



Mohtasham Kashan, Circa 1880

Ref: 31105

Size: 4' 6" x 6' 7"

Content: Wool

Collection: Antique

Hand-knotted in Persia

Mohtasham Kashan Carpet, 4'6"x 6'5" Central Persia, late nineteenth century

Like those of nearby Isfahan and Tabriz to the north, the rugs and carpets produced in Kashan are heirs to a great Persian weaving tradition going back to the Safavid period in the sixteenth century. There is evidence that Kashan was an early center of silk production in Persia, and some of the finest silk carpets of the Safavid period were apparently made there, as they still are today. Since the late nineteenth century though, most Kashan rugs have been made of wool, sometimes of exceptional, silk-like softness, and these latter are distinguished under the name Mohtasham. While late nineteenth-century Kashans often resembled Sarouks, the very finest or Mohtasham Kashans of this period were closely modeled on classical Safavid Persian designs, as we see in this elegant little example.

A scalloped, undulating soft cinnamon medallion sits poised at the center of the soft gold field. A smaller eight-petalled rosette filled with delicate floral detail sits within the medallion surrounded by delicate sprays of flowering vines. Arabesque finials crown the medallion above and below, while larger sprays of vines dance gracefully across the field surrounding the medallion. Exotic birds sit perched among the surrounding vines. The same design elements and coloration continue into the four cornerpieces, with only a delicate beaded blue ribbon separating them from the rest of the field. A remarkable border surrounds the field design. Its ground is divided into two colors. A series of adjoining blue ground scalloped lappets forms the greater part of the border, filled by small flowering plants that grow from the border edge, while tiny flowers fill the remaining ivory ground areas. The resulting effect is that the border and field are not sharply separated. The cornerpieces almost seem to flow over the minor borders into main border itself, just as the field flows into the cornerpieces. This elusive and subtle design represents the Mohtasham tradition at its best.