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Photo by John Daniel Powers

WOVEN ELEGANCE

Ward + Gray's rugs reflect their handcrafted style



The first time Christie Ward and Staver Gray visited the idyllic site of Wildflower Farms, the cabin-strewn property they designed with Electric Bowery for Auberge Resorts in New York's Hudson Valley, they took a snapshot of the autumnal surroundings. "It was October. The leaves were changing and deep burgundies, acid greens, and mustards covered the ridge," recalls Ward. "We wanted to bring those colors into the Bergamot rug to tell a story of that time of year."

Bergamot, currently gracing Wildflower Farms, is one of seven rug designs the founders of New York studio Ward + Gray—both Soho House alums—recently rolled out as its inaugural product collection. Dune, a beachy hemp and jute flatweave depicting sand-drawn lines that they envisioned for an oceanfront abode in California, is another.

Collaborating with second-generation family rug makers has allowed Ward + Gray to experiment with innovative approaches to production. For example, the braided sisal, hemp, and jute rugs are manufactured in India, while the hand-knotted wool rugs are produced at a mill in Pakistan that sources Ghazni wool in Afghanistan.

With its naturally undulating appeal, the Ghazni wool, star of the Bergamot, Blue Moon, and Forsythia botanical patterns, as well as the Mediterranean blue- and rust-hued Terracotta by the Sea, "lends an irregular coloration and texture to the rug that we think is beautiful," adds Gray.

The designers' process is organic, bringing together inspiration from their mutual love of flea markets and travel, like the vintage evening gown and Swedish herbarium sheets they spotted that spawned the Autumn and Winter rugs. "We love natural materials—objects that have character and quirks," says Gray. "We don't use any synthetic materials in our rugs and the basic construction techniques have been used for centuries. What makes the collection fresh is the mixture of these age-old techniques in the same rug, the curated color palette, and the layering of pattern."

Ward + Gray's hospitality spaces are chockfull of patterns, colors, and antiques to espouse a residential feel, and the rugs have an elegant patina, sheared down "to create worn imperfections throughout," points out Ward, "to make them feel like they've been walked over for many years or passed down generations." **hd**

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Christie Ward and Staver Gray with their recently launched rug collection