

The

ENGLISH HOME

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BY DEFINITION: RUGS

Rugs come in a wide variety of different textures and patterns to supply both visual and aesthetic warmth to a room scheme. Here, we explain some of the terms used

Rug making has a long and complicated history, and each part of the world has its own style, colour and manufacturing techniques. Each tradition also imposes different meanings upon the designs and colours used: reds, for example, are employed universally to symbolise richness and power, whilst green is regarded as the sacred colour of Mohammed's coat, and so it is avoided in Muslim culture. Motifs such as the lotus, the dragon and fish are laden with meaning in Chinese culture, whilst being figurative representations of figures. Depictions of animals and people are discouraged in Islamic culture, giving rise to an elaborate lexicon of geometric designs and pattern.

HAND-TUFTED RUGS

Used in both modern and traditional designs, hand tufting is the fastest method of making a rug by hand. The pattern is drawn onto a woven canvas then the rug maker takes a tufting gun and injects yarns in different colours into the drawn sections of the backing. The pile is then frequently sheared to achieve the desired texture. The technique is popular in India and China.

KNOTTING

Knotted rugs are constructed using individual threads of coloured wool, silk or cotton, which are tied to strong vertical threads in cotton or silk (the warp), suspended on a loom. Each row of knots is kept in place by a woven horizontal thread (the weft). The edges of the rug are known as the selvedge and the end binding is formed by weaving a few rows of flatweave in a kilim style (see over page), which are then stitched in place. This is finished with a decorative fringe made from the continuation of the warp threads. The type

of knot will indicate the origin of the rug. Indian, Persian, and Chinese rugs are usually made using an asymmetrical Persian Senneh knot tied around a warp thread, whilst the symmetrical Turkish Ghiordes knot is favoured by the Turks, the Caucasus and northern Iran. The Jufti knot, found in the highly prized Khorasan rugs from northeastern Iran, is tied around four warps making the knotting process faster. All these knots are cut individually whilst being worked. In Tibet the yarn is tied around two warp threads and a metal rod and the knots are worked with a continuous piece of yarn until the pattern dictates a colour change when the rod is removed and the knots are cut. Most contemporarily designed, handmade rugs

use this faster technique. To finish, the surface of all these rug types are clipped to ensure that all the knot tails are the same length. This is known as 'cut pile', the alternative is a 'loop pile' where the knots formed around a rod are left uncut, forming loops.

To determine whether a rug is hand knotted, examine the back of the rug; if the pattern and stitching is very even, then it will almost certainly be machine-made. Sometimes in machine-made rugs the knots are tufted or punched onto a latex backing, a hand-knotted rug will never have a backing. The fringe may be sewn onto the ends of a machine-made carpet, sometimes in a different yarn from that forming the framework, whereas ▶



ABOVE Felt rugs are especially hardwearing and offer good insulation, whilst those in warming colours help to further heighten a sense of cosy comfort within a scheme as well as underfoot. *Shyrdak felt rug, 1.8m x 2.85m, £1,800, Felt*