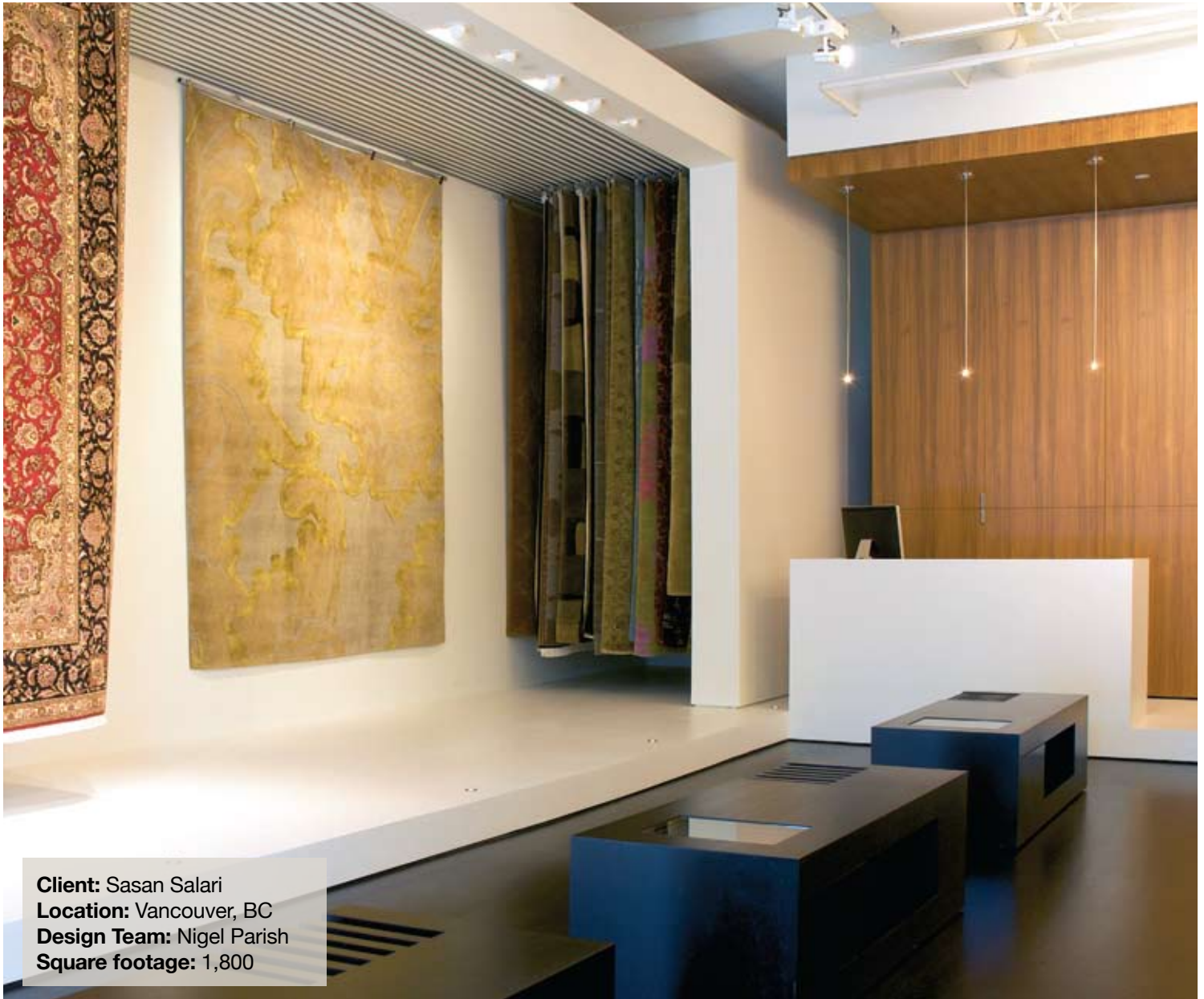


# A WORK OF ART

**BEST OF SHOW/RETAIL GOLD** Salari Fine Carpet Collections — Splyce Design inc.

BY CHERYL MAH



**Client:** Sasan Salari  
**Location:** Vancouver, BC  
**Design Team:** Nigel Parish  
**Square footage:** 1,800

Wendy Niamath

**R**etail design requires an understanding of not only what will work aesthetically but what will create a unique retail experience.

Splyce Design achieved that and more with its renovation design for an established high-end carpet retailer in Vancouver's Kerrisdale neighbourhood. The design firm's innovative approach earned them top honours at this year's IDIBC Awards of Excellence. The Salari Fine Carpet Collections showroom won Best in Show as well as a gold award out of a record number of more than 70 entries.

"I was definitely surprised and very honoured," says Nigel Parish, principal of Splyce Design.

Salari Fine Carpet Collections is a family-run business, specializing in handknotted carpets for more than 35 years. The owner's objective was to rebrand the store and reposition themselves in the market by differentiating themselves from other carpet retailers. Another key objective was to find a fresh new way of displaying luxury carpets to retail and trade clients.

"There was no definition of space before," says Parish. "It was a big warehouse space that wasn't really conducive to the product they were selling. It wasn't an inviting setting."

Parish explored different options to redefine the conventional carpet store model: piles of rugs arranged on the floor with narrow circulation pathways between.

Organizing the new showroom according to the spatial configuration of a theatre, Parish created an innovative retail strategy that showcases the merchandise as works of art.

To create a memorable retail experience for customers, the showroom features a theatre-style gallery of rugs that are hung individually from the ceiling — a concept that breaks dramatically from the conventional carpet store model.

"These are high end rugs — beautiful handmade rugs — but you don't get that feeling when they're all sitting on the floor," says Parish. "The whole concept was to make them special products and works of art almost so each rug becomes a unique piece. Now the space is



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engaging and it invites you in and there's a bit of intrigue and theatrics."

A bright white backdrop and three mahogany-coloured benches enhances the gallery style treatment for this 1,800 square foot space. Set against the warm white walls, the colour, quality and unique craftsmanship of each rug are articulated clearly.

A 35 foot long raised platform creates the "stage" where individual hanging rugs on a novel sliding track system can be presented to clients.

"Clients can sit down and the sales person brings out the rugs so it's like they're engaged in a show," says Parish.

The benches also roll aside to make room for on-floor carpet exhibit. Inset into the seating plane of each bench is a digital LCD panel that displays product images and literature, minimizing the dependency on printed materials.

Across from the stage the wall is furred out to conceal a projecting column and services, and then carved out to frame a large, floor-to-ceiling, hanging rug.

The space is subtle and modest with clean lines to avoid any visual clutter that would distract from the product itself. The dark black stained hardwood floors play off the white walls.

"We infused the space with some warmth through the use of teak veneer," notes Parish, adding a long narrow teak built-in counter is used as a viewing area for catalogues and samples.

Another strong element in the showroom is the millwork for the rug storage cabinet be-

hind the sales counter. The 11 foot high teak unit separates the main formal showroom from the rest of the space, conceptually conceived as "backstage." Located there are the business office, storage, a lunch room and additional rug inventory and display.

The storefront also received new signage as part of the rebranding.

"The storefront is a big pane of glass that allows for a lot of transparency and animation — it intrigues the passerby to go in. It's quite unique on the street and it does captivate an audience," says Parish.

Some unexpected structural issues were encountered during the two month renovation.

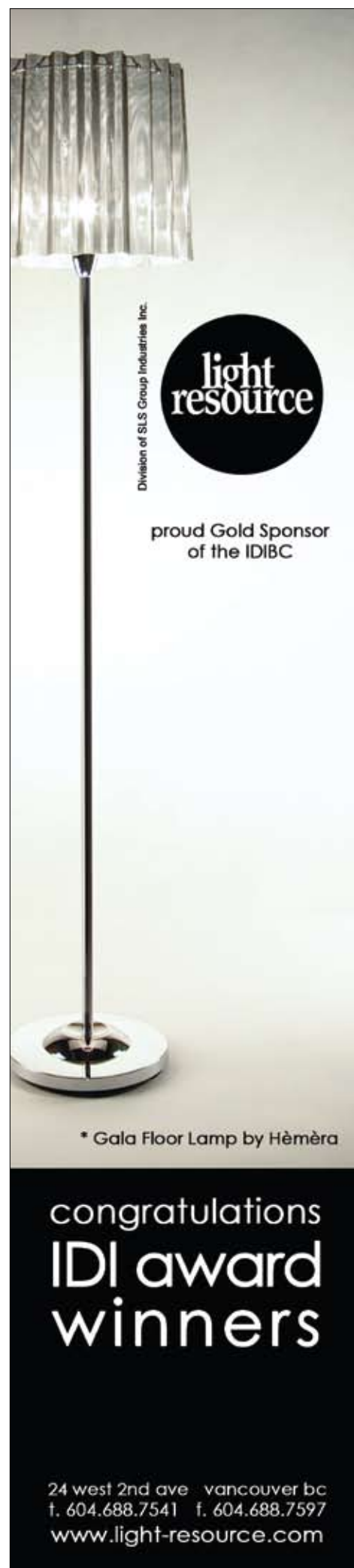
"With any renovation, the challenges are just dealing with the existing conditions," says Parish. "You don't have a clean palette to work with. But with challenges come opportunity."

Parish attributes the success of the project to "good energy" between himself and the owner.

"He was really open to my ideas which is really key to achieving a great product in the end," says Parish. "The owner has commented on the increase in business and foot traffic."

Owner Sasan Salari is thrilled with the showroom's unique design. "Splyce did an amazing job revamping the Salari gallery into a strikingly contemporary space which completely sets us apart from other fine carpet retailers."

Splyce Design also won two additional awards — a gold and bronze in the residential category.



\* Gala Floor Lamp by Hèmèra

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