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AMERICANA ETHOS

MERIDA RUGS

In the mid-19th century, Fall River, Massachusetts, was the Silicon Valley of America's textile manufacturing industry. Fast-forward through decades of shifting global economies, and few active mills remain today. But one self-described counterculture company decided to put down roots in the storied area as some of the last big mills were shuttering. "We're not going to survive in the United States unless we're doing something extraordinary," admits Merida Rugs CEO Catherine Connolly. That something extraordinary, for starters, is that each of the company's rugs is made of all-natural materials sans chemicals. Another revolutionary idea? Empower local craftsmen by creating a workplace where weavers find joy and pride in their craft. Merida Rugs HQ is part production lab and part innovation hub, where skills are honed and techniques tested. The goal is to create an environment where weavers push the bounds of their creativity in hopes it carries through to the finished product. Leading the charge is artistic director Sylvie Johnson who approaches design with the curiosity of an art student (she has been known to study out-of-print books on pigments to find fresh hues). The brand releases one new collection a year, each marking a new chapter in the Merida Rugs' story. Their latest collection, Arte Povera, is inspired by the Postwar 1960s Italian arts movement, the story of which is as rich as the rugs themselves. "They have presence," says Connolly. "The rugs contribute to the conversation in a sophisticated way." meridastudio.com

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