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CARPETS & TEXTILES FOR MODERN INTERIORS



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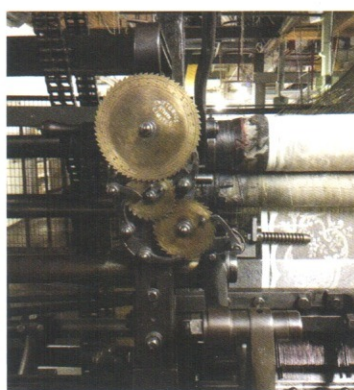


"Lace has been perceived as twee, antiquated, lifeless, conservative, evoking old grannies' knickers! But actually, it is a great way to let light in while giving an interior some privacy. It works well in contemporary urban environments"

Paul Simmons of Timorous Beasties



M/M's *Fumetsu* carpet inspired by a Japanese tsunami fundraising emblem



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01

Joie de Weave

Having worked as art directors and collaborators on design projects with some of the biggest names in fashion, art, music and magazines, in 2012 design studio M/M (Paris) marked their 20th anniversary by producing a monograph of their work, plus a series of rug designs shown at Gallery Libby Sellers in London. **Lucy Upward** follows the design journey that resulted in these four carpet creations

01 M/M (Paris)'s 'Carpetalogue' exhibition at Gallery Libby Sellers London

02 Double Agent rug by M/M

M/M (Paris) are the eponymous Michaël Amzalag and Mathias Augustyniak, who formed the French design studio in 1992 after meeting as students at Paris's Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs. It did not take long for their name to become synonymous with cool, when in 1993 their first fashion assignment was to design the launch of Japanese fashion guru Yohji Yamamoto's Y's range. This was followed by a stream of projects with a list of names that would make any lesser designers weep: fashion houses Givenchy, Balenciaga, Marc Jacobs, magazine Vogue Paris, artists Sarah Morris and Liam Gillick, musicians Björk, Madonna and Kanye West, and the museum Centre Pompidou to name only a few!

Twenty years on from founding the partnership Amzalag and Augustyniak are still working from their Parisian rue des Récollets studio but now have a vast and enviable portfolio under their collective belts. To mark last year's significant anniversary M/M (Paris) released an impressive monograph of their work, *M to M of M/M (Paris)* designed by Graphic Thought Facility and edited by curator Emily King. The vast 528-page compendium reads like an A to Z of London, with M (Michaël) and M (Mathias) at either end, sandwiching highlights of their complete oeuvre from the realms of fashion, art and music.

From monograph to carpetalogue

The idea for the monograph began eight years previously when a publisher from Thames & Hudson visited the duo and proposed the idea of publishing a book about their work. Augustyniak explains 'With *M to M from M/M (Paris)* we wanted to do something different. The idea was to create a kind of compass.' The book contains everything from a decade of collaborations with Icelandic singer Björk – to the enormous volume of work undertaken in conjunction with the photographic team of Inez van Lamsweerde and



Vinoodh Matadin, with whom they created a whole photographic language. This visual toolbox has gone on to inform years of subsequent projects.

M/M (Paris)'s work, with its graphic style of scribbles, doodles and writing layered on top of photography and other imagery captured the spirit of visual design in the late 20th century and has been at the forefront of design ever since. 'Culture should infiltrate every part of society,' says Augustyniak. Amzalag explains how they keep that attractive edge: 'Whatever scale we are working on, it's important for us to attract a person on a one-to-one level.'

The work goes beyond the simple image, constructing a new graphic language. Augustyniak adds: 'We have always thought of our work as a series of signs and from the beginning we decided that we wanted to create our own 'language'. The *Pradalphabet*, which debuted at Milan Design Week in 2010, is a good example of this concept as each letter of the alphabet was reconstructed architecturally to form its own meaning and identity. The letters were used to make five limited edition t-shirts for Prada. In 2011, musician Kanye West invited M/M (Paris) to design the packaging for his album *My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy*, for which West had also commissioned artist George Condo to create a series of paintings. From this collaboration came a collection of luxury silk scarves in which M/M (Paris)



03 created elaborate drawn frames for the Condo paintings.

The 'Carpetalogue' exhibition which took over Gallery Libby Sellers London in October and December last year, came to fruition after a conversation between Sellers and the London-based curator, writer and design editor of Frieze magazine Emily King. The gallery owner commissioned Amzalag and Augustyniak to collaborate with Abhishek Poddar, whose credentials include carpet projects with artists Takashi Murakami and Julian Opie, to come up with a range of rugs.

The resulting four carpet designs (in a limited edition of twelve each) were handknotted in Varanasi, India, and use imagery drawn from M/M (Paris)'s two-decade body of work. At Gallery Libby Sellers the carpets were held up on angled frames, which referenced M/M (Paris)'s work *Off the Wall, Graphic Design Worlds* shown at the Triennale Design Museum, Milan in 2011 and which illustrated the carpets as pages of the 'Carpetalogue'. In April the rugs then went on to be shown at the Air De Paris gallery in Paris in an exhibition show called 'C'est Wouff!'

The four rugs begin with *Double Agent*, illustrating a character who M/M (Paris) have frequently used in their work to portray themselves and here shown twice to represent Amzalag and Augustyniak's twenty year partnership, something about which they are often questioned. When asked how their synergistic relationship works Michael Amzalag explains 'Oliver Zahm came up with the perfect metaphor for our working relationship. He said one is the bone, the other is the muscle. To me it's the most accurate



04

03 The knotting of M/M's rug *Double Agent* on the loom in Varanasi

04 M/M's *Fumetsu* carpet inspired by a Japanese tsunami fundraising emblem

description of how we work.' In this rug design the pair look joined at the hip, their hearts radiating out.

Since 2007, M/M (Paris) have produced all the invitations for Givenchy's women's, men's and haute couture collections by Riccardo Tisci. Their second rug *Sirène* is a revised version of their Spring/Summer 2012 Givenchy invitation, in which a beautiful mythical female sea creature lies across a field of colourful digital pixelation. This rug highlights M/M (Paris)'s signature style of combining hand drawn figures, photography and design while rug number three, *Notes*, illustrates perfectly the idea that the 'Carpetalogue' is 'a map of the M/M brain' by reproducing a page of the designers' sketchbook. Scribbles, typography and strange figures give us some insight into the minds of designers who describe themselves as 'critical and curious'.

The last rug is a reminder of the size and scope of this design duo's artistic output. Like an all-seeing eye the *Fumetsu* design is taken from an emblem donated to help raise funds after the tsunami in Japan in March 2011. Amzalag and Augustyniak have a long-standing relationship and strong affinity to Japan, which explains the importance of this piece. The same symbol was hung at the top of the Christmas tree that M/M (Paris) created in Osaka later the same year.

This was Amzalag and Augustyniak's first foray into designing rugs and it has proven that their wide ranging quirky work style translates well into wool. When asked if they will do it again M/M (Paris) replied: 'The Carpetalogue was conceived as a one-off art/design project for Libby Sellers so we're not intending to turn into carpet manufacturers, but we're always open to developing opportunities.' Perhaps we will not have to wait another twenty years for the next Carpetalogue.



The work goes beyond the simple image, constructing a new graphic language

