



View from the Fringe

Newsletter of the New England Rug Society



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www.ne-rugsociety.org

November 21 Meeting: John Collins, “Another Look at Shahsevan Bags”

On November 21, at Lincoln First Parish, John Collins will treat fellow NERS members to “Another Look at Shahsevan Bags.”

Thirty-five years ago, John founded Collins Gallery. Many of us remember shopping and attending meetings at his various handsome (and wonderfully rug-decorated) sales spaces—originally in Newburyport, then on Newbury Street in the early 1990s, back in Newburyport, in Watertown from 2005 to 2011, and now once again in Newburyport.

Over the years as gallery owner, John has mounted a dozen exhibitions, published three catalogues, and written

articles for *Oriental Rug Review* and *HALI*. Dealing almost exclusively with the woven art of Iran, he has specialized in South Persian tribal rugs and bags and in Bijar rugs and carpets. In the last ten years he has also collected numerous Shahsevan bags in both sumak and pile. His talk will focus on design development in Shahsevan weaving; for illustration he plans to show us some outstanding examples from his personal collection.

Members are invited to bring Shahsevan pieces of their own for a show and tell following John’s presentation.



John Collins at the 2013 Antique Rug and Textile Show (ARTS), San Francisco. See pp. 10–11 for the 2014 event.

November 21 Meeting Details

Time: 7:00 p.m.

Place: First Parish, Bedford Road, Lincoln

Directions: From Rt. 95 (128), take exit 28B, Trapelo Road West. Proceed west about 2.5 miles to a stop sign at the five-way intersection in Lincoln (there’s a white planter in the middle of the intersection). Go right on Bedford Road for 0.1 mile to Bemis Hall, a large brick building on the right. First Parish is on your left.

From Rt. 2, take Bedford Road, Lincoln Center exit (eastbound, turn right at the light; westbound, go through light, turn right, and circle 270° to cross Rt. 2 at the light). Proceed 0.9 mile to Bemis Hall, a large brick building on your left. First Parish is on your right.

Parking: Park in the lot behind the parish house, along the street, or in front of Bemis Hall if that building is dark and not in use.

Food: Provided by **members whose names begin with R through Z**. Please arrive before 6:45 to set up, and plan to stay afterwards to clean up.

February 20 Meeting: Ali Riza Tuna on Reconstructing Extinct Carpets from Paintings



Ali Riza Tuna

On February 20, ACOR-sponsored speaker Ali Riza Tuna will present “Back to the Future: Reconstructing Extinct Anatolian Carpets from Renaissance Paintings.”

Born in Istanbul and educated in France, Ali Riza has long been a passionate collector of Anatolian textiles, as well as an independent scholar and lecturer on various aspects of early Anatolian carpets. He gave papers at the Istanbul and Stockholm ICOCs and has published essays in *Oriental Carpet and Textile Studies VII* and Stephan Ionescu's *Antique Ottoman Carpets in Transylvania*. His rugs and kilims have been included in numerous exhibitions in Germany and Turkey.

In his presentation, Ali Riza will focus on early Anatolian carpets now lost to us save for their depiction in Italian Renaissance paintings. Via his painstaking art-historical research, he has reconstructed—both virtually and as actual woven objects—vanished rugs shown in famous works of Domenico Ghirlandaio, Piero della Francesca, and Lorenzo Lotto. He will bring to the meeting at least one of these extinct but now recreated rugs.

For a show and tell following Ali Riza's presentation, NERS members are invited to bring old Anatolian carpets, especially those with designs reflecting the “classical” tradition as shown in European paintings.



Detail showing carpet depicted in Ghirlandaio's *Madonna and Child Enthroned with Saints*, ca. 1483

February 20 Meeting Details

Time: 7:00 p.m.

Place: Durant-Kenrick House, 286 Waverley Ave.
Newton Centre, MA, 02458

Directions: From Boston and east, take Mass Pike to exit 17 and follow signs for Boston/Newton Centre, making a U-turn over the Pike. At Newton Centre sign, go RIGHT on Centre St. for 0.1 miles. Go LEFT on Franklin St. for 0.3 miles. Turn RIGHT on Waverley and go 0.2 miles. House is on LEFT.

From Rt. 128 and west, take Mass Pike to exit 17, turn RIGHT onto Centre Street and follow directions above.

From Watertown Square: Take Galen Street (Rt. 16) toward Newton Centre for 0.4 miles. Continue to Washington St. toward West Newton/Newton Centre, making a U-turn over the Pike. At Newton Centre sign, go RIGHT on Centre Street and follow directions above.

Parking: On Kenrick Street. Parking places at the end of the Durant-Kenrick House driveway may be used for dropping off people or supplies, but **NOT for parking during the meeting.**

Food: Provided by members whose names begin with **A through G**. Please arrive before 6:45 to set up, and plan to stay afterwards to clean up.

September Meeting Review: Jeff Spurr on the Impact of Kashmir Shawls in Persia



1. Jeff Spurr discussing a striped *jamawar* fragment, woven ca. 1810–15, at the show and tell after his talk

On September 19, Jeff Spurr **(1)** opened the 2014–15 season with “The Allure of Luxury: The Impact of the Kashmir Shawl on Dress and Design in Persia,” a talk he had given in various forms to other rug societies and at long last had the opportunity to share with NERS members.

Throughout their history, Jeff explained, Kashmir shawls have been considered luxury goods, combining rare material, beautiful design, technical finesse, and practical appeal. Jeff compared them to Yuan and Ming blue-and-white porcelain, which had similar attributes, were widely admired and sought-after, and likewise prompted local attempts at emulation that generally fell short of the originals and wound up filling a lower-priced spot in the marketplace.

Kashmir shawls were present and esteemed in Persia a century or more before Europeans began to clamor for them. Originally, the term *shal* simply referred to any items made from fine goat hair (pashmina). Through the political might of the Mughal rulers of India from the late seventeenth century into the nineteenth, Srinigar and its weavers received the entire supply of pashmina produced in Tibet, giving them a monopoly. “Shawl” came to designate the rectangular garment—typically worn around a man’s shoulders—that was created from the fine goat hair. Besides shawls, the same pashmina fabric was used for finished pieces including *patkas* (cummerbunds) and turban cloths, and for *jamawar* (yardage woven in lengths similar to long shawls), made to be tailored into other items.

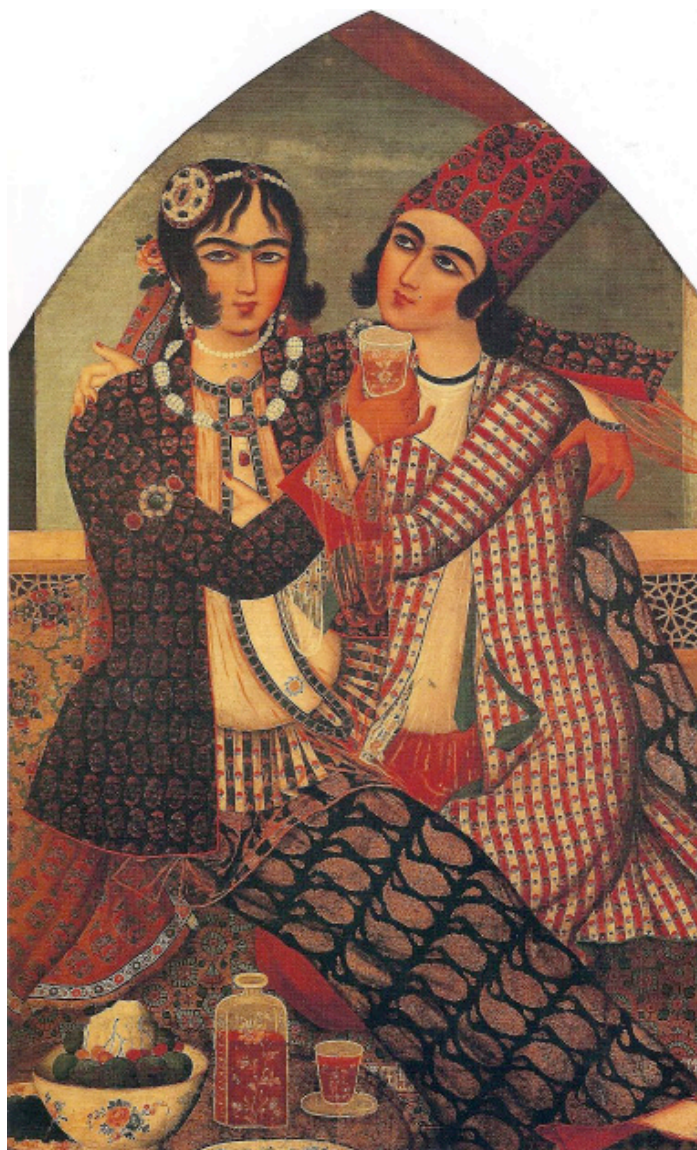


2. Detail of a mid-17th-century Kashmir shawl end panel decorated in Mughal floral style (MFA 1945.540)

The earliest shawls were likely undyed, with increased use of color appearing at the end of the sixteenth and very start of the seventeenth century. From textual descriptions and Mughal miniature paintings, we can deduce that a distinctive Mughal floral style developed during the seventeenth century for use in shawls **(2)** as well as other arts, displacing earlier Persian floral forms and geometric motifs. Sources for the new Mughal style included herbals and botanical manuals brought by Europeans to the Mughal court and drawn upon by court artists.

Evidence shows that Kashmir shawls were exported to Persia during the seventeenth century, but there is far more eighteenth-century documentation, from European travelers to Persia as well as local observers, of shawls' popularity. Persian large-scale portraiture, developed in the late seventeenth century, provides additional information on shawl wearers and their favored styles and designs. Whereas shawls were primarily male attire in India, and in Europe they would become female apparel, in Persia they were worn by both sexes (3).

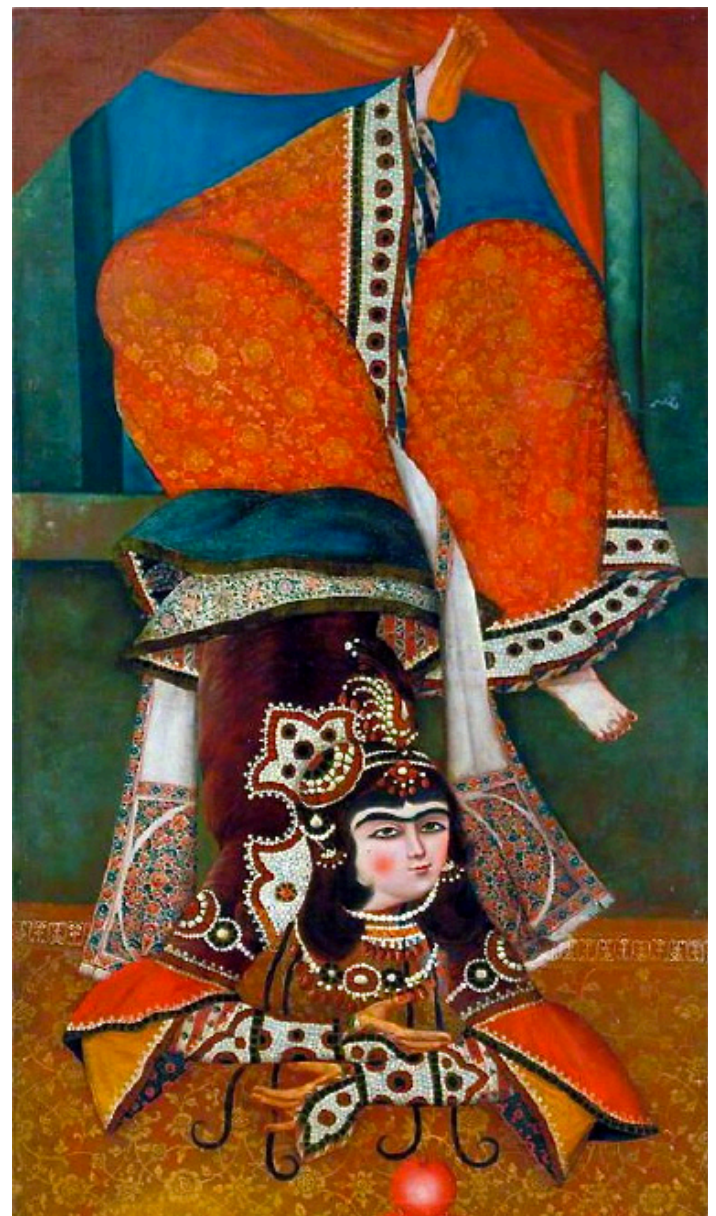
Texts and paintings attest that the Persian elite preferred the Kashmiri imports to domestic imitations, and chose to clothe themselves, and even their servants (4), in these luxury goods.



3. Qajar oil painting, ca. 1805, showing an amorous couple clothed head-to-toe in various *jamavar* fabrics

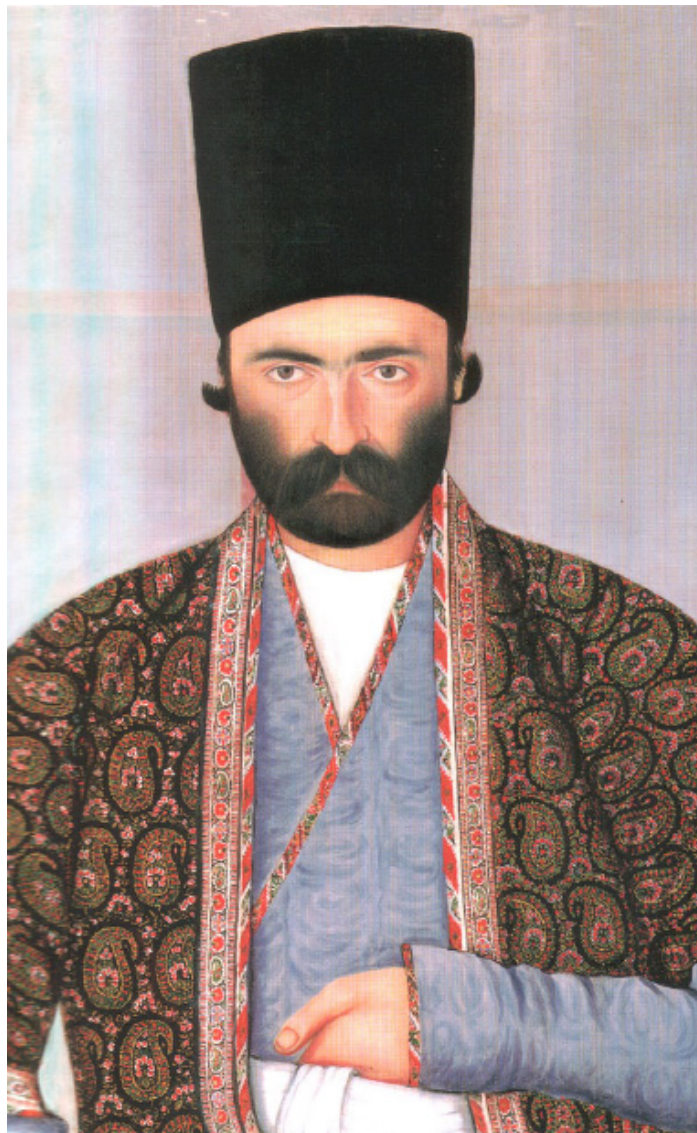
Persian demand for Kashmir shawls continued into the early nineteenth century. Kashmir supplied many different shawl types, plus a wide range of specialty items, from leggings to curtains, cupboard covers, and tomb shrouds. The enduring esteem for Kashmiri products is reflected in pricing records: an 1849 account, for example, indicates that Kashmir shawls cost between 25 and 600 ducats, whereas Kerman shawls ranged from 6 to 40 ducats and Mashad shawls from 5 to 20.

During the course of the century, however, several factors reduced Kashmiri domination of the Persian market. Persian shahs had at times attempted to prohibit the import of Kashmir shawls in order to promote domestic production,



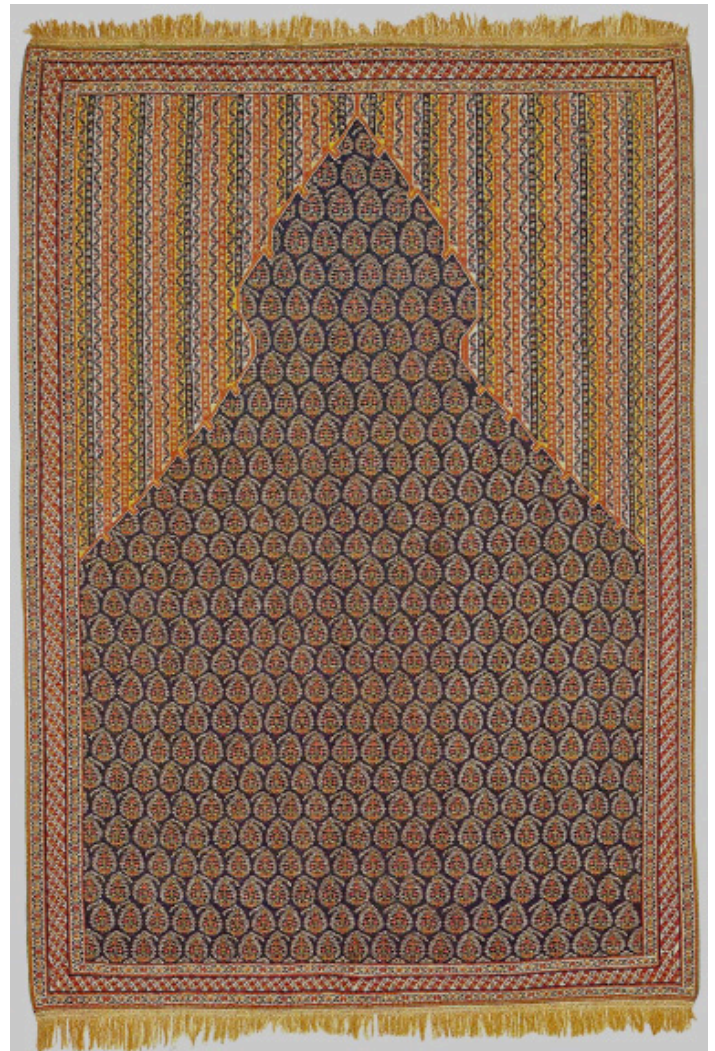
4. Qajar oil painting, early 19th century, of a female acrobat wearing a Kashmir *patka* around her waist

although such dictates were limited and usually short-lived. Due to political unrest and famine in Kashmir itself, shawl production declined, starting in the 1830s. At the same time, demand—now worldwide—for Kashmir shawls outpaced the supply of fine Himalayan goat hair, prompting increasing consumption of rival Kermani products. By mid-century, the volume of shawl cloth produced in Persia surpassed that of Kashmir—partially the result of an order in the 1850s by Nasr al-Din Shah that robes of honor worn by Persian grandees be made of *termeh*, a Kerman-made cloth that copied Kashmiri work (5). Finally, in the later nineteenth century, economic conditions in Persia deteriorated, and Kermani production fell victim to the growing use of European manufactured cloth.



5. Portrait, ca. 1855–66, of Qajar nobleman Imam Quli Khan wearing a robe of *termeh* (Kirman cloth)

Jeff concluded his presentation with comments on the influence of shawl design on rugs and kilims. In the 1860s and '70s, he explained, rug weaving in Persia underwent a significant revival, with considerable emphasis on export to Europe, where Kashmir shawls had long been appreciated. Unsurprisingly, some carpet weavers adopted characteristic shawl-design elements. A Senneh kilim, for example, might typically display offset botehs surrounded by “barberpole” stripes (6)—field and border motifs widely used in shawls. Jeff also illustrated another Senneh kilim with a niche design, which bore striking similarity to an earlier Persian panel constructed from Kashmir shawl material. Even tribal weavers adopted motifs of Kashmiri origin, such as the single or composite (“mother and child”) botehs seen in South Persian rugs.



6. Senneh kilim, 19th century, with offset botehs and diagonally striped main border derived from Kashmir shawls



7. Detail of one end panel of a Kashmir shawl, ca. 1805–10

The influence of Kashmir shawls also extended to rugs of the Caucasus—particularly those of Shirvan, a former province of Persia. Jeff compared the lattice-and-flower field and spandrels of a ca. 1870s Shirvan prayer rug with similar Kashmiri fabric produced around 1810. Familiar “Marasali” rugs, he noted, derive their field and border motifs from Kashmiri predecessors made a century earlier.

For the show and tell after Jeff’s talk, members brought textiles and rugs that illustrated the theme of the evening. Kashmiri examples included a ca. 1805–10 long shawl with graceful boteh end panels (7); a piece of striped *jamawar* fabric, ca. 1810–15 (1); and a moon shawl dating from the 1830s, likely made for the European market.

Representing the Caucasus were an Azerbaijani bagface with botehs (8); a Shirvan rug with red-and-white “barberpole” borders surrounding a multicolor, diagonally striped field; and a gold-ground Shirvan prayer rug featuring botehs in a lattice and the conventional “Marasali” border motif—stylized Mughal floral forms, *not* grape clusters!—outlining the mihrab. From Iran came a fine Afshar pile rug with offset botehs on a red ground (9), and several little comb or jewelry bags, most of them made from Kermani shawl cloth. Jeff surmised that a Persian man’s robe, likely dating from the end of the nineteenth century, was machine woven on a Jacquard loom.

Our hearty thanks to Jeff for his extensively researched, documented, and illustrated talk!

Jim Adelson

Reviewer’s note: This summary lacks much of the enriching detail of Jeff’s presentation, which he plans to publish.



8. Bagface with botehs, Khyzy district of Azerbaijan (near Baku), 19th century



9. Botehs in the field of a fine Afshar rug, 19th century

Grogan & Company Relocating to Boston (after a Farewell Rug Sale in Dedham)

On November 3, Michael Grogan will hold an auction of 111 rug and textile lots at his Dedham gallery (the catalogue and preview times are posted on the Grogan & Company website, groganco.com). Thereafter, Michael will move his operation to Boston.

He plans to inaugurate his new gallery, at 20 Charles Street, with a December 7 sale that will include rugs as well as fine and decorative arts and jewelry. Joining Michael and his wife, Nancy, in owning and running Grogan & Company is their daughter Lucy.

The Charles Street location to which Michael is moving formerly housed the French antiques business Room with a View, whose contents Michael auctioned in April 2014. The quarters are on street level; nearby parking is available in the Boston Common Garage.

We heartily welcome Michael back to the city (he left his Commonwealth Avenue gallery for Dedham in the 1990s), and we hope that, in friendly competition with Skinner, the presence of Grogan & Company will make Boston the indisputable “Hub” of North American rug auctions.



Nancy, Lucy, and Michael Grogan, with Gus (in front of a handsome Serapi)

Editor’s Note: Review of the October 24 Meeting Will Appear in the Next Issue

Jim Adelson, the longstanding and accomplished scribe of NERS meetings, is recuperating from a serious cycling injury. In his absence, Jim’s fellow Steering Committee member Richard Larkin has offered to review Meredith Montague and Buzz Dohanian’s October 24 presentation on rug care and preservation. Richard’s report will appear in the February 2015 *View from the Fringe*.

Rug and Textile Events

Auctions

- Nov. 3, Dedham: Grogan & Company, Oriental Rugs, Carpets, and Textiles (see announcement above)
- Nov. 29, Wiesbaden: Rippon Boswell, Collector Carpets
- Dec. 7, Boston: Grogan & Company, December Sale (see announcement above)

Exhibitions

- Boston, MFA: “Kilims from the Collection of Raoul Tschbull,” Oct. 7–July 7, 2015
- Toronto, Textile Museum of Canada: “From Ashgabat to Istanbul: Oriental Rugs from Canadian Collections,” Oct. 8–Apr. 19, 2015

Future NERS Meetings

- March 13: A Night at the MFA, featuring kilims from the collection of Raoul “Mike” Tschbull (MFA, Boston)
- April 17: Beau Ryan, “Bits and Pieces: Collecting Rug Fragments” (Lincoln First Parish)

Photo Credits

- p. 1: John Collins
- p. 2: Ali Riza Tuna; Wikimedia Commons
- pp. 3–5: Julia Bailey (fig. 1); MFA Boston (fig. 2); L. Diba, *Royal Persian Painting* (figs. 3–5); E. Herrmann, *Seltene Orienteppiche V* (fig. 6); Yon Bard (figs. 7–9)
- p. 7: Michael Grogan
- pp. 8–9: Skinner
- pp. 10–11: Rich Blumenthal (figs. 1–3, 5); Ann Nicholas (fig. 4)

Skinner Rug Sale: Lots of Choice

On September 28, at its Boston gallery, Skinner held its fall auction of oriental carpets and related textiles. It was the second rug sale organized by Lawrence Kearney with the assistance of Erika Jorjorian. Two nights previous, Skinner hosted a public reception and tour of the offerings; many NERS members turned out to inspect the 328 lots and hear Lawrence's take on his favorites.

Predictably, top prices of the sale were achieved by room-size Fereghan Sarouk **(1)** and Bakhshaish carpets, a Star Kazak, and a big, splashy Shakhrisabz suzani **(2)**. But bidders were also enthusiastic about less conventional textile offerings, such as an eighteenth-century Kashmir shawl end panel with supremely elegant "proto-botehs" **(3)**, and a lovely Chinese rug with a pictorial center **(4)**. Among lots acquired or deaccessioned by NERS members were numerous Kashmir shawls and shawl fragments, a striking Egyptian appliqué **(5)**, a robust Kurdish prayer rug **(6)**, and a small Anatolian kilim with exquisite color **(7)**. For a full listing with illustrations and prices, see skinnerinc.com/auctions/2752B/lots.



1. Fereghan Sarouk carpet, \$25,830; 2. Shakhrisabz suzani, \$33,210; 3. early Kashmir shawl end panel, \$7,995; 4. pictorial Beijing Chinese rug, \$12,300; 5. Egyptian appliqué panel inscribed in Arabic, "The house that's generous is filled with light," \$1,845; 6. East Anatolian Kurdish prayer rug, \$1,353; 7. Central Anatolian kilim, \$4,920. Prices include buyer's premium.



ARTS in San Francisco



1. Ben Banayan, a San Francisco dealer and cofounder of rugrabbit.com, in his room at Motel Capri

Every October, thirty or more American and international dealers travel to San Francisco for ARTS—the Antique Rug and Textile Show. Renting rooms in the three-story Motel Capri, they hang their offerings on walls, pile them on beds **(1)**, and drape them over the balconies **(2)**. The informal setting of the show provides a comfortable atmosphere for browsing some great antique collectible rugs and textiles and for mingling with fellow ruggies from around the world (see “San Francisco Rug Week,” in the November 2011 issue of *View from the Fringe*, available online at ne-rugsociety.org/newsletter/fringe-v19n2-11-2011.pdf).



2. Bob Mann of Denver and Reyn Staffel of Springfield, OR, in discussion on a carpet-draped balcony

This year's ARTS, held October 16–19, was no exception. In addition to the dealers' show (3), it featured a superb exhibition, "Central Asian Weavings from the Collection of Dennis and Wesley Marquand" (4); a picnic at Jim Dixon's home in Occidental, with a viewing of his exceptional collection of early Turkish carpets; a talk, "Cleaning and Care of Collectible Textiles," by Bob Mann of Denver; and the opening reception of "Light on Persia," an exhibition of Persian tribal weavings at Tom Cole's private gallery in San Rafael.

Among attendees at ARTS were several past NERS speakers and current or former members (2–5). Qualitatively, as noted by *hali.com*, the rugs and textiles in both the dealers' show and the exhibitions spoke for themselves. Even the weather was perfect—what more could one ask for?

Ann Nicholas



3. NERS member John Collins talking with former member Ed Berkhoff, who recently moved to the San Francisco area



4. Left to right: former NERS member Jeff Dworsky of Stonington, ME, with members Rich Blumenthal and Lawrence Kearney in the Marquand exhibition of Central Asian carpets



5. Jeff Dworsky and another former NERS member, Bethany Mendenhall of Irvine, CA, examining a Chinese throne seat cover with Milan dealer Alberto Levy

Contributors to this issue: Julia Bailey (editor),

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Distributor: Jim Sampson

NERS 2014–15 Steering Committee: Jim Adelson, Julia Bailey (co-chair), Yon Bard, Richard Belkin, Louise Dohanian, Joel Greifinger, Mark Hopkins (emeritus), Richard Larkin, Lloyd Kannenberg, Ann Nicholas (co-chair), Jim Sampson, Jeff Spurr

If you haven't already done so, please renew your NERS membership now! You can pay online using a credit card: go to www.ne-rugsociety.org/NERS-paypal.htm and follow directions. Alternatively, you can mail your check, payable to NERS, to our Charlestown address (see the box opposite).

The New England Rug Society is an informal, non-profit organization of people interested in enriching their knowledge and appreciation of antique oriental rugs and textiles. Our meetings are held seven or more times a year. Membership levels and annual dues are: Single \$45, Couple \$65, Supporting \$90, Patron \$120, Student \$25. Membership information and renewal forms are available on our website, www.ne-rugsociety.org; by writing to the New England Rug Society, P.O. Box 290393, Charlestown, MA 02129; or by contacting Jim Sampson at jahome22@gmail.com.



The New England Rug Society

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