

# Mira Lehr

Inspired by Lehr's paintings, Stephanie Odegard had the bright idea to turn them into a collection of hand-knotted rugs.

By Saxon Henry

There was never any doubt in Mira Lehr's mind as to what she wanted to be. The artist drew portraits of her friends when she was young and sold them for a dollar apiece; she went directly from high school to Vassar for a degree in art history, then attended the School Of The Museum of Fine Arts in Boston for postgraduate studies.

When she moved to New York City, she snagged a coveted studio in Carnegie Hall. She later studied painting with Robert Motherwell and James Brooks, and eagerly embraced the philosophies of Hans Hofmann.

So why would a fine artist with such a pedigree (and prestigious Florida and New York gallery affiliations) have designs on carpets? Enter Stephanie Odegard, who chose four of the artist's paintings as starting points for the Mira Lehr for Odegard collection of hand-knotted carpets. The lauded designer, whose high-end Tibetan creations are rugs in residence for Robert Redford, Julianne Moore, Jerry Seinfeld and the J. Paul Getty Museum, launched the new line during Art Basel 2005 from her Miami Design District showroom.

"I was attracted to the simplicity and minimalism of Mira's paintings, as well as the citrus colorations," she says. "They seemed perfect for a rug collection that would be very much for today and would suit Miami's taste for the tropics."

Lehr could not have been more surprised when Odegard proposed the idea. "I trusted Stephanie's vision, though, and I think she has incredible taste so of course I said yes!" Odegard is now expanding the line with several new colorways.

Lehr's collaboration with Odegard has prompted her to add a new name to her list of powerful design influences, which includes master landscape architect Dan Kiley, who designed the gardens surrounding her Miami Beach home. "I looked at Stephanie Odegard's rugs and I said this woman has a real eye," she remarks. "And her showroom is like a cathedral: I wish galleries could look like that!"

Seeing her compositions quietly reposed in the finest Himalayan wool in the sophisticated showroom has prompted the abstract artist to think of other home décor products that her paintings might inspire. "I look at the relationship between art and design differently now, and I've been thinking that my compositions would look beautiful on folding screens," she explains. "Seeing my own art in new ways has taught me that a tastefully designed house is a work of art in its own right."

Mira Lehr in front of her "Bellflower" rug for the Odegard Collection, 305-576-7166

