

The Kevorkian Carpet's Transnational Tapestry

Image no: 1

Caption: *The Kevorkian Hyderabad Carpet*, 17th Century, 1596 x 3250 cm, Wikimedia Commons.

Link:

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Unknown,_India,_17th_Century_-_The_Kevorkian_Hydrabad_Carpet_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg

Image no: 2

Caption: Kamal Muhammad and Chand Muhammad, *The House of Bijapur*, c. 1680, Ink, opaque watercolour, gold, and silver on paper, 41.3 x 32.5 cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Link:

<https://www.metmuseum.org/Collections/search-the-collections/140010589?rpp=20&pg=1&ft=Kamal+Muhammad&pos=1>

Image no: 3

Caption: Bichitr, *Padshahnama plate 10 : Shah-Jahan receives his three eldest sons and Asaf Khan during his accession ceremonies*, c. 1630–1657, Manuscript on paper with gold decorated borders; miniatures in gold and bodycolour, 58.6 x 36.8 cm, Wikimedia Commons.

Link:

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bichitr_-_Padshahnama_plate_10_-_Shah-Jahan_receives_his_three_eldest_sons_and_Asaf_Khan_during_his_accession_..._-_Google_Art_Project.jpg

Image no: 4

Caption: *Maratha darbar*, c. 1820, 31.5 x 24.5 cm, Wikimedia Commons.

Link:

https://hi.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E0%A4%9A%E0%A4%BF%E0%A4%A4%E0%A5%8D%E0%A4%B0:Maratha_darbar.jpg

Image no: 5

Caption: *Shah Jahan in durbar*, c. 1650, Opaque aquarell, Wikimedia Commons.

Link:

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Shah_Jahan_in_durbar_\(c.1650\)_- BL Add.Or.3853.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Shah_Jahan_in_durbar_(c.1650)_-_BL_Add.Or.3853.jpg)

Image no: 6

Caption: *The Fremlin Carpet*, c. 1640, Woollen pile on cotton, 599 x 249 cm, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Link: <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O74043/the-fremlin-carpet-carpet-unknown/>

Image no: 7

Caption: *Pictorial carpet*, c. 1590–1600, Cotton warp and weft with wool knotted pile, 243 x 155 cm, Museum of Fine Arts Boston, Massachusetts.

Link:

<https://collections.mfa.org/objects/71487/pictorial-carpet;jsessionid=1843EC5F9F5256FF82C1A543C1D709D9>

Image no: 8

Caption: *Silk Animal Carpet*, Second half 16th century, Silk (warp, weft, and pile); asymmetrically knotted pile, 241 x 178 cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Link:

<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/446642?ft=safavid&offset=80&Brpp=40&Bpos=117>

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Caption: George Francis White, *Tombs of the kings of Golconda*, 1838, Wikimedia Commons.

Link: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Views_in_India_0174a.jpg

Image no: 10

Caption: *The Jaipur Garden Carpet*, late 16th or early 17th century, Wool, cotton and silk, 850 x 380 cm, Wikimedia Commons.

Link: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Jaipur_Garden_Carpet.jpg

Image no: 11

Caption: Charles Huang, *Taj Mahal Aerial Panoramic View Fly Out Main Gate and Yamuna River by Drone*, Adobe Stock.

Link: <https://stock.adobe.com/in/video/taj-mahal-aerial-panoramic-view-fly-out-main-gate-and-yamuna-river-by-drone/241863263>

Image no: 12

Caption: *Vase*, c. 18th–19th century, Glass; blown, painted, tooled, 22.5 x 9.4 cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Link: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/444806>

Image no: 13

Caption: *Isfahan Vase Rug*, c. 1875, 208 x 145 cm, Claremont Rug Company, Oakland.

Link:

<https://www.claremontrug.com/antique-oriental-rugs-carpets/persian/neutral/isfahan-vase-rug-central-persian-5854>

Image no: 14

Caption: *Persian Tabriz Medallion Rug*, Silk and wool, 208 x 148 cm, Essie Carpets, London.

Link: <https://www.essiecarpets.com/product/persian-tabriz-medallion-rug-silk-and-wool/>

Image no: 15

Caption: *Double-Niche Carpet*, 1650–1750, Knotted wool pile on wool foundation, 250.19 x 163.83 cm, Wikimedia Commons.

Link: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:9Double-Niche_Carpet_LACMA_M.2004.32.jpg

Image no: 16

Caption: *The Baillet-Latour Mamluk Carpet*, early 16th century, 258 x 240 cm, Wikimedia Commons.

Link: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Baillet-Latour_Mamluk_Carpet.jpg

Image no: 17

Caption: *Kalamkari Prayer Mat*, 20th century, Cotton, natural dyes, 141 x 95 cm, Museum of Art & Photography (MAP), Bengaluru.

Link:

https://map.cumulus.co.in/client/map/collection#/search/3907?src=srh&q=Kalamkari&_qtp=_flt&culture=Andhra%20Pradesh,%20India&view=grid&searchField=All&limit=20&page=1

IMAGE CREDITS

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Caption: *Kalamkari*, 20th century, Cotton, natural dyes, 118 x 82 cm, Museum of Art & Photography (MAP), Bengaluru.

Link:

https://map.cumulus.co.in/client/map/collection#/search/11999?src=srh&q=Kalamkari&_qtp=flt&culture=Andhra%20Pradesh,%20India&view=grid&searchField=All&limit=20&page=1

Image no: 19

Caption: *Wall hanging with design of trees, peacocks, tigers, and other animals*, 1892–1893, Cotton, 255.3 x 113 cm, Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, and Google Arts & Culture.

Link:

<https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/wall-hanging-with-design-of-trees-peacocks-tigers-and-other-animals/SwF2l2aTlrTidg>

Image no: 20

Caption: *Dastarkhan, Floor Spread*, 1871–1930, Kalamkari technique on cotton, 400 x 90 cm, Sanskriti Museums, New Delhi, and Google Arts & Culture.

Link: https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/dastarkhan-floor-spread/EQGuPVgz1e97_w?hl=en

Image no: 21

Caption: Muhammad Ali, *A Royal Picnic on a Terrace*, c. 1620, Gum tempera and gold on paper, 23.4 x 14.6 cm, The Cleveland Museum of Art, Ohio.

Link: <https://www.clevelandart.org/art/1920.1966>

The Kevorkian Carpet was made in the seventeenth century for the palaces of the Deccan sultans, whose kingdoms flourished on the Deccan plateau between the Vindhya range and the Krishna river. Created in the city of Golconda, and measuring nearly sixteen-metres long, it is woven with an ivory cotton warp and a red-brown cotton weft, with knots made from wool. It would have been exhibited in the court at ceremonial occasions for special audiences, like many such extravagant ‘darbar’ carpets, as we see here.

Let’s take a closer look at the Carpet’s composition, and the ways in which it reflects transcultural exchanges of its time.

Pond of Fish: A Dance of Symmetry

At the Carpet’s centre is a large sixteen-lobed medallion, which represents an abstract pond with multicoloured fish, whose forms have been turned and twisted to appear more geometric. If you were to cut the Carpet in half, you would see that its top and bottom parts mirror each other perfectly. On either side of the medallion are three distinct shapes, connected through a system of straight and coiling stems. These stems bear a variety of floral arrangements and large leaves that are shaped in the form of fish. The Carpet’s use of mirroring offers a sense of symmetry that balances its large area filled with squares, medallions and flowers.

The ordered chaos of the Carpet is embodied in the contorted shape of the fish. The small ones that occupy the central medallion in a tight, compressed pattern assume a larger scale as they float in the guise of leaves, between the flowers and the squares across the rest of the Carpet. They are influenced by the grotesque animal forms that populated sixteenth-century Mughal carpets. These forms varied in scale and orientation and were not always geometric or symmetrical.

Golconda: The City of Weavers

Let’s now look at the ways in which the Kevorkian Carpet’s site of production — the city of Golconda — shaped its transcultural vocabularies.

The Carpet's use of mirrored geometries and floral motifs is reminiscent of paradisaical iconography in Islamic art, seen especially in Persian garden carpets like the one at the Albert Hall Museum in Jaipur. These designs present a top-down view of the classic quadrilateral garden known as the *chahar bagh*, and are often populated with diverse flora and fauna. The Kevorkian Carpet also includes other Persian influences; for instance, if you turn the Carpet vertically, you'll notice that the latticework resembles a vase, a motif reminiscent of Persian vase carpets. Additionally, the sixteen-lobed central motif of the Kevorkian Carpet is derived from Persian medallion carpets, which represent an open lotus blossoming with sixteen petals.

Alongside its Persianate influences, the Kevorkian Carpet's shapes and stripes also recall Anatolian or Mamluk weaves, which usually contain a central medallion surrounded by other geometric shapes in a colourful, kaleidoscopic design.

All of these transcultural borrowings reveal the hybrid artistic style of Golconda in the seventeenth century. The city was home to diverse weavers from Iran, Turkey, and Anatolia, and their influence can particularly be seen in *kalamkari* textiles from the region. Let us look, for instance, at this *kalamkari dastarkhan* from Masulipatnam, a port city in the modern-day state of Andhra Pradesh. Across several Islamic cultures, a *dastarkhan* traditionally serves as a floor covering on which families have meals. In this particular example, which uses the *kalamkari* hand-block printing on a cotton fabric, we see a central round medallion and a dense array of intricate floral patterns against a madder-red background. The Arabic calligraphy in the borders includes prayers that seek for everyone at the meal to be blessed. We see a similar design in the borders of the Kevorkian Carpet, which resemble illuminated manuscripts of the time.

Even though this Persian style eventually lost its favour in the Deccan courts, textiles like the Kevorkian Carpet serve as a testament to the region's legacy of transcultural exchange.

Postscript

The Kevorkian Carpet was named after its nineteenth-century collector Hagop Kevorkian, and is now housed in the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha, Qatar. It forms a part of the Museum’s carpet collection, which includes other significant pieces like the Ashtapada Carpet. These carpets not only embody international styles in their very making but also in their afterlives, moving across borders, cultures and languages.

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