

Deb Barrett on Suzanis

I'm Officially Obsessed With



Suzanis are the large, embroidered textiles from Central Asia often used as hangings or bed covers. These textiles were made of several panels of cotton or linen cloth that were embroidered with silk, cotton or wool thread. Several women in the family would then embroider different panels, and after the embroidery was complete, the panels would be sewn together to form the finished design. While suzani prints and patterns have exploded in popularity in recent years—from contemporary all crewelwork versions to flat prints—for me nothing can capture the beauty and artistry of a vintage original. I've been gathering swipe for years, planning on how I could use this brilliant burst of color and pattern in my home, all while keeping my eyes peeled for the perfect version. So when I watched the absolutely most beautiful red and golden yellow suzani unfold in front of me at the recent Maison & Objet show, you can believe I snapped it up in a heartbeat! Now my dilemma is that I find it so lovely I can't imagine cutting it for pillows or for upholstery, which is what I had in mind all along. I think that means I need to buy another in not-quite-as-pristine condition ...



Just a few of pages of suzani-inspired swipe, from *Domino*, *Elle Decor* and *Met Home*. I have dozens of other pages torn out over the years.



These two detail shots are wonderful examples of the detail to be found in vintage and antique suzanis, as well as sometimes slightly "off" proportions and piecing. While there are some softer-toned, more neutral vintage suzanis to be found, I had my heart set on one that used red as the main color.



Long before I found "my" suzani, I had discovered the miniature chair portraits of Kimberly Applegate, a talented young artist who seems to have a new piece for sale two or three times a week. This is one of her older works from a few years ago, but it's exactly the look I was hoping to achieve when I finally scored my perfect suzani.



Here it is! This has to be my dream suzani: A red background and the classic (to me) accent colors of golden yellow, bright navy, white and green. The added bonus is the wonderfully graphic edge treatment and the overall truly excellent condition. As mentioned, it's in such great shape, both front and back, that I can't bring myself to cut it for the bergère I wanted to upholster. So for now, I have it as a throw on my living room sofa. Every time I see it there, it just makes me smile!



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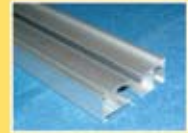


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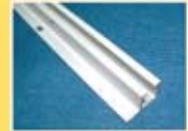
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