

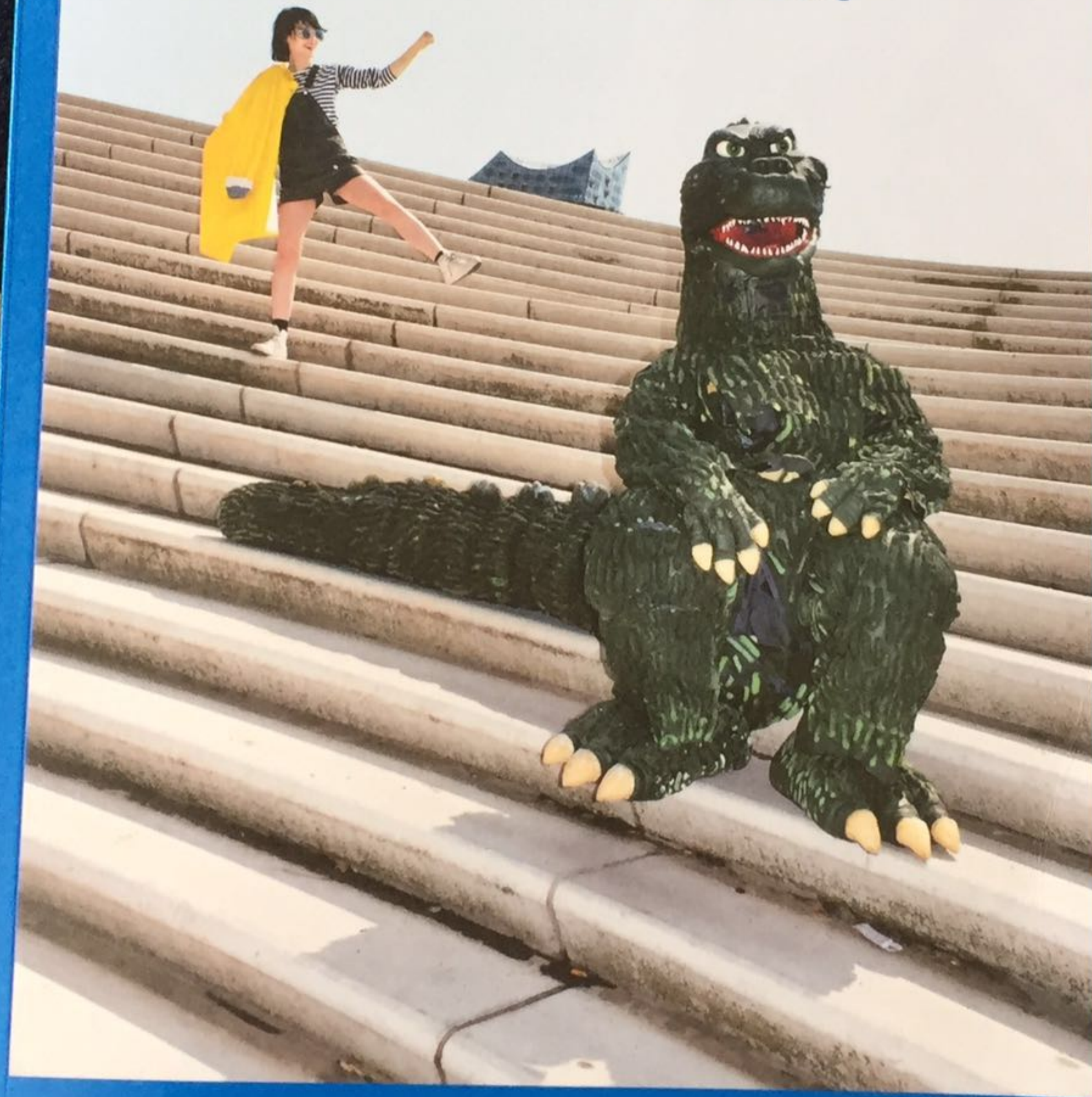
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gentle rain

and other reasons to love Hamburg



BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

**The first visitors
discover the
Elbphilharmonie**

BIRD'S-EYE VIEW

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can make you fly –
using a drone**

MUDDY WATERS

**Getting lost in
Hamburg's Wadden
Sea World Heritage**



Anna Wahdat tempts son
Easim onto the rug.

RETURN TO THE RUG

Text_Katharina Charpian
Photos_Sophia Mahnert

Anna Wahdat is giving rugs a second chance: originally a journalist by trade, the Hamburg native is developing a label for high-quality rug artworks. The base is her father's warehouse in Speicherstadt district. Our author Katharina Charpian visited her there.

Portrait

Thousands of rugs are stacked in metre-high mountains, and a slight breeze that has squeezed its way in through a slit in the port warehouse's floor-length windows sets a chandelier's crystal gently chiming. In the midst of this oriental vision stands Anna Wahdat, on a Persian rug with a rose-coloured floral pattern. Beside her, two wooden Indian elephants raise their trunks aloft.

The 33-year-old grew up among rug mountains, she used to play hide-and-seek with her sisters in her father Ahmad Wahdat's old warehouse. Today she's in the new depot in HafenCity looking for suitable pieces for her interior design label On the Rugs, which she founded a year ago together with product designer Tina Brunner.

"My father always wanted me to come into the business," says Wahdat. But when she left school she preferred to study journalism. "When I moved out, I said: there'll be no rugs on my parquet floor!"

**The
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For many years she wasn't the only one to hold that opinion – but rugs are now making a major comeback. In a world rocked by crises and overrun with digital innovations, it seems that the need for a congenial ambience, evenings cooking with friends and an attractive environment is growing. Home is becoming more and more the centre of social life.

That has rekindled Anna Wahdat's love of rugs. Together with her co-founder Tina Brunner she exhibits the items at her own events, concept-store style: at these occasions, brightly-coloured kelims and Persian rugs with delicate floral patterns topped with cacti, yellow Aca-pulco chairs and Scandinavian standard lamps cover the white floorboards. Tea is served on little wooden boxes, readings and concerts are held in her salon, children crawl around the floor. You have a sense of attending a large family gathering in a modern Arabian Nights setting.

"At my grandmother's, we all used to sit, eat, and while away time on the rug. We want to revive that with the events," says Anna. And of course the rugs are also for sale. The first interior design stores, such as LUV in the Sternschanze district, are now also selling favourites from On the Rugs.

However, the base is and will remain her father's warehouse. He has been in Speicherstadt, now part of a World Heritage Site, for more than fifteen years. He

and his brother manage the rug business from there. "Originally, all he wanted to do was to visit friends in Hamburg at the end of the seventies. But then Russia marched into Afghanistan – and he stayed put," says Anna Wahdat. To start with Ahmad Wahdat took casual jobs with other rug and carpet dealers, until he went into business for himself with a shop in the 1980s. Business boomed in those days, the exotic pieces were seen as an investment. "My father wasn't often home at that time – he was constantly away at trade shows. I remember how my sisters and I waved to every plane, because we thought he was on it," says Anna Wahdat.

On the way home from the rug warehouse to her home in Altona stand row upon row of the clean new buildings of HafenCity on the left-hand side of the street, to the right the historical warehouses of Speicherstadt tower skywards. Where spices and coffee were once transhipped, the trade is now mainly in rugs. Wahdat has one in the boot today, she rolls it out when she gets home. A brightly coloured children's rug with cars, horses, birds and a wealth of tiny details. "I've just rediscovered this one in the warehouse – it was down in our room when we were children," she says. From now on, her son Kasimir will be crawling around on it.



With warehouse capacity of around 48,000 square metres, the Speicherstadt has remained the world's largest trading centre for carpets and rugs.

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When the Speicherstadt was still a free trade area, there were more than 300 importers here. 65 now remain.

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