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**INDIA
MAHDAVI'S
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5 FLYING CARPETS

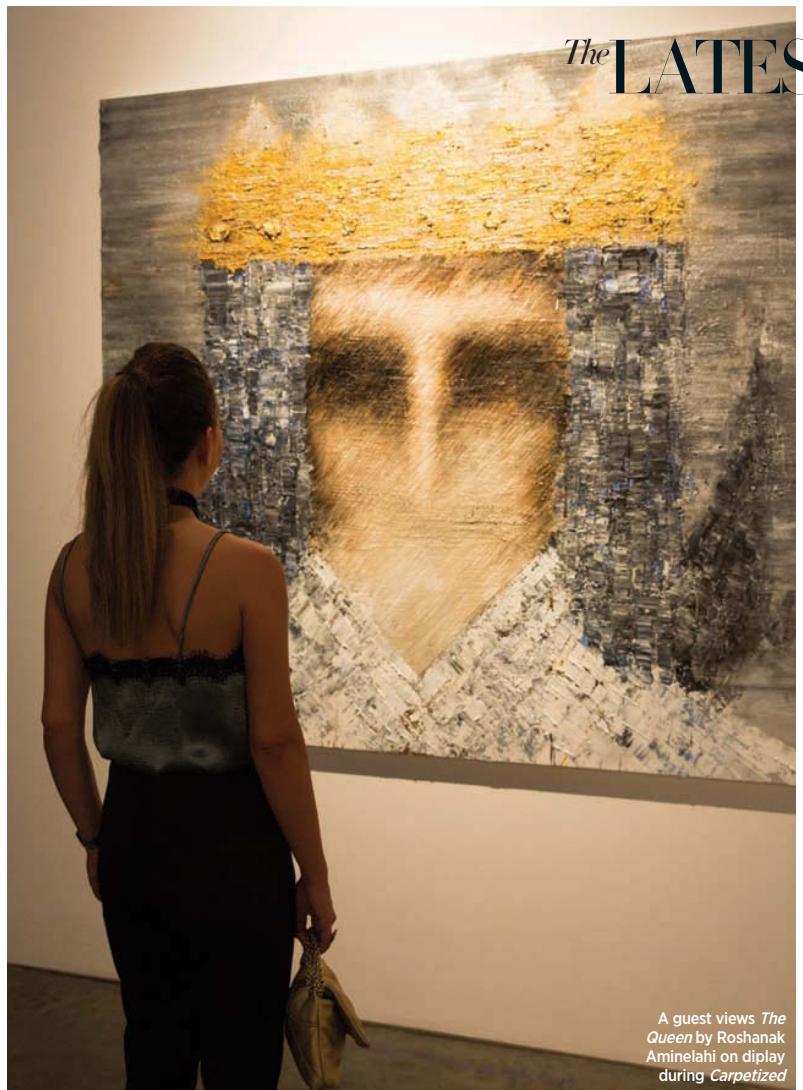
Words by **REBECCA ANNE PROCTOR**

Award-winning
carpet designer
Hossein Rezvani
and third generation
carpet gallery Iwan
Maktabi showcase
contemporary
Persian carpets at
Salsali Private
Museum in Dubai



Delicately patterned colours move in a swirl of emotion and artistry. They constitute the gentle threads of an elaborately made Persian carpet made in a traditional fashion but with a contemporary flair for modern lines and proportion. Spaced throughout the Salsali Private Museum in Alserkal Avenue, these carpets by the renowned carpet designer Hossein Rezvani bring light and harmony to the closed walls of the gallery space. They encourage silent contemplation. Entitled *Carpetized*, the exhibition, which ran until 5 November 2016 and was staged jointly with carpet connoisseur Iwan Maktabi, presented 10 pieces from the Persia Reinvented collection by the designer credited with revolutionising the Persian carpet industry. Aligning the walls were representations evoking the skill and mastery of grand Persian carpet masters such as Tabriz and Bakhtiar. A highlight of the display was the unveiling of the Heriz Majorelle inspired by the designer's time in Marrakech where he visited the Marjorelle Garden of Yves Saint Laurent. "I knew I had to do a carpet evoking the blue and yellow of the house," he stated.

Today, Rezvani is the only contemporary carpet design brand to offer carpets made in Iran



A guest views *The Queen* by Roshanak Aminelahi on display during *Carpetized*



Facing page: Hossein Rezvani in front of his carpets *Termeh Gold* and *Kaasachi Vintage Gold* in *Carpetized*. Right: Mona and Mohamed Maktabi sit on Persian carpets

Left: *Tabriz Red* carpet by Hossein Rezvani hangs next *Alien Sofa* by Jonas Jurgaitis from Nakkash Gallery



incorporating up to 1,000,000 knots per square meter. Based out of Isfahan, Iran, for generations the Rezvani family has produced and distributed masterpiece carpets. Hossein, often called the creator of the 21st century Persian rug, is the third generation of the family to be involved in carpet making.

Hossein's grandfather used to work in the Tehran bazaar where he dealt with carpets and textiles. Just like Hossein, he tried to break away from the family business when he moved to Germany in 1959 to study economics. However, after university, he went back to making carpets.

Hossein's signature style is to create contemporary carpets within the context of Iranian heritage. He tells how this idea – to revolutionise the Persian carpet – came about when discussing the concept with friends



Hossein Rezvani poses in front of his carpet *Tabriz Red*

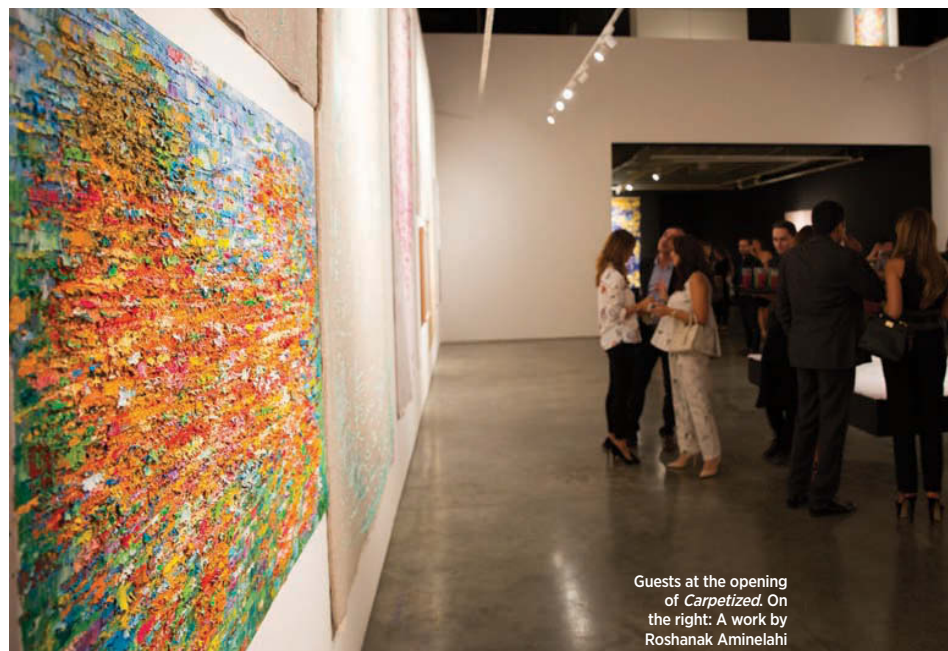
each of Rezvani's carpets through their colour scheme and subject matter. The combination of artwork and design offers a creative juxtaposition that allows the viewer to dream. Rezvani has frequently collaborated with Iranian artists on carpets in the past but this exhibition constituted the first time that he has done a solo show at the Salsali Private Museum. "For a long time I wanted to do a carpet installation where it wasn't a typical gallery space so when Ramin said I could use the gallery I was thrilled," he adds. "What you see on the walls is all my own ideas. I also had an idea of which artists I wanted to display – some are Iranian and some aren't." The artworks bring out a new character in Rezvani's dazzling creations and vice versa: his carpets endow each artwork with a new language. "For the past 10 years we have been trying to push carpets to be seen as artworks," says Mohamed Maktabi. "The presence of the carpets inside this setting is really the expression of our vision which is to show carpets in a setting where you give them the forefront with each piece occupying its own space." Indeed, the carpets have ample room to breathe in Salsali Private Museum. They create an ambiance that is at once art gallery and spiritual sanctuary. Rezvani's works are truly – flying carpets. Hossein Rezvani's carpets are available at Iwan Maktabi Carpets at The Dubai Mall. ■ iwanmaktabi.com

PHOTOGRAPHY BY RAJESH IRAGHAV

over dinner. They spoke of why Persian carpets weren't being adapted to modern living spaces when similar work had already been done in other carpet-producing countries such as Nepal and India. But Iran, the mother of all carpets, hadn't adapted to modern items. The discussion prompted Hossein to experiment.

On display in *Carpetized* at Salsali Private Museum were the results of Hossein's continuous efforts. Carpets marrying traditional Persian motifs, classical patterns and centuries-old symbols with vibrant colour schemes and modern designs enlightened the space. The essence of each piece is its ability to retain its cultural integrity. "I have always been a staunch believer that trends come and go, yet classics remain forever and it is this belief that underscores every one of my designs," said Rezvani of his eponymous brand. "I strive to re-create classics with a contemporary touch, while staying true to the heritage and legacy of the traditional Persian carpet."

What gave this exhibition its strength was the unique coupling of carpets next to contemporary artworks. Works by artists such as Reza Derakshani, Youssef Nabil and Roshanak Aminelahhi accentuate



Guests at the opening of *Carpetized*. On the right: A work by Roshanak Aminelahhi