

Fashion designers cut a rug -- literally

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You admired hip designer Nanette Lepore's peacock-patterned dresses, but they were so three years ago. Now you can resurrect the pattern for your floor.

Lepore has joined a growing list of fashion designers -- Calvin Klein and Liz Claiborne (with rug maker Nourison), Oscar de la Renta (with elson & co.), Diane Von Furstenberg and Lulu Guinness (with The RUG Co.) -- all translating their passion for fashion design to floor coverings.

Lepore recently introduced a bold-patterned area rug with her peacock design for the Doris Leslie Blau carpet gallery in New York City. The gallery also recently unveiled two nautically-inspired rugs designed by Tommy Hilfiger (one blue with white anchors, the other navy with a red chain-link pattern).

Lepore says she was approached by the carpet folks and is happy she did the project, since she now has one of her rugs in her living room.

"The way it transformed my living room with color and a bold pattern . . . it would be fun to do more of that," she says. In fact, Lepore is considering designing another rug the public may see in stores some day for her pool table area.

What do those in the world of interior design think about fashionistas stepping in?

"I believe good design is good design and a good designer is a good designer," said Thom Filicia, best known as the design expert on the television series *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*. Filicia says the important thing in interior design is understanding people's lifestyles, something fashion designers do well.

"A good designer can transcend from the area they are focused on into other areas and do it very successfully," he says.

Filicia doesn't necessarily recommend consumers start buying area rugs based on what's in their wardrobes. Still, he has a new show on the Style Network called *Dress My Nest*, in which he uses fashion as a springboard to help folks figure out interiors.

"I do think there's a relationship," the designer explains. "Saying you want to match your house to your clothes is too literal, but clothes do indicate your point of view, your aesthetic."

Filicia soon will launch a series of seminars in U.S. cities as spokesperson for Karastan carpets. His big advice: Designing from the floor up is a good start.

"When they (clients) don't know where to begin, I tell them to start from the rug," he adds, "in terms of colors and what sets the tone whether classical or modern or whatever."

Lepore says what was appealing to her about designing rugs was their longer shelf life. "People don't change their homes as much as they change their closets," she says.

Julie Rosenblum, brand manager for Nourison, the manufacturer of the Calvin Klein and Liz Claiborne carpets, says she suspects more fashion designers will introduce area rugs and that's a good thing.

"It brings rugs to the forefront," she explains. "They (the consumer) may not know who the manufacturer is. What they know is there's a line by that designer. It takes the business to a whole new level."