

# Credits

The exhibition has been co-curated with art historian Jovan Nicholson, grandson of Winifred Nicholson, and MIMA, Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art, with the Hub team. Winifred Nicholson: Cumbrian Rag Rugs is a touring exhibition organised by MIMA, part of Teesside University.

It follows the publishing of the new book, Winifred Nicholson: Cumbrian Rag Rugs by Jovan Nicholson, Paul Holberton Publishing, available in the shop.

Thank you to all the lenders of artworks to the exhibition.

Technicians:  
Craig Humpston, Billy Hughes  
and Emily Stollery.

**Cover Image:**  
**Lion, c. 1971**  
Designed by  
Winifred Nicholson,  
maker unknown  
Rag Rug, textile  
Private Collection



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## Winifred Nicholson Cumbrian Rag Rugs 19 Jul–16 Nov 2025





**Cumberland  
Landscape, 1968**  
Designed by Jovan  
Nicholson, made by  
Florence Williams  
Rag Rug, textile  
Private Collection

**Sheep, c. 1960s**  
Designed and made  
by Mary Bewick  
Rag Rug, textile  
Private Collection



**Tiger, early 1960s**  
Designed and made  
by Janet Heap  
Rag Rug, textile  
Private Collection



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Best known for her radiant paintings, Winifred Nicholson (1893–1981) was a leading figure in 20th-century British art. This exhibition reveals a lesser-known side of her creativity, her connection to the tradition of rag rug making in rural Cumbria.

Featuring 25 works spanning from the 1920s to the 1970s, Cumbrian Rag Rugs offers a unique view of Nicholson's artistic collaborations with family, friends, and women in the local farming community around her home at Bankshead, located on Hadrian's wall.

Rag rugs, also known as hooky rugs or proggy mats, were once a practical and imaginative craft, using scraps of old fabric to create warm, colourful floor coverings. After moving to Bankshead in 1923, Nicholson met her neighbour Margaret Warwick. One day, Nicholson visited Margaret's farmhouse and discovered her making a rag rug—an encounter that sparked Nicholson's lifelong passion for the tradition. She later became a dedicated advocate, helping to revive rag rug making in the 1960s and 70s. She invited others to contribute designs, from her grandchildren to her friends, including the artist and poet Li Yuan-chia—which were crafted by local women using traditional methods.

The exhibition brings together 25 rugs, many never seen in public before, alongside Nicholson's sketches, postcards, tools, and archival material that offer a glimpse into her creative world. From farm animals to abstract designs, these vibrant works celebrate shared making, artistic exchange, and the enduring beauty of everyday materials.

## Book Now

### Talk and Tour

Thur 31 Jul, 28 Aug, 25 Sep &  
23 Oct, 11:30am–12pm

Sun 17 Aug, 14 Sep, 12 Oct &  
9 Nov, 11:30am–12pm  
Free, all welcome

### Painted Rugs with Vanessa Stone

Sun 10 Aug 2025, 1–4pm  
£30, 16yrs+

### Hooky Rug workshop with Cumberland Rag Rugs

Sat 20 Sep 2025,  
10am - 4pm  
£70, 16yrs+

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