

# MOVERS & SHAKERS

Berber rugs and textiles specialist,  
Souad Larusi

WORDS EMMA J PAGE PHOTOGRAPHS JAKE CURTIS



Playful Boucherouite rugs,  
classic Beni Ourain and  
whimsical Azilals, selected  
by Souad on her travels.



I started out working in human rights for Amnesty International, but have always had a passion for textiles so, more than 20 years ago, I took the plunge and set up a business importing tribal rugs from Morocco.

Having been born in Fez, one of the most amazing cities of the Maghreb, I had always appreciated nomadic traditions and craftsmanship. It's in the blood. My mother, orphaned at the age of four, had learned intricate traditional embroidery to help support the family. Later on, she was instrumental in securing me an education.

Modernist architects and artists have been interested in tribal art for most of the 20th century, and Berber rugs often featured in mid-century interiors. Their informal, asymmetric individuality suited forward-thinkers who wanted to jettison

ostentatious shows of wealth and class. My aim with the business was to make these rugs available as home furnishings at affordable prices, while supporting individual artisans. They are today's little black dress; they have a timeless beauty and work everywhere.

New rugs are still being made by tribeswomen, but not in great quantities. Creating bespoke rugs of comparable quality to the originals is a challenge. The wool used is unique, as is the knotting technique. The process takes time, with much discussion, sampling of colours and many knotting trials before we are all satisfied that we've got it right.

Authenticity is key, too. The attraction lies in the story. Techniques and patterns are handed down from mother to daughter and patterns differ between the various tribes and sub-tribes. That is integral to the structure and design of the rug and it's not

something that can be simply added on by slipshod copying, as happens with so many imitation rugs.

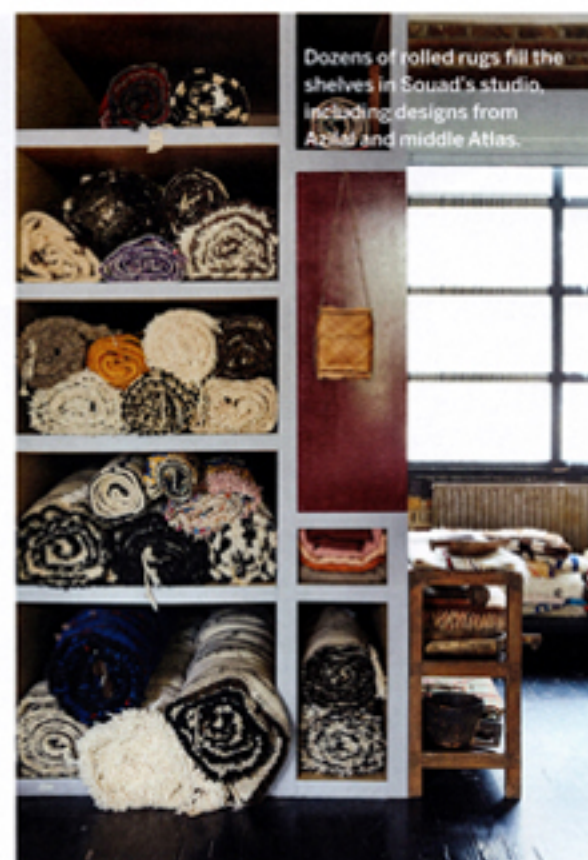
Over time, I have added other products to the rug range, each made in small batches. The pre-washed bedlinen in our own thread-dyed colours has been a hit, as well as bath linens and cotton hammam towels from Turkey. I've also started sourcing home accessories and furniture from places as diverse as sub-Saharan Africa, India and China.

My husband and I have textiles and weavings everywhere in our home – a lot end up on the wall where they can be appreciated for their colour and flamboyant designs. One of our favourite rugs hangs opposite our bed, so I see it as soon as I wake up.

■ Larusi, 020 7428 0256, [larusi.com](http://larusi.com). Visits to the studio in London can be arranged by appointment.



Bedlinen in Larusi's distinct colours, including rust, russet, sand and mud, are folded on a rustic elm bench from China.



Dozens of rolled rugs fill the shelves in Souad's studio, including designs from Azila and middle Atlas.



Hand-carved Indian stone bowls sit on pre-washed woven linen.



Souad supports the rug makers using traditional techniques to produce these stunning designs.