

## The art of using antique Oriental rugs as a unifying design element in the contemporary home

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*Mid-19th century Persian Sultanabad carpet in Big Sky family compound. Architect/Designer: BraytonHughes Design Studios; Photo: Karl Neumann.*

**Oakland, CA** — Jan David Winitz, President and founder of [Claremont Rug Company](#), has spent more than three decades building a world-class inventory of art-level 19th century Oriental rugs from “The Second Golden Age of Persian Weaving.” Over the years, he has advised clients regarding how to effectively decorate their [homes with antique carpets](#) and how to build private collections. Earlier, he provided ArtDaily readers with insights about the history of antique rug collecting and the integral role they play in the contemporary home. This article addresses how to use the intrinsic unifying qualities of art-level antique rugs to integrate them into various decors and art collections. More information about Claremont’s inventory of over 4000 antique Persian, Caucasian and Turkish rugs is available on their website, where more 1000 of their Oriental carpets are showcased.

### Decorating with Rugs: Enhancing Your Home

A question I’m often asked is: How will antique rugs—a handcrafted artifact created on the other side of the world more than a hundred years ago—“work” in a modern home decorated with a collection of contemporary paintings, prints, photographs and sculpture?

Many people erroneously think that older Oriental carpets work only in traditional settings such as historical homes and neoclassical environments.

Antique Persian, Caucasian and Turkish rugs are an artwork that are remarkably timely and never go out of style. They are infinitely versatile and work as great unifiers, bringing together disparate elements of a décor. Created as superbly unified compositions in their own right, they have the ability of carrying that quality over into the settings in which they’re placed. In fact, much of fabric design of the last two generations owes homage to antique Oriental carpets.

Again and again, art-quality Oriental rugs have proven themselves to be extremely versatile, adding depth and interest to environments as diverse as contemporary, Arts and Crafts, Victorian, Tudor, Spanish Colonial, Italianate, ultra-modern and others. They provide both a decorative foundation to a room and embody age-old principles of harmony and balance.

Here is a remarkable example of the flexibility and individuality that well-chosen 19th century and early 20th century Oriental rugs can bring to a home.

A single residence can take on several different design directions, depending on its owners' aesthetic. Over a period of decades, I have been privileged to work on a grand contemporary home in Piedmont, California that was furnished by three different owners. In one incarnation, bold floral Persian Kashan and Ferahan carpets were used, in another graphic Persian village Serapi carpets and Caucasian tribal rugs, and in a third, high-decorative Persian Sultanabad rugs with stylized floral designs and subtle colors. The house accommodated each style "makeover" beautifully because the carpets "anchored" the owner's taste and sensibilities.

Antique Persian and Oriental carpets can soften the hard lines of minimalist, ultra-modern or Craftsman environments. One Claremont client unified an eclectic collection of pre-Columbian artifacts, a Napoleonic mantle and Deco-inspired chairs with a 150-year-old geometric Persian Bakshaish carpet. Another combined an oversized Persian Malayer undyed camelhair carpet with a series of angular medallions on a latticework field with a Chinese screen, a painting by Miro, a Ming-style glass coffee table and a panoramic picture-window view of the San Francisco skyline. Elsewhere, a classical Persian Hadji Jallili Tabriz carpet of rare pinks was used to complement four contemporary abstract portraits.

Antique Persian Laver Kirman rugs, with their delicate detail work, pastel hues and arabesques, harmonize extremely well with the narrow brushstrokes and naturalistic scenery found in Impressionist art. The spare graphics and abstract imagery of 19th century Caucasian rugs and Persian village rugs like Bakshaishs, Serapis and Herizs work brilliantly in contemporary settings. They've proven to be great complements to the abstraction and asymmetry found in the work of such 20th century avant-garde masters as Klee and Kandinsky. Some clients discover that the soft lines and warm colors of traditional Oriental rugs effectively soften the hard edges of a minimalist or ultra-modern décor, making it more inviting and livable. One example was our use of an extremely curvilinear, salmon-ground Persian Kerke Kashan to counterbalance a large Lichtenstein painting in a contemporary Midwest apartment.

The bottom line is that the great majority of art-level antique rugs will enrich virtually any environment. There is no absolute template to follow. The chances are great that if a particular Oriental rug speaks to your aesthetic, it will share the overall mood with other decorative aspects of your home.

There are numerous ways to approach designing with antique carpets in a home. They vary from beginning when a house is still in the design stages; with a pre-existing empty home; with furniture and art works already in the owners' possession; or with homes that have been fully furnished.

It's not unusual for a client to begin with one or two rooms and then come to discover that the other rooms feel "empty" or "cold" in comparison. Some clients prefer an overall style of Oriental carpet to unify the entire house, while others prefer that each room have its own individual character.

We recognize that the choices available in a 4000-rug inventory such as ours can appear to be overwhelming. Our goal always is to help you understand the options and create a rug palette and design-way that will enhance your home and bring balance and harmony to your personal space, as well as to assist you to discover antique rugs that speak to you personally. When these factors are considered together, the solution ultimately will be greatly satisfying.

One approach that clients have found quite helpful is our Whole Home Project Service. I have seen over and over again that even clients who are new to fine Oriental rugs have their own taste, which simply is yet to be discovered. The key is to help you apply those preferences to your living spaces or, conversely, learn how to let the homes themselves dictate what best works in them.

Working in collaboration with my team of antique carpet consultants, I have participated in furnishing a substantial number of the finest apartments, residences and family compounds on several continents, incorporating from a handful of up to 70 Oriental carpets in a single home.

Our website ([www.claremontrug.com](http://www.claremontrug.com)) showcases detailed color photographs and descriptions of about a thousand antique Oriental carpets at any one time. Many use the site to learn about the gamut of styles and age groups we handle. Others use it as a device to hone their taste. Visiting the Claremont website, clients often find the ideal Oriental rugs for their needs and taste, or a selection worth serious consideration.

The website is also home to color photographs of more than 75 completed rooms, providing you a look at how various architectural styles, furniture and art have been successfully integrated. One of our Whole Home Projects, featuring a group of 24 antique Laver Kirmans and related Kermanshahs, is shown in its entirety.

We take great satisfaction in enhancing the beauty of our clients' homes with the magic of fine 19th century and early 20th century Oriental carpets. It's hard to imagine anything more gratifying than incorporating these examples of great artistry from the past into contemporary living spaces.

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