

mix+ Rugs to Riches

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We do love a good entrepreneurial story – and when our good friend Rachael Connolly started to tell us about her exciting new venture – Clerkenwell Rug Studio – we were so enthused that we asked her to stop talking – but only so that we could get her story ‘on record’.

Having apologised for our rudeness, we ask Rachael to take it from the top once again. ‘After 10 years working in the bespoke rug and carpet industry, I gained specialised knowledge of the textile, manufacturing process and how to work closely with the

A&D community, advising on colour, design and the beautiful different textures that can be achieved by taking advantage of new technologies when creating a bespoke rug,’ she tells us.

‘I became aware that my competitors were either well-known rug designers or famous international fashion designers, who mostly commissioned the manufacturing in places that I couldn’t even pronounce in the Far East! What kept coming back to me, however, was the UK based designers with huge talent and the fantastic homegrown craftspeople

with a long heritage in manufacturing. British high quality rugs and carpets were not being showcased.

‘So I came up with an idea that I could help marry the designers and the craftspeople. The economic climate was ripe and we are in the right place at the right time – Clerkenwell has more architects and creative businesses per square mile than anywhere on the planet! I thought I might just have a shot at making this work.

‘My aim was to create a platform for new rug artists – to take ideas from trends and

inspirations to create amazing eye candy, to educate them on the design process, to hopefully inspire them and give them the confidence to create beautiful and unique rugs for their clients.

‘I had the commitment, passion, energy, enthusiasm and plenty of ideas about how to create this platform, but my weakness was setting up the business infrastructure and I needed the capital to start.

‘It was a dream. I went to a friend who runs his own successful business for some advice and after several meetings, honing the business ideas and the business plan, he was so enthusiastic (and he believed in me) that he offered to invest in the company and set up all the infrastructure.

‘The metamorphosis happened quickly and, just like the butterfly in our logo, something beautiful – Clerkenwell Rug Studio – was created in April 2014!

‘We have a first class team who will go to great lengths to provide an excellent service from your eureka moment in conceiving the design, to having the rug manufactured by our

British craftspeople, to the bespoke rug being laid on the floor. ‘We will use the finest quality wool and other natural fibres in the process and ensure that the touch, feel and colour are just as the designer had imagined. We like to say that ‘Your ideas are realised by our hands’.

‘As a taster of our aim to educate and inspire, we invited a number of designers I had worked with over the years to our handmade rug loom evening at Craft Central in Clerkenwell in May, where they had a chance to see the hand making process of a rug and were then able to have a go themselves. We were excited at

the interaction and interest that was shown and feel that the successful evening was a pointer that we are on the right path.’

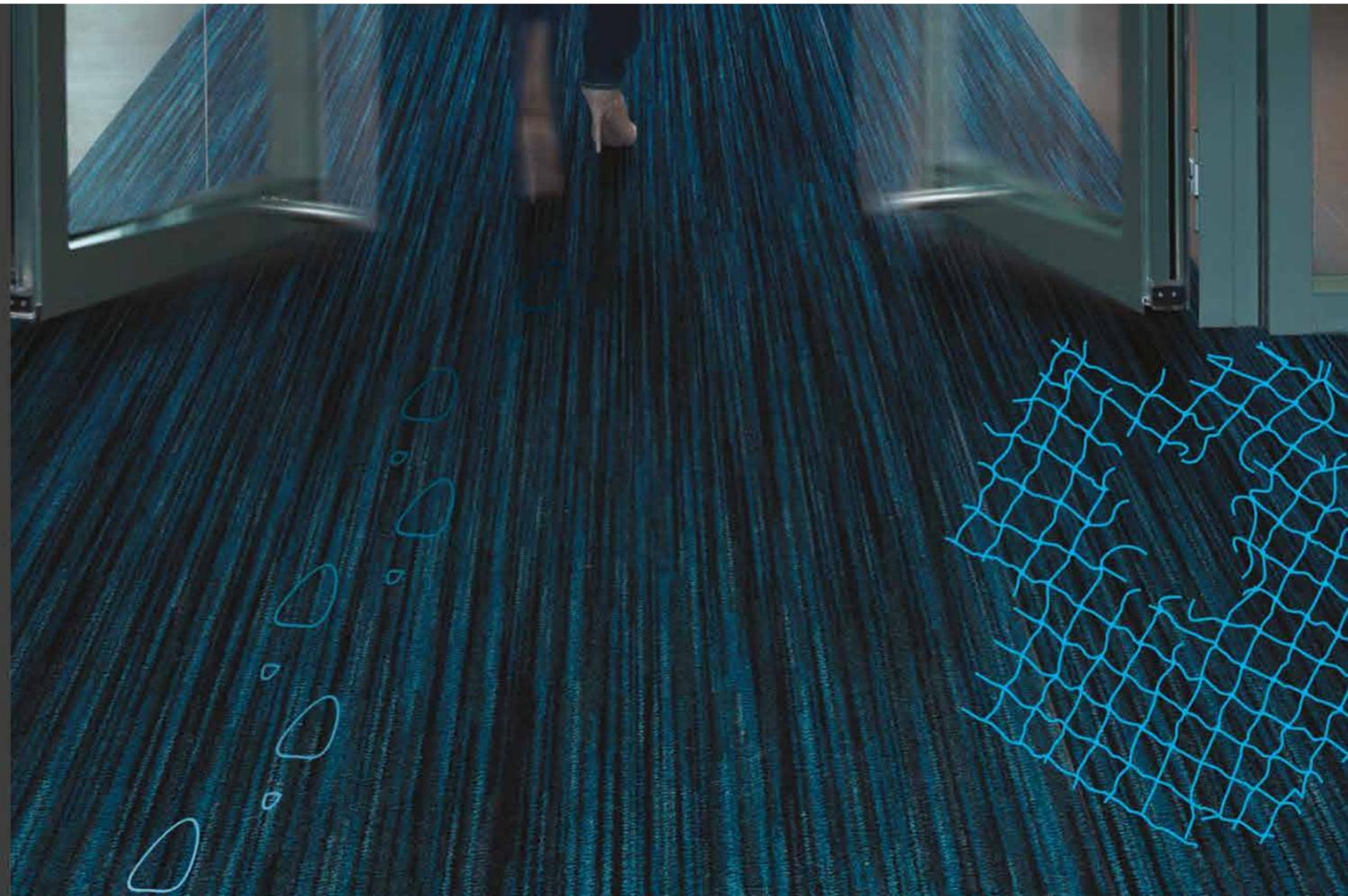
So how are Rachael and the team going to champion budding rug artists? ‘We will launch a Clerkenwell Rug Studio design competition in later this year,’ Rachael reveals. ‘We need to keep the details under wraps for now but the winners will receive their own rug made for them by us, plus we will showcase their design. If you are a ‘Rug Star’ in the making, start thinking about your design now and watch this space!’



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