

Oriental rugs regain center stage in home decorating

By Barbara Meyer
AP Newsfeatures

Oriental rugs have long been a decorating favorite, but as part of the current emphasis on traditional decor they're particularly au courant.

With museum cooperation, new copies are being made of rare old originals. An educational series on Oriental rugs, "Art Under Foot," is airing on many public TV stations. And five lectures on antique Orientals are set for Christie's auction house in New York in the spring.

The wide disparity in price and patterns and confusing marketing methods make choosing an Oriental difficult, according to John Kurtz, host of the PBS series. Adding to the dilemma are dealers with perennial going out of business sales and fictitious price reductions of 40 to 60 percent, he said.

No matter the type, said Kurtz,

every Oriental should be evaluated on the quality of wool and workmanship and the appeal of color and design. While the latter two characteristics are more subjective than the first two, experts usually agree on which rugs are more desirable and which are less so.

Even a novice, said Kurtz, can soon distinguish between good wool, which resembles the hand of a fine wool suit, and one of lesser quality, which may feel harsh and scratchy. Beware, however, the too soft rug. It won't wear well.

Most natural vegetable dyes, which give a softer color, and the more common chrome dyes are excellent. Aniline synthetic dyes, which you may find in some older rugs, are not reliably durable, Kurtz said.

While there are plenty of old Orientals around, many new rugs are being woven. An interesting venture begun in 1984 is the partnership between the rug-weaving city of Ti-

anjin, China, and a rug merchant in Philadelphia. The cooperative produces authorized copies of masterpiece rugs from eight museums.

THE RUGS are sold mainly through high-end home furnishings stores.

Cooperating museums are Independence Hall; the National Trust for Historic Preservation; the Preservation Society of Newport, R. I.; Winterthur Museum in Wilmington, Del.; Museum of Fine Arts in Boston; Historic Charleston Foundation; Historic Natchez Foundation and the British National Trust.

Copies from the Museum of Decorative Arts in Paris and the Brooklyn Museum will soon be available, according to Roy Maloumian, president of the Philadelphia company.

Each collection includes just a few rug designs in several sizes from 4 by 6 to 11 by 18 feet. Prices range from \$800 to about \$8,000. There are runners from 10 to 20 feet long. Custom sizes in any length and as wide as 30 feet are available. Delivery for a custom rug is about one year.

The five seminars at Christie's organized by Keith Wayne, head of the rug and carpet department in New York, are designed to focus on what

it takes to be a knowledgeable buyer and why buying an imported Oriental is so complicated.

Imported Orientals generally come from one of four sources: a cottage industry, small or large factory or from nomadic tribes who weave as they go. Appearance differs with each source.

Some areas provide all sources. In Turkey, for example, there are factories, cottage industries and some tribal rug production.

Besides where they are made and how they are made, rugs can also be classified according to pattern. But traditional patterns of one area may be copied by another. As an investment, Wayne says it is better to buy a rug in the area where the pattern originated.

OLD RUG or new? Pampered rugs that have mellowed and developed patina are favored by those who believe older rugs are usually more finely woven.

But, said Wayne, at the high end new rugs are very, very good. Damaged rug? If an antique Oriental is otherwise pleasing, some damage is no reason to pass it up, Wayne said, unless you are extremely sensitive to visible signs of wear

and reweaved patches. Buying at auction can save money, but you don't get to see the rug on

the floor before you take it. When you buy retail, you can usually take a rug home on approval.

Create an efficient, basic home workshop

By Reader's Digest
For AP Newsfeatures
staff writer

If you dream of an efficient, functional place to work on projects and store tools, here are some hints to help you get started on your ideal home workshop.

A workbench is the heart of a workshop. A sturdy 2 by 4 frame topped by a double layer of 1/2-inch plywood will serve as an excellent, easy-to-make workbench.

If a full-sized bench takes up more space than you have, you can build a fold-down unit. Use a solid core door for the bench top, fasten it to a wall using a piano hinge. Support the front edge with 2 by 4 legs attached with hinges and folding leg brackets that lock open.

Because concrete is hard on the feet and damages tools that are dropped accidentally, cushion the workshop floor with plywood or an old carpet.

Storing Tools
Here are some tips for expanding storage space:

- A rack at the door, too, is great for storing small tools and supplies.

- You can store tools on wall hooks or on a peg board. Paint the outline of each tool on the surface to remind you and others where to replace it.

To make a handy rack for screw drivers and other small tools, drill a series of 1/2 to 1/2 inch holes through a 1 by 3. Mount the rack on the wall with L-brackets.

A good way to organize washers and nuts is to hang them according to size on large safety pins or on wire coat hangers whose necks have been unfastened.

Jars with screw tops are ideal for storing small items such as nuts, screws, nails and bolts. You can double your shelf capacity by screwing some of the jar lids to the underside of the shelves. Place a lock washer under the head of the screw so that the lid won't turn when you unscrew the jar or attach the lid with two screws.

If you need a rack to store abrasive sanding discs, cut off 1/2 to 1/4 of an aluminum pie plate and fasten it to the wall, bottom side out.

Safety Precautions
When working with any power tool use only a heavy-duty grounded (three-prong) extension cord that is 14-gauge or larger.

To keep power tool cords out of the way, tie each cord to the back of a long spring screwed into the ceiling above your workbench.

(Need help on a home repair or improvement project? Write Reader's Digest, P.O. Box 700, Pleasantville, NY 10570-7000.)

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