

The background of the entire image is a dense, abstract watercolor pattern. It features a variety of colors including deep reds, vibrant blues, lush greens, and warm oranges, all set against a light cream or off-white base. The colors are blended and layered in a way that creates a sense of depth and movement, with some areas appearing more saturated than others. The overall effect is reminiscent of a traditional watercolor painting that has been used as a textile or book cover design.

Watercolours

CINDY LEVESON AND SHAME STUDIOS

SHAME STUDIOS

WATERCOLOURS

A collection in collaboration with
Cindy Leveson

2023

Everyone loves Cindy's watercolours and one of the joys of working with her, which I've done for over 30 years, is to see how she uses them not only to get across ideas to her clients but also as a means of both developing and perfecting her own designs.

They are integral to how she works. They also say so much more about the look and the feel of a space than a photograph ever can. It was inspired of Hector Coombs to think of turning Cindy's delightful and charming images directly into rugs.

The results are stunning and there is nothing else like them. The feeling and effect they bring to a room creates a whole new dimension and goes on to further establish Cindy as one of the most outstanding interior designers of her generation.

A handwritten signature in red ink, appearing to read 'Michael', with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

The Duke of Richmond and Gordon



Introduction

‘Watercolours’ is a new collection of hand-woven carpets from Shame Studios in collaboration with Cindy Leveson. These textiles are inspired by the formal structure of traditional carpets meeting the freedom and expressiveness of water and pigment, resulting in a unique collection of abstract rugs.

Through applying technical digital developments to Cindy’s drawn interpretation of antique carpets, they have created a collection which is painterly, playful and contemporary. Drawing inspiration from both the past and innovation occurring in the industry today to successfully create a new language in carpets.

‘Watercolours’ is a new spin on the traditional, an abstract version of the conventional that, although contemporary, could be antique.

Leveson Design was established in 1990 by Cindy Leveson, who soon found herself propelled into decorating not only beautiful private houses in London and the country, but also creating commercial spaces such as The Kennels at Goodwood, her first project of the kind and where we have photographed many of the rugs for this collection.

Making the commercial side of life feel and look like home is something Cindy has become known for. Comfort is never to be underestimated, and every client should feel that way—not only within their decorated space but also in her company during the process.

Cindy's idea of a compliment is when, finishing a project, both her clients and their friends say that it feels like it has been there forever. Nothing should be too precious or off limits. One and all should be able to throw themselves onto an inviting sofa and feel no guilt.

There is nothing more uncomfortable than being overdecorated.



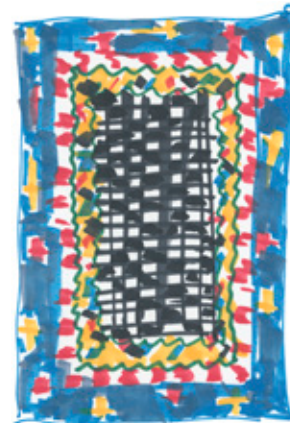


Shame Studios specialises in designing handmade rugs. A penchant for the playful defines their work with a focus on the imaginary and the possible, along with reverence for the history of their craft and a thirst for innovation.

They work closely with weavers across the world to create pieces imbued with the traditions of those who make them whilst being distinctly modern in style.

Founded in 2019 by Hector Coombs, who had worked at Christopher Farr for the previous 10 years, and then joined by Nathalia Gregores, with her background in design, in 2020.

The pair's shared creative vision has led to a number of collaborations with leading international designers as well as designing their own artistic rugs.



ALBERT BRIDGE

With the large and simple motifs of a tribal or village Konya carpet, a very generous border of meandering cursive guard stripes encloses a blocky ribbon. Large stellar designs in madder red explode across the delicate blue and indigo field of this rug, surrounding a central, abstract, knot motif.

The colours are also in keeping with a Konya carpet, with their rich madder reds, gentle buckthorn yellows and the wonderful greens obtained from over-dyeing indigo with the aforementioned buckthorn.

This was the first carpet to be designed and created for this collection, defining the starting point for the visual language we would continue to explore.

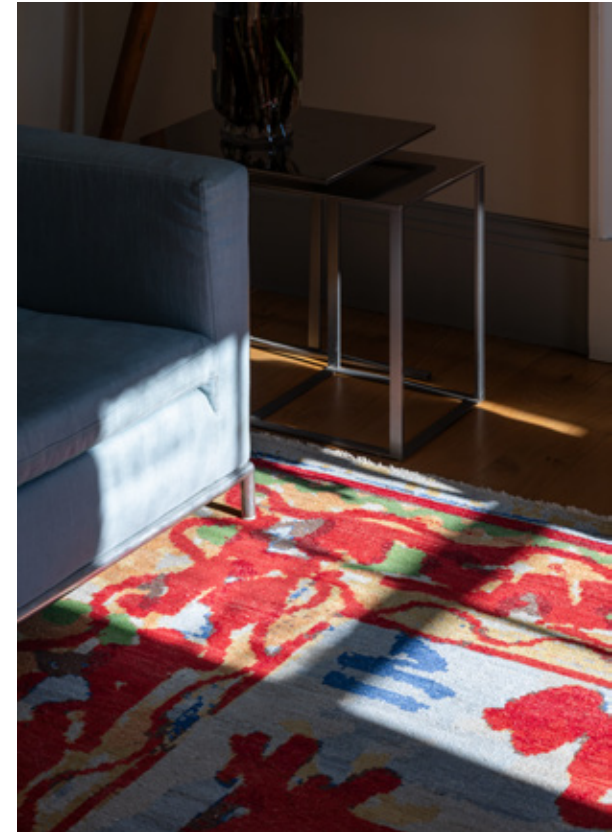


ALBERT BRIDGE RUNNER, PHOTOGRAPH BY ASTRID TEMPLIER



244 cm x 311 cm

Finely hand-knotted, hand-spun, hand-dyed natural wool bony pile carpet.



FORTY BRANCHES

This piece immediately brings to mind the feel of an Uzbek felt carpet. A favourite symbol of the semi-nomadic people of the region adorns the centre of this rug, a kirkbudatz - forty branches - but rendered here far more informally than is typically seen in traditional felts. This symbol is a feminine one and is contrasted by the playful rams' horn motifs that adorn the border, these being a traditionally masculine symbol.

The colours are mostly in keeping with this Uzbek felt tradition, though of course some liberties are taken. Interestingly this is the only Soumak weave in the collection and it is amazing how the feel of this weave is reminiscent of a felted piece.



136 cm x 179 cm

Hand-woven, hand-spun, hand-dyed natural wool Soumak flatweave.

TABS

A soft, delicate pink suffuses across this elegant silk dhurrie.

Stylised peacocks, a favourite design motif in the large silk palace dhurries of the 1800's, mirror each other around the centre of the rug.

Peacocks would be used to represent beauty, grace and pride; these ones are bound by a narrow but formal and strong border that mirrors the colours of the field. The heavy marks in the border provide a contrast to the playful strokes featured in the central design.

This rug was designed about mid-way through the collection and is one of the more relaxed and informal of the designs.



240 cm x 317 cm

Finely hand-woven, hand-spun, hand-dyed natural silk dhurrie.



No.48

A vague, effervescent echo of a Mihrab fills the field of this peach-toned rug. Contained within the Mihrab is a central motif in the vein of a tree of life; this tree is traditionally seen to be supporting the sky and providing a path from earth to heaven. The yellow, gold and saffron tones of the design elevate the heavenly aspect, while a running latticed guard stripe in grassy green speaks of the earth below.

The rosettes in the border mirror the field whilst the pink arabesque tendrils, curling unpredictably, add a lively design and colour element.

The strong, wide border and the small field, with strokes of intense red, provide a harmonious and balanced composition.



221 cm x 296 cm

Finely hand-knotted, hand-spun, hand-dyed natural wool bony pile carpet.

LILY

With a weave reminiscent of a village Tabriz carpet, the large field of this rug has a subtle offset medallion in red, pink and blue which is repeated across the field and reciprocated in the border.

Green vines meander chunkily and aggressively amongst the medallions and fruit into blue blossom, while a dashed border grounds the more animated elements.

The overall impression is of a verdant garden rug, traditionally thought to be a representation of paradise. Though this one does not follow the formal composition of such, it is hard not to draw the parallel.



243 cm x 301 cm

Finely hand-knotted, hand-spun, hand-dyed natural wool short pile carpet.



KIMI

This rug is a Kellei shape, a style designed and made for large country houses that required carpets of particularly generous lengths and widths.

Kimi is another piece that takes its stylistic cues from the tribal and village carpets of Konya. Some of the oldest and most elegantly simplistic carpets are from this region.

Contrasted in the yellows, greens and reds of this carpet are floral medallions, running river borders and harsh geometric interventions. These create a many-layered design of crashing motifs breaking over each other, rather than the very static, held, geometry seen in traditional versions of these carpets.



165 cm x 389 cm

Finely hand-knotted, hand-spun, hand-dyed natural wool bony pile carpet.

NAZAR

This design is inspired by carpets that were made by the weavers for to be used by the weavers themselves. It is stylistically the most “tribal” of the collection.

Reminiscent of an Anatolian Kilim, four bands of anthropomorphic protection symbols are finished at the top and bottom with evil eye motifs, or “goz”.

The colours of madder red, indigo blue and natural cream are generally the most predominant in these types of rugs, as they were the cheapest for the weavers to procure; the cream of the sheep’s wool often being used as a ground colour.

Dyeing expenses do not factor into carpet design in the same way today, but these influences echo down the generations and the traditional palettes remain.



139 cm x 210 cm

Finely hand-woven, hand-spun, hand-dyed natural wool kilim.

INK

In many ways this rug, and its influences, encapsulates the genesis of the Watercolours collection.

It is inspired by the rugs made in the late 19th century by Ziegler and Co., a German company who was one of the first Europeans to set up manufacturing in the Sultanabad region of Iran. These rugs were made by local weavers, but the company supplied them with the highest-quality materials and equipment to make rugs which preserved the exquisite craftsmanship of the region, yet appealed solely to the Western market.

Ink feels like the natural progression for these rugs, which used traditional Persian motifs to create new designs for a new audience. Its soft, pale colours are reminiscent of the vegetable dyes used in the Ziegler designs. Delicate pen-like strokes dance across an ivory ground, with an elegant running 'S' guard stripe so prevalent in the aforementioned designs. The all-over floral field has a central pattern of large palmettes surrounded by jaunty flowerheads and leaves.

The indigo border has, again, the typical floral running design we see so often in the Persian Town carpets.



228 cm x 283 cm

Finely hand-knotted, hand-spun, hand-dyed natural wool bony pile carpet.



LOPHELIA

An all-over lattice design with floral shields and tendrils. The lilac lattice 'bar' is covered with black vines which spiral into blooms and give the rug a naturalistic feel.

The very simple border provides just enough weight to bind the design and stop it escaping.

Shah Abbas palmettes and the naive rosettes are mirrored, inverted at each repetition. The lattice network repeats across the field of the rug and implicitly beyond the border.



190 cm x 276 cm

Finely hand-woven, hand-spun, hand-dyed natural silk dhurrie.

CHESTER SQUARE

An infinitely-repeating floral palmette populates the field of this carpet, reminiscent of Monet's waterlily paintings.

A field like this is traditionally seen as a window into the infinite with the pattern extending forever, and the mortal viewer only able to perceive it through the narrow perspective created by the border.

The generous pseudo-Kufic border used here alludes to ancient script created in the Arabic alphabet. We can only guess what it could be trying to say.



226 cm x 313 cm

Finely hand-knotted, hand-spun, hand-dyed natural wool bony pile carpet.



STRAWBERRY

A floral motif influenced by those you typically find in Bessarabian rugs, with bright red rosettes of flowers framed by green curling leaves, repeating on a black or brown background.

Originating on the western shore of the Black Sea in Ukraine and Moldova, this folk-art tradition began by copying French rugs, Aubusson and Savonnerie, which were bought back East by the aristocracy and then imitated for the merchant class.

Here the form is taken to a logically abstract conclusion with all the elements becoming impressionistic shapes which tumble across the carpet.



185 cm x 250 cm

Finely hand-woven, hand-spun, hand-dyed natural wool kilim.

LL

This carpet is an exuberant and playful take on a Heriz rug. The border contains the hint of a lattice in a gorgeously deep, reddish, pink. This lattice jousts with floral buds of turquoise and golden yellow on a pistachio bed which almost takes over the cream ground.

Two tight, dark guard borders provide structure to the rug with a darker-hued and rich aubergine colour.

The colour palette is a strong departure from the colours usually seen in traditional carpets. In many ways this seems the design that has pushed our concept the furthest.

It is also the carpet where we have pushed the aging techniques the most, encouraged to reveal the red warps and wefts usually hidden behind the pile and to use as many overdye techniques as possible, thus creating its rich and varied colour palette.



220 cm x 274 cm

Finely hand-knotted, hand-spun, hand-dyed natural wool bony pile carpet.



CYPRESS

A lavish pink and purple cypress tree design, classically seen in Persian Kerman rugs. The small field, with the trees staggered amid profuse blooms, gives the effect of paradise glimmering through a window.

A wide border of stylised and overblown petals is encased by the regularity of the repeated square running border stripes, which bring a hard geometric element in contrast to the rest of the design.



141 cm x 185 cm

Finely hand-knotted, hand-spun, hand-dyed natural silk rug.

BLOOM

This carpet is playful and joyful, the colours and design somehow being completely unlike anything one would see in traditional rug design and yet sharing enough reference points to be speaking the same language.

A slim inner border in a barber's pole design of pink and yellow contains a field that is exploding with colour and exuberance. Floral designs crash into each other and the effect is of a Middle Eastern summer garden in full bloom.

The outer border is a running water motif in blue and yellow enclosing a flower meander with straight tendrils that add a rigid intervention to this otherwise very botanical rug.



200 cm x 249 cm

Finely hand-knotted, hand-spun, hand-dyed natural wool bony pile rug.

MINA

Stylised teal birds flit around the border, while the central field is inspired by a Mina Khani – a traditional floral design of Western Persia. One variety of flower is placed at the interstices of a trellis-like network of stems and tendrils, while at the centre of each section is placed a different, cruder, flower.

In the form of a Persian carpet, with a field, border and guard stripes with stylised floral medallions, this style of Shirvan rug with a large-scale lattice design can be traced back to the floral carpets found in the region during the 17th and 18th centuries.



174 cm x 246 cm

Hand-knotted, hand-spun, hand-dyed natural wool rug.



CHESSBOARD

There is a tradition of interpreting this Tibetan design as a straight chessboard, one of the pleasures of the educated class. The outer border is a loose interpretation of geometric key and fret design enclosing a star. The inner border resembles a cursive running water design.

Large knots of this scale are often seen in Tibetan area rugs. We wanted to include many different materials and weaves in this collection and this rug is the most chunky hand-knotted piece.



255 cm x 300 cm

Chunky hand-knotted, hand-spun, hand-dyed natural wool pile rug.



Como

This flatweave is the largest in the collection, made with the infinitely repeatable design of a major elephant's foot gul, alternated by the smaller, minor guls, so often seen in Afghan Esari carpets.

The major guls contain an idiosyncratic and varied iteration on a floral bouquet motif, with a star motif in place of the minor gul.

The structure of this carpet is very much taken from the Turkmen tradition, but this design rug deviates completely from the Turkmen in colour, with their usual field of deep reds, into a stony brown field with splashes of periwinkle blue, lemon yellow and oxblood red, pastel tones more typically seen on the Persian city carpets from the mid-20th century. This, coupled with quality of the line, gives a light, playful character to the rug.



280 cm x 447 cm

Finely hand-woven, hand-spun, hand-dyed natural cotton dhurrie.

CINDY

The only rug in the collection which is inspired by European traditional weaving, this Aubusson-style rug is made in luxurious silk, and has many of the elaborate design elements seen in these carpets. A large central ribbon-like cartouche is filled with a lush rose-bouquet medallion and surrounded by scrolling acanthus leaves.

The opulent Rococo-esque design is subdued by the tonal palette of pistachio green, terracotta and sage. This is such a playful take on the design language of European weaving and architecture; it is joyful and humorous yet also grounded and serious.



241 cm x 343 cm

Finely hand-woven, hand-spun, hand-dyed natural silk flatweave.



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Amy Leveson

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