

Rug Hooking

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Rug hooking is both an art, and a craft, where rugs are made by pulling loops of yarn or fabric through a stiff woven base such as burlap, linen or rug warp. The loops are pulled through the backing material by using a crochet-type hook mounted in a handle (usually wood) for leverage.

History of Rug Hooking:

Rug hooking has been around for centuries. Historians have debated exactly how far back it can be traced. Some say that, between the third and seventh centuries, descendants of the ancient Egyptians made the first hand-hooked rugs. Other say that it originated in China. Author William Winthrop Kent, believes that the earliest forebears of hooked rugs were the floor mats made in Yorkshire, England during the early part of the 19th century. Another author Jenni Stuart-Anderson, states that most recent research indicates “the technique of hooking woolen loops through a base fabric was used by the Vikings, whose families probably brought it to Scotland” Although there are debates on where and when rug hooking first originated, it has been around for many centuries.

The important thing is that someone, somewhere, sometime, figured it out! As a result it came to North America where it is considered to be one of North America’s native folk art forms.

Rug hooking started to slowly show up in New England and the Canadian Maritime provinces in the mid 1800's. It was only natural that if they couldn't afford to buy the rugs shipped in from Europe, Colonial women would find other means to make their homes comfortable. Using rags to make hand-hooked rugs was the answer.

The base of the rug was made from the burlap sacks that the livestock feed came in, and the fabric was any kind of cloth too old for wearing or making into quilts. The rag rugs were quick to make it helped pass the time during the hard cold winters when there wasn't much going on outdoors.



By the 1940's, rug hooking had become a well-established hobby in the United States and Canada. Its popularity continues to grow even today.

The Different Styles Of Rug Hooking:

One of the best things about rug hooking is that you don't have to spend a lot of time learning a lot of different stitches and skills. Learn one basic stitch and you've mastered it.

Primitive Style:

For beginner rug hookers, this style is probably the easiest to do. This style of rug hooking uses wide strips of wool, normally at least 1/4" wide, and a very simple childlike drawing. It doesn't have to be realistic in style or coloring. A child's coloring book has some excellent patterns for primitive rugs, or you can draw your own.



Realistic Style:

This type of rug is hooked using a much narrower strip of wool, about 3/23" up to 1/8" wide. The object is to make the rug as detailed and as realistic as possible. You use several shades of each color and normally only use white wool that has been dyed to the exact shades needed. The rug actually comes alive before you eyes.



Pictorial Style:

This style lets the rug hooker create a picture or scene such as a landscape. The width of wool the rug hooker uses may vary, it can be entirely wide, entirely narrow or a mixture of both. The object is to make the rug look real.



Abstract or Geometric Style:

This is another good "beginner" style for rug hookers, it is made up of squares, circles, triangles, diamonds or whatever design you want to come up with. Again the width of wool can vary.



Waldoboro Style:

This style is named after the town of Waldoboro, Maine, where the women developed their own style of rug hooking. It's unique in a couple of ways. First, the rug is hooked on a wool backing rather than burlap, monk's cloth or linen. Secondly, after the design is hooked, the wool is cut and sculpted, creating a three-dimensional design.



The “Must Haves” and the “Oh, That Would be Nice to Haves” of Rug Hooking:

Rug hooking is one of the few hobbies that you can do with very little up front expense. There are only two or three things that you will need to buy to start your first project.

~ You will need a hook. Today there are several different shapes and sizes of hooks that you can choose from. Some people even start out using a regular crochet hook. You will most likely use several different ones before you settle on the one that is right for you. It is strictly a matter of preference.

~ You will need a frame to hold you backing tight. There are any number of frames available for rug hooking. Again, it is a matter of preference and your style of working.

- ▶ The least expensive setup is to buy a 14" embroidery hoop and clamp it to a tabletop with a “C” clamp, as you need both hands to hook.
- ▶ There are lap frames that allow you to take you rug hooking with you wherever you go. There are floor models that allow you to sit in your favorite chair and adjust your frame comfortably for rug hooking.
- ▶ The most expensive of any of the floor or table/sit-on models, is a metal “gripper” that holds you backing in place. The gripper makes it extremely easy to adjust you hooking area whenever needed.

~ You will need scissors. Any style will do for starters, but you really need a pair of embroidery scissors or a pair that has an offset handle. The bent handle allows you to get close to the hooked area to clip the ends of your wool.

That is all you really need to begin rug hooking! Of course you will need pieces of wool and a piece of either burlap, monk's cloth or linen.

Some “Nice to Have” things include:

- ~Mechanical wool cutter
- ~Sewing machine for stitching lines around your design to keep your backing from fraying, and also for attaching the rug binding.
- ~Steam iron and ironing board for steaming your project after you’re finished hooking it.
- ~Textile dyes and measuring spoons for dyeing your wool.

Miscellaneous Tools:

- ~Permanent marker
- ~Ruler
- ~Tape measure
- ~Needle and thread
- ~Tracing paper

Information gathered from: <http://www.rughooking101.com>,
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rug_hooking,

Rug Hooking Quiz

1) Rug hooking started showing up in New England and the Maritimes in the?

- A) 19th Century
- B) 1749
- C) mid 1800's
- D) late 1600's

2) Which style of rug hooking is easiest to do for beginners?

- A) Realistic
- B) Primitive
- C) Pictorial
- D) Waldoboro

3) Which is considered a “Must Have”?

- A) Scissors
- B) Mechanical wool cutter
- C) Sewing machine
- D) Needle and thread

4) Where did Rug Hooking originate?

- A) China
- B) England
- C) North America
- D) Still up for debate as to where rug hooking originated from

5) The style of rug hooking that creates a three dimensional design is?

- A) Pictorial
- B) Abstract/geometric
- C) Waldoboro
- D) Realistic

Answers to Quiz

1) C

2) B

3) A

4) D

5) C