

fter passing giant orange carp swimming in a rocky pond, two clucking ducks, and a dog and cat standing guard, one arrives at Christopher Alexander's home in

Berkeley. A verdigrised brass plate reads Center for Environmental Structure. Inside, the walls are hung with Turkish carpets on their way to the M.H. de Young Memorial Museum, where they will be exhibited as a premier attraction of the Sixth International Conference on Carpets, to be held in San Francisco in November.

The selection of San Francisco as the site for the conference confirms the arrival of the Bay Area as one of the world's major rug centers, with its passionate collectors, museum-quality dealers, extraordinary private collections, and the peerless holdings of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco. An unprecedented array of important carpets will be on display in connection with

the four-day event, which will be attended by collectors, scholars, curators, and conservators from around the world. Some three hundred privately owned rugs will be shown in "Oriental Rugs from Pacific Collections" at Fort Mason. The de Young will exhibit another three hundred, including the newly acquired Caroline and H. McCoy Jones Collection of Early Anatolian kilims, considered the best in the world; the world's second oldest rug, the Fustat Carpet; other tribal weavings from its Jones collection; and eighty-three pieces from the private collection of Christopher Alexander.

Regarded as one of the great twentieth-century thinkers on architectural theory, Alexander, like many Bay Area

Floor Show



Above: Early nineteenth-century Turkoman Tekke main carpet. From the collection of Don Lee. Below: Nineteenth-century Konya rug from Turkey. From the collection of Ralph Kaffel.



cultural treasures, is better known internationally than on his home ground. A professor in the architecture school at Berkeley, he has inspired generations of devoted disciples. In a series of influential books published by Oxford University Press, Alexander has expressed his view that as a culture we have lost the ability to achieve

wholeness and must rediscover meaningful patterns of design. His theories go hand in hand with his major passion: For the past twenty years, Alexander has been collecting and studying carpets.

"For several years I had some kind of obsession I couldn't really understand," Alexander says. "I didn't know why I was so passionate

AN EVENT DISPLAYS RUGS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

**Pearl.
Moonstone.
Opal.
Jade.
The Luster Series.**
A gentle mist of shading enhances the subtle hues of these porcelain tiles from Tileshop. Enjoy a relaxing bath in luxurious surroundings brimming with charm and personality.

15% off all non-sale items through 11-30-90.

Available at
TILESHOP

Two convenient Bay Area locations;

In Berkeley:
1005 Harrison Street
415/525-4312

In San Jose:
480 E. Brokaw Road
408/436-8877

Warehouse and Showroom in Los Angeles also.



about carpets.” As his collecting narrowed to Turkish carpets, he realized that this weaving art deals so purely with questions of pattern and ornament “that it has the ability to be a teacher for us.”

As an architect and builder, Alexander had come to the conclusion that a building’s decorative elements—detailed patterns and ornamentation—were as important to its overall structure as the beauty of its site, its plan, its rooms. “It was the fine structure, that is, the small stuff, the way the boards meet, the small

What
puts a Turkish
carpet on the same
level that Mozart
occupies in the
realm of
music?

carving on the head of a stair rail, the embossed pattern in a ceiling, which made the building good or not,” he explains. In carpets, Alexander realized, this detailing was designed with enormous sophistication.

In a pile carpet (as opposed to a kilim or flat-weave), knots are put in one by one, and the weaver has almost total control of those knots—“like a pointillist painting,” says Alexander. “Thus the feeling of the thing, which exists at the scale of several feet, is controlled by decisions that exist at the scale of one-eighth of an inch.” He points to one of the gems of his collection, a thirteenth-century Seljuk carpet with an endless repeat of intertwining dragons in ivory and blue, precise in its minute detail. “The weaver was placing knots with incredible care,” he says. “The ‘life’ hinges on a millimeter here and a millimeter there.”

As Alexander continued to study carpets, he became convinced that the “oneness” or “wholeness” he sought occurred more often and more deeply in great Turkish pieces from the fourteenth through seventeenth centuries than in any others. He asked, “What is it about their structure that places them, among all carpets, at the same level that Bach or Mozart occupies in the realm of music?”

In an attempt to answer this question—and in a sense the question of

Shop the Showrooms at

Showplace Square

Design Exchange

“Since 1980”

at Showplace Square • by appointment only • Phone (415) 552-4028

For those who want the fun of doing it themselves...

An interior design buying service for those who do not need the complete design services of an Interior Designer.

A convenient means to shop the resources of the restricted Designer Showrooms.

See this extensive selection of fine home furnishings, fabrics and accessories, as well as antiques and superb Oriental rugs.

Please call for information.

what all collectors see in rugs—he undertook a meticulous aesthetic analysis, to be published as his seventh book, *A Foreshadowing of 21st Century Art: The Color and Geometry of Very Early Turkish Carpets*. What Alexander found was that implicit rules of design structure govern all Oriental carpets.

The beauty of this design structure, he found, is an objective quality felt by everyone. In his research, whenever he asked people the question, “If you had to choose one of these two carpets as a



Nineteenth-century Caucasian Zeykhur rug.
From the collection of
Philip Baity.

picture of your own self, which one would you choose?” viewers always agreed on one carpet. They recognized its greatness as art.

One thing always marks a truly great ancient carpet, says Alexander: its color. “The great carpets represent the most profound, most fierce intensity of color,” he explains, “produced by the way the colors are organized in geometry: the very boldness of the geometric shapes, and the way that figure and ground reverse, and the many, many levels of scale, which bring this shining color to fruition.” In the end, he says, a well-

foxglenn™

By FIELDSTONE® collection



Inspired English Country Kitchens

available exclusively through authorized Fieldstone Cabinetry showrooms

American Home Kitchens
1319 Town Center Lane
Sunnyvale Town Center
(408) 773-0141

Cabinets etc.
2973 Castro Valley Blvd.
Castro Valley
(415) 538-0100 / 792-2100

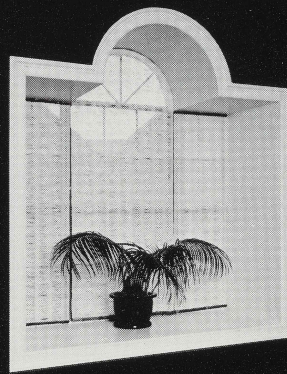
Nova Designs
300 DeHaro at 16th
San Francisco Design Center
(415) 626-8868

Great Kitchens
719 Santa Cruz Avenue
Menlo Park
(415) 328-4224

Marin Kitchen Works, Inc.
401 Bel Marin Keys
Novato
(415) 883-8728

EXCELLENCE IN CABINETRY
FIELDSTONE®

For free information packet call (415) 727-1838 or Toll Free 800-344-1232



CONRAD
ORIGINAL SUNSHADES

Custom handwoven window coverings
of natural fibers.

Call or write for the showroom nearest you.

CONRAD 575 Tenth Street, San Francisco, CA 94103
(415) 626 3303 / Fax (415) 626-6302

- Porcelains
- Tansus ▪ Planters
- Screens ▪ Textiles
- Oriental Decor



Takahashi

TAKAHASHI IMPORTS INC.

235 15th Street
San Francisco, CA 94103
(415) 552-5511

VIEWPOINT

N O R T H
A Gallery

Christopher Winfield
Director

Linda Braz
Manager



2124 San Mateo, Fashion Island
San Mateo, CA 94404
415-571-0414

In Carmel & San Mateo
Mon - Fri 10-9 • Sat 10-6 • Sun 11-6



designed and well-constructed carpet contains an almost "animal being."

An example of this "animal being" of color in Alexander's collection is found in a fourteenth-century fragment he calls "Carpet with Tree of Life and Animals," in which eight birds, four fabulous beasts with spreading tail feathers, and two trees of life surround a central medallion on a field ranging from chocolate red to scarlet magenta. "To take these unbelievably saturated colors—red, green, black, purple blue, and a rich yellow—and make them harmonious is a fantastic achievement," he says.

Ultimately, Alexander is led to the conclusion that "a carpet is a picture of God. That is the essential fact, fundamental to the people who produced the carpets, and fundamental to any proper

A carpet
is a picture of God,
according to a
mystical Islamic
concept, almost
a living
being.

understanding of these carpets." The idea of the carpet as a picture of God or a mirror of the "Great Self" is a mystical Islamic concept, and most of the carpets in Alexander's collection were in fact woven by Sufis connected to the mosques. "It is only by thinking of God, or oneness with the world," that a rugmaker occasionally creates a rug that approaches the nature of a being, or a human soul. "Something which really has to be understood as a living being is being created," says Alexander.

Finally, Alexander has his answer. In the world of carpets, as in the music of Bach or Monteverdi, a living being arises out of "a realm of pure structure, in which the deepest human emotions have their play—pure structure, pure geometry, pure color." The gems of his collection come closest to mirroring the wholeness of the universe we call the soul: "Their special worth is spiritual and religious—not only aesthetic."

* * * *

Highlights—Sixth International Conference on Oriental Carpets, November 17–20

•The M.H. de Young Memorial Museum will display the Fustat Carpet, the Caroline and H. McCoy Jones Collection of Anatolian Kilims, the Caroline and H. McCoy Jones Collection of Oriental Carpets, and the Christopher Alexander Collection of Anatolian Pile Carpets. Golden Gate Park, SF (415) 750-3600. The exhibition continues through the end of the year.

•Herbst Pavilion (Pier 2), Fort Mason Center: "Oriental Rugs from Pacific Collections," an exhibit of three hundred rugs from private collections believed to be the largest display of Oriental rugs ever shown in one location; "Fragments of an Ancient Puzzle: The Origins of Tribal Rug Designs," organized by author, scholar, and collector James Opie; "Central Asian Tribal Rugs from the S. M. Dudin Collections," sixty pieces from the Leningrad collections of the turn-of-the-century ethnographer, displayed for the first time outside the Soviet Union. (415) 441-5706. 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. November 18 through 25.

•The Lowie Museum of Anthropology, University of California, Berkeley: "Oriental Carpets from the Lowie Museum," and "Sassanian Pile Carpet Fragment." Recently excavated at a fifth-century site in northeastern Iran, this unique ancient fragment is on loan from the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. October 1 through January 22, 1991. Tuesday through Friday from 10 to 4:30; Saturday and Sunday from noon to 4 p.m. Kroeber Hall, Bancroft Way and College Ave, Berkeley (415) 642-3681.

•More than eighty speakers, among them many world-renowned rug scholars, will present papers at the four-day conference, November 17–20, at the Marriott Hotel, 55 Fourth St, SF (415) 896-1600. The San Francisco Rug Fair, featuring exhibitors from around the country and abroad, will be held adjacent to the conference rooms.

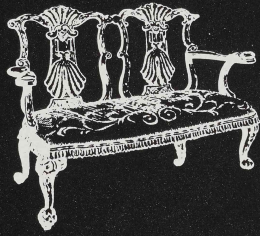
Registration forms for the conference, which costs \$375, may be obtained from Sixth ICOC, c/o Horne, McClatchy & Coblenz, 151 Union, SF 94111. Regular museum fees apply for visitors to rug exhibitions who do not attend the conference. □

SEE RESOURCES, PAGE 73.

Susan Edmiston is the author of Literary New York, soon to be republished by Peregrine Press, and is collaborating with Dianne Feinstein on her autobiography.

RESOURCE

Listings



ANTIQUES

ARGENTUM—THE LEOPARD'S HEAD, 414 Jackson, Suite 101, SF (415) 296-7757. Deals in very fine silver, some dating to the early eighteenth century and including a range of countries. Also has a good library of books on silver.

BAUER ANTIQUES, 1878 Union, SF (415) 921-7656. Known for its excellent, unusual, and well-priced eighteenth- and nineteenth-century French and Continental antiques, such as painted Venetian chairs and gilded mirrors.

DILLINGHAM & CO., 470 Jackson, SF (415) 989-8777. Gaylord Dillingham's forte is quality; he is considered by many to be the foremost dealer in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century English furniture in the Bay Area.

ROBERT DOMERGUE & CO., 560 Jackson, SF (415) 781-4034. Born in France and well-connected there, Domergue deals in high-quality seventeenth-, eighteenth-, and early nineteenth-century French and Continental pieces, both small and large. Recent displays have included paintings, pe-

riod chairs, beautiful wall brackets, and unusual chandeliers.

DRUM & CO., 415 Jackson, SF (415) 788-5118. Carries lovely Italian and French pieces, many scaled for smaller apartments where space is limited.

FOSTER-GWIN, 425 Jackson, SF (415) 397-4986. Top-quality European and Oriental pieces. In addition to the formal upstairs showroom, there is a lower-level shop with country pieces and rustic items such as Philippine tables and odd iron furniture.

ED HARDY/SAN FRANCISCO, 750 Post, SF (415) 771-6644. Specializes in European antiques; Hardy also created the Asian department at Sotheby's on the West Coast and is considered an expert on the subject. He is respected for his fine eye, the quiet, understated colors of his collection, and a spectacular showroom. Noteworthy are his Ushak rugs, garden ornaments, and chinoiserie panels.

FRANK KOVACS, San Mateo (415) 574-2028. Kovacs is an antiques dealer with a vast range of merchandise, both large pieces such as marble statuary and mosaics, and drawers full of tiny bronze statuettes and jewelry. His price range is also quite broad. Kovacs shows by appointment only.

KUROMATSU, 722 Bay, SF (415) 474-4027. Dealer Joe Cook sells almost exclusively Japanese pieces and is especially known for his Mingei, Tansu, and Ikebana baskets. The well-respected Cook is active in the Society for Asian Art.

OVEDA MAURER ANTIQUES, 137 Tunstead Ave, San Anselmo (415) 454-6439. A respected dealer in Early American furniture and objects, Mau-

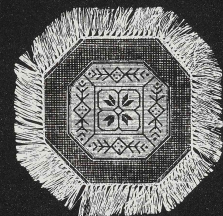
rer sells many small implements, such as Betty lamps and tiny lighting fixtures. Her collection includes a wide range of American items: hearthware, pewter, folk art, and textiles.

D.J.'S THE ARTS AND CRAFTS SHOP, 1417 Bridgeway, Sausalito (415) 331-2554. An acknowledged arts and crafts expert, D.J. Puffert has been called the dean of the West Coast dealers in that style. He also sells Tiffany glass.

THERIEN & CO., 411 Vermont, SF (415) 956-8850. Owner Robert Garcia is known for his well-trained eye and especially high-quality collection. He carries rare Russian pieces and also specializes in Scandinavian furniture.

RESOURCE

Listings



CARPETS

ADRASKAND, INC., 15 Ross Ave, San Anselmo (415) 459-1711. Anne and Michael Craycraft's "store" functions as an exhibition gallery and information center on "the leading edge of study and attribution." In addition to dealing in antique tribal and village rugs—Tibetan, Belouch, Turkoman, Persian, and Anatolian—Adraskand carries the largest