

# Mira Lehr

## DESIGNS ON LIFE

by Saxon Henry

### *How did the Mira Lehr for Odegard collection come about?*

Stephanie [Odegard] invited me to show my paintings in her Miami showroom, which is so beautiful that it's more like a cathedral than a showroom! Once my paintings were there, she noticed how perfectly suited they would be for a line of carpets. My first reaction was that I know absolutely nothing about rugs, but I trusted her vision. I think she has incredible taste so, of course, I said yes.

### *Why do you think your compositions translated so well to the carpet designs?*

I asked Stephanie the same question, and she said it's the minimalist quality and simplicity of my paintings that make them so perfect. Personally, I think my compositions work so well because they are abstract, yet they contain subtle imagery from nature.

### *Has having your name on a home décor product changed your point of view in any way?*

Seeing the rugs has made me more conscious of design in the home. I now feel that everything you're surrounded by makes an impact. Before, I thought that the term 'decorative' carried a negative connotation because it meant fluffy and lacking in substance, but I see now that it's important for your surroundings to be as beautiful as what you hang on your walls.

### *Do you think the current emphasis on décor is a relatively new phenomenon?*

Not necessarily for artists: Mondrian changed his entire apartment when he was living in New York to enhance his paintings — he built boxes, which he painted, and then painted much of his furniture and the walls so that nothing



There was never any doubt in Mira Lehr's mind as to what she wanted to be. She drew portraits of her friends when she was young and sold them for a dollar each; she went directly from high school to Vassar for a degree in art history, then plunged into postgraduate work at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. When she moved to New York City, she snagged a coveted studio in Carnegie Hall. She studied painting with Robert Motherwell and James Brooks, and embraced the philosophies of Hans Hofmann, a noted master of abstract expressionism who had known Picasso and Matisse personally. Until now, this artist's artist thought she'd be the last person on earth to have a line of hand-knotted carpets with her name on it. But Stephanie Odegard, whose high-end Tibetan creations are rugs-in-residence for the likes of Robert Redford, Julianne Moore and Jerry Seinfeld, saw something special in the artist's compositions. The Mira Lehr for Odegard collection of carpets just debuted in the company's New York City showroom.


would detract from his work. Hofmann also painted his furniture, stairs and walls to highlight his paintings. I think they saw that the house can be a work of art, too. Though the concept is not new, I feel that I've only come to the awareness on a personal level recently, and the rugs have helped me to understand this.

### *Have the carpets influenced your painting in any way?*

When I saw the big, beautiful, pared-down images that Stephanie designed, they were

so captivating to me. They have helped me to calm things down a little, to tone down the imagery in my paintings, which I think had a way of bombarding in the past. I feel that I'm joining a long list of artists who have experienced a similar transition in their work at pivotal points in their lives. Take Cézanne, for example, whose work at the end of his life became less complex visually, but much more profound spiritually. I think that this is where I am now, and it is due in part to my collaboration with Stephanie.

### *Has seeing your compositions quietly reposed in the finest Himalayan wool prompted you to consider other home décor products?*

I'm thinking about a line of folding screens. I've done some drawings on a wonderful Japanese paper that I love, which I think could work well as triptychs. Now that my perspective has changed, I feel inspired when I look around at so many of the beautiful decorative elements that come together to create a home. Whether it's rugs, glassware or the landscape, I see that life is better when you are surrounded by things of beauty. It's a Bauhausian thing, I think. 

You can see a selection of Lehr's paintings at [www.miralehr.com](http://www.miralehr.com) or at Flomenhaft Gallery in Chelsea ([www.flomenhaftgallery.com](http://www.flomenhaftgallery.com)). The rugs are on view at the Odegard showroom (200 Lexington Avenue, Suite 1206; 212-545-0069; [www.odegardinc.com](http://www.odegardinc.com)). The showroom is to-the-trade only, so retail customers must have an appointment to view and purchase the carpets.