

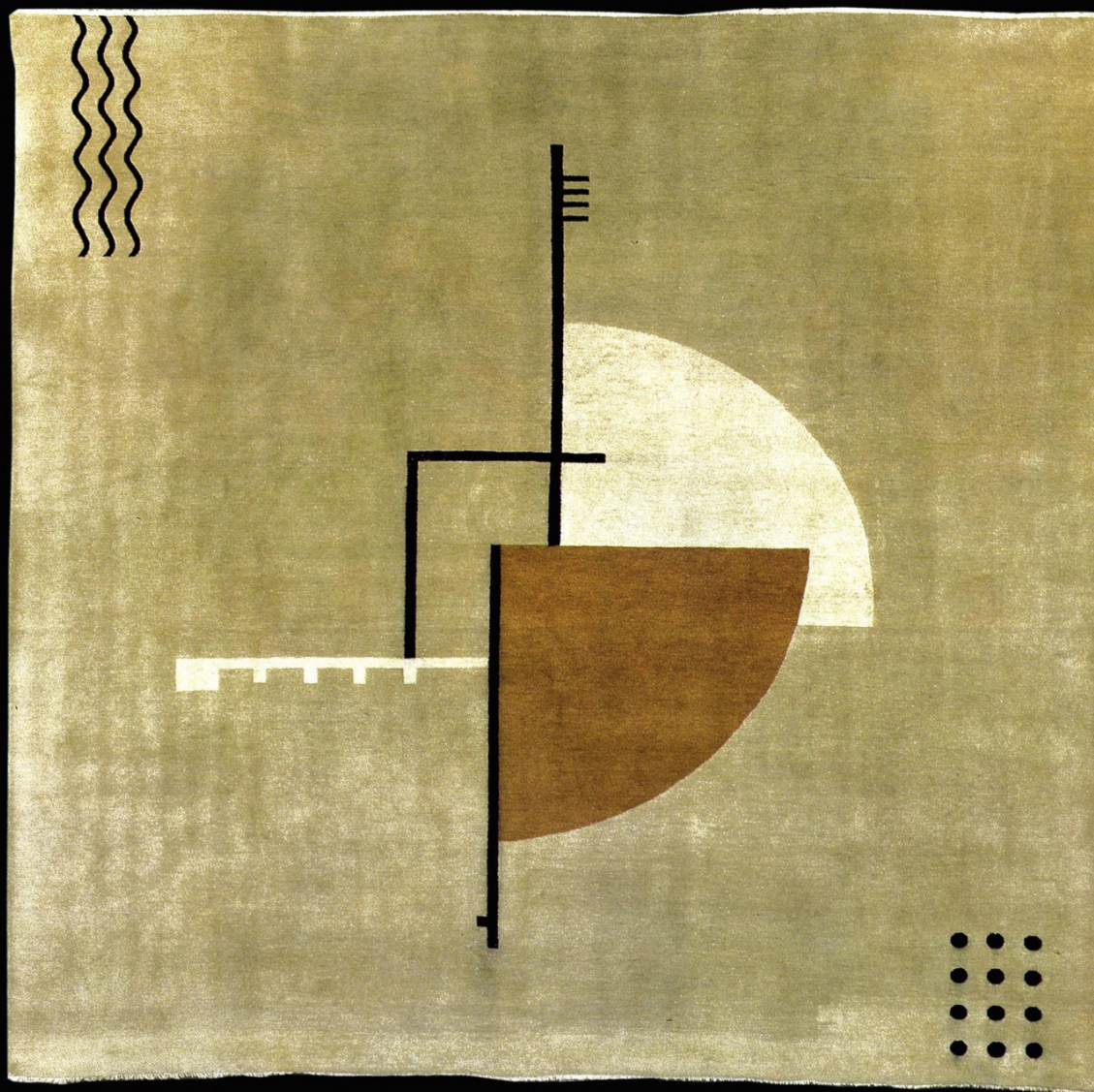
HALI

The International Magazine of Antique Carpet and Textile Art



Fifty Years of the Pazyryk Carpet
Russian Printed Cottons in Central Asia
November/December 1999 Issue 107

ALBERTO LEVI GALLERY



*Art Decò Carpet - circa 1925 - cm 293 x 301 (9'7" x 9'10")
after a cartoon by Da Silva Bruhns*

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BRAVO ICOC ITALIA

■ Members of the world-wide oriental carpet community who chose not to support the recent 9th ICOC in Milan, Florence and Venice should kick themselves, hard! For despite advance fears of organisational problems, the event, still the largest and most important regular gathering in the rug world's calendar, was one of the busiest and best ICOCs of all, and undoubtedly the most stylish and enjoyable. And it was generally good value for money.

Sadly, registered turnout of paying participants was "at least a hundred" fewer than for ICOC Philadelphia in 1996. This is no fault of the organisers, as there was abundant and timely promotion in HALLI and elsewhere. Nor is it solely due to the relatively light attendance from the USA, which was partly anticipated. Rather it was the many old friends (and new faces) from Europe who we expect to meet at successive ICOCs on either side of the Atlantic, who were absent. Doubtless as word of the success of the event gets back to them, they will regret having missed the chance to enjoy the wealth of art, culture, oriental rugs and fine textiles that was on offer in their own back yard. And make no mistake, in sum there was probably more on offer than at any previous ICOC.

Which is not to say ICOC Italy was perfect. We remember, for instance, the academic excellence of London 1983, the grandeur and palpable excitement, in the wake of German reunification, of Hamburg/Berlin 1993, the inspirational quality of the exhibitions at the De Young Museum in San Francisco in 1990, and the clockwork efficiency of Philadelphia 1996.

Ironically, the formal *raison d'être* of the event, the massive programme of some four-score 20-minute lectures has, for many, slipped into the background. The programme is still too crowded and uneven, while those lecturers who do have something stimulating to contribute are often unfairly limited by the format. In Milan, attendance at the academic sessions, already low due to limited enrolment, was not helped by having one conference room a quarter of a mile off-site in a local cinema. This made it rather difficult to switch to the alternative attraction to see if it was more lively and interesting. It was much simpler for participants to hang out in the rug fair.

Of the special exhibitions, those in Florence, of the Bargello Museum's textiles, and of the newly conserved Bardini carpets, will long remain in the memory, and both have left behind catalogues that are important permanent contributions. The once in a lifetime opportunity to see the Medici Cairene carpets at the Pitti Palace, and the new display of carpets and textiles in the San Marco Treasury was not one to miss. "Sovrani Tappeti" at the Palazzo Reale in Milan was more of a curate's egg, undeniably good in parts, with many wonderful rugs, but marked for some of us by the absence of much of the best of Italy's outstanding private holdings, and especially by the non-participation of at least two very major collectors.

Looking back over a wonderful week – and more – we can only offer heartfelt congratulations to the organisers, marshalled and often inspired by *il Presidente*, Alberto Levi, with the support of Mario Bergamo, Alberto Boralevi, Ziya Bozoglu, Luca Brancati, Edoardo Concaro, Dennis Dodds, Peggy Eskenazi, Elena Ferri, Robert Pinner, John Sommer and others. They produced a succession of glittering cameos, with fine hospitality, intriguing excursions, the biggest rug fair ever, high class shows in dealers' galleries in all three host cities, some fabulous public displays of

important and beautiful carpets and textiles in major artistic venues for which, crucially, the active support of local civic, cultural and religious institutions was successfully engaged. Bravo!

Even aspects of the academic programme can be reviewed with some satisfaction. The Daniele Sevi Prize, a cash award to fund further research, was presented in memory of the late Milanese dealer by the Milan Carpet Circle to two young first-time ICOC lecturers: Mustapha Hansali for his paper on Berber carpets in the excellent Moroccan special session; and Valentina Roccella for her presentation on 'Holbein' carpets in Italian paintings.

■ At the three-yearly meeting of the International Committee, held in Florence at the end of the conference, Wilfried Stanzer, organiser of the 1986 Vienna conference, was elected ICOC Chair to succeed Robert Pinner. Dennis Dodds, of Philadelphia 1996 renown, and an important contributor to the success of the Milan event, becomes Secretary General, replacing San Francisco's John Sommer. Washington's Wendel Swan, assisted by the Hamburg banker Hans Sienknecht, takes over responsibility for the ICOC's finances from Jürg Rageth.

ICOC status has been awarded to Nejat Diyarbekirli's proposed congress on Turkish and Central Asian carpets, very tentatively scheduled for Istanbul in autumn 2000, and also to Wilfried Stanzer's next Moroccan regional conference in Marrakesh a year later. The next full international conference itself is most likely to go to Washington DC again, but critical questions are still unresolved, including the extent of the Textile Museum's commitment to the conference, the ability of the local rug community to host the event, and whether it should take place in 2002 or 2003. It may not be too late for other candidates to come forward.

■ The first big rug event of the new millennium, ACOR 5, is set for the San Francisco Bay Area at the end of March 2000. The comfortable, competitively-priced Embassy Suites Hotel in Burlingame, close to the international airport, will host a programme of informal focus sessions led by experienced collectors, field researchers, academics and authors, as well as the popular Dealers' Row fair in a superb atrium setting, and a major exhibition of rugs and textiles from local private collections, emphasising a decade of acquisitions since the 1990 Fort Mason ICOC show. In addition, the De Young Museum's scheduled exhibition of Turkmen carpets from the gift of the late Wolf Wiedersperg has been held over for ACOR, and participants can sign on for an excursion to the specially designed home of the local collector Jim Dixon, where over eighty rugs will be on view. The city's major commercial carpet and textile galleries will also participate in the programme.

■ We would like to draw attention to the significance of two articles in this issue. First, with specially commissioned new photography, Ludmila Barkova's account of the Pazyryk carpet marks half a century since this tapetologists' knotted pile icon was unearthed from the Siberian permafrost, and also publishes the even older Bashadar fragment in colour for the first time. Finally, a year after his death, the late Donald King's 'Magic in the Web', published with the generous help of his widow Monique and the textile department at the V&A, is an apt tribute to a great gentleman curator and his impact on a remarkable collection.