

Wool

Silk

Resistant

en

ANCE

**Wool. Silk. Resistance.
7.2.–24.5.2026**

Featuring works by

**Faig Ahmed
Diedrick Brackens
Johannah Herr
Jan Kath
Alexandra Kehayoglou
William Kentridge
Baseera Khan
Noelle Mason
Otobong Nkanga
Tobias Rehberger
Erin M. Riley
Tsherin Sherpa
Rose Stach
Nasan Tur
Jeroen van den Bogaert**

A rug, carpet, or tapestry may be associated with complex forms of resistance operating on many different levels. The exhibition presents rugs and tapestries from all over the world that feature in the work of contemporary artists, who tackle themes of political opposition and of resilience and resistance at both individual and collective levels. Their resistance is directed against traditionalism, against systems of rule and assertions of power that are perceived as illegitimate, and against discrimination, racism, traumatization, and ecocide. The artists' rugs and tapestries thus function as banners for sociopolitical comment. Just as radically, they sometimes burst through the limits of the flat surface to explore the possibilities of three-dimensionality, finding expression as textile sculptures and immersive experiential spaces whose affective qualities involve them in contemporary life processes.

The application of techniques such as knotting, weaving, and tufting and the use of materials that may be traditional or modern unite centuries-old textile practices with the world of today. In this respect, the artworks reinterpret the utilitarian, decorative, and spiritual aspects of a rug or tapestry in their favoring of visual strategies that draw on iconography, pop culture, and politics. As vessels of critical meaning, what they convey has personal, social, geographical, and political implications. The ornamental aspects of the textile works are thus able to cross between worlds, connecting with contemporary narratives about good and evil, dominance and equality, war and peace, paradise and hell, reality and illusion, hope and pessimism, self and other, individual and collective.

The artists' rugs and tapestries are part of a process of creative evolution that dates back to the 1960s, when textiles were increasingly used in artistic practice to serve subversive purposes. They are a reflection of the emancipatory efforts of a global movement that is fueling new discourses centered on design concepts and production methods. The key issue here is how the carpets were created—whether entirely made by the artists

themselves (Diedrick Brackens, Johannah Herr, Alexandra Kehayoglou, Erin M. Riley), produced as collaborations with manufacturers using artisanal (Faig Ahmed, Jan Kath, William Kentridge, Baseera Khan, Noelle Mason, Tobias Rehberger, Tsherin Sherpa) or industrial methods (Otobong Nkanga, Jeroen van den Bogaert), or even taking the form of found material that was then worked on artistically (Rose Stach, Nasan Tur). Originally assigned to the realms of craft, applied arts, and design, the rug and tapestry works are not only authored by artists but also have the attributes of fine art. They thus call into question the customary hierarchies that exist between applied and fine art and redefine the relationship between them.

The production methods are not merely relevant to the artistic concept; they are both its fundamental prerequisite and underlying substance. The (transcultural) negotiations required for the production of the artists' carpets, which were produced as collaborations between the artists and manufacturers using traditional craftsmanship, may highlight the close relationships that exist between artists and communities of knotters or weavers. Thus, an awareness of social standards in textile production is inherent in the works. These carpets, rugs, and tapestries were made with an eye to transparent supply chains and fair remuneration (understood as a relationship-dependent variable) for the artisans involved—even in the case of works that are not formally certified as such.

1st floor



- 1 Faig Ahmed
- 2 Faig Ahmed
- 3 Tsherin Sherpa
- 4 Nasan Tur
- 5 Nasan Tur
- 6 Jan Kath
- 7 Jan Kath
- 8 Noelle Mason
- 9 Noelle Mason

- 10 Noelle Mason
- 11 Jan Kath
- 12 Jan Kath
- 13 Jan Kath
- 14 Jan Kath
- 15 William Kentridge
- 16 Jeroen van den Bogaert
- 17 Jeroen van den Bogaert
- 18 Jeroen van den Bogaert

- 19 Erin M. Riley
- 20 Erin M. Riley
- 21 Baseera Khan
- 22 Baseera Khan
- 23 Baseera Khan
- 24 Tsherin Sherpa
- 25 Otobong Nkanga
- 26 Alexandra Kehayoglou
- 27 Rose Stach

- 28 Rose Stach
- 29 Tobias Rehberger
- 30 Tobias Rehberger
- 31 Johannah Herr
- 32 Johannah Herr
- 33 Johannah Herr
- 34 Johannah Herr
- 35 Jan Kath
- 36 Jan Kath
- 37 Diedrick Brackens

- 1 **FAIG AHMED**
Doubts? 2020, 2020
Wool, hand-knotted by the artist's carpet-weaving workshop in Baku, Azerbaijan
Faig Ahmed Studio

Hung on the wall, the upper section of the carpet begins as expected: anchored within an established repertoire of patterns. The ornamentation resembles that found on a West Anatolian Ushak medallion carpet, of the kind produced from the sixteenth century onwards as archetypal Ottoman court art. Yet about halfway down the carpet, the classical composition seems to dissolve. The pattern melts away and oozes out onto the floor like a puddle of paint. This abstract swirl of color forms an irrevocable contrast to the strict symmetry of the carpet's upper section.

The work symbolizes a transition from structure to chaos, from solid to liquid, from tradition to modernity. It brazenly defies the spatial limitations of wall and floor, spanning both and extending beyond them. In this way, Faig Ahmed has transformed a floor covering into a three-dimensional artwork.



2 **FAIG AHMED**

Virgin, 2016

Wool, hand-knotted by the artist's carpet-weaving workshop in Baku, Azerbaijan

Faig Ahmed Studio

The ornamentation of arabesques, star-shaped blossoms, and the braided band pattern of the border are executed in the tradition of fifteenth-century Anatolian carpets. Yet the pattern seems to fade toward the bottom and literally dissolves away: The flat carpet then transforms into a fluffy mass of long red threads that seem to spurt out like blood. What we see here is a traditional form in the process of radical change.

The artist's deliberate deconstruction of the traditional carpet also hints at changes in Azerbaijani society. Faig Ahmed uses the dramatic nature of the textile sculpture to draw attention to the loss of local customs, gender roles, and rites of passage. For centuries, young women—"virgins"—created textiles as dowries for their weddings. His allusion to virginity and the loss of sexual innocence on the wedding night, however, is fused with a subversive irony. This allows him to undermine the view of social traditions as static constructs and question common notions defining fine and applied art.



3 **TSSHERIN SHERPA**

Stairways to Heaven, 2024

Tibetan highland wool, Chinese silk,
hand-knotted by Mt. Refuge, Kathmandu, Nepal
Property of the artist & Mt. Refuge

A dragon spirals its way up the long rug. Once at the top it reveals its gaping mouth and bared teeth. The silk of the dragon's brightly patterned body stands out in relief against the woolen pile of the pale background. The auspicious creature who possesses such enormous creative power is Druk (*'brug* in Tibetan).

The dragon is initially visible, then disappears from view, only to surface again. This represents the turbulent history of rug making in the Himalayas. It is indivisibly linked with Tibetan cultural heritage and the fate of Tibetan refugees in the diaspora who have been living in Nepal since the 1960s. This started a boom in the country's rug industry in the 1980s. However, by the mid-1990s various factors led to an abrupt decline, not just in that one sector but also in rug making more generally in the region. In that respect, the rug can be viewed as a symbol of the resistance of a local tradition that—against all the odds—is experiencing an artisanal revival and artistic evolution.



- 4 NASAN TUR
Greetings from Syria, Kurdistan and Persia, 2024
Polypropylene carpet, scorched
Property of the artist

The surface of this yellow, circular industrial polypropylene carpet has been scorched with symmetrically arranged black ornamentation. Floral decorative elements of various origins are brought together here in a novel combination. The repeat motif of a demonic shadow figure resembling an animal, which also appears in *Shadow on Carpet, No. 17*, is also part of the composition. The work's title refers to regions in modern-day Syria, Iran, Iraq, and Turkey. These regions are not only known for their carpet traditions but have also, time and again, been torn apart by conflict over the course of their histories.

The ornamental scars on the synthetic carpet pile offer a critical commentary on the historical development of geopolitical power struggles in these regions. They symbolize the ups and downs of golden eras and periods of decline. The artist's manual treatment of the machine-produced carpet using a woodburning tool transforms a serial product into a unique handmade work of art.



- 5 NASAN TUR
Shadow on Carpet, No. 17, 2025
Polypropylene carpet, scorched
Property of the artist

A black silhouette overshadows the decor of this industrial carpet. Its ornamentation imitates that of handmade “Oriental carpets.” The shadow figure projected on the surface appears almost overpowering. It represents the terrible demons that the artist believes reside in each of us. Some of these demons are lifelong companions who, if we are brave enough to confront them, can strengthen our resilience. As sources of both terror and power, they can appear at any time—and can disappear just as suddenly.

Nasan Tur immortalized the sinister creature by scorching it onto the surface of the carpet by hand using a woodburning tool. This painstaking process transforms a mass-produced item into a unique work of art. In this manner, the artist's deeply personal, existential questions take on a distinctive form of their own.



- 6 **JAN KATH**
Alcaraz Sky, 2011
Tibetan highland wool, Chinese silk,
hand-knotted in Kathmandu, Nepal
Museum Angewandte Kunst, Frankfurt am Main,
Inv. no. 17296, donated by Jan Kath, 2012

The title of this carpet refers both to a town in southern Spain, namely Alcaraz, and to the sky as a design effect, echoing the work's resemblance to an overcast sky. Jan Kath chose this effect as a twist on a classical pattern of stylized palms and vines (arabesques), all facing the same direction. A bright border with dark arabesques surrounds the repeated pattern. Signs of aging seem to permeate the pattern, which turn out to be the closely shorn yellow-gold silk pile. Like clouds covering parts of the sky, what looks like flaking caused by weathering or wear and tear effectively "erases" the classical pattern—which can do nothing to prevent its own apparent dissolution.

The design thus refers to *Erased Classic*, the title of the commercial series to which *Alcaraz Sky* belongs. In this collection, Kath breaks through old patterns of perception and alludes to the deconstruction of classical textile patterns as well as the abstraction of their decorative elements. In so doing, Kath questions the role of ornamentation and the function it fulfills in the self-determination of art with respect to aesthetic autonomy.



- 7 **JAN KATH**
Verona Vendetta, 2011
Tibetan highland wool, Chinese silk, Nepalese nettle,
hand-knotted in Kathmandu, Nepal
Museum Angewandte Kunst, Frankfurt am Main
Inv. no. 17297, donated by Jan Kath, 2012

The title of this carpet refers both to Verona as a city in northern Italy and to a vendetta (the Italian word for "blood feud") as a design effect. Jan Kath uses the latter as a twist on the arabesque: a classical Italian textile pattern consisting of stylized blossoms and vines. Strips of golden-yellow silk are distributed over two thirds of the carpet. Regardless of the direction from which it is viewed, the strips "erase" the classical pattern as a kind of artistic vigilante justice, against which any form of resistance seems futile.

The design thus refers to *Erased Classic*, the title of the commercial series to which *Verona Vendetta* belongs.



NOELLE MASON

Ground Control

The three works presented here stem from a series of works entitled *Ground Control*, in which Noelle Mason depicts historical and current conflict zones on the border between Mexico and the United States. The images woven into the tapestry-rugs originally come from *Terra*, a satellite observing the Earth that is operated by the US National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).

The textile satellite images were produced in the Taller Mexicano de Gobelinos workshop in Guadalajara, Mexico. The weavers were paid the exact amount of money that a family of four would have to pay to cross the border illegally from Mexico to the US: around ten thousand dollars. By using this mode of production, the artist creates a connection between the abstract image of the Earth and the concrete reality of individual human destinies. Rather than presenting these tapestries on the wall, Mason chooses to exhibit them on the floor, thereby figuratively returning the abstract images to Earth. They become a subversive gesture of resistance in a political climate marked by isolation, dehumanization, and surveillance.

8 NOELLE MASON

Ground Control (El Paso/Ciudad Juárez), 2014

Wool, handwoven by the Taller Mexicano de Gobelinos workshop, Guadalajara, Mexico

Property of the artist

El Paso/Ciudad Juárez is part of the *Ground Control* series of works. This tapestry-rug depicts the city of Ciudad Juárez in the Mexican state of Chihuahua from the perspective of a NASA satellite. It lies on the border with the United States, opposite El Paso, Texas. The two cities are separated by the Rio Grande, which is barely perceptible in the tapestry, as it often carries very little water in this region. The river forms the natural border between the two countries. Several hundred thousand people cross the river every day; around two thousand of them are trying to cross the border illegally under life-threatening circumstances.

In translating the digital satellite image into a handwoven tapestry and presenting it as a floor covering, Noelle Mason connects the abstracted image of a conflict-ridden border region to the Earth itself and creates a subversive gesture of resistance against isolation, dehumanization, and technocratic control.



- 9 **NOELLE MASON**
Ground Control (Colorado River Delta), 2017
Wool, handwoven by the Taller Mexicano de Gobelinos
workshop, Guadalajara, Mexico
Property of the artist

Colorado River Delta is part of the *Ground Control* series of works. This tapestry-rug is based on a NASA satellite image and shows the Colorado River Delta, a part of northwestern Mexico where the Colorado River flows into the Gulf of California. This drought-stricken region is depicted as sand-colored areas in the virtually square tapestry. In recent decades, the water level of the river has fallen sharply. In the upper left-hand corner is a dense cluster of green, purple, and brown patches of color. This is the city Doctor Alberto Oviedo Mota, named for the rector of the University of Michoacana, who took part in the Mexican Revolution launched in 1910 against the long-standing president Porfirio Díaz.

Oviedo Mota resisted the terrible oppression and social injustice perpetrated by those in power at the time. The act of remediating a digital satellite image into a handwoven tapestry and presenting it as a floor covering is also a gesture of resistance to prevailing geopolitical power relations.



- 10 **NOELLE MASON**
Ground Control (Brownsville/Matamoros), 2019
Wool, handwoven by the Taller Mexicano de Gobelinos
workshop, Guadalajara, Mexico
Property of the artist

Brownsville/Matamoros is part of the *Ground Control* series of works. The tapestry-rug is based on a NASA satellite image and depicts one of the cross-border conurbations that straddles Mexico and the United States. The region is located on the Gulf of Mexico, represented by the marine blue area of the rug. It is part of the Lower Rio Grande Valley and connects the city of Brownsville in the US state of Texas with the city of Matamoros in the Mexican state of Tamaulipas. In recent years, there have been times when more than three thousand migrants, the vast majority of them from Central America, have waited here in makeshift camps for their asylum decisions. After legal protection programs were axed by the government of US president Donald Trump, huge camps are now springing up in Matamoros once more.

In subversively translating a digital satellite image into a handwoven carpet and presenting it as a floor covering, Noelle Mason counteracts the visual hegemony of border control. It is this conceptual shift that constitutes her artistically powerful gesture of resistance.



- 11 **JAN KATH**
Group of People Walking, 2022
Tibetan highland wool, Chinese silk on cotton,
hand-knotted in Agra, India
Jan Kath Design GmbH

We first notice the silhouette of a group of marching people. Only upon second glance do we see that the figures are passing through an abstract Persian carpet pattern (*Kerman*) with apparent signs of wear and tear throughout. The scene is reminiscent of images of refugee movements. Individual ornaments populated by heavily defamiliarized imagery of wild animals in the carpet pattern refer to the refugees' dangerous journey. Jan Kath borrowed these ornaments from the animal and garden carpets produced in the royal Kerman workshops of the Mughal Empire.

In this unique piece from the series *Rug Bombs*, the artist deconstructs the historical precursor in favor of a conscious reinterpretation of the symmetrical design and harmonious balance with the aim of lending new meaning to the ornamentation. Thus, at the metaphorical level, the animals represent the challenges and dangers potentially faced by refugees. Yet they also refer to the courage and strength required to undertake such journeys, as well as the significance of resilience in coming to terms with trauma.



- 12 **JAN KATH**
Stopover, 2022
Tibetan highland wool, Chinese silk on cotton,
hand-knotted in Agra, India
Jan Kath Design GmbH

Against a starry, stylized sky, three mountain ridges rise above a group of shadowy figures carrying backpacks. A military helicopter patrols the scene. Its floral ornamentation is echoed in the patterns of the mountains. This ornament in the style of a Persian carpet (*Bijar*) traditionally symbolizes notions of paradise. Here, however, Kath subversively expresses the ambivalence of this longed-for afterlife: In this instance, the mountains pose an insurmountable boundary to the figures. Their “stopover” is necessitated by the helicopter, which is crowned with a caricature of Mickey Mouse. This imagery can be read as a metaphorical criticism of the intervention of international organizations or states such as the US into global political affairs.

The unique piece is part of the *Rug Bombs* series in which Jan Kath leaves commercial carpet design behind and positions himself in the world of art. The motif encourages us to reflect upon the direct or indirect involvement of Western powers in international conflicts, which often causes people to flee.



- 13 **JAN KATH**
Family Walking, 2022
Tibetan highland wool, Chinese silk on cotton,
hand-knotted in Agra, India
Jan Kath Design GmbH

The dark silhouette of a group of people makes its way across an abstract Persian carpet pattern (*Bijar*); the pattern displays clear signs of wear and tear. The family, which is carrying baggage, has just passed by a streetlight and is now hurrying onwards in long strides. Although the figures only appear as silhouettes, we can see that they are turning their heads toward the viewer. The stylized scene is reminiscent of images of refugees on the move.

In this unique piece from the series *Rug Bombs*, Jan Kath consciously defamiliarizes the classical carpet with the aim of breaking the viewer's visual habits and lending the ornamentation new significance. He resists the rigid structures of classical carpet conventions and expands upon his own artistic approach rooted in design and the applied arts by incorporating strategies from the fine arts. In so doing, he firmly positions the work in terms of its authorship within the context of fine art.



- 14 **JAN KATH**
On High Seas, 2022
Tibetan highland wool, Chinese silk on cotton,
hand-knotted in Agra, India
Jan Kath Design GmbH

A raft full of passengers makes its way over the high seas. Behind it looms a massive ship and above it a full moon shines neon green in a violet sky. The scene is reminiscent of images of refugee boats and naval ships on the Mediterranean Sea. The enormous warship determines the outline of the floral ornaments, which are set against a blue background in the style of a Persian carpet (*Bijar*), in which such decoration traditionally symbolizes notions of paradise. Here, however, Jan Kath subversively expresses the ambivalence of this longed-for afterlife. The warship is crowned with a stylized Mickey Mouse—deployed here as an ironic caricature. The image encourages us to reflect on the ambivalent role of Western powers in military rescue operations in the Mediterranean, where security concerns often outweigh the protection of refugees. The unique piece is part of the *Rug Bombs* series.



- 15 WILLIAM KENTRIDGE
Carte Hypsométrique de l'Empire Russe, 2022
Mohair, handwoven by Stephens Tapestry Studio,
Johannesburg, South Africa
William Kentridge Studio

The tapestry is the largest that William Kentridge has so far made in collaboration with the Stephens Tapestry Studio. Its main motif is the black silhouette of a boat crowded with people. A collage that the artist had produced in 2020 served as the template. The shadow figures created from laser-cut paper, the gestural strokes of the red crayon, the heads of the thumbtacks, and the material torn from colonial-era maps—as well as the image of a fish with fine scales—were all strikingly transferred to the tapestry by hand.

The figures are adrift on a boat with an ambiguous symbolism: The vessel can be read, on the one hand, through its allusion to the titular Russian Empire, as the Imperial Russian warship of the Tsarist Empire under Nicholas II (1868–1918), which, in the course of the 1917 Revolution, acquired a new significance as a symbol of the emerging Soviet power; or, on the other, as the rescue boat *Aurora*, which the nonprofit initiative Sea-Watch has been using in its civilian sea rescue operations in the Mediterranean since 2022. In this way, different aspects of resistance and human resilience faced by both the rescued and the rescuers are woven together: The tapestry itself confounds the boundaries between collage, projection, and weaving.



- 16 JEROEN VAN DEN BOGAERT
17 *A Foolish Pleasure in Wicked Schemes (1/2/3)*, 2022
18 Cotton, machine-woven by FiberArt,
Lynn, North Carolina, USA
Property of the artist

The tableau of three wall hangings collages three male stereotypes: heroism, tragedy, and aggression. The historical riders and the young bikers on the left stand for heroism. In the middle, the Deposition and the Lamentation of Christ juxtaposed with the young men who have drunk themselves into a coma stand for tragedy. Aggression is represented by the encounters depicted in the historical battle scenes, brawling hooligans, and mounted police on the right.

The wall hangings recall the grand court tapestries of past centuries. Yet Jeroen van den Bogaert deliberately chose to have his works machine woven in order to achieve a photorealistic aesthetic. With a mixture of fascination and repulsion, the artist ironically deconstructs the purported ideals and traditional notions of masculinity. In the open contrast with their contemporary versions, the heroic gestures are stripped of the sublime and upended into absurdity or the grotesque.



19 **ERIN M. RILEY**
the hunted, 2022
Wool, cotton, handwoven
Wolf Hill Collection

In a black-edged mirror, we see an image of a naked, colorfully tattooed woman, taken through the lens of her cell-phone camera. The mirror image shows her from behind. She is posing, sitting on her heels on the floor. All that is visible from the front is a detail of her left shoulder and a strand of her black hair. The disconcerting play of reflections between camera and mirror guides the viewer's gaze to several different visual levels.

In the tapestry, Erin M. Riley has used a selfie to skilfully weave an intimate snapshot into a textile piece featuring a complex web of symbols. The tattoo on her back shows a bare-bosomed Artemis/Diana, the mythological goddess of hunting and protector of women and children. Just like the tattoo on the artist's skin, this erotic pin-up motif has been inscribed uniquely and permanently into the tapestry as a decorative, autobiographical ornament. In it, the artist manifests the resilience of someone who is scarred by childhood traumas. Here, the hunted becomes the hunter. Now she is able to take care of herself and become her own muse. As she weaves, the artist defies her traumas, thread by thread, in a silent act of self-assertiveness.



20 **ERIN M. RILEY**
Affair, The, 2022
Wool, cotton, handwoven
P·P·O·W

In the horizontal-format work, we see a screen. The foremost window on this screen shows a paused webcam video in which a naked woman is posing provocatively on a black blanket. Her tattooed body can be seen in side view. Her face remains hidden beyond the frame of the video. The titles in the tabs of the hidden windows allude to various US websites: a *New York Times* news bulletin reporting a fatal shooting spree motivated by jealousy; the national suicide prevention hotline “Lifeline”; and the website of the “Just Say No” drug prevention campaign from the 1980s and early 1990s. A further search request has led to Amazon, where the open tab shows the US drama series *The Affair*. It is to this that the title of the tapestry refers, styled like a dictionary entry.

The open tabs represent the search by Erin M. Riley for herself, weaving together elements of self-presentation, digital intimacy, and trauma into a multi-layered self-portrait. In this way, Riley reverses what she regards as uncontrollable voyeurism, flipping it instead into a controlled act of disclosure. In an act of resilience, Riley consciously takes back ownership of her body, from which she was alienated by experiences of sexual violence.



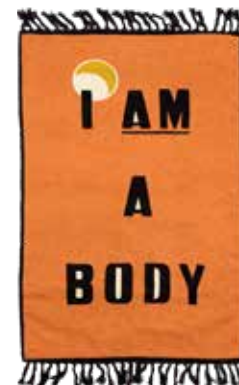
BASEERA KHAN
Psychedelic Prayer Rugs

The *Psychedelic Prayer Rugs* were designed by Baseera Khan and hand-embroidered by artisans in Kashmir. Khan endows the works with a dual status as works of art and everyday objects for ritual use. This inherent ambivalence results from an exploration of the extent to which material and color reflect desire, surveillance, and power in lived experience—particularly in relation to gender and Muslim life. Khan is Indian American with roots in Afghanistan, Iran, and East Africa and a sensibility informed by a queer American Muslim identity.

21 **BASEERA KHAN**
I AM A BODY, 2018
Wool, handmade in *ari* embroidery in Kashmir
Niru Ratnam

The slogan “I AM A BODY” runs across the *Psychedelic Prayer Rug* in black capital letters. It refers to the iconic protest placard “I AM A MAN” carried in a strike by Black garbage collectors in Memphis, Tennessee, in 1968. The workers were fighting for better wages and working conditions and became an important part of the American civil rights movement. The color used for the orange background is an interpretation of Baseera Khan’s individual skin color, defined by a makeup company’s digital concealer matching system. Here it alludes ironically to the danger of categorization posed by automated data processing.

With its slogan borrowed from the labor and civil rights movement the *Psychedelic Prayer Rug* references notions of equality, dignity, and respect. It pays homage to the resistance practiced by the African American civil rights movement, which paved the way for far-reaching social change. At the same time, it underlines the connection between physical strength and the mental resilience required to bring about social change.



22 BASEERA KHAN

"I'm As Good As You Are," 2018

Wool, handmade in *ari* embroidery in Kashmir

Niru Ratnam

The quote "I'm as good as you are" runs across the *Psychedelic Prayer Rug* in red capital letters. The letters are framed by a black silhouette of a mint-green Islamic prayer niche with a small yellow half-moon. Into this niche protrudes a microphone stand that towers above the slogan in front of four steps—an allusion to the Four Doors of Sufism (al-Abwāb al-Arba'a), which describe the spiritual path to God—Divine Law (Sharia), Spiritual Path (Tariqa), Divine Understanding (Ma'rifa), and Truth (Haqīqa)—as a continuous process.

The microphone amplifies the last words that the fourteen-year-old African American Emmett Till from Chicago, Illinois, is alleged to have uttered. Till was murdered in Money, Mississippi, in 1955 by the grocer Roy Bryant and his half-brother John William Milam, who were driven by racist motives. He defended himself courageously against his white kidnapers, torturers, and murderers until his death. The protests against the acquittal of Emmett Till's murderers are considered to mark the beginning of the Black civil rights movement. The *Psychedelic Prayer Rug* thus stands as a monument to the resilience of that movement and as a symbol of decolonial defiance.



23 BASEERA KHAN

iamuslima, 2018

Wool, handmade in *ari* embroidery in Kashmir

Niru Ratnam

The *Psychedelic Prayer Rug* shows Islamic symbols: the green crescent, the five-point star, and a pink prayer niche. These are mixed with elements from contemporary pop culture and fashion, such as the Hollywood Walk of Fame and two pairs of Nike sneakers. The personalized lettering on the back of the rug reads as IA-MUS-LIM-A. This is a play on the word "Muslima," which Baseera Khan had embroidered onto a pair of sneakers via the individualization program "NIKEiD" (today "Nike By You"). This allowed Khan to circumvent the sportswear company's censorship of the words "Muslim" and "Islam."

In *iamuslima*, Khan's identity as a queer, Indian American Muslim itself becomes an expression of artistic resistance. The *Psychedelic Prayer Rug* turns into a space for both spirituality and empowerment, resisting the apparent contradiction between religion and gender-specific self-realization. It thus questions the ambivalence between the sacred and the profane, between spirituality and a consumer mentality, and between religion and gender issues.



24 **TSSHERIN SHERPA**

The Lone Ranger (Coral), 2022

Tibetan highland wool, Chinese silk,
hand-knotted by Mt. Refuge, Kathmandu, Nepal
Property of the artist & Mt. Refuge

This piece pays homage to the Tibetan tradition of Tiger rugs. Its title refers to the pursuit of an individual spiritual journey. A white tiger sits in a meditative pose in the middle of the rug. This big cat in silken bas-relief stands out against the lower woolen pile behind. Tsherin Sherpa borrowed the style of the design from Tibetan imagery. The delicate ornamentation of the red background recalls the syllabic Tibetan script. Only at second glance do we realize that the characters are letters forming English words and sentences that reveal Buddhist pearls of wisdom.

These guidelines to core principles such as mindfulness and empathy honor the significance of the present moment in achieving happiness and inner peace. They accept the process of letting go as a means for overcoming suffering and convey a sense of kindness towards oneself and empathy for others. These can, in turn, serve as the basis for nonviolent resistance and thereby help to bring about practical change to societal structures.



25 **OTOBONG NKANGA**

Unearthed – Twilight, 2021

Trevira, Sidero, polyester, multifilament, outdoor polypropylene, techno, Elirex, mohair, merino wool, superwash, linen, monofilament, Econyl, Fulgaren, viscose, machine-woven at TextielLab, Tilburg, the Netherlands
Defares Collection

This wall hanging presents a section of an imaginary shoreline landscape in which machine-like fragments of arms and geometric objects lie scattered on the beach, interspersed with seashells, rocks, and algae. A large white net spans the lower half of the work, which formally draws on the tradition of Verdure tapestries with their depictions of lush vegetation and idealized landscapes. Instead of scenes of intact nature, however, the artist shows a seascape polluted by human intervention. Like excavator arms, the fragmented body parts have brought raw materials to the light of day. At the same time, they reference the sunken bodies of people who were transported from Africa to America by slave traders and lost their lives at sea.

The wall hanging depicts traces of environmental destruction and exploitation. Conversely, the densely woven synthetic and natural fibers subtly point to the close entanglement of humans and nature. Otobong Nkanga regards responsibility as a form of resistance, a means to counteract the destructive forces of exploitation. Her work is a call for a radical rethink—a departure from the alienation and neglect of nature and a turning toward responsible, mindful cooperation.



26 **ALEXANDRA KEHAYOGLOU**
Paraná de las Palmas River, 2021
Wool, tufted
Studio Alexandra Kehayoglou

The section of Argentina's Paraná Delta in the northwest of Buenos Aires Province depicted here is part of an important ecosystem of expansive wetlands. It offers a number of different habitats and is home to immense biodiversity. Yet, in recent decades, human interventions have resulted in severe environmental destruction. On the carpet, the river divides the land into two zones: On the left, we see the green vegetation of an apparently unspoiled landscape. On the right, however, there are traces of deforestation, agriculture, and construction. But we can also discern several small islands of green breaking through the areas of beige and brown. The carpet thus presents the landscape as a dynamic system. Despite the massive environmental devastation, nature finds ways to adapt and regenerate.

Alexandra Kehayoglou takes a stand against the destruction of nature and the environment by honoring the beauty and resilience of this endangered habitat in her work as an artist and activist. By combining a floor covering and a wall hanging she creates a textile topography, a three-dimensional work that invites visitors to touch it, walk upon it, and think about what it represents. As an immersive, experiential space, it finds itself at the intersection of textile art, sculpture, and installation.



- 27 **ROSE STACH**
Resistance, 2013
Wool rug, video projection
Property of the artist

A Persian rug serves here as a surface on which to project a video montage. The images are of nonviolent protest: against the Castor transports to Gorleben that were instituted in the 1990s; against the large-scale development project *Stuttgart 21* in 2010; and against the Erdoğan government with the Gezi Park demonstrations in Istanbul in 2013. The images are overlaid with the sounds of footsteps, riot sticks, and water cannons. They give a glimpse of the wholesale state violence that the demonstrators are confronting with acts of civil disobedience.

Rose Stach repurposes the decorative furnishing, turning it into a screen. The moving images bring the rug's static pattern to life, as the artist's installation creates an immersive scene of insurgency and escalation. This reinterpretation of the rug transforms a symbol of comfort into a metaphor for the passive consumption of media. The private haven of the domestic space is contrasted with the protests displayed on the rug, which show people joining forces in public to peacefully resist collectively felt injustice.



- 28 **ROSE STACH**
Stone Thrower II, 2018
Wool rug, acrylic paint
Property of the artist

A figure emerges from the silvery-gray background as a dark silhouette winding up to throw a stone. Reduced to the outline of a body, the figure is rendered in such a way that it remains completely anonymous. Its face is masked. The image support is a rug originating from the Tekke people of Turkmenistan. Although the ornamental pattern has been painted over with acrylic, a subtle impression of it can be made out, unchanged, within the figure. The secondhand rug was probably originally for sitting on.

Stach applied a reverse stenciling technique to this knotting work. In overpainting the rug, the artist does not merely obscure its textile pattern. She also challenges rigid patterns of thinking: Who is winding up to throw a stone here—and who or what is the target? A motif that has been reproduced many times in the media here morphs into a metaphor for protest against structural violence. At the same time, the artist's schematic imagery gives the situation a universal validity. The scene becomes a symbol of militant resistance against prevailing circumstances, as practiced all over the world.



- 29 **TOBIAS REHBERGER**
Koloman Wallisch in glazed ducks, 2022
Wool, hand-knotted by Khyber Weavers International,
Lahore, Pakistan
Galerie Bärbel Grässlin

The first thing that one registers here are four ducks on strings dangling into the image on the carpet. Viewed from different perspectives, the textile relief, consisting of different pile lengths, coalesces into the two-thirds portrait of a figure with a hat. This is Koloman Wallisch (1889–1934), a politician who was active in the Social Democratic Workers' Party of German Austria (SDAP). As a workers' leader, he assumed political leadership in the town of Bruck an der Mur in early February 1934 against fascist Heimwehr militias, the government, and the military. On February 18, 1934, he was arrested, tried summarily, and sentenced to death in Leoben. On the gallows, he defiantly cried out: "Long live Social Democracy! Freedom!"

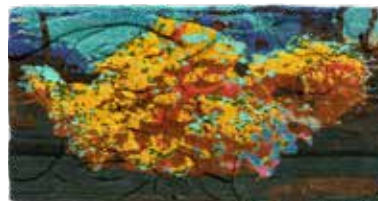
The textile portrait of the freedom fighter was modeled on a historical photograph. The photo of the glazed ducks was taken by Tobias Rehberger himself on a trip. In this work, the artist combines the originally unrelated subjects into a textile relief in which the carpet as a functional floor covering is defamiliarized and elevated to the status of an autonomous work of art.



- 30 **TOBIAS REHBERGER**
Dolores Huerta in Chinese teapot, 2022
Wool, hand-knotted by Khyber Weavers International,
Lahore, Pakistan
Galerie Bärbel Grässlin

The first thing that one registers on looking at this work is the highly abstract motif of a teapot. Viewed from different perspectives, the textile relief, consisting of different pile lengths, coalesces into the portrait of a figure with a hat and a megaphone. The figure is the influential American trade unionist and civil rights activist Dolores Huerta (b. 1930), whose nonviolent resistance to social injustice was manifested in her tireless fight for the rights of agricultural workers, women, and other marginalized groups.

The textile portrait was modeled on a black-and-white photograph taken in 1969, which shows Huerta as the co-founder of the United Farm Workers union (UFW) at a protest in Coachella, California. The photo of the Chinese teapot was taken by Tobias Rehberger himself on a trip. In this work, the artist subversively combines the originally unrelated subjects into a textile relief that reflects his constant engagement with questions of artistic authorship and with the very notion of the artwork along the perceived border between applied and fine art.



JOHANNAH HERR

War Rugs From America / How To Hide An Empire

Johannah Herr's tufted rugs are linked by one theme: They highlight forms of state-sanctioned violence committed by the United States. Some of the events she illustrates are from several decades ago, while others date back only a few years. The artist adorns her brightly colored pictorial rugs with a wide variety of objects, arranged within the context of the event in question to create a narrative. This allows her not only to tell the story of US involvement, but also to comment on it. The title of the series makes one thing very clear: An empire can't be swept under the carpet.

Herr makes reference to the tradition of Afghan war rugs, yet in addition to depicting weapons, she also includes seemingly harmless objects. These are combined to create an overall ornamentation that questions the clear-cut distinction between "good" and "evil." Using cartoon-style imagery, she shows that each of the depicted items is historically significant and bears the traces of American imperialism. Herr views her rugs as activist tools; recalling histories that have been suppressed or disregarded, they are directed against erasure and systems of injustice.

31 JOHANNAH HERR

American War Rug V (Flint Water Crisis), 2020

Acrylic, wool, tufted

Private collection, Cologne

Polluted water is the main theme of this rug: It drips from the faucets and is filled in plastic bottles and baby bottles. The white water tower of the *Flint Water Plant* is depicted in the background. In 2014, the city of Flint in the US state of Michigan became the setting for a protracted political scandal over drinking water. Residents' complaints about the undrinkable water were initially ignored. The investigations that were subsequently launched revealed that the water was contaminated with substances such as lead.

This is referred to by the chemical symbol "Pb" in the four corners of the rug. The stylized flowers are the logo of the Environmental Protection Agency, the EPA, which was accused of flagrant negligence. Thanks to the people of Flint, who banded together and staged protests, the provision of clean drinking water was restored several years later.



32 JOHANNAH HERR
American War Rug XIV (Congo, 1961), 2022
Acrylic, wool, tufted
Gaa Gallery

The Congo is at the core of this work. The outline of the central African state is flanked by the flag of Belgium, its former colonial ruler (until 1960), and the eagle emblem of the American intelligence agency, the CIA. The USA's interest in the presence of uranium in the Congo is indicated by yellowish-brown rocks in the rug's central section and the chemical symbol "U" at the corners. Other pictorial motifs illustrate the independent country as a backdrop for the East-West conflict in the early 1960s.

The then recently elected prime minister Patrice Lumumba was murdered in 1961. The blue tube denotes the US plan, which was never implemented, to kill Lumumba with poisoned toothpaste. Airplanes symbolize the later coup, for which the USA set up its own air force in the Congo and recruited pilots from the socialist republic of Cuba. Its emblem of a bull stood for the name of the troop: *Makasi*, which means "strength." After the coup, Lumumba was first imprisoned and then shot—by soldiers under Belgian command. He had led the Congo to independence and become a national hero. To this day, his descendants are still battling for the truth about his murder.



33 JOHANNAH HERR
American War Rug XV (Operation Paper), 2022
Acrylic, wool, tufted
Gaa Gallery

The syringes, opium pipes and spoons, plastic bags filled with powder, and dollar bills are a big clue: This rug reveals the political machinations of the United States during the 1950s opium trade in the "Golden Triangle." The region situated between Myanmar, Thailand, and Laos is depicted in the center of the rug and decorated with scattered poppies.

It was in Myanmar that the anti-communist Kuomintang troops settled after fleeing China. They were backed by the USA through its Operation Paper: The eagle emblem symbolizes the American intelligence agency, the CIA, while airplanes refer to the ostensibly civilian airline *Air America*. In reality, the planes had a dual function, transporting weapons as well as drugs. This meant that the USA played an active role in setting up an international drug network that they would later zealously combat.



- 34 JOHANNAH HERR
American War Rug XVII (Hawaii, 1893), 2022
Acrylic, wool, tufted
Private collection, Cologne

The silhouette of the Hawaiian archipelago appears in the central section of the rug, with the leaves of a monstera plant and a crown flower (*Puakalaunu*) encroaching from either side. The latter's blossoms are integrated into the decorative border of leis, the typically Hawaiian garlands worn around the neck and on the head. Sugar cane and sugar cubes reference the numerous plantations that were largely owned by US "sugar barons" in the late nineteenth century.

In making reference to Afghan war rugs, the ornamentation on this colorful rug includes rifles, cannons, and a warship. These recall the US coup against the Hawaiian queen Lili'uokalani. Her attempt to consolidate Hawaiian independence and strengthen its monarchy was defeated in a republican revolt. The queen was placed under house arrest. The bunch of flowers wrapped in newspaper recalls the peaceful resistance shown by her supporters, who used these means to give her access to current events.



- 35 JAN KATH
Jet, 2022
Tibetan highland wool, Chinese silk on cotton,
hand-knotted in Agra, India
Private collection, Karlsruhe

The neon-orange-edged silhouette of a fighter jet rendered in shimmering silk boldly dominates the center of the carpet, whose pile was given an "antique finish" to produce two different heights. The shorter threads are of Tibetan highland wool, whereas the longer threads are Chinese silk.

The unique piece is part of the *Rug Bombs* series, whose iconography is reminiscent of Afghan war rugs. Here, the jet determines the outline of the colorful blossom ornaments, which are set against a dark background rather than being incorporated into the ornamentation, as is typical of Persian carpets (*Bijar*). Instead of bombs, the jet drops stylized Mickey Mouse heads. In this literal instance of a "carpet bombing," Kath ironically reinterprets the lovable icon of American pop culture as a weapon, transforming the congenial figure into a "bad mouse" in a caricature of Western consumer culture. Behind the irony, we find a critical examination of the ambivalence of a seemingly nonviolent (but nevertheless destructive) form of American cultural imperialism: soft power.



36 JAN KATH

Tank, 2022

Tibetan highland wool, Chinese silk on cotton,
hand-knotted in Agra, India
Jan Kath Design GmbH

Lines of orange silk outline the shape of a tank rolling through a background of shadowy, abstract ruins. The combat vehicle boldly dominates the center of the carpet, whose pile was given an “antique finish” to produce two different heights. The shorter threads are entirely of Tibetan highland wool, whereas the longer threads are Chinese silk.

The unique piece is part of the *Rug Bombs* series, whose iconography is reminiscent of Afghan war rugs. Yet rather than being incorporated into the ornamentation in the style of Persian carpets (*Bijar*), the tank determines the outline of the colorful blossom ornaments. Returning ornamentation to its Latin roots (*ornare*—“equip” or “adorn”) also contributes to an ambivalent design vocabulary that foregrounds the aestheticization of violence. The driver of the tank is a silhouetted Mickey Mouse figure, but in Kath’s provocative imagery the lovable cartoon character is transformed into a “bad mouse.” Beneath this irony we find a critical examination of a global culture war and the power of Western values.



37 DIEDRICK BRACKENS

horse hoop, 2023

Cotton and acrylic, handwoven
The Hudgins Family

As in a dance, two human figures form an arch with their outstretched arms. A purple horse with flying mane and tail is galloping through it and out of the right-hand edge of the tapestry, which is formed of four woven strips of different lengths.

Diedrick Brackens has translated the realities of African American queer life into the poetic visual language of this tender scene as a way to resist clichéd representations and traditional classifications. For Brackens, “Black” is more than just a (skin) color. This is why he uses white yarn as a contrasting design element: no matter what color he employs, all the human figures in his works are Black. His choice of cotton as a material is also an allusion to the history of the cotton plantations in the era of slavery. As a way to counteract the stereotype of the white American cowboy, here Brackens references the Black cowboy culture of the late nineteenth century.




IMAGE CREDITS

1 © Faig Ahmed Studio, Courtesy of the artist and Sapar Contemporary; 2 © Faig Ahmed Studio; 3 © Tsherin Sherpa and Mt. Refuge; 4–5 © Nasan Tur / VG Bild-Kunst; 6–7 © Jan Kath Design; 8–10 © Noelle Mason, 11–14 © Jan Kath Design; 15 © William Kentridge, Courtesy Kentridge Studio, Photo: Thys Dullaart, 16–18 © Jeroen van den Bogaert; 19–20 © Erin M. Riley, Courtesy of the artist and P.P.O.-W, New York, Photo: JSP Art Photography, 21–23 © Baseera Khan, Courtesy of the artist and Niru Ratnam, London, Photo: Dario Lasagni; 24 © Tsherin Sherpa and Mt. Refuge; 25 © Otobong Nkanga, Courtesy of the artist and Kunsthaus Bregenz, Photo: Markus Tretter; 26 © Alexandra Kehayoglou, Photo: Francisco Nocito; 27 © Rose Stach; 28 © Rose Stach, Photo: Gisbert Stach; 29–30 © Tobias Rehberger, Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Bärbel Grässlin, Photo: Wolfgang Günzel; 31–34 © Johannah Herr, Courtesy of the artist and Gaa, New York + Cologne, Photo: Mareike Tocha; 35–36 © Jan Kath Design; 37 © Diedrick Brackens, Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

LENDERS

AC Hudgins, New York
Alexandra Kehayoglou Studio, Athens/Buenos Aires
Baseera Khan, New York
Defares Collection, Amsterdam
Faig Ahmed Studio, Baku
Galerie Bärbel Grässlin, Frankfurt am Main
Jan Kath Design GmbH, Bochum
Jeroen van den Bogaert, Tilburg
Johannah Herr, New York
Nasan Tur, Berlin
Noelle Mason, Saint Petersburg, Florida
P.P.O.-W, New York
Privatsammlung, Karlsruhe
Privatsammlung, Cologne
Rose Stach, Munich
Tsherin Sherpa & Jigme Wangchuk Lama (Mt. Refuge), Kathmandu
William Kentridge Studio, Johannesburg
Wolf Hill Collection, New York

EXHIBITION

<i>Wool. Silk. Resistance.</i> Museum Angewandte Kunst	Translations Tradukas GbR	Security manager Gabriele-Petra Rodino
Director Prof. Matthias Wagner K	Exhibition construction Messegrafik & Messebau Schreiber	Locking service Iraj Hafiz Dirk Sinner Florian Syler Toni Riefs
Curator Dr. Katharina Weiler	Image and sound technology satis&fy AG, Markus Berger	Ticket desk, information Adriana-Carmen Nemtanu
Curatorial fellows Leon Lukas Plum Sofia Simeth	Exhibition installation Christian Brown Tandi R. Dahl John Hussein Flindt Timm Herock Raha Jabbari Magali Laurent Nina Nadig	Media partners   Magazin für Kunst und Leben
Exhibition management David Beikirch	Exhibition architecture Büro Deserve, Mario Lorenz	Sponsored by   
Graphic design Bureau Sandra Doeller	Lighting technology Stephan Zimmermann Lightsolutions, lighting technician Tobias Cunz	A museum of the city of Frankfurt am Main 
Conservation Laurence Becker Christian Dressen Gerda Kopatz Kathrin Röttger	Printing of wall graphics Messegrafik & Messebau Schreiber	Cooperation partners Dalibor Marković, Frankfurt am Main Dr. Eva Linhart, Frankfurt am Main European Days of Arts and Crafts (ETAK) Eva-Marie Schöfer, Frankfurt am Main Francesco Colli, Frankfurt am Main Jan Kath Design GmbH, Sanchir Kath, Bochum Jia Write, Frankfurt am Main Lilian Korner, Frankfurt am Main Prof. Christopher Daase, Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main raumlaborberlin, Francesco Apuzzo Stitch by Stitch, Frankfurt am Main
Registrar Isabelle Kollig	Director's assistant Sandra Kaiser-Schwarz	
Create, Education Simone Richter Linda Gottwald Viktoria Jede Sonja Sikora Nina Manes	Administration Natalie Graf-Schwab Katharina Maiwald	
Press and public relations Natali-Lina Pitzer Lucy Rose Nixon Katja Kummerfeldt Isabella Müller	Archive Ute Kunze	
Copyediting pertext corporate publishing, Enrico Feierabend	Event management Sabine Huth	
	Technical manager Thomas Funk	
	Facility manager Stanislav Yakushev	
	Technical services Alexander Schwarz	

BOOKLET

This booklet is published in conjunction with the exhibition
Wool. Silk. Resistance.

Second, revised edition

Editors: Katharina Weiler, Matthias Wagner K

Authors: Katharina Weiler, Leon Lukas Plum, Sofia Simeth

Copyediting: pertext|corporate publishing, Enrico Feierabend

Translations: Tradukas GbR

Graphic design: Bureau Sandra Doeller

Printing and binding: WIRMachenDRUCK

© 2026 Museum Angewandte Kunst, Frankfurt am Main, and the authors

All rights reserved; no part of this publication may be reproduced,
stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any
means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise,
without the prior written consent of the copyright holders.

