

VI: The Knotted Rug HJR

By Leslie Stroh

Behrooz Hakimian is one of the nicest people in the rug business in addition to being one of the most knowledgeable. An engineer by training he fell in love with rugs thirty years ago.

Knot count is sometimes used as shorthand to discuss rugs in one category or another. That basic concept means that a rug in category "x" with more knots is probably better than one with fewer. A more sophisticated view of construction is used by Hakimian who thinks about the construction grid of warp, weft, and pile yarn. And because he is an engineer, he also thinks about the tensile strength of the warp on loom, and naturally the impact of various looms on construction. (*Rug News* cautions that comparing different types of rugs based on knot count may be irrational.)

Although he sounds like a purist, Hakimian said that he would rather have a tufted rug today than one with junk wool like a "Taba" which he thinks is a much lower quality than the current tufted. He commented that wool quality and wool prices fluctuate during the year because of the nature of the supply process, while most of the other material costs are generally rising.

It has been *Rug News'* experience that relatively few people understand the fundamental construction of rugs. Rug repair people tend to understand the construction, but they are not common in the business of making and selling rugs. While understanding construction may be a tremendous advantage in the making of rugs, one may only have to have a "good enough" understanding for the selling of rugs.

In any case, Behrooz Hakimian says that his key to success is a passion for rugs—one must have passion. He reads books and auction catalogs, and still goes through every auction catalog he can get his hands on. Before one assumes that Hakimian is simply a traditionalist, one should look at the pictures accompanying this article. Design number 3 is a traditional rendition, but design number 3A is an aubergine made up variation. Hakimian notes that it is much more difficult to color a rug with deep colors



Design 3 Traditional Hadji Jalili design with traditional colors.

than with light colors, because if you get one wrong, it is so strong that it stands out like a beacon in the night.

Rug News particularly likes his sense of scale and negative/positive space because he has successfully implemented some ideas we thought were sensible. The border shown in design number 501 occupies 42% of the overall space instead of the traditionally accepted 33%. What he appears to be getting at is that the border is more important than the ground in some cases. (Note also the outer border, which is a simple line to separate the rug from

color seminar, and the "expert" pointed out that red has been selling for the last 5,000 years and probably will sell for the next 5,000. The question is which red, orange, rose, burgundy, brown, aubergine, etc. The customer at this level, as we have seen from other articles, wants unusual things. They may not care how the rug is made, but how the rug falls and how it lays, is a function of how it is made. Hakimian notes that identifying a rug with Jufti knots (knots tied over 4 rather than 2 warps) is easy from the sound of it hitting the floor when it is spread—no substance.



Design 3A: Same traditional Hadji Jalili design with an aubergine ground and non-traditional colors.

the floor.)

Hakimian noted that he went to a

Since HJR (Hadji Jalili Revivals) is reviving Persian production, one might

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Design 501: Classic border over scaled so that the borders occupy about 42% of the rug instead of the usual (Edwards) 33%.

assume that Hakimian is wedded to Persians, but he himself says that he was humbled by Indian weavers when he came to see their ability to excel at making rugs. He refers to a tremendous work ethic coupled with a sense of discipline. He notes that Persians are mostly crooked, and Agra's hardly ever. He attributes that to two reasons, the weavers, and India's heavier looms which can handle the higher tensile strength of tight warps. (If you beat the rug five times in one place, and four times in another, you get a crooked rug. One could argue from the back of a Persian rug, that they can do this, and compensate on the face so that the design comes out straight. But very few people look at the back of a rug these days.)

Taking the loom discussion one step further, Hakimian notes that with steel looms and printed warps in China, you could take the same design and yarn to ten locations and get the same rug, while in India you would get ten different rugs (not bad or good, just different).

From Hakimian's perspective, India is the place for rug production at this level. He feels that at the moment, Iran is trying to make good rugs and will come back in time, but with a few very notable exceptions using good wool, Iran is struggling. (One of the things we have learned from tufted is that really good wool makes a really good rug.) He also commented on the huge variety of handicrafts that are found all over India, in

virtually every form of product and production. On a very esoteric note, Hakimian feels that the way both Pakistan and Iran think about construction where the warp count and the weft count are equal (allowing easily for round circles) is a limiting factor compared with the Bhutan method of India which allows for rectangular as well as for square counts. He feels that the Bhutan system is more fluid and flexible.

Taking an engineer's view of construction, Hakimian looks at the grid of warp, weft and pile accounting for the type of knot. As he points out, if you put the wrong yarn for the pile into the warp/weft grid it will take you a long time to find out that the construction doesn't work. Aside from color, which relationships we all know are difficult, building a rug means dealing with relationships of texture and color in addition to the grid itself. It's how things go with each other, right down to a single flower.

Every part of a rug has a relationship to every other part. Bad weavers are like a disease for a rug, while good weavers are worth paying more. A common thread in this series of articles is the hands on approach that each maker takes to their production. While it is the hands of the weaver that we see in the product, it is the head of the maker that creates it. ❁