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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Rugs as Art

A new Bristol venture is using the traditional techniques of the East to bring to life the Modernist vision of a West Country painter. **Land Rugs** is enlisting the hand-weavers of Kathmandu to turn the designs of Cornish-born **Pip Benveniste** into rugs that are both practical and strikingly beautiful.

Pip Benveniste was born in 1921 into the artists' colony in Newlyn, a crucible of British Modernism. Landscape and the natural world remained an inspiration throughout her life – but her work is far from the genteel traditions of English water-colourists. Hers is a bold, engaging vision – largely abstract in style influenced by the spirit of the East and the landscape of the West. Over her 60-year career, she worked in oil, acrylic, watercolour, etching as well as photography and 16mm film.

Benveniste died in 2010, having had a small number of rugs woven in India – but now, through Land Rugs, her designs are finding a wider audience. The business has been set up by her son Mark Vaughan – and its first task was to find new weavers who could turn her glowing colours and dancing forms into hardwearing reality. Mark found them in Kathmandu, Nepal where not only are local artisan weavers hand-knotting rugs in Tibetan yarns to the highest standards, but crucially they are doing so in the Tibetan and Nepalese tradition so dear to Benveniste. Shortly before her death she wrote “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.”

Land Rugs has found the weavers it wanted – and it's treating their work with respect. It has registered its operation with **GoodWeave** – the global not-for-profit organisation that promotes ethically produced rugs and ensures no child labour is used in their making. And Land Rugs is donating a further 5% of all sales to help GoodWeave's pioneering educational projects among the children of Nepal's weavers, a country with 60% adult illiteracy.

So these are exciting times. The weavers are busy, the website is live – and the official launch of this rug business is set for Sunday 27th May at a private function in Bristol's Arnolfini Gallery. And rugs are arriving in Bristol! “It's an extraordinary feeling,” says Mark, “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 its 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.”

Land Rugs are made to last, with Tibetan wools from the Himalayas. They are hard-wearing enough to spread on the floor of any home or office. But they are also works of art, beautiful enough to display on a wall. Either way they fill a room with energy, colour and delight. They can even be combined with a Benveniste limited edition high quality art print. Land Rugs and Mark Vaughan can be contacted via the website: www.landrugs.com. There you can browse through four galleries of different designs, and read more about both Pip Benveniste and the Tibetan Knotting System of rug weaving.

NOTES FOR EDITORS

- 1) Mark Vaughan, son of Pip Benveniste and founder of Land Rugs, is available for interview – see contact details below.
- 2) High res images of all rug designs are available from Land Rugs (see <http://www.landrugs.com/gallery> for full range) - do contact us! A limited stock of rugs is also available for individual photographing.
- 3) As a child in the 1920s, Benveniste knew the Cornish painter Patrick Heron well since their fathers, Tom Heron and Alec Walker had collaborated to set up the creative Crysede project, producing high quality wood-block, hand-printed designs on fine silk textiles and garments which sold in the 28 Crysede high street shops across England for many years. Walker was the artist and designer at Crysede and Tom Heron the businessman. See The Guardian's obituary on Benveniste (Sept 17, 2010) at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2010/sep/16/pip-benveniste-obituary>
- 4) Mark Vaughan OBE, D Univ (Open) was a journalist, writer and campaigner working for educational change based on human rights and social justice issues for 40 years. In 1982 he set up and co-ran the educational charity, CSIE, to help develop inclusive school development. He retired from employment in the education world in 2011.
- 5) Mark Vaughan, 66, lives in Bristol and is married to the voice teacher and therapist Christina Shewell. They have a son Jack, a music student at Bristol University. Mark has a daughter, Anna, by his first marriage and two grandchildren. His pastimes are tennis, sailing and cycling; and he has for 10 years occasionally taught Tibetan harmonic overtone chanting to beginners, raising funds for the Free Tibet campaign.

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