

# VISIT SOUAD LARUSI'S VERY PERSONAL COLLECTION OF VINTAGE AND CONTEMPORARY TEXTILES

*20 years in the making, the 'Imperfect Beauty' exhibition is a love letter to the world's weavers and craftspeople*



By [CLARE SARTIN](#) 11/03/2020



Michael Sinclair

**S**ouad Larusi has made a career expertly sourcing Beni Ourain rugs, vintage kilims and fine linens for her eponymous brand, but, for her, the love of textiles is much more than a business endeavour. For more than 20 years, she has been amassing an enviable collection of gems from her travels and now, until 9 April, they will be on display to the public.

New exhibition 'Imperfect Beauty', curated by Alex Kristal of Made Good studio, showcases the intricate workmanship of each handcrafted piece, including wallhangings, throws, bedcovers and much more. Testament to the skills passed between generations, some of which are sadly dying out, these textiles all celebrate the hand of the makers.

We spoke to Souad ahead of the exhibition's launch to get her view on this very personal show, discovering her favourite piece, her tips for uncovering exquisite finds, and the inspiration behind her love of textiles.



Michael Sinclair

**What does the title of the exhibition, 'Imperfect Beauty' mean to you?**

It means that imperfection is normal, that's what life is. Trying to make things perfect, for me, is not right. One rug in the exhibition, for example, is a bit wonky. That's how it is because the people who made it created it only for themselves. They weren't thinking commercially. You find pieces that are wider at one end than the other. It's because sometimes the makers will start weaving, and because, if they are part of a nomadic tribe they stop weaving when they travel, they undo the loom, go up or down the mountain and begin again. Life is like that. These pieces truly reflect the makers – not just their aesthetic, but their moods and their processes.

**When did you begin collecting and what inspired your love of textiles?**

I started Larusi, my rug business, about 20 years ago, and before that I was always collecting small things. I had no idea it was going to become a business. I used to work for Amnesty International and travelled all the time. Wherever I went I was always searching in souks. Actually, it's also in my family because my mum was a master embroiderer. It's in my DNA. I grew up knowing how to thread the sewing machine.

**How much of your whole collection does this exhibition represent?**

It is just a small portion. There is more. I selected the pieces that are neutral, whiteish, and natural in colour in order to highlight the texture and the intricate details of the weave. This way you don't get the distraction of colour, you can look more closely at the structure. These are things I usually find myself looking at for hours.





Michael Sinclair

**What is it about neutral tones that inspires you?**

When I first started purchasing rugs, I was only buying neutrals. Then I started moving towards vibrant colours, because they were free flowing and organic. Now I find myself returning to neutrals. It's like when you say to someone 'What's your favourite colour'? For me it depends on the season and my mood. Right now, I am in the mood for neutrals and textures – I don't know how long it will last.

**Where and how do you find these rare and interesting pieces?**

If you are hooked on something you will buy it anywhere. Sometimes you just spot things without looking and that's the magic. You have to have an open mind and judge things based on your own aesthetics. If you like something, buy it. There's one piece called a postak that is made of many animal hides. I didn't understand what it was at first, I just liked it. It's from Kyrgyzstan, a country between Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and China. I found it in the shop of a Swiss dealer. If you collect, then you will buy wherever.

**Some of the textiles are your own personal work. Where did you pick up your skills?**

A lot is from my mum. She used to embroider women's veils and really intricate belts and shoes with golden thread. It ruined her eyes in the end, placing the gold thread into those tiny needles. Seeing her do that, to me, was normal. I never wanted to do it, but then I came full circle. When I go to Morocco looking for textiles, it's always my mum that I wish I had with me.



Michael Sinclair

**Do you have a favourite piece on display?**

It's so difficult to choose. They are all my babies. There is one Beni Ourain tribe known for making rugs in neutral wool, but the women's shawls are completely different. They are intricate, double-sided, with loads of texture. The side with the pile, they wear against their body, while the intricately woven back is worn on the outside to display the craftsmanship. I have been collecting them for a long, long time – since I started.

**How does it feel stepping into the exhibition? Are you transported through your memories?**

I know when, where and why I bought every piece. For me, it is just so nice to be able to show a lot of them all in one space. I have been collecting these things privately and it's lovely to begin sharing them. Some of them are fantastic discoveries that I have never seen anywhere else.

**You must feel very protective of every single piece...**

Yes. I have three displayed that are not for sale. I want people to see them and appreciate them. There are many pieces people can buy, but certain babies are simply not for sale.

*'Imperfect Beauty' is on display from 12 March to 9 April, by appointment only, at Studio 7, The Dove Centre, 109 Bartholomew Road, London NW5. [larusi.com](http://larusi.com)*

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