



# THE CARPET KING

Hossein Rezvani has brought the ancient art of Persian rugmaking up to date with his modern designs

## **How many years has your family been making carpets?**

My family has been in the carpet industry for more than three generations. My grandfather used to work in the Tehran bazaar, where he was dealing with carpets and textiles. Like me, he attempted to break out of the family business and moved to Germany in 1959 to study economics. But after finishing university, he returned to his roots. It looks like carpets are just in our destiny.

## **What did you do before joining the family business?**

After finishing my studies in economics, I started working in a bank but I realised very soon that it was not the right thing for me. I used to work with my father after school and university. Travelling with my father to the origin countries of the carpets, like India and Iran, was very inspiring. I loved it. It was about creativity, what the eyes like, colours, patterns. It was such a vibrant and alive world, the total opposite of banking. I realised increasingly that I loved the creative aspect of life and the beauty this world had to offer but I wanted to go my own way and try something completely different.

## **When did you first get the idea of revamping the traditional Persian carpet? What did you feel was missing in the market?**

It was by accident. The whole idea came up while having dinner with friends. We were discussing innovation and how important it is to move forward and improve and adapt in any field and they asked me what was happening with Persian carpets. Why weren't they adapting to today's living spaces? Why was nobody giving them a contemporary twist? Other countries like Nepal or India were producing modern carpets but the mother of all carpets, the Persian carpet, had not changed at all.

## **How did your family first react when you approached them with this idea?**

When I first told my father I wanted to make contemporary Persian carpets, he laughed but he was supportive. He knew many weavers in the Isfahan area of Iran, where we produce traditional carpets. But sending over my own contemporary designs was a different story. That is when the headache began. I understood

why no one had done it before and why my father had laughed. It was extremely difficult to break with centuries-old traditions. Telling proud Iranian weavers how they should weave was the most difficult part of the process. One time I sent a sample over for production which was red and blue. After four weeks, I travelled to Isfahan and the sample was green and yellow. I asked the weaver why the colours had changed and he told me quite simply, because he thought it looked better. You can get an idea about the mentality.

#### **Do you design the rugs yourself?**

Yes, I believe a Hossein Rezvani carpet should be designed by me. It is my brand and my name so that for me is mandatory. I do not have a background in art or any artistic inclinations but when you grow up around carpets, you automatically get a feeling for them. It was definitely a learning-by-doing process. I think when you have a product with so much history, tradition and soul, it is very important to keep the roots of the Persian carpet visible, even in a contemporary iteration. So after a lot of studying and digging into the design world, I created my first two designs, Tabriz and Bakhtiar, in 2010. When I won the Red Dot design award for the Tabriz in 2011, I knew I was doing something right.

#### **Where are the carpets produced and using what materials? What is distinctive about the production of your rugs?**

All of my carpets are handmade in Isfahan, Iran, a town which for centuries has been renowned for weaving beautiful carpets. We use only the finest materials, such as Persian cork wool and pure Chinese silk. The carpets are not subjected to any mechanical or chemical processes. They are dyed with natural colours, sustainable and environmentally friendly, because this is the only way the dynamic reflections and the lustre of the carpets can emerge. The most distinctive feature is that my carpets are

hand-knotted with up to one million knots per square metre. Imagine that—a 6m squared carpet has six million handmade knots. That is one of a kind in the industry and makes the carpet a real work of art.

#### **What has been your proudest moment thus far?**

That my carpets are not only contemporary carpets but lifestyle products. They are hip and sexy, a must-have fashion item for today's floors and interiors. The whole view on carpets has changed. Carpets are cool again. We distribute globally and I get to travel the world, meet so many interesting people and see different cultures.

#### **Who are your most high profile clients?**

Most like to be anonymous but we have worked with quite a few royal families from the Middle East and Europe. We are also in the presidential suites of many leading hotels of the world. The Fairmont Hotel Vier Jahreszeiten in Hamburg was always on my wishlist as I was born in Hamburg and used to go there often with my family. So when they picked the Frenchie and the Bakhtiar designs for their lobby and reception, it was a very special moment for me.

#### **What is next for the brand?**

I am currently working on the 2017 collection, which is a collaboration with an Iranian artist. In the past I have worked with artists Reza Derakshani and Mohammad Ehsai and really enjoyed the merging of Iranian craftsmanship and art. There are also plans to collaborate with fashion labels this year. Hossein Rezvani as a brand will open several flagship stores, one in Los Angeles.

*Hossein Rezvani carpets are available at Iwan Maktabi in Dubai Mall*

