

# Persian perfection

by Michelle Sharon



Essie Sakhai

A beautiful Persian rug or carpet has the ability to completely transform a room and will last you a lifetime, so it is important that you make an informed choice as well as picking one which appeals to your senses. Identifying a good quality, handmade rug or carpet and matching it to the room can be a daunting task. Expert guidance is needed. Michelle Sharon investigates...

Essie Sakhai is a respected expert on the subject of oriental carpets, born in Iran and educated in Britain, as the eldest of five children, Essie was introduced to the family business at an early age. The Sakhai family business was established in 1766 and has been passed down through ten generations. In order to bring his passion and knowledge of carpets to a greater audience, Essie has written two books on oriental carpets, his third book is currently being published. He has also appeared on television and lectured on the subject. Despite all this he spends the majority of his time at his impressive shop on the corner of Albermarle Street and Piccadilly in London, where he or one of his highly knowledgeable staff are always on hand to advise and find the perfect carpet for distinguished clients.

The history of carpet weaving predates written records and there is no proof as to where or when the first carpets were made. It is agreed that people probably began to make carpets, or simple floor coverings, due to the need to make their surroundings warm and comfortable. It is thought that nomadic tribes began to make carpets or rugs as an alternative to using valuable animal skins as floor coverings. The idea of making carpets decorative became popular later on as communities became more established and wealthy, and life allowed more time to devote to art.

## Eastern Art

Oriental carpets today are on a par with some of the finest works of art. The complexity of weaving and the intricacies of design combined with the sheer beauty of each product have placed Persian carpets amongst the most sought-after crafts to emerge from the east. "It is unfortunate that most people are unaware of the skill and man-hours that go into the making of a beautiful carpet and because rugs or carpets are traditionally floor coverings and not displayed on a wall like a painting, they

don't achieve the status that great painted works of art achieve. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that these carpets are some of the most amazing works of art, made by very talented artists and highly skilled craftsmen," says Essie. "An average 6' x 9' carpet can take up to five years to make and will contain some million knots per square metre."

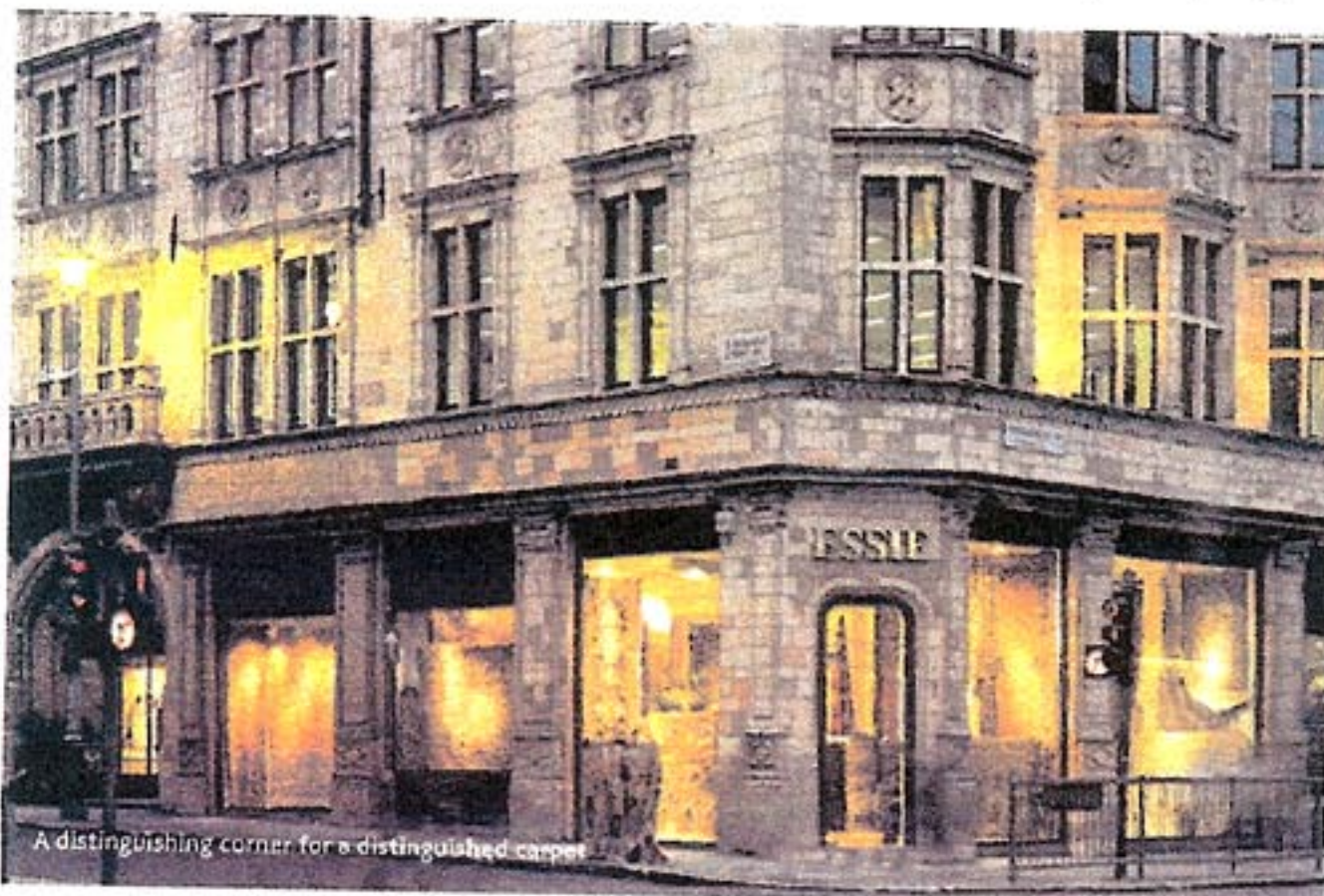
## Traditional methods

Essie carpets mostly deal in Persian goods, although some are Turkish or Old Russian. All of the carpets are made by traditional methods which have remained largely unchanged for centuries. Skills are passed down through families from generation to generation, along with design, weaving and knotting techniques as well as colours. The pictures and stories worked into the design are often exclusive to specific villages, tribes or individual artists of the region. Persian people love pattern and colour and, maybe as a reaction to the barren inhospitable land in which they live, they have poured all their artistic skill into the weaving of carpets.

Whether a carpet or rug is made in a private household or in a city workshop each one is unique. Tribal or village rugs are usually made from memory and are often instinctive and unplanned. The spontaneity of these rugs ensures that although similar pattern and colours occur, no two rugs are identical.

Rugs or carpets made in city workshops are usually more planned with more intricate designs. Many are produced following artists drawings, however this

Khorasan-Doroksh 11'x7'



A distinguishing corner for a distinguished carpet