



Johanna Herr; War Rug III (El Paso Shooting), 2020

RUG LIFE

**Museum of Craft and Design
San Francisco, California**

December 14, 2024 - April 20, 2025

The exhibition

Rugs and carpets have defined the character of space since animal skins began to warm and adorn cave dwellings; the earliest known Persian rugs are nearly 2500 years old. Given this long history—entwined with religion, culture, and nature—it is not surprising that artists continue to find potential in the form of the rug. While many artists take a formal approach to the subject matter, others engage in cultural critique. It is this perspective that most interests us, when artists from around the globe take on the appropriation of cultural, racial, and gender roles and stereotypes within the framework of a decorative object turned art object.

Artists

Ai Weiwei (China/Portugal)
Nevin Aladağ (Turkey/Germany)
Azra Aksamija (Bosnia/Austria)
Ali Cha'aban (Lebanese/Kuwait)
Sonya Clark (United States)
Liselot Cobelens (Netherlands)
Nicholas Galanin (United States)
Mona Hatoum (United Kingdom/Palestine)
Johannah Herr (United States)
Oksana Levchenya (Ukraine)
Noelle Mason (United States)
Wendy Plomp (Netherlands)
Stéphanie Saadé (Lebanon/France/Netherlands)
Slavs and Tatars (Germany)
Andrea Zittel (United States)

Organizers Museum of Craft and Design
San Francisco, California

Curators c², a curatorial partnership between Ginger Gregg Duggan and Judith Hoos Fox, develops exhibitions of international, cross-media contemporary art and design that explore current issues in culture.

Contents 4000 square feet approximately
14 floor and wall mounted works

Schedule

Winter/Spring Museum of Craft and Design, San Francisco, California
Summer 2025 Weatherspoon Art Museum, University of North Carolina, Greensboro
Fall 2025 Weisman Art Museum, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis
Spring 2026 Pratt Manhattan Gallery, Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, New York

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Ai Weiwei
born in Beijing, China, 1957; lives in Alentajo, Portugal



The Tyger, 2022
Ghazani wool, natural colors

When invited to participate in the World Wildlife Fund's Art For Your World in 2022, the year of the tiger, Ai Weiwei, working with Christopher Farr, the noted producer of rugs, and Artwise, a team of curators, eagerly accepted the challenge. Weiwei's Tyger turns the traditional Tibetan tiger rug on its head, upside down.

Nevin Aladağ

b. 1972, Van, Turkey; lives Berlin, Germany



In her *Pattern Matching* series, which she pursued from 2010 through 2016, Nevin Aladağ brought her inventive, intercultural, cross-media investigations to the form of the carpet. Music, video, installation, sculpture, performance—these are genres in which she is equally at home and eloquent. Bringing the iconography from the distinctly western game of basketball, a specific cultural signifier, to the hand-knotted carpet, emblem of time and place quite different from the imagery of basketball, Aladağ opens a rich dialog about culture, history, historiography and more.

Ali Cha'aban
b. 1988 Kuwait; lives in Kuwait



My imagination is no Longer Enough to Complete My Journey
One day we'll dream (from right to left)
embroidery on carpet

Aside from identity, Cha'aban addresses a host of socio-cultural ideas including our relationship with time and technology....He deconstructs the millennial desire to reinvent the past instead of creating a new unique future, revealing the darker side of sentimentality.

<https://www.3rdwrlld.co/conversations/artist-spotlight-ali-chaaban>

Sonya Clark

b. 1967, Washington DC; lives in Amherst, MA



Comb Carpet, 2008

combs, cable wire

5 x 60 x 66 inches; 12.7 x 152.4 x 167.6 cm

“The Comb Series” is concerned with the meaning in the materials. It employs a material culture perspective. The black plastic combs evoke a legacy of hair culture, race politics, and antiquated notions of good hair and bad hair. What type of hair would easily pass through these fine-toothed combs? What does it mean that the combs themselves are arranged into tangles like felted dreadlocks, neat curls, and wavy strands? Combs imply order in as much as they are tools that organize the fibers we grow. They suggest thorough investigation as in “to go through something with a fine-toothed comb.” When a comb has broken or missing teeth there is evidence of struggle. The missing teeth provide a new rhythm, the music of a new order.

<https://sonyaclark.com/concept/combs/>

Liselot Cobelens

b. 1994 xxxxx, Netherlands; lives in xxxx, Netherlands



New work to be made for exhibition building on *Dryland*, 2022
wool

Liselot Cobelens researches and captures a complex story in an object. In recent years, for example, she has worked on the stories of desiccation, landscape transition and loss of craft. Liselot works from the power of the story to give the product the right form and material to fit the context and experience. Her products can be used both museologically to draw attention to an issue and commercially inside a home.

About *Dryland* carpet:

The Dutch landscape is associated with large amounts of water. It becomes hard to imagine that a silent and slow dehydration is taking place. With *Dryland* Liselot Cobelens investigated how dehydration arose and what the various perspectives are on the consequences of drought. Four consequences (drying, loss, sagging and burning) are translated into a carpet.

file:///Users/judithfox/Downloads/Studio%20Liselot%20Cobelens_Dryland-2.pdf

Nicholas Galanin

b. 1979, Sitka, Alaska; lives in Sitka, Alaska



Signal Disruption, American Prayer Rug, 2020

wool, cotton

60 x 96 inches (152.4 x 243.8 cm)

Nicholas Galanin is a Tlingit and Unanga multi-disciplinary artist who addresses racism head on in his piece *Signal Disruption: American Prayer Rug*. Hung on the wall like a television in any American family room—a version of a prayer rug for media—rendered in wool and cotton, is arresting. The title, *Signal Disruption*, references the error image that appears on a television screen during a broadcast signal disruption. In an attempt to disrupt what he sees as the status quo proliferated by American politicians and media, Galanin's prayer rug pulls the plug on regular programming—America's genocidal past and racist present—in hopes of breaking the communal trance, triggering a recommitment to land and community. In addition, the vibrant colors and striking pattern, when displaced from tv screen to woven rug also reference traditional indigenous weaving designs and heritage, adding to them pointed critique against the flawed history of America.

Mona Hatoum

b. 1952 in Beirut, Lebanon; lives in London, United Kingdom



Pin Rug, 1998-99

stainless steel pins, canvas, glue

1 3/8 x 47 13/16 x 73 5/8 inches; 3.5 x 121.5 x 187 cm

The Barbara Lee Collection of Art by Women

Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston

The space delineated by this bed of pins, rather than beckoning, repels. When the material used to form the carpet is antithetical to the notion of fabric, the chorus of contrasting concepts embedded in the carpet itself tunes up: old-new; east-west; home-homeless. Here the pins elegantly form an alluring nap, but do not beckon one to take a nap.

Johannah Herr

b. 1987 Reading, Pennsylvania; lives in New York, New York



War Rug III (El Paso), 2020

Tufted rug using acrylic and wool yarn

28 x 48 x 1 inches;

“Domestic Terrorism: War Rugs from America” is a series of machine-tufted rugs that use the material and visual narrative strategies found in Afghan War Rugs to interrogate State-sanctioned violence in America. [War rugs are traditional Afghan rugs that began to incorporate military weaponry into their design motifs during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, and continue to this day (though now incorporating American drones)]. While the content of the rugs does not singularly address the ongoing war in Afghanistan, the idea of creating a war rug to acknowledge or even exorcise pervasive State violence grounds the basis of this body of work. War on Rugs aim to implore viewers to intimately consider the violences— immigrant detention, mass incarceration, wars abroad, gun violence, police brutality, inadequate healthcare and income inequality amongst others— that comprise our domestic American landscape.

Rug iconography references the 2019 racially-motivated hate crime and mass shooting in an El Paso Walmart. References include: the semiautomatic rifle, ammunition as well as ear protection used by the shooter, police crime scene markers, the 8Chan logo (the extremist right-wing online forum where the shooter posted a racist, anti-hispanic manifesto before the shooting), 22 Walmart logos (in reference to the 22 victims killed), and map of El Paso.

<https://www.johannahherr.com/work/war-rugs-from-america>

Oksana Levchenya

b. 1975 in Bershada, the Vinnitsa region, Ukraine; lives in New York, New York



Pac Man and Cossacks

wool

70 x 188 inches; 170 x 300 cm

The traditional Ukrainian carpet, a flat woven Kilim, is updated with the insertion of images of Pac Man, modern day warriors that join the historic Cossacks. Oksana Levchenya literally weaves together the past and present, ancient traditions with current fads.

Noelle Mason

b. 1977 San Diego, California; lives in Tampa, Florida, US



Ground Control (Mexicali/Calexico)

Hand woven wool

96 x 72 inches; 243.8 x 183 cm

Ground Control is a series of three hand woven wool Gobelin tapestry-rugs that reproduce images of the US/ Mexico border at places of conflict taken by the Terra satellite's Advanced Spaceborne Thermal Emission and Reflection Radiometer (ASTER.)

<https://noellemason.com/artwork/120988-Ground%20Control%20%28Mexicali%2fCalexico%29.html>

X-Ray Vision vs. Invisibility, which she has been working on for over a decade. For this project, she has collected and transformed surveillance images and videos that border patrol and vigilantes on the U.S.- Mexico border have shared widely on the internet, as well as satellite images.

<https://artisnaples.org/baker-museum/exhibitions/2021-22/florida-contemporary/noelle-mason>

Wendy Plomp

b. 1977 Wilnis, Netherlands; lives in Eindhoven, Netherlands



Cardboard carpets

6-8 painted flattened cardboard boxes

Dutch designer, Wendy Plomp turns to the ubiquitous recycled cardboard box for inspiration for her 'cardboard carpets.' By simply unfolding the boxes and printing decorative arabesque patterns derived from traditional carpet patterns on the inside, previously plain surfaces, she has transformed one of the most mundane objects into a unique design element. Always a fan of repurposing and green design approaches, Plomp looks to inventive ways to elevate the everyday to coveted design. The nomadic practices of our current mobile population conflate tribal rug traditions and patterns with the ubiquitous moving box, home to too many who are homeless.

Stéphanie Saadé
b. 1983, Beirut, Lebanon; lives Beirut, Paris, Amsterdam



Stage of Life, 2021
2 carpets cut in strips, dimensions variable
78 7/10 × 51 1/5 inches; 200 × 130 cm
Centraal Museum, Utrecht, Netherlands

Two carpets having belonged to the artist and her brother as children are respectively cut in equal strips in order to obtain the respective distances between their current beds and the entrance of their buildings.

Slavs and Tatars

Collaboration founded in 2006 by artists and designers Payam Sharifi and Kasia Korczak

Based in Berlin



Qatalogue

wool

75 x 71 inches; 190.5 x 180.3 cm

A mouth emits Cyrillic letters which failed to take hold in various languages, approximations of sounds which did not exist previously in Russian or other slavic languages.

The phenomenon of lost language is illustrated in this powerful carpet in which forms of unused sounds are cast away onto the floor, like so much litter.

Andrea Zittel

b. 1965 Escondido, California; lives in Joshua Tree, California



A-Z Carpet

96 x 96 inches; 243.8 x 248.3 cm

synthetic wool blend

Here Andrea Zittel has conflated the carpet with the room, and the room with its furnishings, and thus the primary activity of the room with the carpet itself.