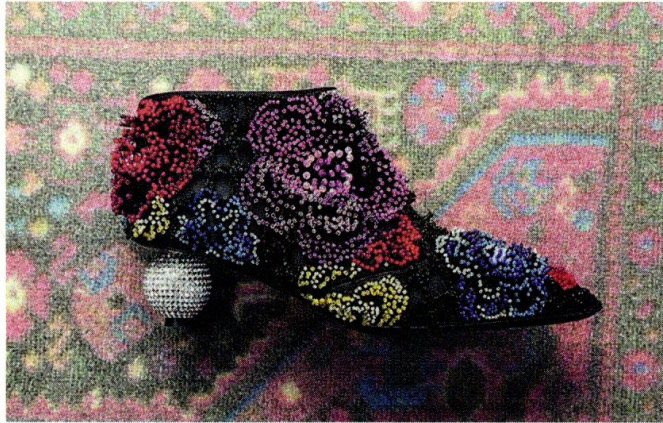
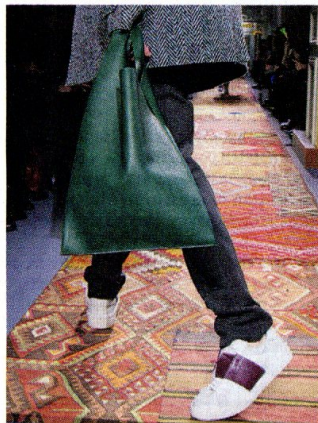


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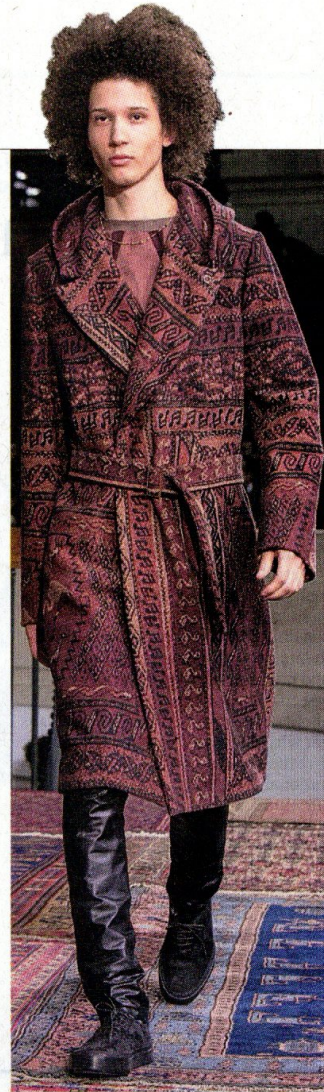
ROGER VIVIER



VALENTINO



BURBERRY



PAUL SMITH

Return of the carpetbaggers

PARIS

BY SUZY MENKES

When artist colonies in the 1970s made rag rugs and woven carpets, they might not have expected their work to land in a museum 40 years later — nor that it would become a high fashion inspiration.

The fashion shows that filled the first month of 2014 have been rug crazy. There were Burberry carpet bags turning the look of the street-smart shopper into something more original and poetic.

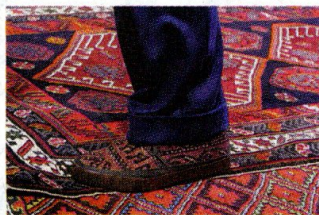
Woven rugs were used as a colorful runway cover at the Valentino's men's show, and by Paul Smith.

In fact, Essie, a shop that specializes in Oriental rugs, was the setting for the Paul Smith presentation in London. The British designer followed that up in Paris by laying rugs in a circular room at the Bourse for a parade of his clothes.

At the Roger Vivier shoe presentation, the designer Bruno Frisoni turned his showroom into a 1970s night club with curtains and floor covering in the spirit of Persian carpets.

Even more dramatically, the designer had shoes that were created with big weave patterns — and balls as their heels.

"Playful but sophisticated," said Mr.



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☛ Suzy Menkes talks with Paul Smith about his fashion world. nytimes.com/style

Frisoni to describe the collection of accessories that varied from a bag with a line of dangling tassels to the ball heels, giving a striking disco flair.

The story of rugs from the Orient, and so many more artistic features, can be found in the Musée d'Art Moderne in Paris, where "Decorum: Carpets and tapestries by artists" is on display through Feb. 9.

This well-researched exhibition shows that the cult of the Oriental rug was only a small part of the history of tapestries, which were held in even greater esteem than paintings in early centuries.

Great 20th-century artists from Francis Bacon to Pablo Picasso have their textiles hung on the museum walls, while contemporary artists such as

Daniel Dewar & Grégory Gicquel and Vidya Gastaldon also have their work displayed.

The hippie era of the 1960s was a particularly fruitful time for handwork. The homemade rag rug became synonymous of the era of avocado-colored bathroom furnishings and brown-with-orange home decoration.

But the most compelling thing about the history of rugs is that so few of the names of those who tied the knots were recorded. A section in the exhibition devoted to Moroccan rugs allows viewers to press their fingers into the thick surfaces.

The joy of carpets — not least to fashion designers looking for striking but simple sets — is that they are easily transported. Le Corbusier, the minimalist architect of the 1920s, called tapestries "mural nomads," a poetic way of defining their role as an instant and transportable piece of vivid color and pattern.

Since the hippie years, carpets and tapestries have often had a political or feminist message, with images or words woven into the work.

More recently, digital weaving is changing these magic carpets, literally and metaphorically.

And with luxury brands embracing rugs, they have come from riches to rags — and back again.