

THE CARPETS AS MY TEACHERS

I have collected these carpets over a period of about 20 years, and have been lucky to find so many of the truly early carpets, which almost do not exist outside museums. I collected these carpets mainly because I learn from them. I look at them every day, and every day I learn something new from them. Many of the carpets in this collection, I must have looked at five hundred or a thousand times. Over the years, I must have spent literally thousands and thousands of hours, simply looking, looking, looking.

Since I am a builder, I spend my life making buildings — also furniture and ornaments and other things that buildings contain—and try to make them better. Many years ago I began to realize that carpets had an immense lesson to teach me: that as organized examples of wholeness or oneness in space, they reach levels which are only very rarely reached in buildings. I realized, in short, that the makers of carpets knew something which, if I could master it, would teach me an enormous amount about my own art.

So I began looking for those carpets where wholeness, or oneness — beauty — existed most deeply. I was simply looking for those carpets that could teach me the most. I was not interested in the classification of carpets. I did not care if the carpets came from a certain area, or from a certain type, or from a certain period — I was only interested in those pieces which had the most to teach me in my own work as an artist. Gradually, as a result of this intention, I found myself looking for earlier and earlier carpets. This did not happen because I had any kind of intellectual idea about early carpets. It happened simply because I discovered slowly, through experience, that the earlier carpets had an important structure that was so moving that I wanted to learn from it. So, I tended more and more towards the very early carpets in my search.

Among the very early carpets, I found myself with a marked tendency to choose Turkish ones. For some reason which I cannot entirely explain, it seemed that the Turkish carpets, more than any others, had the oneness, or spiritual depth, that I was looking for. Even in those cases where I did buy carpets from other parts of the world, they were always those that had a pronounced “Turkic” character. For this reason, even though there are Spanish carpets, Persian carpets, Caucasian carpets, Central Asian and European pieces mixed in with the collection, I have nevertheless always focused on Turkish carpets, because the oneness or wholeness I was after simply occurred more often and more deeply in Turkish carpets than in any others.

Christopher Alexander
Guest Curator

