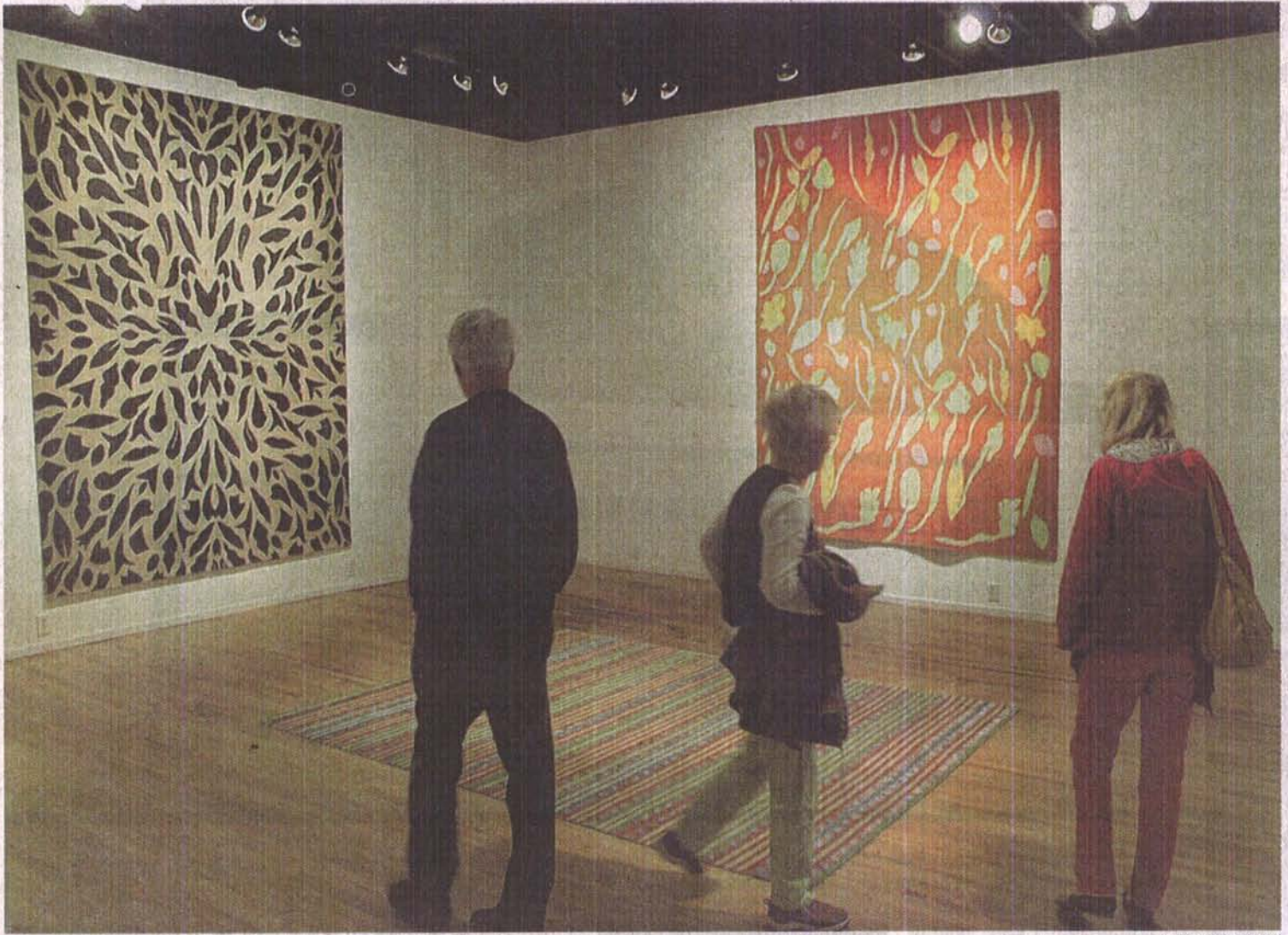


INSIDE & OUT

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NATHAN TUCKER

Art lovers experience handmade rugs from the Milton Glaser for Lapchi collection during an exhibit opening at the Carl Solway Gallery in Cincinnati. Glaser, a graphic artist who created the "I (heart) NY" logo, played with geometric forms and flowers in his designs.

Making the floor a gallery

These rugs are art underfoot

JULIE E. WASHINGTON | Homes Editor

Great art is usually hung on walls or displayed on shelves, where “look but don’t touch” is understood. ¶ But some art seductively purrs, “Take off your shoes and curl your toes in me.” ¶ We’re talking about the collection of wool and silk rugs and carpets designed by Milton Glaser for Lapchi. The carpets are handmade by master weavers in Tibet using dyed Tibetan wool and Chinese and Indian silk. ¶ “You’re buying a piece of art to use,” said Lapchi artistic director Andrew Neave, who worked closely with Glaser on this project. “It’s so typical of Milton to be interested in producing things people use in their lives.” ¶ Glaser is one of the country’s leading graphic designers. He’s the mind behind the iconic “I (heart) NY” logo, and he famously turned Bob Dylan’s hair into swirls of psychedelic colors on a poster. Glaser has mounted one-man shows in New York and Paris, and was honored with a lifetime achievement award by the Cooper Hewitt National Design Museum.



ED GLENN DENING

“Mandala, Earth” is based on a traditional design re-imagined for a contemporary look.

At age 83, Glaser still finds new ways to express his creative language. His message comes through clearly in a rug called “Landscape,” which depicts a lake reflecting the trees surrounding it in concentric circles. In “Paper Dragons,” curved fanlike elements and circles create the feeling of a Lunar New Year celebration. “Vines” explodes in multicolored confetti.

“Best Flower Pattern” celebrates the traditional flower theme in rug design. It called on the rug-makers to cut the background’s pile lower than the flowers so that they catch the light differently; the amount of silk in the flowers varies so that some are pearly and others are quite shiny.

“Milton’s designs require time and attention,” Neave said.

The rugs on display at the Lapchi showroom inside the Ohio Design Centre in Beachwood — the only retail outlet for the Milton Glaser for Lapchi line in Ohio — are regularly



Glaser

pawed by clients who can’t resist the luxurious feel. Handprints show in the rugs’ nap, but it’s OK.

“We want [customers] to touch them,” said Thom Capretta, showroom director for Atelier Lapchi in Beachwood. “The more they touch them, the more they want

them.”

A wool rug from the Glaser collection costs about \$80 per square foot; 100 percent silk costs \$120 per square foot. Each rug requires up to five months to make and another three weeks to be shipped from Nepal to the United States, Capretta said.

In addition to its Beachwood showroom, Lapchi also owns showrooms in Los Angeles, Chicago and Portland, Ore., and production facilities in Katmandu, Nepal.

Glaser worked for five years on this project, after the founders of Lapchi approached him about designing a line of rugs.

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RUGS

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Making the floor an art gallery

The graphic artist played with geometric forms, flowers and repetitious patterns traditionally found in rugs.

"He's reinterpreting everything," Neave said. "He doesn't want to be pigeonholed into one look."

The rugs are on display at Carl Salway Gallery in Cincinnati, and were previously exhibited at the Santa Monica (Calif.) Museum of Art. There are no plans for a Cleveland-area gallery show.

Figuring out how to translate the artist's colors and designs into textiles was challenging. Sample rugs shuttled back and forth until Glaser was satisfied.

It was discovered that the light in Katmandu, where the rugs were handwoven, is more golden-yellow than the harsh sunlight in Los Angeles. The same color looked different in each location, Neave said.

The rugs are constructed with 100 to 150 hand-tied knots per square inch. Each knot can be likened to a pixel, and the number of knots per inch must render the design crisply.

Some designs were too complex to be woven into carpets. One pattern — a series of large-scale interconnected circles made up of polka dots — was discarded because it proved impossible to weave perfectly round circles. "You end up with slight ovals," Neave said.

Most of the rugs are woven with strands of wool and silk that have been plied together, which creates a different sheen than all wool or all silk.

Glaser reinterpreted the mandala, a circular design that is used as an aid to meditation, in a series of silk rugs named for the elements. The pattern in "Mandala, Air" appears to vanish; "it's so light and so soft, it becomes light itself," Neave said.

If you're thinking about investing in a Glaser rug, think first about where it will be placed in your home. It's not practical to put an all-silk rug by an entry, or a pale rug under a dining room table.

Take care of your investment by having it professionally cleaned once a year if it's in a low-traffic room, or two to three times annually in a high-traffic area, Capretta said. Keep a supply of white rags on hand to deal with spills immediately.

Most rugs are sold as area rugs, but if you want a wall-to-wall look, have the room professionally measured first. Be aware that you'll buy a rug that is slightly too big for the space because installers will cut it to fit, Capretta said.



ED GLENN DENING

Curved fanlike elements and glowing circles in "Paper Dragon in Shiraz" evoke a Lunar New Year celebration.



ED GLENN DENING

"Best Flower in Caribbean," part of the Milton Glaser for Lapchi collection, celebrates the perennial flower theme in rug design.

If the idea of owning a Glaser rug — and actually walking on it — still scares you, rest assured that you have permission from the artist himself. In an email, Glaser said he hoped his rugs give "delight, pleasure and well-being."

Think of it as a chance to own a piece by a famous artist.

"It will stay with you forever," Neave said. "It's not a thing that's so precious you can't use it."

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