



1 *Ankasa* (detail) from the Barry Dixon Collection, Megerian Rugs  
 2 CEO John Megerian (left) with designer Barry Dixon  
 3 Megerian Rugs' showroom in New York



1

4 *Taromina* (detail)  
 5 *Foret*  
 Both from the Barry Dixon Collection, Megerian Rugs



4



2



3

## TAKING ON TRADITION

Megerian Rugs unveiled its eagerly awaited collection designed by US designer Barry Dixon in Atlanta this year. **Mike Wood** finds out more about the successful collaboration

As CEO of the company that bears his family's name, John Megerian knows about tradition. Megerian Rugs was founded by his great grandfather and great great uncle – who were immigrants from Armenia to the United States – in 1917; for decades the company bought, sold, and restored antique carpets, but in the 1970s it began to produce rugs based on traditional designs, a practice that it continues to this day. Thus, as the fourth generation to head the firm, John Megerian has perfected looking simultaneously to the past and to the future,

and even in these uncertain times, is pushing ahead to expand the business, seeking innovation in the face of adversity.

At the January 2009 Atlanta Rug Market, the company launched its highly anticipated collection of rugs designed by Tennessee-born interior designer Barry Dixon. This was the first foray into rug design for Dixon, who resides in Virginia and has made a name for himself designing both interiors and furniture (the latter in collaboration with Tomlinson/Erwin-Lambeth). He has also worked on a line of fabrics for Vervain and is

the subject of a recently released book, Brian Coleman's *Barry Dixon Interiors*.

The collaboration with Megerian Rugs was instigated in 2006, shortly after John took up the reins of the family business. "One of the first projects I initiated was bringing in a renowned designer to make a collection," he says. "And Barry was a perfect fit. It was something that he had considered, and we were thinking about – taking that first step to the design community and really enhancing our brand image."

Megerian Rugs supplied the designer

with samples of over two hundred colours and a brief to produce a line of rugs with a modern, not traditional, aesthetic. That having been said, the rugs that were produced are perhaps less of a departure from the company's established design aesthetic than either Megerian or Dixon had imagined, a result that owes as much to Dixon's approach to designing as anything else. Central to his process is the merging of disparate elements indicative of his wide range of interests. Describing one rug, Megerian notes how Dixon had drawn

inspiration from a 17th century Moroccan basket he had seen while travelling years ago.

"What I think we finally ended up with is a more transitional product. It is modern, but perhaps not what people think of being modern today – more classic." Indeed, in viewing the collection, which includes about a dozen rugs, some of which are available in multiple colour schemes, one is mindful of how unaggressive they are in proclaiming that they are products of the 21st century.

A similar blend of old world production sensibilities and modern day concerns is

present in the manufacturing of the rugs themselves. Handwoven in Armenia – Megerian Rugs also produces in Egypt, Pakistan, China and Romania – the rugs are completely organic. Each is truly unique, a fact that John Megerian animatedly pointed out at the company's offices in New York City. Noting the variation of the green in two of the 'same' rugs, Megerian said: "This is an example of an organic part that we can't control, because we're not using any chrome [dyes] in it – it was something that Barry loved. I said that we could put a disclaimer on and say it's 95% organic, and he said, 'No no no!'"

This willingness to embrace the unexpected is indicative of the playfulness of the rugs and seems emblematic of Dixon's openness. "He had a clean slate," says Megerian. "He wasn't taught, for instance, that this works and that doesn't, and that's why the rugs in this collection are so genuinely unique."

And while these rugs are unique, consumers will soon have even more options to choose from in the Barry Dixon Collection. This autumn, Megerian Rugs plans to re-launch the collection, and will unveil more designs as well as new colours for some of the existing designs. Of this continued expansion, Megerian says with a smile – "We are still a force within the market." [www.megerianrugs.com](http://www.megerianrugs.com)

5

