



Circular Rug

Winifred Nicholson

Not on display

Title/Description: Circular Rug

Artist/Maker: Winifred Nicholson

Born: 1970 c.

Measurements: Diam. 1040 mm

Accession Number: 31218

Historic Period: 20th century

Between 1966-1978 Winifred Nicholson (1893-1981) supervised the designing and commissioning of over 180 rugs. After 1960, Winifred, was based in Cumbria, at Banks Head, an old farmhouse on the Roman Wall in that she had owned since 1924. It was here that she revived the local 'hookie' rag rug making tradition with contemporary designs, which her son Jake. [1] This example is made from wool and cotton.

There were two rug makers who executed the majority of Nicholson's designs, Miss Florence Williams and Mrs Davidson. This example was made by Florence Williams in c. 1970. [2] Recalling how the venture started, Jake Nicholson wrote, 'Nancy Powell (Liberal Party Agent for Penrith and the Border) ... felt that the Cumbrian country folk had the traditional skills for making rag rugs, but had lost their design sense. She thought that Winifred could provide the designs.' [3]

Whilst based in Cumbria, Winifred helped the Chinese kinetic artist Li Yuan-Chia to open his LYC Gallery in Banks village near Banks Head. The gallery lasted for ten years showing Li works as well as artists such as, Mary Newcomb, Elena Gaputyte, Stephen Procter, Donald Wilkinson, Clare Langdown, Valerie Thornton, Michael Chase, Andy Christian, Bill Woodrow, James Hugonin, Andy Goldsworthy and David Nash. Winifred exhibited there four times (1974, 1976, 1979, 1981). Winifred had a solo exhibition at Kettle's Yard, Cambridge in 1972 and again in 2012.

Calvin Winner, March 2022

[1] <https://www.winifrednicholson.com/lifesketch.html> [accessed March 2022]

[2] There is another in the Design Council Slide Collection
<https://www.vads.ac.uk/digital/collection/DCSC/id/3823/> [accessed March 2022]

[3] Christopher Andreae, 'Winifred Nicholson', Lund Humphries, Farnham, 2009 (p.149, no 139 (repr.)), who quoted from an article by Jake Nicholson, 'Winifred and the Cumbrian Rag Rug Tradition, in Artists as Rugmakers, The Boveridge Press, 1994 (noted at <https://www.bonhams.com/auctions/19891/lot/345/> [accessed March 2022]

Further Reading

Elizabeth A. Fisher, Winifred Nicholson: Music of Colour Kettle's Yard Gallery, 2012
