

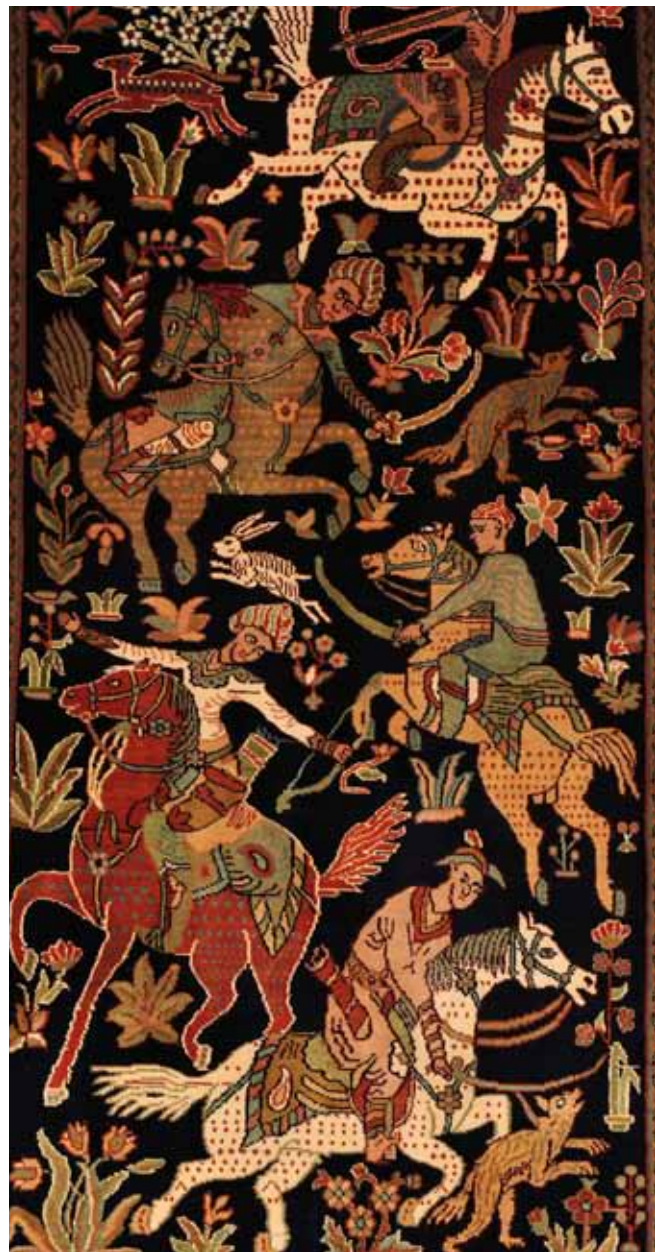
COLLECT

# Art for the Floor

## Decorating with Oriental Rugs

In this interview with Victor Lidchi, South Africa's renowned connoisseur and specialist dealer in fine, decorative, hand-made Oriental rugs, we asked him about the 'today' and 'tomorrow' of these beautiful objects.

Below, from left to right: Victor, in a corner of his Dunkeld, Johannesburg showroom; A close-up of a fine pure silk Kashmir 'Hunting Scene' rug



**P**restige Magazine (PM): Victor, with your decades of experience here and in the markets of the East and West, what should the well-to-do buyer know and do?

Victor Lidchi (VL): Let's put that question in context with the yesterday of fine Persians and Orientals as a decorative art and craft. Since biblical times in the East, and since the Renaissance in the West, the best examples of beautiful hand-crafted Oriental rugs and carpets have been not only a measure of taste and luxury, but also, like original paintings, a potential store of wealth and valued heirlooms. To the present day they are universally loved and seen as the *ultimate* in taste and beauty for the floor, in a way that fine paintings are the ultimate for the wall. We see them in the finest homes, apartments,

those who want a pure contemporary feel. In the hands of competent designers or decorators, this can yield very impressive results, yet they tend to date within a few years. This is all a matter of personal preference. None are right or wrong, if well conceived and executed.

PM: Where does the hand-made Oriental fit in with all this?

VL: I constantly experience two broad approaches and types of buyers. Some people don't give a hoot about fashion or what's 'in' this year. They choose what touches them emotionally or spiritually, and what expresses their personality. Whether they elect a traditional, eclectic or modern theme as a decor basic, they buy the paintings, rugs and other art objects that speak to them. Others are more comfortable with either pure traditional or pure contemporary. Beauty and style does not belong in any one era. Bach,

decades due to political, cultural and economic changes, there are still superb examples being created in these regions, and especially today in India, Nepal, Pakistan and to a lesser extent in Iran and China. But for how much longer? With the rising cost of skilled artisans, raw materials and increased mechanisation, not much longer. Yet, the best will stand the test of time. Our collection, which up to 40 years ago was almost 100 percent traditional, became, from the 1990s, 20 to 30 percent modern, and today has to be around 50/50, based on our clients' taste.

PM: With your decades of travel and dealings, what is your advice to today's buyer?

VL: One, choose what you spontaneously love, and feel you won't tire of. Don't be afraid to be original! Even adventurous! Don't be swayed by the opinions of others. You



Above, from left to right: Four rugs with the timeless, much-loved 'Shah Abbas' Persian motif; The various famous Central Asia 'Bokhara' motifs in glorious colours, ideal for both classic and contemporary settings; Four examples from Victor's hand-made Orientals – VL Contemporary Collection.

hotels, even boardrooms and executive suites, from Cape to Cairo, New York to Hong Kong.

PM: Yes, we witness that in our travels and in architectural and design magazines. But what about today, with changing contemporary trends, minimalist design and decor and so on?

VL: Remember that not everyone enjoys these trends. I have found, here and abroad, that there are three broad tastes. Firstly, there are those who prefer traditional/classical decor that survives changing fads or fashions. Then, there are those who love an eclectic look, such as a happy blend of 'modern' and 'traditional'. The effect can be really tasteful and original, and is indeed timeless and above fleeting fashion. Finally, there are

Beethoven, the Beatles and the best of today's music can each be inspiring and beautiful, can't they?

PM: What is the likely future of hand-made rugs with this changing world?

VL: The finer Persian and Oriental rugs of past generations have always been not only prized and loved as decorative objects, but also as stores of wealth or as collectibles. The same will surely happen for the better levels of rugs and carpets of the recent past and present. They will become the rare and valuable ones for tomorrow's art lovers and collectors.

Although total production from the most famous regions of the past (Persia, Turkey and Central Asia) has declined enormously in recent

will live with your art and decor items, not they. Remember, all advances in the arts – music, paintings, architecture – broke the rules. And then, buy the best you can afford when buying art. Things like curtains or even most furniture are replaceable at low cost. But art for the floor or walls can and should be items of joy and pride for the longer term. ☼

Call +27 11 341 0367 (Victor Lidchi) for Dunkeld, Johannesburg showrooms, and +27 11 675 5008 (Sharon Lidchi) for Clearwater Mall showrooms (Roodepoort area) or to attend an open house introduction on Oriental and Persian rugs once per month. Booking is vital. Visit [www.victorlidchi.co.za](http://www.victorlidchi.co.za).