

a voyage
of memories
across landscapes
of Algeria
in the 1960s



Pottery, Copperware, Carpets and Clothes

The jewellery, pottery, copperware, carpets and traditional clothes are all family heirlooms. As they have been used for decades and have not been restored, they show marks of time. An exception are the Saharan clothes, which have never been worn.

Pottery from Kabylia

Pottery is an important part of the Berbers craftsmanship. These vessels are not only functional, but also artistically decorated with intricate patterns. They are used in everyday life and on special occasions.

The patterns often used on these pottery products, made from clay mixed with cow's milk and a type of ash that gives the clay an almost white colour, are painted in various ways with characteristic characters in beige or white, black and red. Two or three different repeating motifs are usually used. The paintings consist of red or black stripes on a beige ground. These are superimposed by upward pointing triangles symbolising male and female fertility, while the broken lines are a metaphor for a serpent and symbolise strength.

The Kabyle potters work with their hands and fingers. They incorporate motifs found in nature. Traditionally, pottery in Kabylia was made by women who used ancient symbols, believing them to have healing and magical properties

Carpets

The carpets originate from the M'Zab Valley in the Algerian Sahara, where carpet weaving has been best preserved despite all the changes in production techniques, materials and cultural form. They are well known for their vibrant colours and geometric patterns. Each choice of pattern and colour have a symbolic meaning, representing elements of nature, spirituality or ethnicity.

Hand-woven from sheep's wool, these carpets show the skill and imagination of the Berber women, who have woven into them their vision of the world, reflections of the

communities in which they lived, and the same as with the pottery, the characteristics of the time.

Designed for domestic use to cover the floor, the walls and sometimes for prayer - these carpets are a combination of yellow, green, red, white and black colours, interspersed with typical Berber geometric patterns, signs and symbols and highly stylised motifs from everyday life. For example, the most noticeable patterns on exhibited carpets consist of two triangles in the shape of a chair that symbolise a man and a woman, two triangles combined with the letter ξ signify union and maturity, and a white triangle with signs symbolises birth.

Clothes

The clothes on display reflect the traditional dress in North Africa:

Burnous, M'Zab, Northern Sahara, early 1960s.

The rare white hooded burnous is of excellent quality. It is hand woven from coarse camel wool and decorated with embroidered motifs. Burnouses can be white or brown. The simpler, everyday burnouses are made from sheep's wool or other modern fibres. They are traditional long hooded cloaks to protect against desert wind and sand, sun and cold, and are an indispensable item of clothing for desert dwellers, especially the once nomadic (now sedentary) and camel-riding merchant caravans (which have largely disappeared in this millennium). Burnouses are worn by North African Arabs and Berbers.

Traditional kaftans, M'Zab Valley, Northern Sahara, early 1960s.

The men's ceremonial brown kaftan is hand-woven from natural fibres and trimmed with golden-brown silk cord, and the men's ceremonial white kaftan is trimmed with white silk embroidery.