

# cover

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## COLOUR AND OPTIMISM FOR 2022

JAIPUR RUGS



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CHRISTOPHER FARR X COMMUNE • CLAUDIA AFSHAR  
KELLY HARRIS SMITH • ISHKAR • MAE ENGELGEER  
HENZEL STUDIO • JOHANNA ULFSAK • SHAME STUDIOS

# Commune



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The Californian design studio Commune introduces a new rug collection, designed with its long-time collaborator, Christopher Farr, recently photographed at local Arts and Crafts haven, The Gamble House in Pasadena

# Gamble



02

01 *Cactus Flower Spring* at The Gamble House, Commune for Christopher Farr

02 *Bean*, Commune for Christopher Farr

**L**os Angeles-based design studio Commune has a reputation for holistic work across the fields of architecture, interior, graphic and product design. Its output ranges from residential, commercial and hospitality interiors, to products including ceramics, textiles, furniture and lighting. On its client list are the eminently stylish Ace Hotels, Standard Hotels and LACMA; Its projects are united by a faithful commitment to quality materials and craftsmanship, combined with a strong spirit of collaboration with both makers and clients.

Principals, Roman Alonso and Steven Johanknecht co-ordinate a team of around twenty creatives and have just launched a second rug collection with Christopher Farr. Inspired by 'historical design movements and their discoveries as seen through a California lens,' the five new have been photographed in The Gamble House in Pasadena, California—an Arts and Crafts haven built in 1908-1909 as a home for David B. Gamble—and the romantic, masculine rugs are a perfect fit. COVER spoke with Steven Johanknecht about the new rug collection.

**What qualities or concepts are at the core of Commune design?**

We look at projects holistically and collaboratively. We have a diverse portfolio and like to get into the research. We want our projects to reflect each client's personality. We want things to age well over time. The design should feel current, but we don't want it to feel trendy. We try to mesh different styles, so the interiors feel collected and do not veer off into one particular look.

**How did the collaboration with Christopher Farr come about?**

We started Commune in 2004 and have been purchasing Christopher Farr rugs since then. We've been long time fans of their designs, their quality. They've work with such an interesting mix of designers and also have rugs by design greats like Anni Albers and Andrée Putman. Their dyeing process is just beautiful. Christopher is an artist himself who now lives in Los Angeles, so we got to know him over the years. We did our first collection with him in 2017 and it's been a great relationship as his focus on craft aligns with our own.



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**We thought about Californian vegetation and how we could design a pattern that felt like our home**

**03** *Mochi Blue* at The Gamble House, Commune for Christopher Farr

**04** *Arrow*, Commune for Christopher Farr

**05** *Mochi Earth*, Commune for Christopher Farr

**Please introduce the new collection.**

It's inspired by California, like a lot of what we do, and is based in nature. We wanted to do something a little romantic, something that we couldn't find in the marketplace. We like to design things that we want to use ourselves. We tried to fill a void. *Cactus Flower* and *Bean* are a Californian take on a floral, with nods to William Morris and the Arts and Crafts movement. The cactus gardens at Huntington Gardens in Pasadena are an amazing source of inspiration, then there's Joshua Tree. We thought about vegetation and how we could design a pattern that felt like our home. They are kind of earthy and would suit a variety of projects.

**Can you describe the collaborative process?**

We start with designing the artwork and patterns—we develop those in house. Our graphic designer works on the patterns with input from interior designers and architects. We finesse the scale by printing out a section of the rug and see what it might look like on the floor in a room. We study it and play with the scale. Then we work with Christopher's team on the initial colour palettes, looking at where changes in texture or material will work. The whole process takes around a year.

**Was the aesthetic of The Gamble House a consideration in the rug design process?**

No! We are big fans of The Gamble House, it's a masterpiece of the Arts and Crafts movement. We've had a company retreat there—the craftsmanship is amazing. So having a photo shoot there was a dream. It was really exciting to see the rugs in that context, with those furnishings, and to see how at home they felt.

**Could you sum up current Californian interior style?**

The range of homes and the way people live in California is so diverse, you've got so many different styles of architecture: Spanish, Tudor, Gothic and modernist. Then there are buildings by legendary architects such as Paul Williams, Richard Neutra, John Lautner and Rudolph M. Schindler, it gives you so many opportunities with the interiors. One common thread is that most of our clients want something unique and personal. They come to us when they appreciate the work of craftsmen and makers. We bring that into every project: a love of materials and workmanship. Over the past two years with people spending more time at home, we've had long standing clients that have contacted us suddenly appreciating their interiors more.

**How important are rugs and textiles to your schemes?**

Really important! Textiles bring soul, comfort and texture to a room. We always layer in a mix of textures and textiles and rugs. We recently developed textiles, handwoven in India, with Houston based brand Kufri and we pull a lot from Zack + Fox, Pierre Frey—Mina Perhonen has amazing patterns—and Svenskt Tenn. We use antiques and a lot of custom designed rugs. Besides working with Christopher Farr, we've worked on a number of projects with Patterson Flynn and Tai Ping. We try and lead all our clients to invest in something that is good quality, that will age well over time, that they can pass on to their family; a beautiful rug is a good investment.

[www.communedesign.com](http://www.communedesign.com)