



# View from the Fringe

Newsletter of the New England Rug Society



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[www.ne-rugsociety.org](http://www.ne-rugsociety.org)

## New Date! March 28 Webinar Preview: Thomas Wild, “The Tuyuhun Gul: Tracking So-Called RKO Rugs in Eastern Central Asia”



**Thomas Wild**

Carpet scholar Charles Grant Ellis first attached the name “RKO” to a group of carpets from Eastern Central Asia. He derived the term from an American television test pattern used by the RKO (Radio-Keith-Orpheum) radio and television network in the 1940s and '50s. Arguably no designation for a carpet group is more out of context than “RKO,” which underscores the enduring mystery of these carpets, examples of which now number sixty.

Following leads provided by Hans König and Koos de Jong, presenter Thomas Wild will further explore the subject by discussing his field research in Central Tibet, where he was able to localize motifs directly related to RKO iconography.

### Webinar Details

**Hosted by the New England Rug Society**

**Date and Time:** Saturday, Mar. 28, 2026, 1 PM ET

**Venue:** Your desktop, laptop, or tablet

**Registration:** If you have registered for a previous NERS webinar, you will receive an email invitation to this one.

Or register with this link: <https://tinyurl.com/3z8nawc9>



**Detail of a so-called RKO rug, Yarkand or Gansu, ca. 1800**

One motif in particular, which he refers to as the Tuyuhun gul, takes center stage; its temporal scope ranges from China’s Tang dynasty to the modern era of Eastern Central Asia, and its geographic span from Central Tibet to the cultures of the nomadic horse peoples along the Silk Road.

Thomas, who runs a carpet shop in Berlin, is an independent researcher, collector, and dealer of rugs and textiles. His primary interest is in carpets from East Central Asia; since the late 1980s he has traveled there extensively, focusing particularly on Tibet. In 2021, he co-curated the exhibition *Drumze: Metamorphoses of the Tibetan Carpet*, at the Carpet Museum of Schloss Voigtsberg, in Oelsnitz, Germany.

## April 18 Webinar Preview: Ahmet Balkan, “Echoes of Holbein: Karakeçili Carpets and the Question of Tribal Emblems”



**Ahmet Balkan**

The Karakeçili are a Turkmen tribal group documented in Ottoman sources since the 1450s and known for a distinctive tradition of pile-carpet weaving in northwestern Anatolia, particularly in the nineteenth century. Many of these weavings feature striking star-centered octagonal motifs that recall the famous “Holbein” patterns of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. What can such similarities—spanning four centuries—tell us about how designs travel, persist, and transform within tribal traditions?

In this talk, Ahmet Balkan presents a focused case study of a core Karakeçili group of carpets whose compositions consistently preserve a paired-medallion system: a Holbein-like star medallion and a star-and-hooks medallion with strong Central Asian resonances. Through close visual analysis and comparison with related Bergama rugs dating to around 1700–1800, and with classical Holbein carpets, the webinar offers a strengthened argument for tribal transmission and visual memory as key forces behind the long life of the Holbein medallion in western Anatolia.

Ahmet is an architect and historian whose research focuses on tribal Turkic weaving traditions from Anatolia to Central Asia. He holds an M.Sc. in Architecture from Istanbul Technical University and an M.A. in Near and Middle Eastern Studies from Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich. After many years of international architectural practice, he is currently conducting doctoral research at LMU Munich on Anatolian tribal carpets and Turkmen visual heritage. Alongside his academic work, he leads a large-scale project on Caucasian flatweaves at the Theodor Springmann Foundation, Heidelberg.



**Karakeçili carpet fragment, northwestern Anatolia, ca. 1800 or earlier, offered at Rippon Boswell in 2010**

### Webinar Details

**Hosted by the New England Rug Society and co-sponsored by Textile Museum Associates of Southern California (TMA/SC)**

**Date and Time:** Saturday, Apr. 18, 2026, 1 PM ET

**Venue:** Your desktop, laptop, or tablet

**Registration:** If you have registered for a previous NERS webinar, you will receive an email invitation to this one.

Or register with this link: <https://tinyurl.com/ABFringe>

# May 16 Show-and-Tell Meeting: Rugs and Other Weavings of the Transcaucasus

**Bring your Transcaucasian weavings—pile rugs, kilims, sumak bags, so-called vernehs and silehs, etc.—to this friendly, in-person show-and-tell meeting!**

After food and refreshments (provided by NERS), we'll turn to your offerings, big or small. We encourage your comments about where and when you believe they were made, how they were used, and what led you to acquire them.

## Meeting Details

**Date and Time:** Saturday, May 16, 1 PM

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

**Getting there:** Follow your GPS directions.

**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:** Sandwich-and-cookie fare, courtesy of NERS!



Colors and patterns of the Transcaucasus: members' pile rugs, sumak bagface, and kilim, most of them shown at previous meetings or picnics. Will any of these return for our May 16 show-and-tell?

# Auction Review: Grogan & Company, Fine Rugs and Textiles

By Richard Belkin

On January 15 and 16, Grogan & Company conducted an auction of antique oriental rugs and carpets at their gallery on Charles Street, at the foot of Beacon Hill in downtown Boston. Grogan's sales are always filled with high-quality old rugs from estates and collectors, and the offerings in this sale were some of the best in recent memory, with all areas of the rug-collecting spectrum being well represented. This review reflects my personal favorites, with emphasis on rugs I thought had better color, composition, and wool quality, but with little regard for monetary value as a criterion. So let us take a look:

Lot 2 **(1)** was a beautiful example of a 200-year-old, formal-design Anatolian prayer rug, using exuberant, strong village dyes. The colors of the border perfectly complemented the green of the upper field, and the outside blue-and-red narrow border framed the composition and brought the eye into the field again. This is a well-known rug, having been pictured in previous publications.

The next rug, lot 3 **(2)** was a Caucasian Perepedil prayer rug that was better than its picture in the catalogue. Its ivory field had a mid-nineteenth-century look to it, and it retained its mostly original ends and one original side cord. The main border was of an older form not often encountered. The many small good-luck and tribal motifs scattered throughout the field pointed to a very experienced and artful weaver as its creator.

Lot 48 **(3)** was an old—250 years—Anatolian rug, with an iconic field design having many of the same qualities that I liked in lot 2, including a formal and well-balanced composition with no design irregularities, and colors with a robust village aura. The upper and lower chevrons were a fine touch—imagine this rug without them.



2. Lot 3, Perepedil prayer rug, \$7,500



1. Lot 2, Central Anatolian prayer rug, \$14,000 (this and all prices in this review are hammer prices)



3. Lot 48, Star Ushak rug, \$52,500

Lot 56 (4) was a Pinwheel Kazak, a type that has appeared much more often at auctions in the last few years (I can recall at least four examples) than in the past. This example was noteworthy in that—unless I am mistaken—it was in original, unrestored condition, with natural dyes including a really nice blue. It had very attractive design spacing—the pinwheels were not squashed or misshapen—and a little two-headed animal wandering in the field.

Next in the catalogue of my favorites was lot 63 (5), which I nearly overlooked amidst the many Turkmen weavings displayed in the Grogan salesroom. It had superb

colors and condition and featured silk highlights and a wide multi-stripped border with a modernist feel to it.

Lot 57 (6) was another very worthy Turkmen weaving. Its design of diamond-shaped guls is an old and uncommon one that most Turkoman collectors would like to have represented in their collections, and not many do.

Lot 90 (7) was a lovely, decorative Serapi carpet that I only got a brief look at. (Grogan's auction facility is a bit on the small side, and the room-sized rugs were not all displayed at once.) While I can't comment on its condition, as an example of art for the floor, it was the best decorative carpet in the sale.



4. Lot. 56, Pinwheel Kazak rug, \$60,000



6. Lot 57, Tekke torba, \$9,000



5. Lot 63, Ersari chuval, \$5,000



7. Lot 90, Serapi carpet, \$14,000

Lot 147 (8) was a wonderfully colored, museum-quality Cloudband Kazak in original condition, with thick pile, the best, beautifully mellowed dyes, and complete original sides and ends—a great example that I should have bought myself.

On to lot 115 (9): if you like formal Persian rugs, this one was wonderful, with a rare gold/yellow field and baskets of rustic flowers everywhere. Old Fereghans usually have condition issues or dry foundations, but this one was soft like a piece of old linen. It was bought by a noted local collector and NERS member.

Although the second day of the sale featured rugs with lower estimates than those of the day before, there were quite a few lots that I found to be examples of beautiful weaving art.

8. Lot 147,  
Cloudband Kazak  
rug, \$7,500



9. Lot 115,  
Fereghan rug,  
\$7,000



Lot 206 (10) was really old—worn, but *really old*. Sixteenth- and even seventeenth-century main carpets are uncommon, and Egyptian carpets especially so. This example was noteworthy as a true rarity.

Lot 238 (11): as a collector of eastern Caucasian rugs myself, I thought this rug was outstanding. I have never seen the Bidjov pattern used in a prayer rug before. The spacing was superb, with small and large motifs appearing everywhere but without giving the design an overly crowded feeling. The inner ivory border with little strawberries was the best. The all-natural dyes were lovely and soft, and the rug was in original untouched condition. In my mind's eye I could picture this carpet hanging on my stairway wall. Didn't happen . . .

10. Lot 206,  
Cairene rug,  
\$32,500



11. Lot 238,  
Shirvan  
prayer rug,  
\$4,750



And finally, here are a few quick comments on other interesting or beautiful old rugs in these two sales:

Lot 8 (12): The same rug sold in a recent Grogan auction [Jan. 21, 2024] for \$9,000. Why so much more than the \$3500 it brought in this sale?

Lot 187 (13): I once owned this bag and sold it for \$400.

Lot 265 (14): Note the masterful execution of the animals in this rug, from the lions at the bottom of the tree

to the birds in the branches. They were all smiling and content—even the tree looked happy.

Lastly, compare lot 13 (15) with lot 21 (16): why was one almost ten times the price of the other?

To conclude, attending a Grogan & Company auction preview is like going to a small museum where one can handle and examine the exhibits close-up and personally. I look forward to their next rug auction.



12. Lot 8, Alban Kuba rug, \$3,500



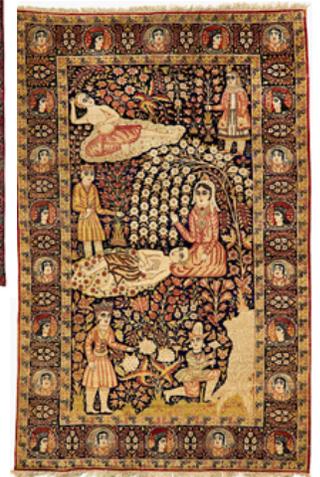
14. Lot 265. Persian “tree of life meditation rug,” \$2,750



15. Lot 13, Kirman pictorial carpet, \$25,000



13. Lot 187, South Persian bag, \$1,600



16. Lot 21, Kirman pictorial rug, \$2,750

## Upcoming Rug and Textile Events

### Auctions

- Mar. 14, Wiesbaden, Rippon Boswell  
Online Auction
- Mar. 17, Philadelphia, Material Culture  
Oriental Rugs from American Estates
- Mar. 31, Vienna, Dorotheum  
Oriental Carpets, Textiles, and Tapestries
- May 3–4, Philadelphia, Material Culture  
Oriental Rugs from American Estates

### Exhibitions

- Until April 6, Brescia, MITA Cultural Center  
The Dragon’s Weaves: Carpets of the Imperial Dynasties from the Zaleski Collection
- Until May 24, San Francisco, de Young Museum  
Textiles from Central Asia and the Middle East
- Until June 20, Washington, GWU/Textile Museum  
Adorning the Horse: Equestrian Textiles for Power and Prestige

**Conference** April 28–30, Buellton, CA, Santa Ynez Valley Marriott, Carpet & Textile Forum

**Photo Credits** p. 1 Thomas Wild p. 2 Ahmet Balkan (left), Rippon Boswell (right) p. 3 Julia or Doug Bailey pp. 4–7 Grogan & Company

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**The New England Rug Society** is an informal, nonprofit organization of people interested in enriching their knowledge and appreciation of antique oriental rugs and textiles. Our webinars and meetings are held seven or more times a year. Membership levels and annual dues are: Patron \$170, Supporting \$110, Couple \$80, Single \$60, Student \$30.

For more information and forms for joining NERS or renewing your membership, go to <https://ne-rugsociety.org/membership/>



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