

Interview

## JOINED UP KNOTTING

S&H Rugs president Ori Wilbush lets Denna Jones in on the secrets of the company’s success in the consistent design and supply of premium quality hand-knotted rugs

S&H Rugs’ spring 2018 debut at the prestigious High Point Market highlighted the company’s increasing prominence as a key US rug company with a custom rug programme tailored to the trade for domestic and hospitality projects and to retailers across the country. Helmed by S&H president Ori Wilbush, and headquartered six miles from Manhattan in an enclave of like-minded rug companies in New Jersey, S&H leads on colour and pattern trends and constantly hones the enhanced special order process to accommodate the accelerated schedules clients increasingly demand from designers. Add in S&H Rugs’ reputation for pioneering online sales as a critical partner to its bricks and mortar showroom and warehouse (some 15,000 square feet with more than 10,000 rugs in stock), and it becomes clear why Wilbush is an early riser.

‘We are 100% hand-knotted rugs,’ Wilbush says emphatically. S&H Rugs import from India and Pakistan where Wilbush deploys teams who ensure every rug is created to the company’s exact specifications. ‘We’ve got graphic designers and a weaving team overseas who focus on special and custom orders,’ he explains. ‘We can complete and deliver up to 10’x14’ sizes in most bespoke qualities within ninety days.’ Fulfilling commissions successfully can be challenging. ‘But not with us,’ says Wilbush. ‘Many rug companies might have 400 miles between loom and finishing centre, but great distances make control weaker. We moved ours closer, plus computers, cell phones and WhatsApp reduce the potential for problems.’ S&H Rugs increasingly attract designers who work with high-end clients.

‘Everything must go to schedule. If we tell them their custom rug will be woven in 90 or 120 days, then it will be.’ Lest there be any misinterpretation, he underscores the company’s unflinching maxim, ‘a deadline is a deadline.’

Wilbush is the self-professed ‘tech guy’ who had the foresight to understand the internet was essential to success. Every rug in the inventory is photographed and uploaded to the online platform, which is updated daily to ensure the accuracy of S&H Rugs’ online offer. ‘We realised it’s not bricks and mortar or a digital showroom—it’s got to be both,’ he says. ‘Our strategy has paid off. We have clients across North America. If they need to discuss something, we can quickly handle the meeting as a video call as we digitally move through the showroom to show rugs, or discuss the client’s bespoke rug ideas.’

Wilbush credits his eye for colour. ‘The winning strategy is correct colour combinations. They’ve got to balance. Design is ten percent of a rug and colour is ninety.’ As well as antique, vintage, traditional and transitional designs, S&H Rugs have a highly successful Oxidized Collection of contemporary wool and silk rugs. Their bespoke process creates a subtle relief surface with the vintage look desired by customers. The Oxidized Collection ranges from Oriental via Arts and Crafts to contemporary abstract designs. Wilbush closes with a simple yet defining statement. ‘We love the art form of the loom,’ he says. ‘Chances are whatever you desire we have it, or can customise it for you.’

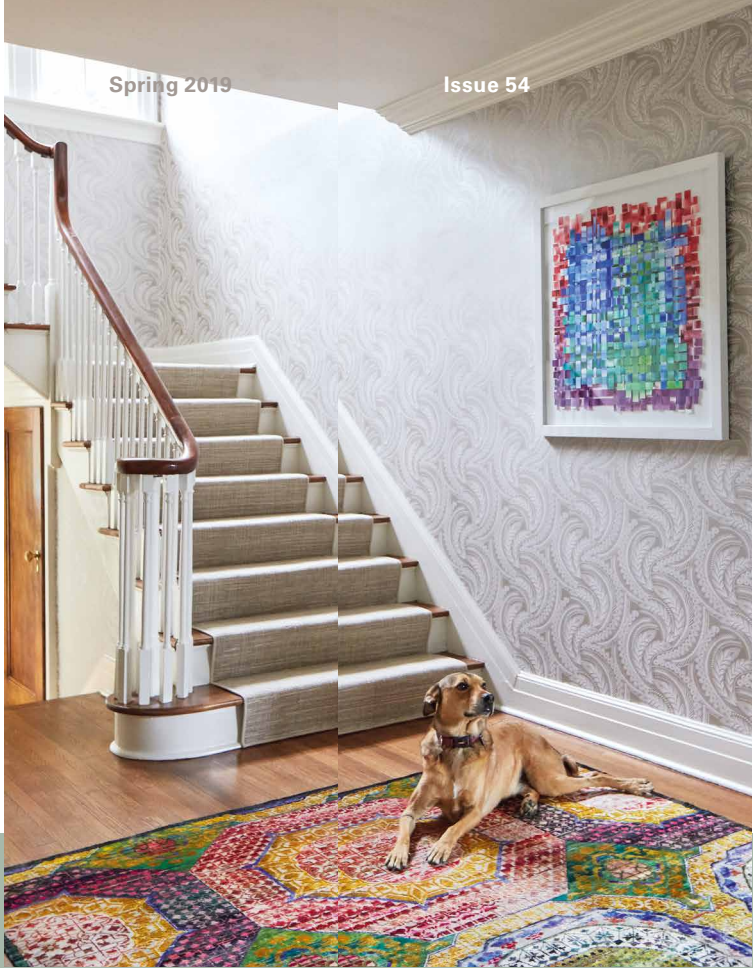
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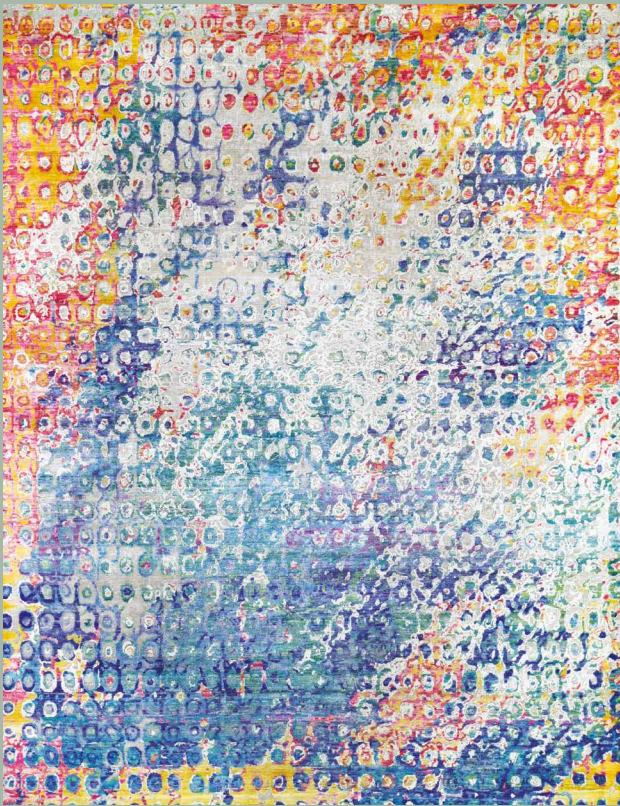
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- 01** *Denim Mosaic*, hand-knotted wool and silk rug, S&H Rugs
- 02** Lynne Hirsh Interior Design room with *Oxidized* wool and silk rug
- 03** *Mamluk* sari silk rug in Jules Duffy Designs interior
- 04** *The Peacock* sari silk rug in Jules Duffy Designs interior
- 05** Lynne Hirsh Interior Design room with *Abstract* wool and silk rug
- 06** *The Peacock*, sari silk rug, S&H Rugs