



Mohtasham Kashan, Circa 1880

Ref: 31106

Size: 4' 4" x 7' 1"

Content: Wool

Collection: Antique

Hand-knotted in Persia

Mohtasham Kashan Carpet 4'4"x 7'1" 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 lovely small carpet

While all the elements of its design are classically Persian, they are adroitly reworked into a remarkably novel result. The multi-lobed central feature is derived from Safavid medallion carpets, but its interior elements set against a blue ground come from classical Persian garden carpets with all-over designs of 'millefiori' floral sprays and 'weeping willow' tree components, but now used to fill a centralized medallion. The core of the medallion is cruciform design of leafy branches emanating from a central rosette, while finely scalloped wedges with similar rosettes fill the angles of the cruciform to produce a rounded medallion core. The ivory ground field features a bold lattice design with four six finials surrounding the medallion instead of just two. Additional millefiori and weeping willow forms fill the intervening spaces, along with miniature versions of the cruciform element at the center of the medallion, subtly echoing yet varying the medallion design. The red ground cornerpieces have diagonal weeping willows in the angles, with millefiori sprays and classical Safavid floral palmettes along the sides. A magnificent blue ground border of floral and 'sickle' frames the field firmly, but gently mollified by the ivory ground minor borders. The grand classical monumentality of the design is all the more remarkable considering the relatively small dimensions of the carpet.