

TRADITIONAL HOME.

September 2012

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ACTRESS SELA WARD BRINGS HER MISSISSIPPI
HERITAGE TO SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA, **p106**

Dream Weaver

STEPHANIE ODEGARD DESIGNS CONTEMPORARY CARPETS TO SAVE ANCIENT CRAFTS

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The name Odegard is synonymous with silky, hand-knotted Himalayan carpets sumptuous enough to excite textile titan Jack Lenor Larsen, curators at the J. Paul Getty Museum, and award-winning chef Daniel Boulud. Whether they're displayed on the walls of the Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum or atop beds in the East Hampton home of Lisa de Kooning (daughter of painter Willem), Odegard handcrafted carpets floor the most discerning design junkies.

"Antique rug dealers were the first to recognize the quality of my Tibetan carpets," recalls designer Stephanie Odegard, who founded the eponymous firm in her Manhattan apartment 25 years ago. In 1991, she opened shop at the New York Design Center, encouraged by then-landlord David Druckman, who donated a year's free rent. That rent concession helped launch Odegard Collections, now a multimillion-dollar business with showrooms in Miami, San Francisco, Zurich, and London and products that include carved marble tables, metal-clad furniture, and Fortuny-inspired lighting as well as anything clients—mostly architects and designers—dream up.

A children's rights advocate, Stephanie has designs on your conscience, too. She ▶

New wool-and-silk hand-knotted "Poppies" carpet. Below, from left: Hand-carved square marble "Jali" table. ■ Stephanie Odegard in the Peace Corps in Fiji. ■ Wool-and-silk hand-knotted "Red Rocks" carpet. ■ Landlord David Druckman of the New York Design Center and Stephanie. ■ Felt rug exhibited at the Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum.





The "Caree" credenza with drop handles by Stephanie Odegard and a handcrafted, white-metal chaise by French designer Paul Mathieu. **Right** Leafy "Champa" sand-cast brass table rests on indigo wool-and-silk "Bamboo" carpet. Vintage Odegard furnishings available soon on 1st Dibs.



has helped turn GoodWeave, a nonprofit organization that certifies carpets haven't been made by children, into a status label to flaunt. "Basically, I look at the weakest people I can find on the street and think about whether what I'm doing has a positive effect on them," she explains, giving credit to Mahatma Gandhi for the idea.

A Lutheran who grew up in Minneapolis, the former Peace Corps volunteer has worked in many countries to support traditional crafts. In Jamaica, Stephanie helped restore Kingston's historic mansion, Devon House. "In the back, there are shops that sell local crafts—hand-carved furniture, ceramics, pewter, and more," she says. "It's good to see all my old projects still exist."

She reignited the carpet-weaving industry in Nepal, where most Tibetan carpets are made, while doing research as a consultant for the World Bank. "The Nepalese couldn't import enough raw wool to expand markets, and I changed that," explains Stephanie, who gained the critical knowledge needed to launch her own business. Developing a better carpet in fresh colors was key. She simplified tribal decorations and increased knot counts (from about 40 to 100 knots per square inch) to create splurge-worthy carpets.

A fan of reggae giants Bob Marley and Jimmy Cliff, Stephanie also finds time to sing in a church choir. "Unfortunately, singing has taken a backseat to carpets," she says.

In tune with the times, Stephanie expanded her repertoire to include a refined Indian aesthetic long before the rest of the pack. With an intuitive eye for art and craft, she has teamed up with the industry's top talents, including Sherri Donghia and French designer Paul Mathieu—as well as designing carpets inspired by the work of painter Mira Lehr and photographer Michael Somoroff.

But Stephanie has earned a cult following for the way her carpets are made. "We understand craft on a very deep level," she says simply. Just visit her showroom, where design devotes drop to their knees—the better to pet the velvety, hand-knotted pile. ■

For details, visit stephanieodegard.com



Above Rug doctor Samdup Dhargyal resizes vintage wide-wale carpet.

Right The GoodWeave label (goodweave.org) certifies that no child labor was used in making the carpet. Stephanie is a founding board member of the organization.



Designer Mathieu's "Louise Semainier" for Odegard is dressed in solid silver sheathing.

