

Antique Bijar Wide Runner Kelege Rug.

One of the earliest forms of art, rug-making began to proliferate amongst nomadic peoples in the Caucasus Mountains, a region that now makes up Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and southern Russia. From this area, the practice quickly spread across the region, creating the so-called “rug-belt” which today stretches from Morocco to India, and is centered around Iran, and especially Kurdish-Iran, the producer of the world’s finest rugs and carpets.

Michaan’s Auctions is proud to offer an **Antique Bijar Wide Runner Kelege Rug** (\$3/5,000) for sale in our April Gallery Auction, held on Friday, April 19th.

This rug is woven into a five-foot-eight-inch by eleven-foot-nine-inch

rectangular shape, with an interior field of red and a blue main border. It features both interior, exterior, and guard borders, each with highly detailed geometric and floral designs. The main border includes blue and yellow alternating floral motifs, interspersed with smaller white flowers



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and a number of detailed geometric forms that fill the blue field. The center field includes 26 rows of alternating black, white, and blue flower motifs arranged into 12 columns. There is no central medallion, instead, the entire rug is filled with highly detailed floral motifs interspersed with diamond motifs and other geometric forms, giving the entire field an intense level of visual detail. Each end of the rug features a tightly cropped fringe.



Kurdish rugs have a long history which is largely underappreciated in the United States, even as these rugs have

continued to show their quality over the preceding centuries. The finest Kurdish rugs today come from Bijar, a small city in Northwestern Iran that has been known for its quality woven goods since at least 330 BCE. Bijar rugs are known for their durability, even when compared to the high quality typical of Persian rugs, due to several technical innovations which distinguish the region from its neighbors. Most prominent amongst these techniques is the practice of “wet weaving” in which wool is kept wet so that when it dries and expands, the weaves and knots are pulled even tighter, achieving a highly dense final product. This is combined with the superior quality of Kurdish wool and special hammering technique to further compact weaves, meaning that the lifespan of a Bijar rug is known to regularly exceed 200 years. This intense durability, when combined with the

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regional dedication to high quality, all-natural dyes, have made Bijar rugs highly desirable on the domestic Persian market, with prices continuing to rise internationally as word of its unique quality continues to spread amongst collectors.

As discussed in a previous blog, Iran has a vibrant tradition of rugmaking stretching back to ancient times. The oldest known carpet, dating from the 5th century BCE, was reputed to originate in Iran and may have even come from the Kurdish region. Literary references passed down from the Greeks indicated that Persian rugmaking was already well known internationally by the year 200 BCE, especially in the Kurdish region of northwestern Iran. Persian rugs can be distinguished from regional alternatives by their high knot count, which increases the rugs' durability and value, as well as their

distinctive design, which highlights organic rather than geometric shapes. These elaborate, highly detailed designs stand out from the more austere choices found in carpets from either the Turkish or Caucasus regions, a testament to the fine craftsmanship and the symbolic importance of Persian design.



An Antique Bijar Wide Runner Kelege Rug (\$3/5,000) will be offered in Michaan's Auctions April Gallery Auction on Friday, April 19th. The sale features excellent furniture pieces from the Asian Art Department, in addition to important works from

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notable artists, and a number of fine jewelry pieces from the Fine Art and Jewelry departments. The auction is led by the Fine Art Department, which will be offering oil paintings by George Demont Otis and Gideon Jacques Denny, while the Asian Art Department offers a 12-panel folding screen and a hanging rug. Also included in the sale

are platinum, diamond, and gold items from the Jewelry Department.

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