

Land Rugs

## Weaving a legacy

Mark Vaughan has turned paintings by his mother Pip Benveniste into ethically produced rugs, in a venture that will help to educate children in Nepal. Suzanne Savill meets him at his Bristol home and finds out more about his mother's legacy. Picture: Gavin Crilly

**D**uring her life, Pip Benveniste became one of Britain's most respected modernist female artists, producing bold, abstract works.

Before her death in 2010, aged 89, she spoke to her son Mark Vaughan about her wish for her art legacy to be used to create rugs.

Now he has realised her vision, and in doing so he is helping to support the education of the children of weavers in Nepal, while also ensuring that child labour is not used in the making of the rugs.

The rugs, which use designs taken from his mother's paintings, have been made by Nepalese weavers supported by GoodWeave, the global not-for-profit organisation that promotes ethically produced rugs and ensures no child labour is used in their making.

They have been arriving at Mark's home in Bristol in recent weeks, and will be on display at the Arnolfini Gallery in Bristol next month when the new art rugs company Land Rugs will be officially launched at a private function.

"I chose the name Land Rugs because land and nature were a source of inspiration throughout my mother's life," he says.

"It's an extraordinary feeling to unwrap one of these deliveries from Kathmandu. I know the designs so well – but to unroll these rugs and see my mother's ideas unfolding in front of you is very moving.

"You can smell them, touch them, run your fingers through the pile – they've been transformed into something with a life and energy of their own.

"Before her death she strongly encouraged me to use her art legacy to develop Land Rugs in the future. I think she'd be proud of the results."

Mark, 66, worked as an education journalist and then set up a charity that for 40 years campaigned for inclusive education. He was awarded an OBE for his work.

He is now focussing his energies on Land Rugs, which are being made by weavers he contacted through GoodWeave, which helps to educate the children of weavers in Nepal, where adult illiteracy levels are 60 per cent.

"My mother had some of her art made into rugs in



**INSPIRED:** Mark Vaughan is selling rugs based on his mother's art to benefit children in Nepal

India over a decade ago, using New Zealand wool," says Mark.

"But I've decided to use weavers from Kathmandu, where local artisan weavers hand-knot rugs in Tibetan yarns to the highest standards, in the Tibetan and Nepalese tradition.

"There is something very special about these rugs. They are very hard-wearing, as

they are made from the tough wool of sheep that graze in the Himalayas."

Land Rugs can be wall-hung as works of art, but are also hard-wearing enough to be spread on the floor.

Sizes and prices vary, typically costing about £600 per square metre, with a six foot by four foot rug typically costing £1,320.

The first 25 purchasers of

rugs bought from Land Rugs will also receive a limited edition Pip Benveniste print.

Mark, who has supported the Free Tibet campaign for many years, has also promised to donate a further five per cent of all sales from Land Rugs to help GoodWeave's educational projects in Nepal.

GoodWeave was started in India in 1994, and since then more than seven million rugs and carpets bearing its label have been exported to Europe and North America, and its initiatives have rescued more than 3,000 children from working the looms, and prevented thousands more from entering the factories.

Those rescued from working are reunited with their families, or taken to live at sponsored rehabilitation educational centres.

GoodWeave also provides education and welfare programmes for weaving families and their children, providing pre-school day care for children who would otherwise spend their days waiting around factories for their parents to finish work.

For further information go to [www.landrugs.com](http://www.landrugs.com)

### Factfile

Pip Benveniste, pictured, was born in 1921 in the artists' colony in Newlyn, which is regarded as the crucible of British Modernism.

The daughter of Bohemian artists, her abstract art is inspired by landscapes in places ranging from Cornwall to Mexico and from Norfolk to Tunisia.

Natural features including granite rocks, woodland, coastline, breakwaters, fields, desert, mountains and streams all play a part in her bold works.

Writing shortly before her



death, she said: "It is the creative energy of 'the doing' that has the value; the finished object is the manifestation of this energy and that is how it acquires a value."