

SHOPPING WITH

LAURA KIRAR

Art to Walk on

Rugs That Provide Warmth and Beauty



CHESTER HIGGINS JR./THE NEW YORK TIMES

FOOT FRIENDLY Laura Kirar sits beside the linen Sam rug at the Kasthall showroom.

WITH fall in the air, people are beginning to think about how to warm up their homes. Laura Kirar, an interior and product designer with offices in Man-

hattan and Miami, suggests focusing on the floor. Hardwood, ceramic tile or concrete can feel downright chilly in the winter, and — short of installing radiant subfloor heating — soft floor coverings and area rugs are the best way to add warmth underfoot, she said.

But just as important is the statement a rug makes.

"I look at a room like I'm making a three-dimensional painting," said Ms. Kirar, who has designed bathroom fixtures for Kallista; furniture for the Baker and McGuire companies; tile for Ann Sacks; and a line of rugs for Tufenkian, being introduced this month, called the New Moderns. "If the right rug's not there, you just know that something's missing."

There are many options beyond standard wool rugs for creating a distinctive look and feeling, said Ms. Kirar, who used a mixture of wool and hemp in her rugs to give them a casual quality. She also incorporated patterns inspired by contemporary artists like Gerhard Richter and Sol LeWitt and the composer John Cage to give them a modern, playful look.

On a recent shopping trip in Manhattan, Ms. Kirar found a number of options for warming

up floors and adding visual appeal to a room.

At Aronson's Floor Covering in Chelsea, she took off her shoes and tested various alternatives to stiff, fibrous sisal. She especially liked the products from Merida Meridian with a woven blend of wool and paper cord, including a zigzag design called Rhythm. The material had a smooth, pleasant texture, "like sisal but not as hairy," she said, that would make an ideal runner with binding along the edges.

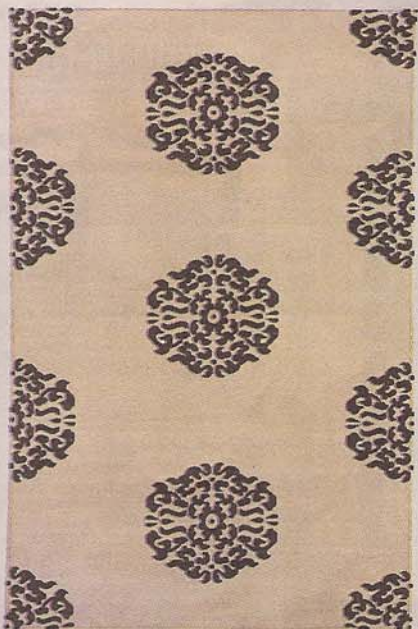
At the Kasthall showroom in Midtown, Ms. Kirar gravitated toward the long-haired rugs that resembled shag carpeting. Running her fingers through the fibers of the linen Sam rug, installed on a wall, she described it as "silky but earthy." It's "what design's about right now," she said.

For spare-no-expense luxury, she stopped at F. J. Hakimian, also in Midtown, to see rugs patched together from pieces of 1940s Persian and Turkish kilim panels, in wool, cotton or goat hair, which can be ordered in custom sizes, from long, narrow runners to large living-room rugs.

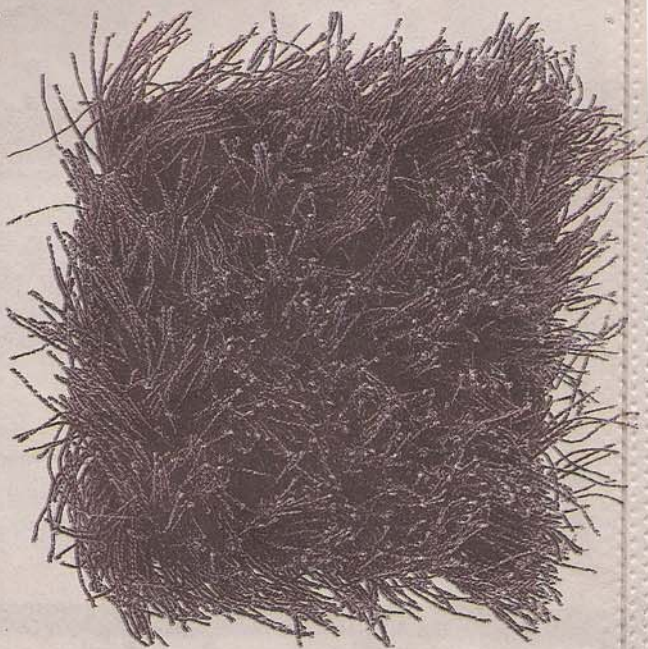
She especially liked a bold, playful geometric pattern called Deco Fan made of undyed Persian wool in neutral tones. It had an equally eye-catching price tag: \$48,000 for the 12-by-10½-foot size.

"Of all the things I get to choose for my clients, rugs are my favorite," she said. "It's like shopping for art."

TIM McKEOUGH



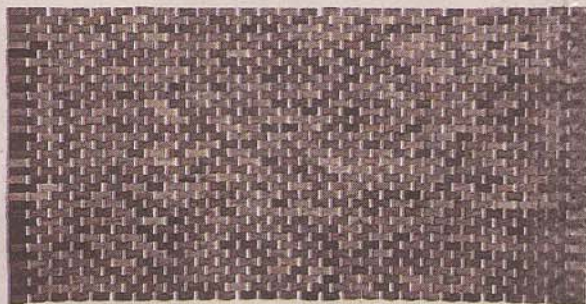
Mandala cotton rug; \$325 to \$2,200 at Madeline Weinrib Atelier at ABC Carpet & Home, (212) 473-3000, madelineweinrib.com.



Sam hand-tufted linen rug; \$104.34 a square foot at Kasthall, (212) 421-0220, kasthall.com.



Deco Fan rug, made from pieces of 1940s Persian wool kilim panels; \$48,000 at F. J. Hakimian, (212) 371-6900, fjhakimian.com.



Wooden bath mat, made from recycled hardwood; \$24.95 at Crate & Barrel, (800) 967-6696, crateandbarrel.com.



Polypropylene herringbone outdoor rug; \$38.99 to \$95 at Restoration Hardware, (800) 910-9836, restorationhardware.com.



Faux Bois nylon carpet tiles; \$20.99 a tile at Flor; (866) 281-3567, flor.com.



Merida Meridian's Rhythm, made of wool and paper cord; \$11.75 a square foot at Aronson's Floor Covering, (212) 243-4993, aronsonsfloors.com.