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The Textile Museum reopens at the George Washington University

Fairs

VALUE OF INCLUSIVENESS

San Francisco ARTS 2014
Motel Capri
2015 Greenwich Street
San Francisco
17–19 October 2014
Reviewed by James Cohen

When I flew into San Francisco international airport for this year's edition of the Antique Rugs and Textile Show (ARTS), I was waved through US customs with my heart full of hopes and a bag full of antique oriental rugs. So many collective pulses are raised by the prospect of meeting old friends, and seeing hundred painstakingly assembled antique rugs, carpets and textiles.

For this year's ARTS, organised by Ben Banayan, twenty-six dealers from the USA and Europe came together with their wares. Bookseller Wesley Marquand also brought along a selection of his father, Dennis's collection of Uzbek and Kirghiz piled trappings and rugs for this year's special exhibit. The star piece for me was a large bagface with two ivory latchooks centred on a small medallion and four zoomorphic shapes, two above and two below in green on the red field (3). Others, however, commented favourably on an exceptional Kirghiz *issyk tish* door rug and a figure-of-eight field Uzbek rug.

Robert Mann flew in from Colorado to give a talk at Krimsa, the 'fine rugs and decor' company, which continues to be supportive of our show. He explained the ins and outs of washing wool without running colours or extracting the lanolin, while getting clean right

down to the warp and weft of even the most degraded or hippy-filthed rug on the planet.

There were seminars for collecting beginners. Alberto Levi was on call to offer his advice and guidance to anybody curious to ask, but uncertain whether to approach an exhibitor. Visitors new to the area of collecting wool can be intimidated by the buzz and swirl around them, of regulars talking about C-güls and brindled warps as if they were the very building blocks of modern life. This was a way to help bridge that little gap between the permanently rug afflicted and the soon-to-be.

Continuing the theme of inclusiveness, for several years there has been an 'under \$500' room, where every participating dealer can offer one or two pieces at a bargain rate. Included were two naturally dyed sumakh panels, various chantehs and bagfaces as well as a silky Baluch rug.

Elsewhere among the very high general standard, a few things stood out for me. Amin Motamedi's richly coloured yellow-ground East Caucasian rug (1) was certainly early as described, and had a wonderful palette of sparkling colour. It deservedly found a home with a delighted Californian collector. Ben Banayan had an early fragment of a Turkish village rug, circa 1500 (4), that was also snapped up early on. A Tekke-inspired eagle göl group II Turkmen trapping that was brought to the show by Udo Langauer was snagged by Peter Pap and shortly afterwards passed into my hands (2).

Sam Coad's Tibetan Wangden material was extremely inspiring. An almost-perfect-condition square, with rich colours and a grid design in green on a red



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The market is changing and it is foolish to continue doing things in the same way

background, found a home despite a stiff price tag. And surely it would be remiss not to mention Rodney McDonald's intriguing large square rug that provoked a great deal of discussion (possibly even dispute) as to its origins. I think the Turkish versus Caucasian debate settled more on the Caucasian side, with one of the best explanations offered being Turkish weavers settled in

Zakatala. It was a dynamic rug with a strong design of varying-width vertical bands, the widest central band being filled with a bold elongated medallion.

Alberto Levi showed a selection of sparkling saddlebags, as did John Collins. Owen Parry, one of the real dynamos of the show, sold more rugs than I could shake a stick at.