



# Magic carpets

Talking handmade carpets fit for kings

Adam Gilchrist is founder-owner and chairman of UK-based Veeton Fleece, which produces carpets of superior quality and design, made from muga, pashmina, silk, veeton and supreme Tibetan wool, and enjoys an impressive client list.

His factory in Nepal is managed by a man who came with the personal recommendation of the Dalai Lama and it employs 300 workers making totally bespoke carpets, each one an original creation with every process completed by hand from the spinning, weaving and dyeing to the stitching of bales ready for despatch around the world.

Each carpet is made to order and Gilchrist engages in creative collaborations with the most distinguished interior designers for a galaxy of clients including the royal families of Jordan, Qatar and Kuwait, the Gettys, the Duchess of Devonshire, movie stars Meg Ryan and Robert de Niro and the

likes of Madonna, Elton John, David Bowie and the late George Harrison.

With several new projects on the go with Hugh Henry (of Mlinaric, Henry and Zervudachi) and David Collins Studio, the new launch of the Watts Gallery and new Rolls-Royce mats recently showcased at Masterpiece London, Gilchrist spoke to *MEI* about the company and its products.

**Where did the idea for such a bespoke service come from?**

Once we had finally tuned our workshops to be able to produce the best quality that could be found in Nepal, we realised that we had achieved the technical and creative excellence to offer a purely bespoke service.

In those days, most traditional carpet workshops had a minimal order of either 10 or 20 of the same design which gave them an economy of scale. Our

**Personalisation:** Clients have a great deal of input into the finished product



INTERVIEW

**Colour box:** The company uses traditional materials and dyes

**Collaborations:** Veedon Fleece works with some of the most renowned designers to create unique pieces

ly superior silk from China and another extraordinary silk - 'muga' from Assam. We create in Nepal a unique blend which we call 'veedon' produced from hand carding the best Tibetan wool and silk fibres together to hand spin a superior yarn which creates the sort of soft lustre found in the highest quality antique carpets.

Various other yarns can be and are used on request.

**Where do the designs come from, do you work closely with clients to meet their requirements or do you have a set of designs which you modify to each client?**

The designs are often produced in-house. We create a number of new designs each year and have assembled a comprehensive archive, from which designs can be taken and modified. Most of the time, designs are created by the interior designers or architects who we collaborate with to produce their perfect interior. The designs are often unique to the particular project and never used again. We have an art department which allows sections of designs or complete carpets to be hand painted for presentation. This is a time consuming but rather wonderful way of working.

**How do you produce a bespoke carpet from drawing board to finished product?**

The process for producing bespoke rugs from con-

founding ethos was to produce the best carpets, regardless of cost and without the use of child labour. Our clients, on the whole, were people who can afford the best.

These clients wanted bespoke design, or a 'couture service'. Each carpet would be made individually to their designer's specification. This takes a highly skilled, motivated workshop and organisation, exactly what we created nearly 20 years ago.

**Where are the materials sourced from?**

When we started producing carpets we were using only best Tibetan wool from Tibet and taken in raw form to be processed and hand spun in Nepal. After some time, we developed pashmina which we sourced from China or Mongolia and again processed in Nepal. We later managed to source a high-





**Corporate design:** A rug by Hugh Henry created for the board room of a private equity firm

ception to completion is a long one and we could write a book about it. It is difficult to answer this succinctly in a couple of paragraphs but basically...

The process starts with the room that the carpet will occupy.

In many cases, the room will be undergoing a total transformation including all the furniture and furnishings.

We create a carpet to harmonise with every element of the new room: the floor surface which could be ebony, marble or differing species of natural wood, the furniture, fabrics, colours and wall finishes, even the aspect of the room and the changing effects of natural and artificial light are taken into account.

After this intense study, the moment arrives for a decision on design, colour and the most suitable yarn for the space.

The design could come from Veedon Fleece (VF) or the interior designer or architect's own

specification which will either be hand drawn in watercolour format or computer generated and VF colours chosen to complement the scheme.

By this point budget has been approved and a small sample will be woven. This is after having hand drawn the point paper to scale.

Whilst the point paper is being drawn in our workshops, the selected yarns are carefully dyed and one of the master weavers is instructed on the eventual scheme and size of the carpet which the sample section is to replicate.

The sample is woven, washed and despatched via courier to the UK where it is checked and presented to the interior designer for client approval.

Once approved, a team of weavers is selected who, from experience, we know will weave the best possible carpet to the design and quality specified. Point paper is drawn 1:1 to the size of the carpet for the weavers to follow. This point paper

↳



**The big picture:** Everyday designs take of a special quality (above) and Gilchrist with his favourite piece Big Sea (right)

takes into account the weavers who will carry out the commission.

The yarns are then dyed and wound into balls carefully stored for use during the creation process.

Once the carpet weaving is completed, it is carefully taken from the loom, totally immersed in water and washed, then it is sized and final finishing occurs including the binding of the selvedges and ends. After inspection the carpet is packed and air freighted to the UK where further final inspection and quality control is carried out before, generally, a stain resistant treatment is applied. The carpet is then repacked and delivered to the final destination. Generally, VF's expert team will install the carpets using specialist underlay to ensure that the carpet is correctly situated within the room. This is often overseen by the interior design team and it is always a great pleasure to see the completed result of many months of hard work.

**Can you give examples of some of your clients in the Middle East and also of upcoming projects worldwide?**

Veedon Fleece has produced carpets for many countries in the region including heads of state and VIPs in Qatar, Kuwait and Jordan and ongoing projects in Saudi Arabia and Abu Dhabi. We have recent-



ly completed nine carpets for the two Presidential suites at the Bridgeway Hotel Abu Dhabi.

The company is busy internationally with projects including a palace in Saudi Arabia, a large private residence on Lake Geneva, Switzerland, London houses in Hampstead, Knightsbridge and Belgravia and at No 1 Hyde Park. We are also weaving carpets for commissions in Moscow and sampling for a project residence in Abu Dhabi.

**Do you have a favourite of all the pieces you have produced?**

Yes, my favourite carpet is entitled 'Big Sea' by the interior designer Hugh Henry for an international client in Palm Beach. It is a fantastic carpet and was our first collaboration with Mlinaric, Henry and Zervudachi. We have had a close relationship with this design practice for many years.

Hugh's designs in particular are a favourite, always hand painted, always one-off for the particular client's rooms and it is always a joy to see the finished ensemble.

**What would be the average cost for such a unique piece?**

Every carpet is quoted for before commissions are undertaken, should people be interested in having a carpet made, they can contact [www.veedonfleece.com](http://www.veedonfleece.com).