



# Annabel's

WINTER 07

MARK'S CLUB

HARRY'S BAR

Bath & Barquets Club

GEORGE

# MAGIC CARPET RIDE

**Bethan Ryder** meets  
Christine Van der Hurd  
and tells the story beneath  
Annabel's beautiful new  
bespoke carpet

**C**hristine Van der Huid won't disclose her celebrity clientele. The internationally renowned textiles, carpet and rug designer, who has studios in London and New York, is the very soul of discretion. When pushed (shoved, really) she'll only name two people: "Marc Jacobs, because he doesn't mind me saying, for his Pitts apartment, but we've done looks for photographers, musicians, pop stars, actresses." Later she mentions Annie Leibovitz, but then Leibovitz is a personal friend.

Name-dropping is not Christine's style. How fitting then that she was the designer of choice when India Jane Biley was seeking to lay a luxurious new carpet in the equally discreet Annabel's, a private club with the emphasis most firmly on the private.

Christine talks me through the creative process. She was initially approached in the summer of 2006. "India Jane had this little watercolour she wanted me to look at. That's where the whole concept started. The painting was beautiful, but watercolour is very soft and the carpet needed to be quite dynamic for the space because people were seeing it mostly at night. I wanted the colours to be quite strong." Christine then developed the design with her own paintings, using gouache to achieve a greater depth of colour.

"It was a huge undertaking. The design had to be hand-painted and we had to be absolutely accurate

with measurements and everything because it's a hand-knot carpet," she says. A painstakingly exact floor plan of the club was drawn up and divided into areas, each segment treated as a separate composition, although when laid it would appear a cohesive, harmonious whole. The process took a mere six months. Meantime, full-scale samples were made by Christine's son Jasper in the New York studio to enable the creation of tool-size samples.

It was at this stage in January 2007 that India Jane took Christine along with the paintings and samples to show her father, Monk Biley. "That was an amazing experience," she recalls. "He was so gushing about it, which was extraordinary. He was very excited, it was thrilling to have got the okay from a man I really respected, because that club was an extraordinary statement for England. I'm only sad he never saw it, it was such a shock when he died." The carpet wasn't shipped from Nepal until the summer of 2007. Small wonder. The team of expert weavers had to hand-knot it so intricately that they could only complete six centimetres a day.

The finished piece is a gloriously decadent form of art with a hint of Eliza in its late Sixties heyday. A riot of blossoms and blooms variable and unusual across a racy background, the pattern and hues arising in accord with the surrounding décor: from the indigo tails and bluebells of the '90s to the hallway varietal.

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**THIS PAGE**

The ground beneath her feet: what to expect on your next visit to Annabel's

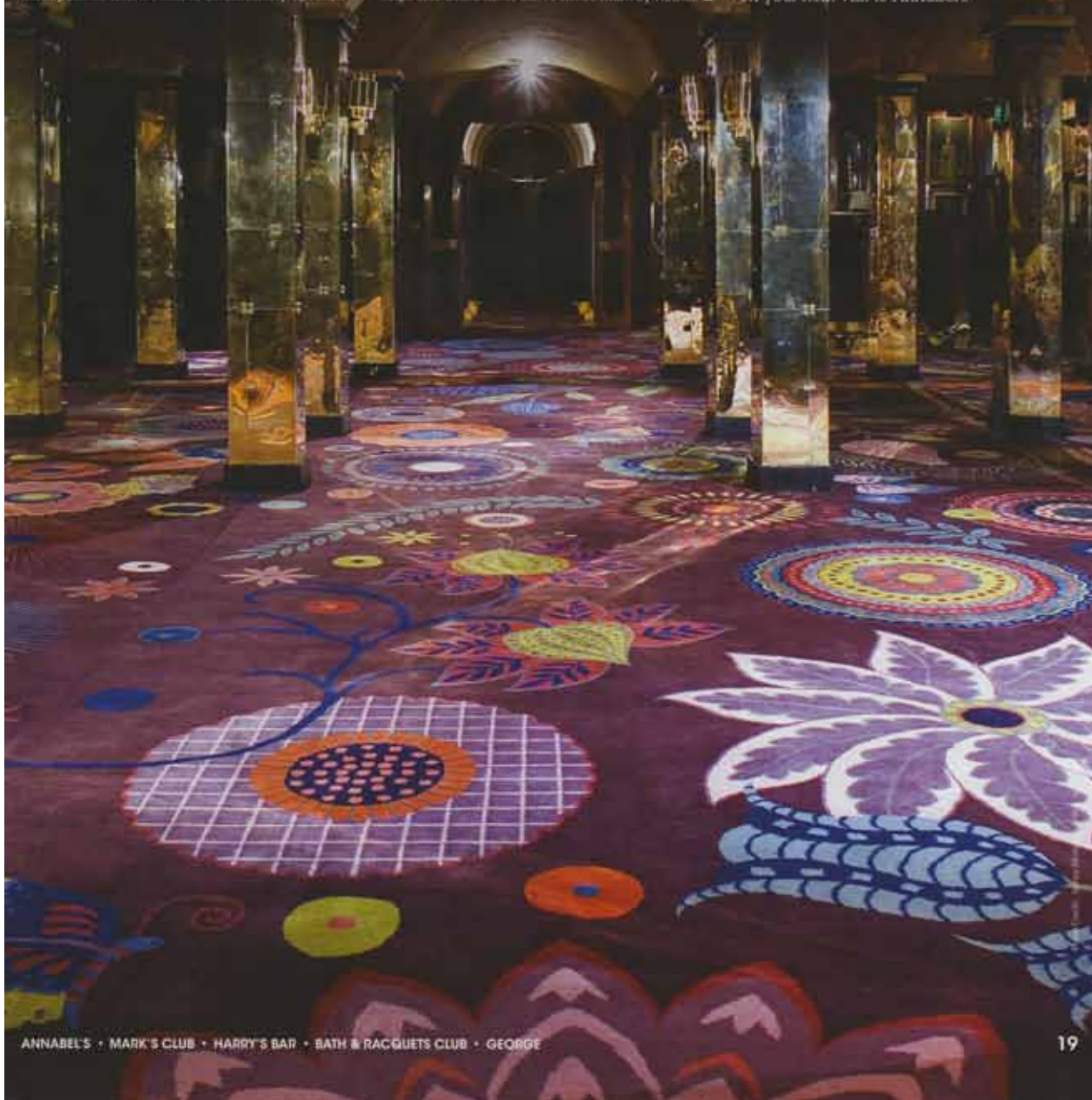


Photo Credit: Wikimedia Commons / CC BY-SA



ABOVE  
Behaviour patterns: the carpet being woven in Nepal



Photo Credit: Simon Mathew / www.ahf.net



ABOVE TOP  
Christine Van der Hurd

ABOVE  
Weaving magic: the carpet on the loom

## "I'M ONLY SAD MARK BIRLEY NEVER SAW IT. IT WAS SUCH A SHOCK WHEN HE DIED"

so butterflies in the ladies loo and warmer toned flowers of orange and yellow in the Yellow Box. The flowers magnify as they reach the dance floor, literally exploding to measure around five to six feet across. No more carpet, it's a vibrant, animated artwork that brings the interior alive with joyful exuberance.

But then, who better to understand what Annabel's needed than Christine. She had not only the design pedigree but had frequented the Mayfair bolle in her youth. "I used to go in my late teens. It was amazing, and such a joy to work for India Jane and be able to design without constraints."

What does she love about the place? "The art collection is absolutely fantastic. There are extraordinary watercolours from the Turbys and Mark's caricatures, too. It's like going to a friend's. It's

a mixture of comfortable, opulent and quirky. More than that, you know you're going to be with people that you know you can enjoy and are liked-minded, but also you know you are going to get a table, which is important, especially nowadays in London."

All quite a stark contrast to the bright lights, loud music and cavernous dance floors she found herself in when she moved to New York (just down the road from Debbie Harry no less) in her early twenties. Quite the party animals, Christine and her husband regularly cut a dash at Studio 54. There they rubbed shoulders with Warhol, Mapplethorpe and Schragar. "My memory of it was dressing up in red patent Maud Furn high heels, and lots of lipstick and dark make-up."

Before they left for NY, Christine had already been creating textiles for Yves Saint Laurent, Bibi, Cocteau,

Osborne and Little, Liberty and Elco. In Manhattan, the couple opened a shop selling vintage European furniture. It was a customer commission around 1980 that led her into bespoke rug design. Since 2000 she's relocated back to Notting Hill. With her team of four she also produces jewellery, exquisite colourful, cloisonné lamps, and fabrics.

She's relieved that despite the sale of the club, her soft carpet of flowers is staying put to delight present and future members of Annabel's. "India Jane came running down with her son Eben when it had gone down. I didn't expect it but she really thanked me... which was fantastic, you know... just to have that." ■