

TALES FROM THE PINK CITY

The 'Jaipur Wunderkammer' display in Palazzo Litta during Milan Design Week in April was a visual treat. **Lucy Upward** discovers more from the collection's designer Matteo Cibic

It is said that the capital city of Rajasthan, Jaipur was first painted pink during the rule of Maharaja Sawai Ram Singh to welcome the Prince of Wales during his 1876 tour of India as pink is a colour to denote hospitality. Of course, this may just be a story but stories are what inspire artists and designers to create and it is storytelling that is at the heart of the new Jaipur Rugs collection with Italian designer Matteo Cibic.

'Designing products, I care about two aspects: storytelling and the visual element. Every product needs a story. If it doesn't have a story the person buying it won't create an emphatic relation with it,' says Cibic, who set up his creative design studio in Milan and Vicenza 15 years ago. The fact that he showed 75 new design products at Milan Design

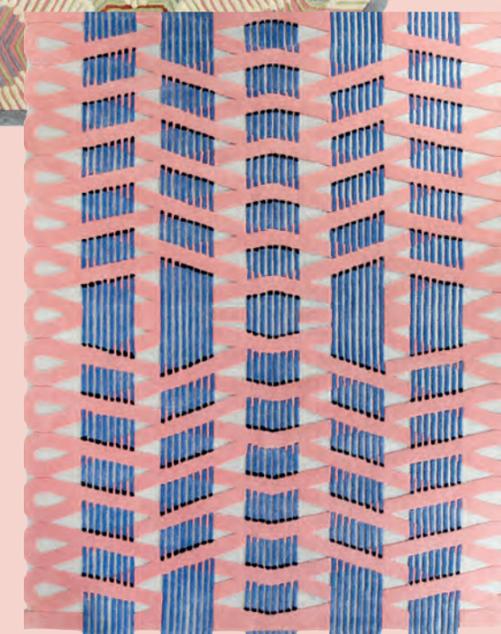
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Week in April is testament not only to his current collaborative pulling power but also his immense creative energy. His new work for the 2019 fair included a lamp for Il Fanale, tables for Editamateria x Delvis, the *Alpha Chair* for L'Abbate, a three-metre horse for the Leonardo Horse Project, the Animagic Collection furniture for Scarlet Splendour...and I could go on.

I met the enthusiastic Cibic—who describes his design style as 'luxury fun'—at Palazzo Litta, where we sat and discussed the Jaipur Wunderkammer project, surrounded on four walls by the 21 new mouth-wateringly colourful designs. Against Litta's highly ornate Baroque architectural detailing, moustached heads and feet floated, semi-psychedelic patterns ruled, and colours popped.

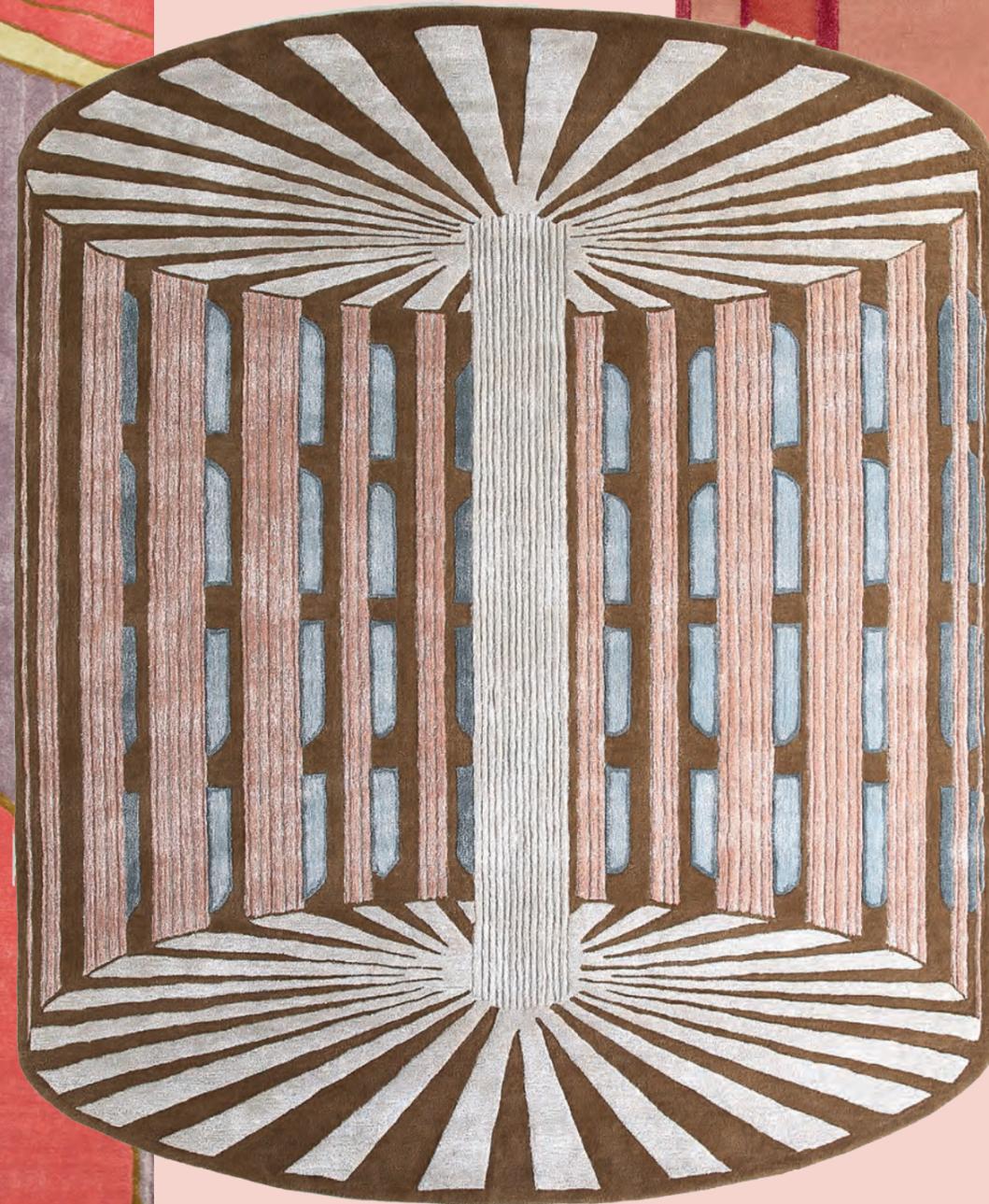
'The surreal carpets in this collection give you a peak at a new contemporary India' reads the catalogue while Cibic described his aim for the collection as 'to export the Rajasthan visual culture imbued with my pop graphic creativity'. He tells me that in his work he 'likes to create



01-3 Wool and viscose rugs from the Jaipur Wunderkammer Collection, Matteo Cibic for Jaipur Rugs

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contrasts' and so in alignment with work like his Animagic half-animal half-cabinet creations, the rugs are fun hybrids where Indian life meets surreal design humour.

In November 2018, Cibic was invited to visit The Pink City by Jaipur Rugs. 'I started sketching the ideas while in Jaipur,' he explains. 'The architecture, the wildlife, the ancient novels, the 17th-century miniature paintings and the sundials were astonishing to my eyes. The design language of the city is very iconic.' Cibic's surroundings had a profound effect on him and rug designs were inspired by many architectural features like step-wells, shop shutters and the Jantar Mantar monument of architectural astronomical instruments. 'I like to mix geometric and decorative patterns together,' he explains to me. 'In this collection, I played with iconic figures such the Rajasthani

moustachioed soldier, the monkeys, the triangular flag, and iconic views of Jaipur's buildings and monuments.'

From these ideas a 'wunderkammer' was created—a collection of 21 rug 'curiosities' telling a story of India as seen through one imaginative pair of eyes. The series comprises an inventive mix of shapes and patterns, some designs more pared back with others more obvious statement pieces. Seen as a whole, as I had the chance to see them in Milan, the rugs work well as a storyboard.

Jaipur had to work fast to get the designs ready for Milan Design Week so the rugs were hand-tufted with the idea of making hand-knotted versions later. I am glad to see that the story of this collection has not yet concluded.

www.matteocibicstudio.com
www.jaipurrugs.com