

HAND-KNOTTED NEPALESE-TIBETAN RUGS

PRODUCTION INFORMATION AND DESIGN TIPS

Entrants should use this information in conjunction with the photographs in the GoodWeave Competition Production Information & Design Tips PDF/PowerPoint*, as well as the GoodWeave Competition 2010 Design Brief and Mood Board (PDFs*)

*These are available from www.goodweave.org.uk as downloads from the home page

Nepalese-Tibetan rugs are unique in their high density knotting system. They are made usually from Tibetan wool and Chinese silk. The feel and texture of knotted rugs will depend on the quality and nature of the materials used and the number of knots/sq. inch. Hence, in contrast to most Persian and Turkish carpets, Tibetan rugs are soft, thick and flexible. The best quality Tibetan rugs have a tight, dense weave and a thick, deep pile.

The processes involved in the rug weaving

Wool Herding

Tibetan sheep wool is used. Pure white wool and other impurities are separated to get the best white wool, which is hand-washed in spring water.

Carding

Carding is the process of combing and cleaning the wool. Since wool is the basic raw material for rug making, it needs to be fine and clean. For effective carding, the fibres are straightened and foreign particles and dirt removed. This helps with subsequent spinning, blending and wool mixing. Carding can be carried out by hand or with machines.

Spinning

After carding, the wool fibres are drawn and twisted to make yarn in the desired thickness. This process is called spinning. Soft yarn at 5-7 twists per inch is considered ideal for rugs. Spinning is a traditional skill of Nepalese people and generally the wool is spun by hand. Hand spinning creates the best yarn for rugs ensuring elasticity and strength.

Dyeing

The wool can be dyed either using natural vegetable or synthetic dyes. Using natural dyes is more complicated and the colours obtained are not strong, but special effects can be created. Synthetic dyes permit brighter colours in a wide variety of shades, which is not possible with natural dyes. Traditional small batch dyeing methods are commonly used, especially when colour-matching small yarn quantities for individual rugs and customers

Weaving

The weaving is done on a vertical loom using traditional Nepalese -Tibetan knotting techniques. It is a creative task, which is performed by three or four weavers according to the size of the rug. The often intricate rug design is printed on paper and attached to the top of the loom, weavers follow it by eye, counting knots as they work. The knot density of Nepalese-Tibetan rugs range from 40 to 125 knots per square inch.

Trimming

The sharp design & pattern is carved out by scissors from the woven rugs. Pile can be trimmed to different heights, design elements or silk motifs can be left 'higher' in contrast to the rug background. Trimming is a very delicate process and one false cut can ruin the whole rug.

Washing

After a rug is trimmed it is then washed with fresh water using household chemicals to ensure any dirt or germs are removed and the natural sheen of the wool is restored. The rug is then dried out in the sun for 4-5 days.

Stretching

After washing and drying, the rugs are stretched from all four sides using metal frames and hooks. This helps to maintain the shape of the rug.

Final Finishing

The rug is then trimmed again to remove any odd yarns and after vacuum- cleaning, it is packed ready for shipping.

Design Tips

- Use all the information you have been given – brief, mood board and PowerPoint/Pdf
- Take time to study Nepalese-Tibetan rug production processes, materials and textures
- Consider carefully the design opportunities they offer, but also the constraints
- Think about the Tibetan knotting process when deciding the level of detail to include
- Study the properties of Tibetan wool and Chinese silk, and how these could be used to enhance your design
- Use texture in your design. You can specify up to two different heights or choose between 'velvet' and 'loop/cut' textures
- Remember that less colour can be better – a colour palette of just 4 to 6 colours can be very effective
- A good rug design should be multi directional and can be viewed from any side

For further information please visit <http://www.rugmark.org.uk/rugs/handmade-carpet-craft-of-oriental-rugs.shtml>

