rise of the niche vendor. We are finding more and more niche vendors of rugs. As we prepare lists of exhibitors, and walk the market taking pictures of rugs, we keep finding more and more vendors with small rug lines that are targeted to a particular niche.

At Gift and Accessory shows you will find vendors with a small line of rugs targeted to specific types of gift stores. As a local retailer your real competition may be a

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andDesign: Sustainability

By Sarah Stroh

SUSTAINABILITY- “is based on a simple principle: Everything that we need for our survival and well-being depends, either directly or indirectly, on our natural environment. Sustainability creates and maintains the conditions under which humans and nature can exist in productive harmony that permits fulfilling the social, economic and other requirements of present and future generations.”

“Sustainability is important to making sure that we have and will continue to have, the water, materials, and resources to protect human health and our environment.” As stated by the EPA. (www.epa.gov/sustainability/basicinfo.html)

The Sustainable Furnishing Council Green Home Furnishing Consumer Study has taken place four out of the last five years. The 2012 summary results were presented in April. The 2012 survey was comparable with 2010. At publication deadline, the complete 2012 study was unavailable.

The important statements in 2010 for buying furniture were, “quality that will last a long time (59%)” and “styles that suits me or my family (52%).” The top concerns were “toxic pollutants in the waste system (28%)” and “using up natural resources (27%).” A 40% response described the group’s position on global warming as “know a little and interested, but not doing much.”

The largest changes that are taking place in the home: Recycling at home (75%), Using compact fluorescents (72%), and tied at 69% - Set thermostat lower in winter, higher in summer and used reusable shopping bags. The preference of terms used to describe products that are good for the environment top four are **Environmentally Safe**, **Eco Friendly**, **Green** and **Sustainable**.

The 2012 study shows that consumers’ awareness of green options has remained largely unchanged. It was noted that “consumers are familiar with terms such as organic and recycled whether they understand how the term apply to their home furnishing purchase or not.”

What does a Green survey on furniture

have to do with the rug industry? There is huge purchasing cross-over between the two industries. Consumers might be lacking in awareness of the Green options but it’s clear many business are very aware. Heightened awareness and the choice to be Green make companies careful in phrasing what they do. They DO NOT want to promise something they are not sure they can deliver 100%.

FLOR—is an “innovative system of carpet squares.” It allows you to design and assemble any size rug. These squares allow you to replace worn/dirty ones or redesign your rug instead of replacing it. This type of rug use is a step toward being Green. Patrick Skertich explained to me why FLOR went Green. “FLOR’s parent company, Interface, has been a pioneer in the sustainability movement dating back almost 20 years. Interface’s late founder, Ray Anderson, had an “aha” moment in 1994 when he looked at the company he had built and saw an opportunity to be a good steward of the environment” while continuing to build a successful business. Over the years, Interface has “created innovative manufacturing processes to reduce our waste and eliminate toxins from our products and facilities. And we pioneered new ways to reuse valuable resources. Our innovative solutions allow us to recycle carpet backing and carpet fiber and have put us on the path toward eliminating the use of virgin materials and closing the loop.”

It was a natural step for FLOR to start a recycling program. They chose to pass on the opportunity; to participate onto their consumers. FLOR’s Return & Recycle Program is simple:

1. Pack up your tiles. Cut them down to size if need be to fit in the box.
2. Call FLOR customer service and they will email you a pre-paid UPS label.
3. “At our Georgia facilities, face fiber and backing are cleanly separated using a new patented technology, Reentry 2.0.”
4. “The separated type 6 and 6,6 nylon face fibers are sent to our fiber partners to be reconstituted into new recycled nylon fibers.”
5. “This new post-consumer recycled

fiber is then available for purchase to be used in future products.”

6. “Once the face fibers are sheared off the backing, the backing is then shredded into small pellets and heated /melted using our patented Cool Blue™ technology to create post-consumer recycled Glas Bac®RE backing.”

OBEETEE—In asking Mr. V.R. Sharma of Obeteetee, Inc. about their sustainability, he responded that their corporate philosophy is “our duty to our customers and employees, as well as to the community at large, to vigorously pursue an ethical, responsible and sustainable corporate philosophy. Obeteetee’s philosophy of CSR or Corporate Sustainability aims at creating conditions for better quality of life for everyone, now and for future generations. The company works with a social conscience without ignoring economic growth and development.”

In pursuance of its policy on sustainability Obeteetee has taken steps as follows:

Pollution Control—A state of the art Effluent Treatment plant has been installed by which all the effluents out of the dyeing plant are treated to pass the specified standards. Hazardous waste disposal is done through a Government approved unit. Air Pollution from boiler emissions is filtered through multi cyclone plant so as to minimize harmful carbon particles within the parameters allowed under law. Noise pollution measures have been adopted at the power generation plant.

Use of Bio-Degradable Fuel—Bio-mass (rice husk) is used as fuel in the boiler for steam generation and the same bio-mass is used for a Gasifier, for eco-friendly power generation. This project for power generation is registered with UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change).

Energy Conservation—Plants have been installed for obtaining hot water from condensate recovery for boiler feed water. Also, the heat out of the hot effluent is reclaimed and used for pre-heating the water used in

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Observations

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gift store, and not just the Internet. The strength of a gift store is its one-on-one relationship with its client base.

One of the other strengths of the gift store business is that vendor-retailer transactions are done by cash. A big complaint in the rug industry is that retailers don't pay their bills. Eventually the best vendors and the best products will migrate to the best payers. Some of the biggest retailers pay on time, others are way past terms. Some rug retailers with long overdue payments are just waiting for the GOB.

If 50 niche vendors do a million dollars each, that is fifty million that isn't going to the established rug vendors.

But the niche vendor is likely to be too small to be selling on the Internet, so the brick-and-mortar retailer has a blind product that they do not have to rebrand. It also means that retailers have more options for specialized products.

However, they have to find those niche vendors. Finding niche vendors means going to the markets where they exhibit, which is usually but not always, not where the traditional rug vendors congregate.

HOME FASHIONS

Twice a year there is a Home Fashions market in New York City, about the same time as the New York International Carpet Show for the high end knotted rug vendors.



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"Home Fashions" includes scatters and small rugs typically selling off a mass merchant shelf for less than \$49 retail all the way down to bath mats. When scatters sell for much higher prices in gift stores they are called "accessories."

Home fashion scatters are as color- and design-sensitive for that market as accessory scatters are for the gift market.

It is all about fitting the product to the channel of distribution, and the retailer defining their target audience.

Steve Couri, principal, Majestic Rugs says that he has gone onto the Internet for several reasons. First and foremost, there was business on the Internet when the retail store environment collapsed three years ago. Secondly, the Internet retailers pay their bills on time. Thirdly, the Internet is a good place to test a color and design, at a low price point that can be lowered to clear inventory, where he can find out if a product could sell to brick-and-mortar.

Actually we have heard from one other company that it was so much easier to sell a product on the Internet, and so hard to sell retailers on the product, that they basically have given up on brick-and-mortar retailers and gone where the sales are.

Majestic's experience is that their average 8 x 10 on the internet retails at \$150/\$199, and the 5 x 8 at \$69/\$119. A higher price point hand knotted larger size sells at the rate of one a month. Bamboo indoor/outdoor sell at the rate of 100 or more a weekend. At these prices, the vendor needs the volume from the two standard sizes.

TRENDS

There is a difference between what's new at market and what's in the stores. Markets anticipate stores by four to six months.

If designers want to know what is in the stores, including to the trade showrooms, the place to look is previous mar-

kets in "Walking the Market" online at www.rugnewsanddesign.com.

Because AmericasMart in Atlanta has the most rug and accessory rug exhibitors, it represents a cross section of the industry. Online you can find pictures of rugs from most of the exhibitors by clicking on Atlanta January 2012 in the blue box on the home page. These pictures represent a selection of rugs that exhibitors think are their best new offerings.

Shopping a market as big as Atlanta is time consuming for retailers. Rug News andDesign tries to have the bulk of its pictures (over 100) online by the end of the second day of market, so that retailers can see what we see. The next market is mid-July.

We can't do your homework, but we can help you do your homework.

The following is highly subjective opinion, or possible wishful thinking.

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Michael Bey: Three Lives, and Counting

By Jack Maier

Michael Bey has had three lives. We're profiling him here in Rug News and Design because of the third one, in which he's a successful – and innovative – retailer of rugs and furniture. But to understand that life, you need to know something about the first two.

Michael Bey was born in southeastern Turkey, in the village of Urfa. It's a beautiful place, according to Bey, but life is hard. It's a place where temperatures can rise to 120 degrees in the shade. "But there is no shade," Bey comments. "There was one tree in the village. The men sat on the left, the women on the right."

It's a place where people earn their living farming – raising crops and keeping cows and goats. Bey's family had a small farm. But the land had no water, which kept them from raising high value crops.

He was one of nine children, the youngest of the boys. He was the only one of the children to leave the village. He left – to help his family – when he was still in his teens. He wanted to go to the USA, but couldn't afford the ticket. He'd read a book that mentioned "foggy London," so that's where he went.

That was his first life.

In London, Bey found work washing dishes in restaurants, and learned English. It wasn't his second language, it was his third. His family was Kurdish. Turkish was



his second language.

In London he eventually got into the frozen food business. He exported frozen food to Turkey – meat, mostly beef, and frozen fish. He was sitting on top of millions of dollars' worth of frozen meat, mostly beef, when mad cow disease broke out. The market for beef collapsed, and Bey was wiped out.

But this time he had the money for the ticket to the USA.

That was his second life.

When he landed in the US he was nearly 40. He got a large van. He made a friend, who had bought a lot of garden furniture he couldn't sell. Bey offered to sell it for him. He piled furniture in his van and took to the road. After selling three or four van loads, Bey decided to rationalize the business.

He found suppliers in Egypt. He set up a route – from Miami, where he lived, to Boston, to Houston, to Atlanta, and then back to Miami. He wouldn't let himself go home until the van was empty.

He found an additional supplier, in Morocco, who made the furniture with French style. He bought a trailer to tow behind the van. He hit the road again. And again.

But finally he pulled off the road. It was 2003. He'd come across a furniture and home accessories store in Jefferson, Ga., about 60 miles east of Atlanta. It was called Real Deals. It operated out of an old textile mill. Bey got a small space in the building and opened Dalton Rug Outlet, which sold machine-made rugs. It did business under the name Real Deals on Rugs, to match the furniture store's name and positioning.



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Over time, Bey expanded Real Deals on Rugs' square footage and added hand-made rug lines. In 2007 Bey purchased (with the assistance of an SBA 504 loan) another shuttered textile mill, across the street from Real Deals, and moved there.

Why rugs? Only because they went with the furniture being sold at the site. Turkey makes a lot of rugs, but not in the area Bey grew up in. Nobody in his family was in the rug business. In fact, Bey had not had a very high opinion of "rug men" when growing up. He thought they pushed people around. He even prayed, "please don't make me a rug man." But now he was one.

One thing about entrepreneurs – they know when to give up one idea and move on to the next one.

In 2008 Bey and a partner purchased Bey's second location. It was also an old mill, this time in Fort Lawn, SC, about 30 miles south of Charlotte NC. The property included two buildings, each with 240

thousand square feet. Bey used one of the buildings to sell rugs, while his partner took the other to sell furniture. Bey operated his Fort Lawn rug business under the name Wow!, which his partner was using to promote his furniture business.

When the partnership dissolved, Bey changed tactics. The buildings were just too large for a rug retailer, so he expanded his product line to include furniture. Bey's philosophy was, and is, to buy at low prices, keep overhead low, keep margins low, and pass the savings on to the customers with low prices.

In 2009 Bey purchased Mooresville Cotton Mills in Mooresville, NC. Mooresville is about 30 miles north of Charlotte. Burlington Industries had made denim at the complex until 1999, when they closed the plant. In 2001 an investment fund bought it, planning to convert it into a residential and retail complex, but after the 2008 financial crisis the fund wanted to dispose of the property. Bey gave them \$500,000 for it.

It's a big place – the seven buildings on the 40-acre site contain more than one million square feet of space.

After spending a significant amount of money, and a lot of time, to renovate the property, Bey opened the first store there in May 2011. It was the first of his Merinos Furniture and Carpet stores. It has 130 thousand square feet. Bey has since changed the name of his other two stores, in Jefferson and Fort Lawn, to Merinos

Furniture and Carpet.

Merinos Furniture and Carpet is owned in part by the Turkish company Merinos Hali. Merinos Hali is the largest carpet manufacturer in Turkey and, arguably, the largest Wilton area rug manufacturer in the world.

All three Merinos stores carry all the rug lines that Merinos Hali has developed for the US Market, and the Merinos lines account for almost all the machine-made rugs offered in the stores. The stores also carry hand-made rugs, and other kinds of floor covering such as laminate floors.

Bey continues to restore and reuse the buildings at the Mooresville complex. There are now over 500 thousand square feet of retail space ready for occupancy. Another furniture company, Boyles, will initially take 60 thousand square feet, with an option to expand to 300 thousand square feet. In the fall of 2012 Bey will open a 30 thousand square foot pizzeria in the mill's old powerhouse, where the pizza will be baked in wood-fired pizza ovens imported from Italy.

Bey anticipates that by mid-2013 the entire complex will be full. He reports that there are many tenants interested in taking space, although he's trying to stick with home furnishings tenants. He's looking for tenants with the same philosophy as his – that is, offering the best possible value to customers.

The stores have a "warehouse store" atmosphere. There are people on staff hap-

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Atlanta Retailing: Traffic and Stock

by Jack Maier

There are a lot of ways of selling rugs, and you can see all of them in Atlanta.

Two issues facing brick-and-mortar rug retailers there (and everywhere) are traffic and stock. Each of these is a challenge, and most every decision a retailer has to make involves one or both of them.

It's true that you can decide what kind of customer you're going after (which market segment) before you look at traffic and stock, but the idea of going after that group of customers immediately resolves itself into the practical matters of where to locate, how to promote yourself, and what to carry – that is, it resolves into the matters of traffic and stock.

Conversely, the decisions a retailer makes about traffic and stock will determine the type of customer that that retailer ends up selling to.

We're well aware that there are other big challenges facing the brick-and-mortar rug retailer, especially competition. Rug News and Design will be covering some of these over the next few months.

This month we'll look at the issues of traffic and stock through the prism of two successful but very different Atlanta rug retailers, World of Rugs and Myers Carpet. We'll discuss "traffic" in terms of location, promotion and building a customer base.

LOCATION

Both World of Rugs and Myers Carpet are located in Atlanta's West Midtown Design District. This is a former warehousing district at what was once the hub of the railroad yards. The District's urban/industrial/reuse back story, its central location and the large size of the converted warehouses have attracted a mix of restaurants and retailers. A majority of the retailers deal in home furnishings and accessories, including a number of rug and flooring stores. What's more, several design firms – interior designers, architects, and graphic designers – have their offices in the District.

For a number of reasons, the effect that being in the District has on traffic is different for the two stores. World of Rugs is located on one of the thoroughfares within the district and is easily found. Myers Carpet, by contrast, is actually hard to see from the street. (Many of us are more familiar with converted warehouse districts from the movies than we are from actually spending time in them. The ones we see in the movies are dense, like the meat packing district in Manhattan. Atlanta's Design District has buildings with fewer floors, spread farther apart, and it rambles over a much larger area. So it's possible to be there and be hard to find.)

Furthermore, when World of Rugs' founders, Abe Malla and David Lewis, bought the 80,000 square foot warehouse

in 2007 they expanded into furniture to fill the space. That is, World of Rugs is located within a home furnishings store. Myers Carpet, by contrast, has 30,000 square feet, of which 20,000 square feet is warehousing and fabrication space. The 10,000 square foot showroom is devoted exclusively to carpets and rugs.

For both reasons, World of Rugs is more likely to get "random" traffic. Almost anyone going to Myers is going there because they've shopped there before, or a friend has recommended it. They're there because they want to buy something to put on the floor. People stop at World of Rugs for those reasons too, but World of Rugs also gets people who come across the store while shopping the neighborhood, or even the building. They may not be looking for a rug at all, at least not when they come there the first time.



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It's worth putting this in context. The density of the traffic in Atlanta's Design District doesn't approach the density of the traffic in a large mall, of which Atlanta has several. The rug retailer who wants to maximize traffic should set up shop in a mall – as several have.

But there's also the issue of the "quality" of the traffic. Compared to people casually shopping a mall, the people casually shopping the District are more likely to stop and check out the rugs, more likely to be strongly attracted to one they see, and more likely to spend the money to take it home.

What the mall retailer has going for him is the sheer quantity of traffic. Because people tend to get in the habit of going to one particular mall, the same people are continually passing the mall retailer's store. They may not be as design-conscious as the people shopping the Design District, and they're far less likely to wander into the rug store at their mall just to look. They're going to just walk past it. But when they need a rug, they're going to remember that there's a rug retailer at their mall, precisely because they've just walked past it so many times.

PROMOTION

Advertising rugs to consumers by traditional means is really expensive. People don't replace their rugs that often. That means that at any one time only a very small percentage of consumers are in the market for a rug, so most of the people your adver-

tisement reaches just aren't interested. The result is that you've paid a lot to reach each of the few genuine prospects that you do, even if the ad wasn't that expensive.

Furthermore, many of those who are in the market are in the market because they've moved. So not only are the traditional media inefficient at delivering the audience you're trying to reach, but there are alternatives for reaching many of them built around the fact that they've just moved.

If you have a wide line of furniture, rugs and appliances, some kinds of advertising apparently make sense. We've all received the Sunday newspaper insert for the local furniture megachain. But it's rare for a rug retailer to do a lot of advertising, and neither World of Rugs nor Myers Carpet does.

Rug retailers do find other ways to promote their stores. Myers' big promotional activity recently was to finally get a big sign with digital lighting to put on the street so that people could find them more easily.

Sometimes these promotional activities take the form of engaging in community activities. World of Rugs, for example, recently sponsored a blood drive. They advertised the drive, and promoted it with a discount on a purchase at the store to everyone who gave a pint of blood.

Both Myers Carpet and World of Rugs have websites, but neither sells rugs through the site. People can go to the sites



to see what's available, but they have to go to the stores to purchase. Neither site displays prices, although on the Myers site there's a "quote" icon that makes it easy for people to send an email requesting a quote. (Which of course gives Myers contact information for someone who's interested in buying a rug.) Mr. Malla at World of Rugs is clear on the fact that competing with the Internet successfully means, among many other things, that retailers need to get potential buyers into the store to see and touch the rugs.

BUILDING A CUSTOMER BASE

But the most important tool a rug retailer has for sustaining and growing his business is his customer list. Myers Carpets does get some walk-ins, "but not many," according to store manager Chris Fonville. Each of the eight salespeople in the Atlanta store has

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Atlanta Retailing: Traffic and Stock

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much including interior designers – with whom they do much of their business.

World of Rugs has a similarly deep list of established customers, and most new customers are referrals.

Interior designers are a critical subset of the customer base. Designers account for close to one-third of all the business at Myers Carpets. World of Rugs works regularly with a number of designers and design firms.

Myers Carpets cultivates its relationships with designers by making their jobs easier. Myers does a lot of custom rugs, so that means not only delivering and installing the rug, but measuring the room before the rug is made, and generally being responsive – to the final customer as well as the designer – throughout the production and installation period. For example, Myers Carpets maintains a cadre of rug technicians able to make rug repairs. Its not promoted as a separate service. But the ability to make the repairs is there – kind of like those programs that run silently in the background on your computer – in case Myers Carpets' customers need it.

STOCK

World of Rugs and Myers Carpet have both succeeded in the Atlanta market by finding the right locations to reach their customer bases, and offering those customers a high level of service. Many of their business practices are similar. In speaking with Mr. Malla and with Mr. Fonville it was clear that they genuinely liked working with their customers, and believed that the relationships they had with their customers were mutually beneficial over the long as well as short run.

All of these similarities between the two retailers exist despite the fact that they offer very different product lines.

World of Rugs has a very large inventory – some 12,000 rugs – 90% of which

are hand-knotted. The designs are not all traditional; Mr. Malla reports that his customers are looking for more transitional designs and even contemporary, single color rugs. But they're pretty much what you could call "traditionally-made."

Mr. Fonville reports that the bulk of the rug sales at Myers Carpet are of custom rugs, based on broadloom. They're fabricated on-site from Myers Carpets' wide line of broadloom and borders. The fabricating unit works pretty steadily, 5 ½ days a week.

Mr. Fonville notes that the rug market's being "hammered" in the recession accelerated the rebalancing of Myers' sales between the custom rugs and the traditionally-made rugs (which they still stock and market) from suppliers such as Nourison, Karastan and Kalaty. It was the custom line that got them through the dark days of 2009-2010.

Just as Myers offers traditionally-made rugs as well as custom, World of Rugs offers custom rugs as well as traditionally-made. The custom rugs World of Rugs offers, however, are hand-knotted from custom designs. Customers can show up with a piece of wallpaper, and World of Rugs can design and have made a rug to match it. But the turnaround time is measured in months, compared to Myers Carpets' two weeks.

Mr. Fonville reports that the custom rugs Myers Carpet offers have several advantages, especially for designers. The fact that they're custom sized is in some ways the most important sense in which they're custom. It means the rug can be made to just fit the room, which means that the rug's size is not a constraint on the rest of the room's design.

Designers often begin a room by choosing the rug. That's partly because it's such a big piece of the picture, partly because it has a big influence on the room's color palette, and partly because it's a big ticket item. But it's also because the size



and proportions of the rug, relative to the size and proportions of the room, can be a big constraint on the overall design. Being able to select the rug's size – as well as its pattern and color – more towards the end of the design process opens up a lot of possibilities. It lets the designer de-emphasize the rug. Given that dynamic, it's understandable that Myers Carpet does a lot of business in sisal, tone-on-tone patterns, and the other more neutral or quiet designs and constructions that many designers favor at the moment.

But the other thing is that it provides this essential flexibility quickly. Having a completely custom rug made – a rug made from your own design – is a months-long process. Having a customized rug made – where you pick from a list of designs, colors and sizes – takes weeks, and the size flexibility is limited. Having a customized rug fabricated at Myers Carpets takes two weeks. And, since one of the reasons for using a custom rug is to delay the selection of the rug until the rest of the design process is farther along, the quick turnaround is essential.

The balance of this article will appear in the July issue. In it the impact of stock availability on the relationship of these two businesses with designers will be discussed.

Please send your comments about this article jack.maier@rugnewsanddesign.com. ☛

Ten Points About: Rugs 7 of 10

By David Lew

POINT 7: WASH & FINISHING PROCESS

The washing process is to clean the rug after coming off the loom with the first shearing process, to get rid of excess wool fibers. There is the basic soap and water process. The rug will not look too soft unless washed multiple times with soap and water. The source of the water may be questioned, either from a river, a natural spring or just basic tap water.

A common antique wash is called a tea wash, where tea leaves are added to the water, in order to stain the rug and tone colors down. Other antiqueing techniques may have different chemicals added in order to break the colors down. One can tell if one smells a chemical odor in the new rugs. Softer colors have always been popular.

There are a handful of rugs that are

washed severely, in order to have an antique look. As a result, the life of the carpet was greatly diminished. This is another example of why one should really feel the carpet. An over-washed carpet will feel like over-permed hair, dry and brittle.

There are different wash processes around the world. One of the best washes is here in the United States. Many oriental carpets are washed here, and as a result, the cost is more. Another good wash is in Zurich, Switzerland.

The traditional Persian wash from the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth century involved submerging rugs in running rivers and/or streams. During this wash process, the rug would absorb any natural minerals, which added to the life of the rug. The proof of which can be seen in Persian rugs that are 80 years and older.

The shearing must be looked at once

again after the wash process, since a second shearing must be performed after the carpet has been dried. One must look at the carpet edges, where there is a surging added. The fringes are important as well.

Personal care of the carpet is the key to the life of any carpet. If all of the points above mentioned are met, then one can easily vacuum a carpet periodically, spot clean water soluble stains with a good rug soap (neutral like Woolite), and one can use a solvent for oil based stains.

A professional rug cleaner would be highly recommended for an entire carpet cleaning. It would be up to the owner of the carpet. A new rug may not need to be cleaned for 2 to 4 years after purchase.

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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Observations

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I think flatweaves with texture will be the next big thing. Why? The overdyed Turkish patchwork showed that color and texture sold on a thin, virtually no pile rug. The underlying design was basically irrelevant, except as a way to carry color.

Flatweaves are a way to extend that look to new production.

In addition to, there is a handloomed product that we hear is coming from India that will also extend that look to new production.

And last but not least, prices of flatweaves are reasonable, and trend above the mass merchant/Internet market. I still think the mass merchant/Internet market is a chunky pile rug for perceived value.

The other continuing trend is vendors making new constructions. We see new ways of weaving rugs in all sectors. The reason is simple. It is much harder for a competitor to copy a construction or weaving technique than it is for him to copy a color palette or design trend.

Machine weaving has most definitely headed in that direction. In the hand made category of rugs – which includes hand knotted, hand tufted and hand loomed – hand loomed rugs from India appear to be going in that direction.

We know that nobody looks at the back of a rug but hand tufted pile is held in place by latex which is covered with a cloth backing. That leaves hand knotted and hand loomed where you can see the fabric from the back, and there is pile on the front.

More than that you don't really need to know, but in general hand loomed carries a plainer design than hand knotted. The exception is Nepalese hand knotted which also often comes in a plainer design.

The hot fiber at the moment is various forms and definitions of SILK. Treat silk as a look, rather than as a fiber. In "Walking the Market" online, one of the most popular categories to search for is silk. The consumer sees silk as a luxury product.

As a luxury product, silk patterns tend to emulate silk brocade fabric, as well as show up as hand loomed silk rag rugs. They look good, and the look sells.

MARKET CONDITIONS

Hand knotted production continues to decline. Material prices are more stable, and labor continues to rise. There is said to be a shortage of hand knotted rugs in sizes greater than 10 x 14.

Because of slow turnover, fewer and fewer people are carrying certain sizes. This is leading to more and more custom business. From what we hear 80% of custom rugs are made to meet a specific size requirement. This size availability shortage seems to be true across all price points. 🌟

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and Design: Sustainability

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dyeing of woolen and other yarn.

Use of safe dyes—Only safe dyes, free from any of the banned amines and heavy metals are used in dyeing. In addition to the certificates obtained from the suppliers, the samples are also tested by independent laboratories.

Rain water harvesting—Obeetee has installed rain water harvesting systems at several locations to maintain and improve the level of underground water - a serious concern in India.

Human Rights—Obeetee has an immaculate record of ensuring that its employees are well looked after, provided with good working conditions and receive all the social benefits as required under law and more. Obeetee has been recognized by the International Labour Organisation and the International Finance Corporation for its efforts in ensuring child labour free production of carpets and for instituting welfare measures for children so that they have a viable al-

ternative.

Disclaimer: Over the past 20 years, I have been a guest at Obeetee. I have seen first hand this sustainability process evolve.

CHILEWICH—is known for its innovative use of textiles for a variety of applications, from placemats to floor mats. They have two parts to their sustainability activity.

Part one is the ease of cleaning Chilewich textiles—"washed with just water and biodegradable detergents, helping the user reduce energy and laundering costs while maintaining a sophisticated and modern aesthetic. "Chilewich fabrics are covered by the Guard program certified by the GreenGuard Environmental Institute, which protects human health and quality of life through the reduction of chemical exposure and improved air quality.

Part two of Chilewich sustainability impact is the recycling of their single material products (not mixed composites). The recycled material gets used in a variety of indus-

trial uses. They continue to explore ways to keep materials out of landfills and re-use important material resources. Chilewich floor coverings use mixed materials to increase durability and help withstand wear-and-tear, making it difficult to separate later in the recycling process. Chilewich's key environmental developments currently being worked on to solve this problem include:

Vinyl fabrics-use of Microban® in flooring and placemats, which eliminates mold and mildew.

Sustainability is a big word with an even bigger meaning and larger impact than any one person can write about, or a company can talk about. As we, as individuals, better understand and become aware of what sustainability means, more companies will step forward and share what they are doing to be sustainable. For now it is a relatively new path of corporate awareness and they are still working through the process.

To learn more about any of these companies' sustainability efforts, visit their websites.☼

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WHEN DO YOU CHOOSE THE FLOOR COVERING?

It always depends on the individual project. If it is a new house, the wood, carpeting, tile flooring all evolve around the needs, wants, and style of the owner, and the input I receive from them. Perhaps they are looking for a heated tile or stone floor. I love hand scraped wood floors.

WHAT MARKETS DO YOU ATTEND?

We are located in the International Market Square in Minneapolis with lots of products and services readily available. I do go to the High Point Market regularly.

DO YOU HAVE A FAVORITE AREA RUG DEALER?

I particularly like Woven Arts and Kravet, as well as Stark Carpet, Aubry Angelo and Cyrus Rugs. Stark Carpet has some unique designs, lovely needlepoint rugs, as well as a wide variety of rugs available for custom. Alex of Cyrus Rugs has been in the business for over 20 years, is very knowledgeable, and has some lovely antique rugs. He is particularly good with color and is very talented. He carries all kinds of Orientals from Iran, Afghanistan, the Caucasus and all over. He has many unique one-of-a-kind rugs.

DO YOU HAVE A FAVORITE STYLE OR FIBER?

Of course wool is hard to beat, particularly a wool and silk combination. I love rugs that have a sense of age, such as low pile washed Pakistani ones. A more casual look appeals to me, such as an Oushak. A tightly knotted Tabriz may be too formal. I love the tribal, more primitive look, often found in kilims. Overall I am fond of the classics. I wish the Aubussons were more easy to find.

DO YOU USE THE INTERNET OFTEN FOR PURCHASES?

Not often. Sometimes a supplier will show me a rug on the internet to see if I am interested in it. I usually have to see it in person, so he has it shipped to me on approval.

DO YOU HAVE ANY DESIGN RULES YOU PARTICULARLY LIKE OR ANY YOU LIKE TO BREAK?

I often use rugs to pull seating groups together. A larger rug will unite two seating areas in a room. There is a rule to place the whole chair on a rug, however, I don't follow that. I find that rule too confining and too tight. It depends on the setting—sometimes a chair half on and half off the rug works well and opens up the room.

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“ A more casual look appeals to me, such as an Oushak. A tightly knotted Tabriz may be too formal. ”

Michael Bey: Three Lives, and Counting

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py to work with customers who have questions or would like help, but there are no sales people approaching customers on their own initiative. Bey encourages customers to come in, to take their time, to go home and think about it. The buildings are not air-conditioned.

Bey is now working on acquiring another property.

So what have his three lives taught Michael Bey?

That the American Dream is real. "My story really is like the American Dream. I have no education. I just worked hard and never gave up. You know, there are people who risk their lives to come here in the hope of working for \$10 an hour. We shouldn't forget that."

That it's all about character, not credentials. "When I'm considering hiring someone I look at them, not their resume or work experience. If there's something someone doesn't know, I know how to fix it. But if there's something wrong with their character, I don't."

That everyone has something to teach you. "I'm often living at one of the mills. So I'm there when the workmen arrive at 6 am. I'm around while they're working, sometimes working with them. We eat lunch together. I learn from them."

That everyone has something to contribute. "No foreigner comes to this country empty-handed. Nobody. There's a man here from El Salvador. I saw him a couple of times bend to pick up a nail in the street. I asked him why he did that. I thought he might just need a nail. The man told me he



picked up the nail because if he didn't, someone might run over it and get a flat tire. That man didn't come to the US empty-handed. He came with kindness. Some come with skills. Some come with the ability to learn. But nobody comes empty-handed." 🌟

<http://www.wcnc.com/news/real-estate/11-million-square-foot-furniture-store-taking-shape-in-Mooresville-143969766.html>

http://triad.news14.com/content/local_news/653827/old-mill-helps-stimulate-mooresville-economy

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HOW DO YOU CHOOSE THE FLOOR COVERING?

Every project is different, but typically the floor covering is one of the first selections made. It is the foundation for other finish and furnishings selections.

WHERE PRIMARILY DO YOU SOURCE YOUR RUGS?

The sources I use for rugs depend on the application. For residential projects, I love the patterns and textures available with Tibetan rugs (Tufenkian) or contemporary selections (Masland Carpet or Surya Rugs). For my hospitality projects, which are primarily hotels and timeshares, the requirements for wear ability and clean ability are much more stringent. Typically I design these rugs from broadloom solution-dyed nylon or CYP patterns and have them custom fabricated. These are often bold, colorful patterns that hold up well with excessive wear and abuse, even cleaning products containing bleach.

I attend the Hospitality Design show in Las Vegas annually, and between shows I shop the Seattle Design Center.

DO YOU PURCHASE CUSTOM RUGS VERY OFTEN?

In hospitality design, the vast majority of products are "custom." In the case of theme properties we often have the opportunity to take simple materials or designs and use them to establish a mood. For example, broadloom carpets used to create a "wave" area rug for a timeshare resort condo.

COLOR, WHERE AND WHEN DOES IT ENTER THE PURCHASE OF YOUR RUG?

Color and pattern are key components for area rug design. Usually the first question is, "What mood do we want to establish?" Once we have answered that question, patterns and colors can be considered. In design, every detail is an important factor.

As for favorite fibers, luxurious natural fibers are my personal favorite but they are not always the most practical choice. I'm very pleased with the color range, texture and durability that manufacturers of synthetic fibers are producing today. Technology has changed our environment in so many countless ways.

HOW IMPORTANT ARE THE "GREEN" QUALITIES TO YOU?

"Green" qualities have always been important to me. I grew up with cotton rag rugs and hand made wool rugs that were made from our family's discarded clothing. That idea has now evolved to the current "cradle to grave" concept that many major companies have incorporated into their manufacturing processes. I consider it one of my responsibilities as a designer to introduce my clients to products that are as environmentally-friendly as possible.

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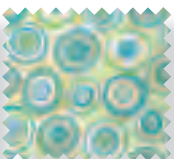


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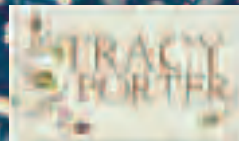
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