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House & Home

TRENDSPOTTER PILE STYLE

Part of the trend for consumerism with a conscience is an interest in where and how products are made. But while people no longer see shopping purely as a means of giving their credit card a workout their concerns about fairtrade, climate change and organic food might make a trip to the shops seem like a moral minefield.

Arzu, meaning "hope" in the Afghan dialect Dari, is a not-for-profit group that helps to alleviate poverty in Afghanistan by providing a sustainable source of income selling rugs woven by local women. By paying its weavers above-market prices, Arzu empowers women to support their families and invests in communities by providing access to healthcare and education.

All Arzu rugs are eco-friendly and made of handspun sheep's wool using dyes from natural plants and fruits. The group offers several collections, including designs from prize-winning architect Zaha Hadid and rug designer Thomas Scoos.

Pieces in the Traditional range have Persian and Oriental influences, while those in the Modern line are made from unused wool from other rugs.

Arzu products are available in the US and Kuwait and there are plans to sell them in the UK. For more information visit www.arzurugs.org

While the cost of transporting the rugs to the west might give cause for concern about some aspects of their ecological impact, at least by buying an Arzu rug you can be sure that your bank balance didn't suffer in vain.

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