

Perfect Partnership

Few people involved in modern carpet production would disagree that carpets made by Hadji Jalili Revivals LLC distinguish themselves in a market that is replete with reproductions of late 19th century Persian carpets. Ben Evans tried to discover how, in just four years, the company has managed to establish such an important niche in the market.



One of the first things that I found out about Hadji Jalili Revivals LLC was that one of its partners, Kambiz Jalili, who is based in San Francisco, is the grandson of Hadji Seyed Mohammad Sadegh Jalili — better known to many in the carpet business as the semi-legendary masterweaver Hadji Jalili, whose name is synonymous with top quality 19th century Tabriz carpets of a certain style and palette.

Although that seemed to me to be an important starting point, I discovered after talking to Behrooz Hakimian and Kambiz Jalili that while it is an interesting historical fact, it does not imply that they are better able to make good modern carpets than anyone else. Indeed I discovered that the legacy of the company lies in the shared affinity that the two partners have in terms of their goal, their appreciation of the art of carpets, their drive for quality and the need for integrity.

They have come such a long way in a short time: with over seventy designs in production, they carry stock in large sizes of approximately 55-60 of the company's designs in different sizes so that their dealers' orders can be swiftly fulfilled. In fact, they have such a good understanding with their Indian production partner that their rejection rate has decreased in four years from approximately twenty per cent to no more than about three to four per cent.

This last figure is remarkable in that not only does it reflect the efficiency of the production process but, more importantly, the fact that on the feeling and seeing their carpets, they have the same texture as an antique 'revival period' Tabriz. This is even more remarkable considering that so many of the carpets in this decorative style currently on the market do not deliver with respect to material quality in the flesh, which makes me conclude that creating this type of distinctive 'feel' must be extremely expensive and difficult, otherwise other producers would surely have followed suit.

The desire to achieve the highest quality possible is what has made the difference. "Our bulls-eye is very small, so we have to be on target more often than not", says Hakimian. "We are happy to strive for excellence." Design, colour choice and wool selection are all subject to the same tight controls that have been put in place by the partners, who discuss the merits of each stage of production until the right decision is made.

And the decision-making is easy since they both have such a clear vision. Some designs are only executed in the sizes at which the pattern works best, and if a dealer wants something that they do not offer, in terms of size or colourway, they have to specify by custom order.



In other words, the desire to preserve the integrity of the design is the foundation of the production process. This is best expressed by the way in which the designs are created in a 1:1 loom master-sketch in order that the whole carpet, each motif, can be checked for proportion, distortion, and colour relationship, and so on. After an examination of this, corrections and changes are made, then a sample is created to the same size as the original design. It is only upon realising this stage that any re-scaling is undertaken.

Above: 'Design 32',
Hadji Jalili Revivals LLC.
4.27x5.79m (14'x19')

The partners' constant insistence on maintaining design and material integrity is clearly born out of a passion and zeal that would either make or break any business relationship. And it is lucky that in India, their partners understand and share the vision and have instilled these qualities throughout the workforce, to the extent that at every stage of the process people are questioning if what has been done could be improved. And both partners are aware that the processes that are in place to ensure quality, as well as the involvement that these require from both, limit the size to which the business can grow, but this means that they will never compromise on quality. And it is this dedication and vision that enable these carpets to be made and keep Hadji Jalili Revivals LLC at the top end of the market. ■