

ALBERTO LEVI GALLERY

MILANO

TAPPETI ANTICHI E CONTEMPORANEI DAL 1878

Antique Textile Art III

A Collection of Oriental and European Carpets and Textiles

By Alberto Levi

Now in its third year, 'Antique Textile Art' has become an essential event for the Alberto Levi Gallery, one where we summarise a season of intense hunting around the world for carpets and textiles of artistic merit. This last year has seen us present at a number of national and international fairs with esoteric antique textiles and carpets, and has marked an inauguration of a series of gallery installations together with leading interior decorators.

In November we organised a show entitled 'Flowers of the Desert- Rugs and Flatweaves of the Berber and Tuareg Tribes', where the carpets were harmoniously integrated in an interior created within our gallery by Daniela Wajskol, a leading member of a new breed of young Italian decorators.

At the Salone Internazionale del Mobile, an important event which takes place every April in Milan, we embarked on an ambitious project together with leading designer Barbara Falanga to create 'New Interiors'. During the course of this exhibition, the gallery was entirely transformed into an imaginary interior with furniture, objects, textiles and carpets from European artists of the twentieth century. This year's collection is even more eclectic than before, spanning wider areas of textile art. The Anatolian

contingent includes classical pieces such as an unusual blue-green Ushak carpet, but also a Konya rug with a striking anthropomorphic figure, a unique kilim with polychrome squares and a highly dramatic Filikli rug. Our Caucasian pieces should satisfy collectors with various appetites, ranging from a peculiar Kazak prayer rug to a refined Ukrainian Khila.

Persian carpets are comprehensively represented. From the northwestern family we will show an exquisite Tabriz and a spectacular Heriz of the 'Serapi' type, while from the western group we will include two outstanding Zieglers, a fine Teheran with silk and a monumental Bakhtiari, and, from the south, a Gabbeh, an early Qashqa'i rug, and the striking flatweave on this year's catalogue cover will feature in the exhibition. Two elegant Agra carpets rightfully represent the Indian tradition, followed by the now usual array of highly unusual Chinese carpets, ranging from an exquisite early Ningxia carpet to a graphic Art Déco carpet from Tientsin. One of the most recent acquisitions is the rare Khotan with three discs, rosettes and pomegranates, which has resurfaced on the art market after many years in an Italian private collection. The early Uzbek carpet carries the 'non-Turkoman Central Asian' banner, one of the newest and most acclaimed fields of carpet collecting. The open field Berber and the Tuareg reed carpet are included in honour of our very successful 'Flowers of the Desert' exhibition, which presented us with the opportunity to show tribal weavings with a strong contemporary look. European carpets also feature in the exhibition. Traditional types, such as an elegant Axminster and a

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refined Aubusson with pastel colours, are shown alongside carpets with more progressive designs. The latter includes an unusual needlepoint with stars, an outstanding Art Déco carpet commissioned in the thirties for a villa in Buenos Aires, a sophisticated piece with a geometric pattern in tones of brown and two modernist rugs by leading masters such as Marion Dorn and Joan Mirò. This group of rugs emphasises the gallery's increasing interest in twentieth century design carpets.

Our aim has been to present the 'best of types' for each family of weavings, and to highlight the fundamental differences between great, good and mediocre pieces. Given the vast amounts of generic carpets on the market today, establishing these differences is becoming a task of paramount importance. Our criteria for selection have allowed us to distill an offering of pieces that we feel belongs to the special domain of textile art.