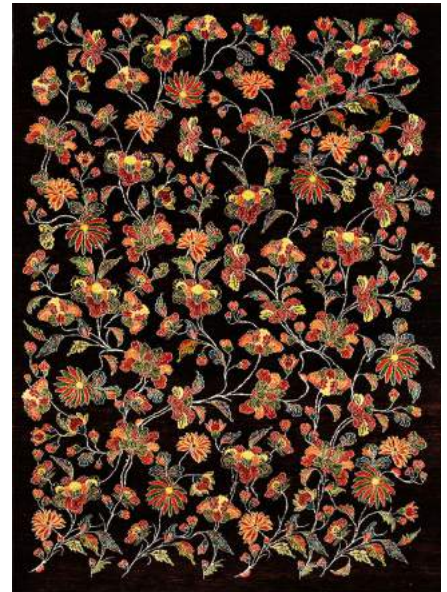


Tradition & Innovation Unite In Stunning Statement Rugs From Zollanvari



Founded in the 1940s, Zollanvari has been creating both traditional-style Persian carpets and high-design contemporary rugs for decades. The "[Art Deco Kyoto Shibori 3](#)" rug is pictured above.

A family-run company founded in Shiraz in the 1940s, **Zollanvari** preserves the traditions of ancient Persian carpet making while giving them new life. Experimenting with modern color while relying on historic techniques, the family has developed a reputation for highly detailed rugs that range in style from classic Persianate, to "tribal" to contemporary. Most of their carpets are hand-knotted by nomadic peoples in southern Persia and southeastern Turkey. By building relationships with their artisans, six generations of Zollanvaris have helped introduce the ornate handmade rugs to a worldwide market, while supporting the traditional communities who have played a key role in the history of the Persian rug.



An assortment of color-rich contemporary rugs from Zollanvari. Left to right: Abstract and bright, "Sunrise" from the Ghashgha'i Meets Bauhaus series was inspired by the color theory of Josef Albers. In "Impressionist Landscapes of my Fatherland," a classic Persian landscape gabbeh is updated with an Impressionist-style weave. "Ikebana 9b" belongs to the Kyoto Collection, which was inspired by the meisen kimono, a silk kimono popular in 1920's and 30's Japan.



Traditional-style rugs from Zollanvari are equally as inventive as their modern offerings. From left to right: The hand-knotted "Senneh Revival 4" features small ornate depictions of flowers, symbols, and animals. Designed by Zollanvari Studio, "Gol-o-Bolbol 1" plays with a classic Persian Tree of Life motif, drenching it in crimson and turmeric yellow traditionally used in the Zagros Mountains. Zollanvari is known for their "Baluch Soumaks," originally released in collaboration with Baluch nomads; this soumak combines wool and silk, and is knotted using kilim, soumak, and pile weaving techniques.

This coming winter, the international powerhouse turns 75. “Our celebrations have somewhat been muted by the pandemic,” admits Farzin Sebastian Ghandchi, a consultant with Zollanvari. However, he eagerly anticipates next year’s premier design fairs DOMOTEX in Hannover, Germany and Maison et Objet in Paris, where they will showcase the company’s latest work and emphasize their decades of expertise in the industry, along with several online exhibitions. “Ultimately, though, we are celebrating this occasion through the handwoven works of art we produce,” he says. This year, the company is launching several new lines, including the Lion Collection, an ambitious line of wool, cotton, and silk rugs featuring Zollanvari’s myriad styles — including explosively colorful "Isfahan" patterns, reinvigorated gabbehs, and Venetian-cut velvet designs — all crafted using exquisitely executed techniques. To celebrate the historic brand, Incollect goes behind the scenes to learn how Zollanvari’s beautiful rug art is made.

Behind the Design Process



In "Perspectives in Red," Studio Zollanvari combines twin influences that surprisingly overlap: a traditional geometric gabbeh and the optical illusions of the Op Art movement.

Zollanvari dates its founding to 1947, the year that Gholamreza Zollanvari started working at his family's carpet shop at the carpet bazaar in Shiraz. As early as the mid-20th century, Gholamreza understood that modern clients would want forward-thinking contemporary designs, as well as traditional Persian works. Although he started off with gabbehs, a high-pile rug with a colorful abstract design traditionally used for sleeping, the company eventually played with the design of his gabbehs, developing richly creative rugs to entice new clients. "We revolutionized [the gabbeh] in the 80's and 90's," says Reza Zollanvari, International CEO, noting various collections like the Landscapes, Flora & Fauna, and Geometrics along with others, that represent the refreshed gabbeh style. Today, the company is known for its extensive range of Persian tribal-style rugs, including collections like Chimera and Tree of Life, as well as contemporary lines — like Traces, Ghashgha'i Meets Bauhaus, and Stained-Glass — that push the boundaries of carpet art.



<https://player.vimeo.com/video/574011924> & <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ire4zVppKzU>

Zollanvari's rugs are crafted using time-honored techniques.

Many of the rugs are designed at Zollanvari Studio in Zurich, the creative arm of the company, under Reza Zollanvari. For others, the company commissions European and Iranian ateliers SoFarSoNear, NOV24, and Soheila Shayegan to invent a design based on a given theme or concept. The brand isn't shy about reaching out to new tastemakers within the industry. "We are always in discussion with textile, architectural, and product designers we have met over the years to produce new concepts," says Ghandchi.



"Jungle Beat" from Zollanvari Studio is an homage to the natural environment.

Within Studio Zollanvari, a design development committee reviews trends to stay ahead of what's next in fashion and interiors, and to reinterpret the past through the aesthetic lens of the present. The design team looks to the artistry of many global cultures, especially those in the Zagros Mountains, where Zollanvari was born. "For us, the art of carpet making has always exemplified the expression of a culture and a way of life, and as a result our use of pattern, color, and symbolism has been constantly evolving," says Reza Zollanvari. When approaching a "revival" design, the designers try to simplify the overall design to give it a contemporary update, without losing the most important components of the traditional style. The color is then carefully selected to reflect modern interior trends.



A Ghashgha'i woman weaves a rug for Zollanvari.

Aside from the stylish design team, the company also credits their weavers with imbuing each piece with artistry and personality that couldn't have been created in an office. "What sets us apart is the active encouragement our weavers are given to allow their own aesthetic sense to shine through the designs," says Reza Zollanvari. "Individual, expressive, and unique carpets are the result."



How It's Made



Zollanvari rugs are woven in traditional communities. Much of their wool is dyed in a plant near Shiraz, Iran.

Traditionally, many "tribal-style" Persian rugs are woven along an ancient nomad trail in the mountains outside Shiraz. Zollanvari has commissioned thousands of artisans associated with the Ghashgha'i and Luris nomadic tribes to herd sheep, spin wool, and weave their intricate rugs. Although most of their production takes place in South Persia and Turkey, two nations intersected by the nomad route, they also work with small villages in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India. The process of creating a single rug is long and intricate, with yarn and rugs being shipped back and forth between the small communities and the workshops in which the wool is dyed, the plant where the rugs are finished, and the distribution center in Zurich, from which the rugs are shipped around the world. The production of wool and the weaving of the rugs is meant to align with established cultural norms and

local lifestyles. "Our carpet production distinguishes itself by a sensitive regard for the traditional way of life of the nomads and their natural environment," says Reza Zollanvari.

In southern Persia, the process of creating a rug begins with herds of sheep that graze in the Zagros Mountains, known for the natural sheen of their wool. The sheep are only shorn once per year to protect the quality and sustainability of the wool. Herdsmen indigenous to the region shear the sheep, before local women card and spin the wool by hand.





Nomadic women in the Zagros Mountains spin the wool (top) and weave the carpets (bottom, left). The carpets are then finished in a plant outside Tehran (bottom, right).

Next, a master dyer outside Shiraz dyes the wool by hand with natural coloring sourced from plants in the Zagros Mountains, and hangs it to air dry. The wool is then delivered back to the nomadic peoples. Local women hand-weave the rugs, a process which takes up to six months. Weavers are paid by knot count and quality, with bonuses offered for unusually large rugs or exceptionally detailed work. After the carpets are woven, they are hand-finished in a workshop near Tehran, washed, and set out to dry in the sun. Directed by the quality control manager, the final finishing involves trimming the pile and stretching the rugs to ensure a rectangular shape. Reza Zollanvari then visits the plant to review the rugs for quality and approve their transportation to a distribution point in Zurich.



A nomad school, partially funded by Zollanvari.

As Zollanvari relies on local communities to produce their rugs, they also depend on the health of those communities. Rather than just commissioning the workers for rugs, the company maintains an active presence in the villages. In addition to paying a relatively high wage, Zollanvari helps to build hospitals, maternity units, water pipes, and winter housing that provide much-needed infrastructure, and donates heaters help keep artisans and their families warm throughout the winter. Through funding mobile teaching units, Zollanvari uplifts youth education, while small pensions and loans to widows help older women support themselves.

As a Label STEP Fair Trade Partner, the company prioritizes the lives of its workers as well as overall sustainability, both within the communities and outside of them. "We are one of the only handmade carpet producers to be awarded the OEKO-TEX® Standard 100 Certificate for 'handwoven carpets made from hand-spun sheep wool and traditionally dyed with herbal natural dyes,'" says Ghandchi, referring to a certification that a textile does not consist of harmful substances.

75 Years of Zollanvari



A design from the new Lion Collection, "Homāyūn 2" is a vibrant mix of traditional and contemporary style.

Over the past 18 months, Zollanvari worked with NOV24 and SoFarSoNear, as well as their in-house design studio, to create a wide-ranging collection that honors their 75th anniversary in the industry. Dubbed the Lion Collection, the new offerings range in style and technique, all while honoring the lion insignia of Zollanvari's logo and putting a unique contemporary spin on traditional Persian carpet making.



Featured prominently above in "[Tribal Fields 1](#)" and "[Homāyūn 2](#)" from NOV24, the lion is an important symbol in Persian culture. As in other mythologies, the Persian lion refers to bravery and royalty, and at least as early as the 17th-century, rug artists were incorporating the lion into gabbehs and other rugs. According to eminent Persian carpet collector and artist Parviz Tanavoli, many lion rugs were originally made for local chiefs, who spread the rugs in their tents to reflect their power.

In the Lion Collection, classic Persian designs are reinvigorated with explosions of color. Two styles, the [Soltan](#) and [Homāyūn](#), take inspiration in the floral medallion designs of traditional carpets made in Isfahan. For each rug, NOV24, the atelier behind the rugs, selected well-known motifs like floral, *shir-o-khorshid* (meaning the lion and sun symbol, a popular emblem dating back to 12th-century Iran) and *boteh* (paisley) motifs. However, in brilliant colors like red, black, and white ("[Soltan 1](#)") and rich turquoise ("[Homāyūn 2](#)") paired with graphic contemporary lines, antique styles appear fresh and creative. Another rug series on Incollect from the Lion Collection, [Tribal Fields](#), references early rugs from Gholamreza Zollanvari, for which the brand became known. "These weavings combine kelim, soumak and pile weaving techniques to create a multi-textured jewel-like surface that gives the rugs depth and a three-dimensional appearance," says Reza Zollanvari.

Along with the launch of the Lion Collection, Zollanvari is planning their next 3D online show to present objects from their line of home decor, including coffers designed for use as stools, tables, and chests. The coffers are covered in mafrash, a woven textile that functions as bedding, bags, and backrests in the region's nomadic culture. The company is also releasing several new series to coincide with their 75th anniversary, including Traces and Stained-Glass, which are available on Incollect. "It's the the largest number of new collections we have ever produced in a year," says Ghandchi. With an eye toward the future and a strong foundation in the past, Zollanvari embraces transformative growth and change, while honoring timeless tradition.

SHOP ZOLLANVARI ON INCOLLECT

Jul 15,2021

By Brittany Cost