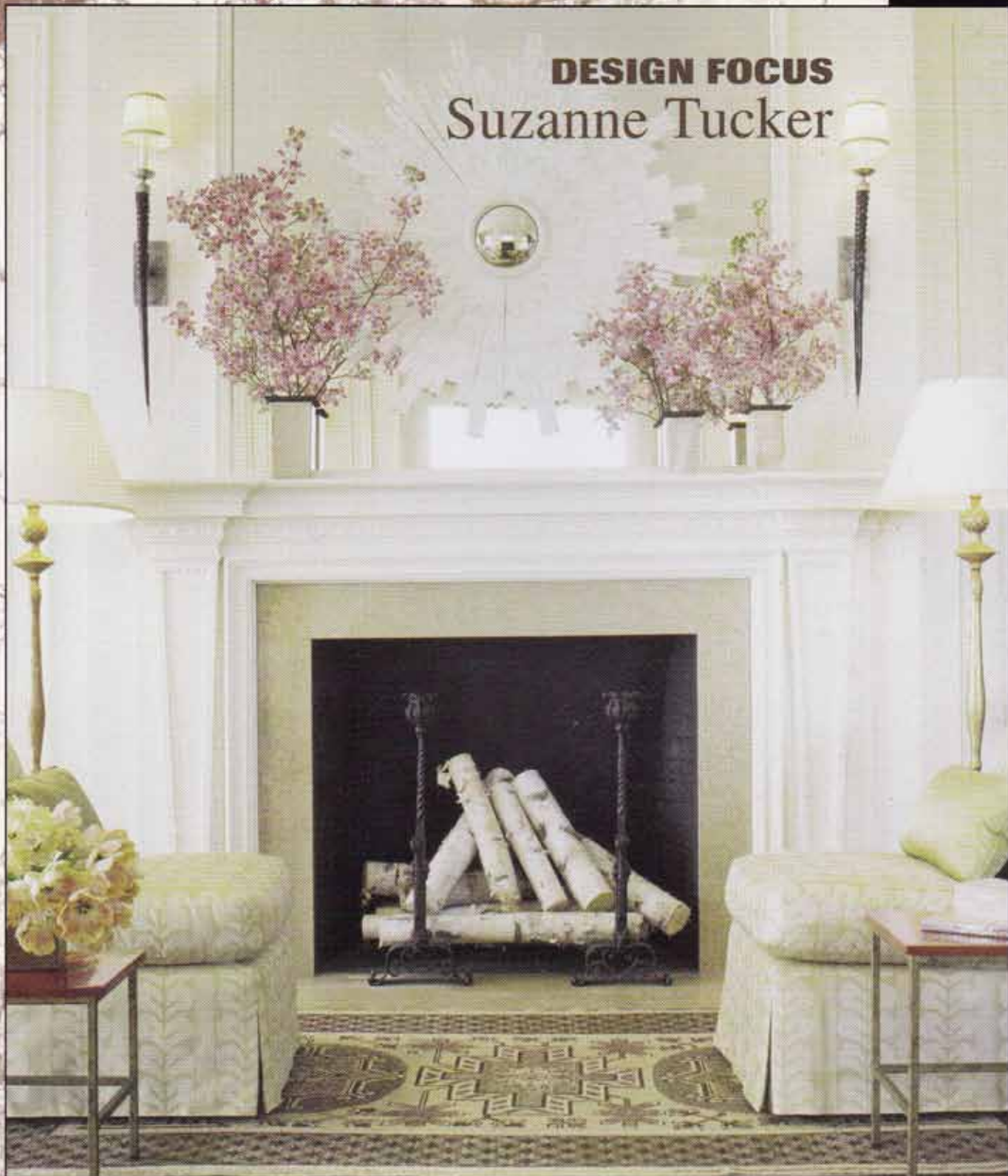


# AREA

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE ORIENTAL RUG IMPORTERS ASSOCIATION, INC.

## DESIGN FOCUS Suzanne Tucker



SUMMER 2013



For Acclaimed West Coast Designer

# SUZANNE TUCKER

Rugs Are Essential To A Room's 'Soul'

While growing up with oriental rugs was undoubtedly a trigger, Suzanne Tucker's passion for them truly developed while she was in college. "My first memorable introduction was a year-long course that I took about history of interior architecture and the decorative arts," reflects the renowned interior designer, principal at the prestigious San Francisco-based firm Tucker & Marks, whose projects have taken her all over the country. Indeed, this is when she became fascinated by how the various aspects of oriental carpets, including their patterns and dyes, all relate to specific provenances and historical periods. Her genuine attraction to rugs is hardly surprising as she is an avid traveler ever curious about diverse cultural esthetic traditions.

For this AD 100 designer, rugs are essential to the room's "soul"—a quality otherwise lacking in their machine-made counterparts. While its all-over even quality can be desirable, machine-made carpeting often shows visible seam lines and is devoid of character. As the ultimate green floor covering—an attribute that is gaining importance in clients' eyes—the handmade rug is key from the

**OPPOSITE** An ivory ground Moroccan rug with its bold nomadic chocolate pattern sets a contemporary tone in this living room featuring a classical architectural design and showcasing an eclectic mix of antique and modern furnishings. Photography by Matthew Millman. Courtesy of Tucker & Marks Design Inc.

STORY BY ALIX G. PERRACHON



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decorative viewpoint because it anchors seating arrangements and pathways grounding the space with texture and color. Moreover, Ms. Tucker finds the possibilities with custom handmade rugs to be virtually infinite in terms of selection of color, size, pattern, and material. She enjoys the thrill of choosing a blend of yarns, such as linen and wool and silk and wool, instead of just a single fiber.

When initiating the rug selection process with clients, Ms. Tucker devises her own “Rorschach Test” of showing them visuals of rugs to assess their knowledge and taste. She then brings a number of pieces to the client’s home that could potentially fit the bill. Also critical to finding the right rug, she comments: “So much depends on the appropriateness to the interior architecture, style of a room, and of course its function.” As she does with all other design elements, she balances the carpet in the space paying particular attention to scale and proportion.

Although she has used a diverse array of rugs, including Donegals, kilims, and Chinese pieces, Ms. Tucker is most passionate about Ziegler Mahals and Oushaks thanks to their large-scale patterns and color ranges that lend themselves to a wide variety of design options. “I love Oushaks for their texture and pile,” she notes. “They’re luxurious yet can be used in very casual applications. They usually have a lovely, warm palette with colors like mango, ocher, and coral juxtaposed with cool pale blues and celadon greens.”

Like many prestigious West Coast designers, Ms. Tucker has a penchant for the scatter-sized tribal Khotans. “They have a lot of character and work so well as accents in hallways, vestibules, and on either side of the bed,” she says. “You can build a room around them by pairing and layering them.” Also

within the tribal sphere, she loves Moroccan rugs which she had been using long before their recent resurgence in popularity.

Avowedly not an antique rug “snob,” Ms. Tucker also uses new rugs whose quality she feels is now often on par with antiques. She particularly appreciates Tibetan rugs thanks to the boundless options in terms of color, pattern, materials, and size. Still, she comments: “Whether they are antique or new, there’s a time and place for everything!”

Generally speaking, Ms. Tucker believes that it’s easier to start with the rug as it’s the foundation of the room with respect to color. However, she adds: “I don’t hold that as a hard and fast rule because there have been times when the rug came last!” Meanwhile, unlike many designers, she feels that a room-sized carpet is a must only when working with “an amazing palace rug.” In effect, she enjoys placing several smaller rugs in a large room for a more intimate ambience and to better show off a beautiful wood floor. To ensure that rugs within the same space “speak” to each other, she often looks for a connecting thread in their borders. When coordinating different rugs in the same room or from one space to the other, their harmony in scale, pattern, and color is far more important than their specific rug style. Also critical is how the rug’s particular texture relates to other materials and textiles in the room.

When harmonizing rugs with fabrics, Ms. Tucker balances them just as she does with all elements of design. Moreover, she remarks: “The balance of color moving around a room needs to be equalized and the appropriateness of the styles must at least resonate with each other.”

Having decorated with rugs since the beginning of her career, Ms. Tucker has amassed a treasury of

**OPPOSITE** A Swedish “half-pile” rug exhibiting a simple geometric repeat on a taupe and cream ground anchors this sitting room decorated with neutrals contrasting with the bold modern art and assorted artifacts. Photography by Matthew Millman. Courtesy of Tucker & Marks Design Inc.



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tips for new rug buyers. “Be generous, don’t skimp on size and put a postage stamp on the floor,” she urges. “Watch where rugs start and stop at walkways so that you aren’t walking onto a corner of a rug.” Very importantly from the practical standpoint, she recommends carefully examining a rug’s fiber content. For instance, be aware that linen will crush underfoot. Also, know that rugs with center medallions will anchor your room but also steer your seating to be placed on an axis with a central motif.

Ms. Tucker is fond of recollecting her anecdotal experiences with rugs. One of her greatest challenges was convincing a client—repelled by the thought of someone’s feet having trampled on an “old” rug—to

buy an antique carpet. Eventually, she recounts: “I prevailed, but I practically had to perform an exorcism on the rug to get out any old juju!” She’s particularly amused by how some dogs simply adore antique rugs. “They must love the funky smell because they rub themselves all over certain rugs, perhaps responding to the love that these carpets are carrying,” she notes. One client with an extraordinary antique Oushak in the dining room couldn’t get her dachshund out of that room because he couldn’t stop rubbing himself all over the rug. On a more personal note, she adds: “I have a rare Tibetan Tiger rug by the side of my bed, very worn and threadbare, which is part of my Corgi’s morning roll and stretch routine!”

**BELOW** The creams and chocolate hues connect these adjacent rugs—a tightly patterned Khotan rug sitting under the sofa and an East Turkestan piece exhibiting a large-scale stylized motifs in the foreground. Photography by Matthew Millman. Courtesy of Tucker & Marks Design Inc.



## ABOUT *The Designer*



Suzanne Tucker is recognized today as one of the country's leading interior designers. Growing up in Santa Barbara, she graduated from UCLA with a BFA in Design. She worked in London before returning to California where she became the protégé of legendary designer Michael Taylor whose larger-than-life interiors took California by storm. Ms. Tucker and her partner Timothy F. Marks bought Mr. Taylor's business after his untimely death in 1986 and founded Tucker & Marks, long considered one of the most respected and successful interior design firms in the U.S. Ms. Tucker's own style evolved to "European in look but West Coast in scale." Her style is luxurious, sophisticated, sumptuous, elegant and inviting.

Ms. Tucker has won numerous accolades including being honored as a frequent AD 100 Top Designer of the World by *Architectural Digest* and being

awarded "The Best of the Best in Interior Design" by The Robb Report and the Grand Prize in the 3rd Annual ASID/Southern Accents National Residential Interior Design Contest. In addition to being featured in top shelter publications such as *Architectural Digest*, *Elle Décor*, *Veranda*, and *Traditional Home*, she has published her own book *Rooms to Remember—The Classic Interiors of Suzanne Tucker* (The Monacelli Press, 2009) and her second, *Suzanne Tucker Interiors—The Romance of Design*, will be published by The Monacelli Press on October 22, 2013. Her work with rugs is featured in *The Decorative Carpet—Fine Handmade Rugs in Contemporary Interiors* (Random House/Monacelli Press, 2011).