

MATERIAL WORLD

NO MEDIUM IS OFF-LIMITS FOR ARTIST DAVID WISEMAN, WHO TAPS SILK AS HIS NEW MUSE FOR A LIMITED-EDITION RUG DESIGN.

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Glass, bronze, porcelain: For artist David Wiseman, his material selections are as varied as his creations. His scene-stealing designs can be found all over the world, from large-scale porcelain installations for Dior boutiques in Shanghai and Tokyo—which he designed in collaboration with architect Peter Marino—to being a part of the permanent collection at the Corning Museum of Glass in New York. Now, in partnership with R & Company, the Los Angeles-based Wiseman is taking his intricate skills to the ground level with a limited-edition rug design inspired by his travels and rooted in historical craftsmanship.



Clockwise from top: David Wiseman's limited-edition rug design for R & Company. The artist's Glacier pendant in Smoke. A Lily of the Valley installation from a past solo exhibition of Wiseman's at R & Company. A one-of-a-kind Collage fireplace screen in bronze and porcelain. This Small Geode vase in bronze is one of 25 made, each signed and numbered. A custom commission for a private New York residence.

Designer Todd Oldham gave you your big break. Tell us more about that.

My first project was a nature-inspired hat hanger. Todd, who I had met when he was a guest lecturer for one of my classes at RISD, actually ended up ordering a bunch of them to give as gifts. Then, when I graduated college, he offered me a job.

What are your favorite materials to work with?

Bronze is endlessly fascinating to me. There are so many different alloys and patinas, and when you bring it up to a high polish, it's a true work of art.

How did rugs come into the picture for you?

R & Company approached me with the idea to translate my designs into a rug collection. I went to Kathmandu to meet the weavers and to better understand their process. When I got there, I was blown away. Meeting them completely changed my concept because I needed to be as detailed as they were.

Can you speak to the handmade aspect?

It takes anywhere from six to eight months to create one rug and only 12 are being made in two distinct colorways. Because of the high quality of silk that they use, there are 4.5 million knots in each carpet.

Textiles are a new arena for you. Did you have to think differently?

It started the same way I begin all of my designs, with pencil and paper, but I quickly learned that there is no room for error. The Tibetan and Nepalese communities of rug makers were so skilled at being able to capture the drawings they even wove my subtle eraser marks into one of the samples.

How did your travels come to influence this particular collection?

The concept is about fusing my favorite patterns from around the world so I thought it would be appropriate to add a common Tibetan motif—such as billowing clouds—into the design.

What else inspires you?

I always turn to nature and its history in the decorative arts. I love seeing how different cultures have internalized nature and included it in their indigenous ornamental patterns.

With everything you create, what are you always looking to achieve?

Finding the poetic truth about what each material wants to become. I'm obsessed with that.



HEADSHOT: MARK HANAUER; PENDANT, CEILING AND STAIRCASE DETAIL PHOTOS: SHERRY GRIFFIN; RUG, FIREPLACE SCREEN AND VASE: PHOTOS: JOE KRAMMER & COMPANY.