

cover

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CREATIVE MATTERS
X ANNA MULLER

TWENTY YEARS OF COVER



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Collections

THIS SECTION HIGHLIGHTS SOME OF THE BEST RUG COLLECTIONS BEING RELEASED AHEAD OF AUTUMN'S DESIGN EVENTS

Photo: Nick Ballón, courtesy of Maharam



Maharam x Edith van Berkel

THREE NEW RUGS REPRESENT THE ULTIMATE IN TRADITIONALLY MADE, NATURALLY SOURCED TEXTILES

Edith van Berkel, a process-driven Dutch industrial designer, and Maharam, a performance-driven commercial textiles company, have collaborated on three elemental, biodegradable, handwoven rugs: *Compose*, *Linger*, and *Bower*. Maharam's desire to evolve its connection with elemental crafted rugs means that Van Berkel's approach—compatible yet visionary—will influence how Maharam develops its rug offering.

Van Berkel designed the rugs and developed and produced them with Maharam in Kathmandu valley, Nepal, using a largely female workforce. 'We work with local people,' she says, 'and evaluate all aspects of material collection, treatment, yarn making and weaving.'

High-altitude argali sheep wool is sourced from the Ngari plateau—the historic Tibetan (now Chinese) 'salt-and-sheep' route. Van Berkel describes the wool as 'exceptional due to its long fibres and high lanolin'. Wool is cold-water washed, then sent overland to Nepal where it is distributed to women who work from home. They are central to a centuries-old tradition of charkha hand spinning and weaving rugs on horizontal floor looms.

'It's very important to me to be hands-on, to see and experiment with yarns. This is most necessary when creating an identity for a rug,' says Van Berkel. Two rugs are wool-based. *Compose* is wool with silk 'patches' and hand embroidery that acknowledges traditional textile mending. Before weaving, the wool for *Linger* is dip-dyed (similar to

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ikat) and augmented post-weave with silk.

Bower, an undyed nettle-fibre rug, transitions from sumakh to plain weave with silk accents. It reflects Van Berkel's desire to create a language in undyed material. Wild giant nettle is hand-harvested from remote Himalayan locations reached by days of driving and four days of hiking. Nettle's rhizome—underground stems with growth nodes—means harvesting 'doesn't damage the plant. It will regenerate'.

Yarn processing requires 'deep indigenous knowledge and special skills'. Bark is removed; fibres are boiled in water and wood ash, rinsed, sun dried, then rewashed and beaten to soften them for spinning after hand carding to sort for finer fibres. Van Berkel is attracted by nettle's 'interesting properties': tensile strength, fibre length, and its thermal insulation properties.

This collaboration underscores Maharam's enhanced commitment to elemental textiles and rugs and cross-disciplinarity. Its commitments align with Van Berkel's career-long exploration and incorporation of traditional craft techniques and sustainable materials, while scrutinising environmental impact so as to be not just sustainable but regenerative. *DJ*

www.maharam.com



01 The *Linger* rug during production

02 *Compose*, Maharam x Edith van Berkel

03 *Bower*, Maharam x Edith van Berkel

04 *Linger*, Maharam x Edith van Berkel



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