

MICHELLE

Strength

PARADISE LOST

Dubai-based artist Janan Shihadeh collaborates with oriental and decorative carpet maker Iwan Maktabi on a rug in honour of our planet

Words by Rebecca Anne Proctor



Iwan Maktabi's managing director, Mona Maktabi

Titled *Paradise Lost*, artist Janan Shihadeh's first carpet for Iwan Maktabi hangs from the wall of the revered carpet-maker's pop-up space in Alserkal Avenue. It brims with flowers rendered in silk and is decorated with paintings of birds, bees, hearts and planets. Sized 300 x 200cm, Shihadeh's design graces a vintage Anatolian carpet, and it beams with the beauty of nature. "I care deeply about the planet," says the artist. "Besides the fact that it deeply inspires and moves me, I love animals and Mother Nature." When one looks closely, they will see the flora and fauna melting away, almost resembling tears. "I am trying to portray global warming and how everything on Earth is melting because of rising temperatures," she explains. "If we do nothing, everything will wither away to nothing. I painted bees because they are endangered now and are the ones responsible for cross-pollination." The title *'Paradise Lost'* refers to the idea, according to Shihadeh, that "we are about to lose our paradise." While the carpet is in essence a campaign for environmental change, it's also a stunning work of art. And Shihadeh is not your everyday artist. A muralist, trompe l'oeil painter, furniture maker, candle creator, and recently luxury bag customiser (you can find her paintings on a host of Chanel, Louis Vuitton and Gucci bags), she paints on surfaces including brick, concrete, buildings, walls, wax, canvas, wood, leather and even cars, painting a Mercedes G-Wagon for the recent 'She's Mercedes' campaign.

The collaboration with Iwan Maktabi signifies the first time that the artist has painted on a carpet. "I used silk flowers, and attached them petal by petal



Artist Janan Shihadeh and her environmental change-inspired rug, *Paradise Lost*



“

I am trying to portray global warming and how everything on Earth is melting because of rising temperatures.

Janan Shihadeh

onto the rug. Then I used acrylic paint on the rug,” she explains. Shihadeh also painted on each flower so as to endow them with a psychedelic edge. In the middle there is a painted heart that represents “the beating heart and soul of Mother Nature.” It is represented in the centre of the work with sharply painted rays encircling it as if it is extending its energy out to the many flowers and to Mother Earth herself. “I almost felt spiritually led while doing this work,” recalls Shihadeh. “When I was buying the materials, I went to several shops, because I was looking for that bright neon-red colour, and I found one shop that had it. It was like whatever I wanted to find to create the piece, I found.” The rug is a one-off work, which is meant to be auctioned for charity. “We are going to choose a charity in the UAE or Lebanon where it can be auctioned,” says Mona Maktabi. “These days we desperately need to give something to the community. We hope also that it will be sold for an environmental cause.”

Iwan Maktabi, which will soon open a new showroom in The Dubai Mall, has been at the forefront of Oriental and decorative carpet making since 1926. Apart from selling antique and vintage carpets from across the Middle East, Iwan Maktabi is known for its contemporary collaborations, calling in architects, artists and designers to create one-of-a-kind rugs. These have included collaborations with CC Tapis, the Italian company producing contemporary hand-knotted rugs created in Nepal by expert Tibetan artists; Jan Kath, one of the world’s most in-demand designers of hand-knotted carpets; Marwan Sahmarani, Nadine Kanso, Gregory Gatsrelia and most recently, Beirut-based architect and designer duo david/nicolas.

“We hope we can commission Janan to do another rug along the same lines, in a desire to give back to our planet,” added Maktabi.

@Iwanmaktabiofficial, iwanmaktabi.com; jananart.com, @Jananstudio



Mona Maktabi at the pop-up space for Iwan Maktabi in Alserkal

