

EXHIBITIONS

DECO IN THE LOWLANDS

DANIEL SHAFFER

The family-run carpet gallery N. Vrouyr has been established in Antwerp since 1920. Its recent exhibition, with catalogue, of Belgian, Dutch and other Art Deco carpets, was split between the home gallery and a special display at the 2011 Brussels Antiques & Fine Arts Fair.

ORGANISED BY CHRISTIAN VROUYR and his daughter Naïry, who represent the third and fourth generations of the family in the carpet business, the brief special display of Art Deco period and/or style hand-knotted and hand-tufted carpets at BRAFA, together with the parallel event in their Antwerp gallery, enjoyed well-deserved success in reintroducing the Belgian art-buying public to the genre. Such Art Deco carpets had first been widely seen in a major retrospective exhibition at the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels in 1930, then again at the same venue in 1989, and at the Lakenhalle in Oudenaarde in 1993.

The majority of the rugs on display in Brussels and Antwerp in 2011 were produced in Belgium, to designs by leading artists of the 1920s and 1930s, in the weaving workshop established in 1921 in the east Flanders village of Etikhove, near Oudenaarde, by Elisabeth de Saedeleer (1902-1972) and her sisters Monica and Marie Josepha, who with their extended family had spent the First World War period in a village near Aberystwyth in mid-Wales. There they had come under the influence of Arts and Crafts Movement founder William Morris's daughter May, who inspired them to learn weaving.

Luc and Paul Haseaerts, who joined the De

Saedeleer weaving studio in 1925, were prominent among the designers whose work was transformed into knotted pile in Etikhove, as for instance in Paul's design for *Egypt 1*, which echoes the fact that he had studied Egyptian and Assyrian art and also spent a year living in a houseboat on the Nile.

Also included in the exhibitions and in the accompanying 100-page trilingual catalogue were works by other Belgian carpet weaving studios, as well as pieces made in Dutch 2, Scandinavian and even Argentinian ateliers, or in homes, as for instance a home-produced version of a well known 1925 design by the French artist Sonia Delaunay 3. The beating heart of both parts of the Vrouyr exhibition, however, was the wide range of De Saedeleer pieces



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1 *Egypt*, hand-knotted Art Deco carpet designed by Paul Haseaerts and woven in the De Saedeleer workshops, Etikhove, Belgium, 1926. Signed PH and dSS. Wool pile on a bast fibre foundation, 1.54 x 1.87m (5'1" x 6'2"). Exhibited: Brussels 1930, 1984, 1989; Oudenaarde 1993

2 Dutch School hand-knotted Art Deco carpet woven by the Koninklijke Vereenigde Tapijtfabriken, Rotterdam. Wool pile on a

bast fibre foundation, 1.95 x 2.90m (6'4" x 9'6"). With workshops in Rotterdam, Amsterdam, Deventer and Moordrecht, Kon.Ver.Tap. was established in 1797 and shut down in 1978

3 Hand-knotted later home-woven copy of an often reproduced Art Deco carpet designed in 1925 by Sonia Delaunay for her Paris home. 1.84 x 2.06m (6'0" x 6'9"). An example is in the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris

ART DECO

N. Vrouyr

Komedieplaats 4-8, Antwerp, Belgium

21 - 30 January 2011



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