

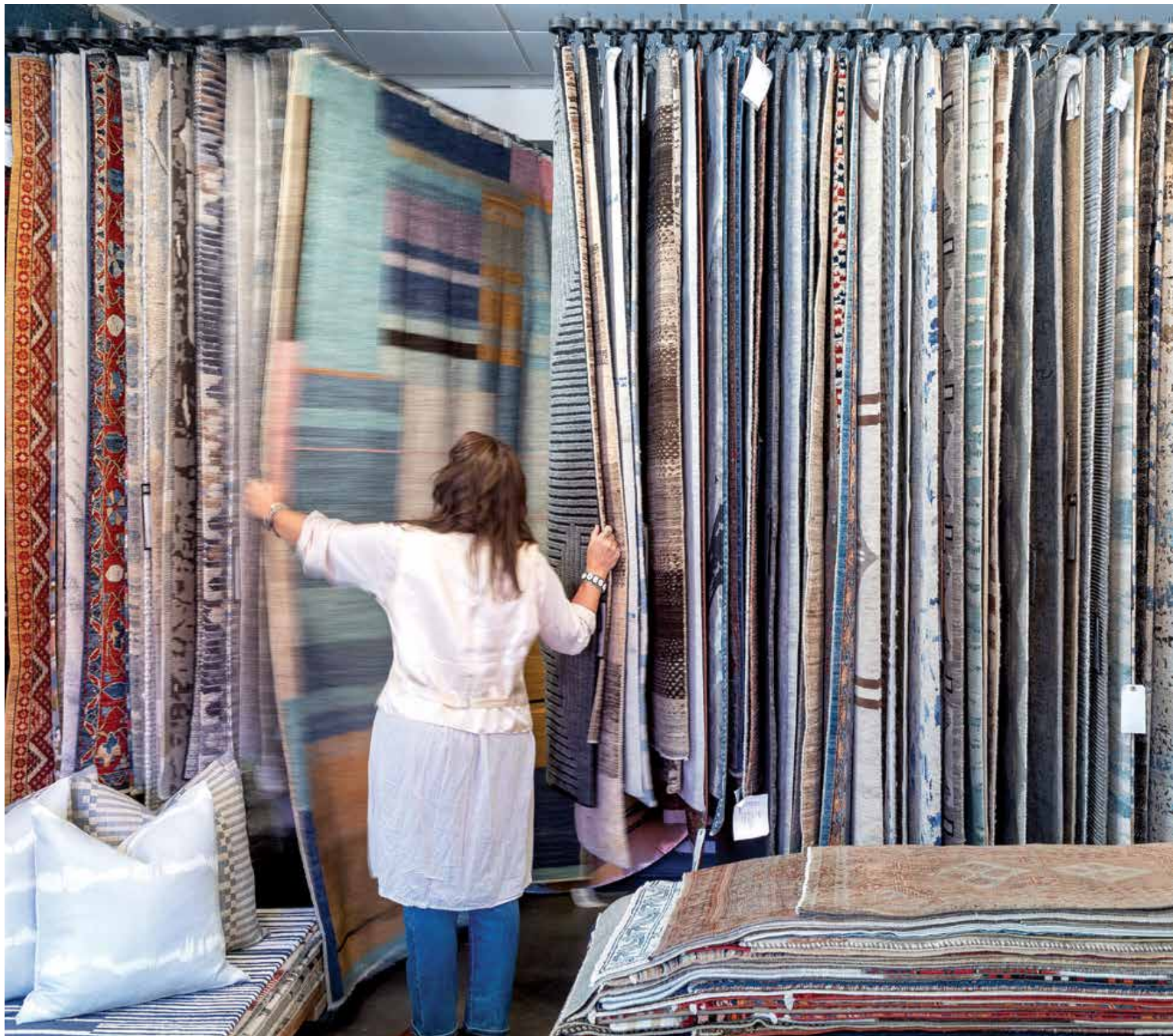
Crossing Cultures

The showroom at The Scarab is both a tactile and visual experience.

THE SCARAB OWNER JANE ROHR DISCUSSES HER ORIGINS, MOTIVATIONS AND A LIFELONG PASSION FOR TREASURE HUNTING

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While Jane Rohr has been in the rug business for over three decades, her passion for textiles goes back even further. Born and raised in Istanbul, Turkey, Rohr remembers being so intrigued by street vendors and merchants that, when she was a young child, she created her own “bundle” of treasures she collected along the way.

“My desire to captivate people with mysterious merchandise came from witnessing gypsies selling things in the streets,” she remembers. “I used to show my treasures to my mom’s friends and they would look and pick and pull and admire. I’ve loved the idea of bringing things to and from cultures my whole life.” Rohr’s father was American, but lived

in Turkey, and she specifically remembers the family bringing things with them when they traveled — whether it was special goods from Europe to Turkey or Levi’s and Converse from America to Turkey. Rohr adds, “I’ve always brought treasures back and forth and I’m still doing it!”

Throughout high school and college, Rohr split her time

between Colorado, where she attended boarding school, and Turkey. When her mother moved to a new town in Turkey, Rohr made friends with two brothers whose family was in the rug business. The brothers were taught to select the best rugs and elevate the level of rugs being sold. Rohr observed the trade by listening to what customers responded to, the quality



they looked for, and what they were willing to pay. “At the time, rugs came from hope chests and barns,” she recalls. “But once they were presented in a showroom light, they became special pieces and I couldn’t get enough of it.”

In 1988, Rohr moved to Vail where a few of her college friends were living and decided to stay. She got a job at Slifer Designs and, during her time working there, Rohr noticed the large number of tribal rugs being placed in Vail Valley homes. She realized that with her connections in Turkey she might be able to do something on her own. “The types of tribal rugs that were acceptable in terms of design style gave me such joy because they were the tribal pieces I already loved,” says Rohr. “They all came from different villages and there were stories behind all of them — that was exciting to me.”

COLLECTION OF CULTURES

Ready to make her lifelong passion a job, Rohr, who was already living in Minturn, saw that space was available at the

corner of Main Street. She called the brothers in Turkey and asked about selling their rugs in her space. “At first they were caught off guard because back then, outside of family members, there were very few women in the rug business,” Rohr explains. “So, in 1992, a young woman wanting to run her own rug business was unheard of — but they were intrigued because they knew I had tenacity.”

In addition to the rugs, Rohr wanted to showcase pieces that introduced her customers to the richness of other cultures. “I wanted to have a collection of accessories that showed my desire to introduce one culture to another,” she says. “I grew up around beautiful visuals so I wanted to bring that type of art here and let it translate into not only being acceptable, but

sought after.” With her local knowledge of Istanbul, and experience gained through travel, Rohr knew how to pick items from Turkey, Central Asia and countries around the world that she thought were valuable.

“Most of the work I have brought here over the years holds a special place in my heart because women in these cultures created the art,” she explains. “Rugs are often made by women, and weaving was taught from a mother to a daughter, so these utilitarian pieces represent another layer I’m passionate about which is women’s art that comes from different cultures.”

THE BUSINESS OF ART

While art continues to be the driving force behind The Scarab, the bustling store is run by a team of professionals

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Jane Rohr peruses the handmade rugs she’s sourced from small artisan communities around the world.



that function like a well-oiled, creative machine. Rohr and her business partner, Larry Stone, have run The Scarab together for many years and she says that Stone's marketing and business savvy continue to be crucial. "He brings a whole set of skills and knowledge that help navigate this business," she explains. "Larry has also worked with various vendors and helped ensure that we have the technology to connect with rug manufacturers and weavers — a process that has evolved and grown throughout the years."

Rohr also points out that "adaptation has been a big part of The Scarab's growth and the desire has always been to offer pieces that are different." Most importantly, every single rug in the store was handmade by a human being — they do not carry rugs made by machines. "Everything at The Scarab is authentic and the stories behind the rugs support the value of what's being offered," she adds. Those stories are what resonate with Rohr and Scarab customers as they are told through the rugs and the variety of jewelry, home goods and specialty items unlikely to be found anywhere else in the Vail Valley. While The Scarab ensures that these special pieces can be found locally, Rohr usually has to travel to find them.

One of those destinations is Round Top, Texas, a place east of Austin that hosts an enormous antique show twice a year. Rohr says the event, which has been going for almost 40 years, attracts wholesalers, film industry people and treasure hunters like herself. In fact, she was spending so much time visiting the area that she bought a second home there. "Throughout the years I've



Jane Rohr opened The Scarab more than 30 years ago, and still has a strong case of wanderlust.



hailed truckloads of stuff from Round Top to Minturn, filled the store, redecorated, and tested the market and everyone has loved it," she says. "What's funny is that most of the stuff is purchased by people who are visiting from Texas so I joke that I have an import/export business between Colorado and Texas!"

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From an outsider's perspective, it seems that Rohr's choices attract customers because the products are unique and are presented in way that catches their attention. "I'm always dreaming of new ideas which has propelled me through the years to create something different. I like collaborating with people, hearing their stories and witnessing their creative process."

PRIORITIZING QUALITY AND AUTHENTICITY

In addition to selling rugs, The Scarab team works directly with exclusive rug producers all over the world, as well as local interior designers. "Our team works with designers to make sure they get the looks they want," Rohr says. "We also collaborate with rug producers and do a lot of work with custom rugs. Our inventory is elevated because we've chosen to align with specific people who prioritize quality and authenticity and make beautiful, top-of-the-industry pieces."

Rohr says The Scarab website offers a "state-of-the-art way to look at rugs" because customers browse the different types, styles and designs at their leisure and choose what they like. Then, the team pulls

up the selections, brings the rugs to the home, and places them to see if they work in the space. Additionally, if a customer wants to custom-design their own rug, The Scarab has the technology to do that. In the past they have even created rugs based on their customers' photography and drawings. Services offered by The Scarab also include rug installation, cleaning and restoration, design consulting and staging.

When asked what's next for The Scarab, Rohr says they are "continuing on a great trajectory" as they expand their work with the interior design community. She adds, "We are collaborating with our rug-makers to bring beautiful works of art to our customers. With every acknowledgment we get from our industry partners, we continue to prosper together."

While Rohr splits her time between Texas and Colorado, and is on the road a lot, she says she feels grateful for The Scarab team and clearly takes immense joy in her three children — Shepherd, Jasper and Zahra. She adds, "I'm proud to be able to say that I've always incorporated the subjects I believe in and interest me into my work. It's been a beautiful journey." **VVH**