

EXPLORING THE TAROT

Tarot cards are intriguing, mysterious and beautiful. They are full of symbolism and artwork.

This exhibit consists of 23 original Art Rugs by hooking artists from the United States and Canada. Exploring the Tarot is inspired by the artwork and symbolism of the Major Arcana, which are the 22 cards that make up the first part of a standard Tarot deck. The rugs in this exhibit are numbered from 0-21 and for this project; we chose to include a rug showing the design of the back of the card.

The Tarot is a pack of playing cards, used from the mid-15th century in various parts of Europe to play a group of card games, such as Italian tarocchi and French Tarot. From the late 18th century until the present time, mystics and occultists for divination have also used the tarot.

Like the common deck of playing cards, the tarot has four suits. Each of these suits has pip cards numbering from one (or Ace) to ten and four face cards (King, Queen, Knight and Jack/Knave) for 14 cards. In addition, the tarot has a separate 21-card trump suit and a single card known as the Fool. Depending on the game, the Fool may act as the top trump or may be played to avoid following suit.

The two guiding Journey-ers and heroines for the Tarot Rug Project are Michele Micarelli and Loretta Scena, two ladies that are rug hooking teachers (as are many of the participant artists in this portion of the show). The opening exhibit was in Vermont in December 2015 and since that, time has been traveling throughout the United States. This is its final showing.

Diane Phillips
Fairport, New York

0- THE FOOL

Diane Phillips lives with her husband, Bruce Toder in Fairport, NY. She has taught classes in the U.S., Canada, and Great Britain. Recently, she has been experimenting with wearables, jewelry, and wet felting – all combined with touches of rug hooking.

“Researching various writings and paintings of “The Fool” let me know that there were many ways to interpret this card. I tried to find the common points of symbolism and incorporate them into my interpretation.”

*The four elements of air, fire, water, and earth

* Coming out of the darkness into the light (Is the earth the dark place right now?)

*Sometimes a man, sometimes a woman

*A white dog companion

*Innocence, fearlessness, imminent danger

The research was inspiring, the designing was full of possibilities, and the hooking was challenging but rewarding.

Mariah Krauss

New Gloucester, Maine

I- The Magician

Mariah Krauss, a fifth-generation rug hooker has learned to put her own spin on rug hooking. She consistently pushes herself to create new techniques, develop new ideas, and pioneer different styles of rug hooking. Professionally she is a high school science teacher in Maine and loves her job!

When I chose The Magician, I wanted it to be a portrait of someone I loved, so I thought about all of the magical people in my life. As I researched the card however, I realized that there was only one person who was both magical and mysterious and that was my grandfather. He would do justice to so important a character. Having just finished a portrait of my grandmother, it seemed right to immortalize his face in a piece as well. In March of 2015, he turned 91 and I thought, "Who better to tell about the past and predict the future?" He is wise beyond words and always seems to know more than he says. I took many pictures of his face and gave him villainous hands to make him seem less approachable.

The Magician is meant to be both friend and foe, approachable and terrifying, revealing and secretive. I hoped to capture what I remember my grandfather's essence to be from my childhood and mix it with the more difficult aspects of The Magician...

Wanda Kerr

Warton, Ontario

II- The High Priestess

Wanda Kerr is an award-winning wool artist and dyer working in Warton, Ontario, Canada. She is Rug Hooking magazine's dye columnist and fiber arts teacher focusing on colour and creativity online and live.

The High Priestess is an enigma. She sits by the water and is a peaceful witness to all that is. Her wise owl stands ready for her. She is the keeper of all knowledge and quietly watches us play out our script. She rests comfortably holding a mirror, she doesn't care what she wears or what she looks like, she is holding that mirror so you might see your true self. She calls you to answer your intuition, seek your answers from within. She listens, she does not speak. Her veil hangs between her two pillars, somewhat hidden; it is so easy to shift her veil to heed the all and everything she will reveal. She teaches us to look inward to divine what we need.

I was drawn to her quietness and her mystery. She is part of a series of self-portraits I create from time to time as I travel through my life. I placed her in scene from my own place in the world with my beloved books and trees. This is my season of taking time, listening, heeding my intuition, discovering all my options and sticking to the plan with determination, the High Priestesses my touchstone. She has much to teach me.

Loretta Scena

Deer Park, NY

III- The Empress

Loretta Scena is a fiber and bead artist and a certified rug-hooking teacher. She loves color and creativity and is excited by the path this art form is taking. She lives on a beautiful Long Island, New York with her husband, Eddie, and daughter Caiti.

The Empress is usually depicted as a pregnant woman holding a scepter in a field of wheat. A waterfall in the distance, ever flowing, connects her to the Earth. She represents fertility, motherhood, creativity, and nurturing. She is card number three; the fruition of cards one and two. The pomegranate is the symbol of fertility. The baby reproducing. The pearls on her wrist represent the nine planets over which she rules. The wheat is a symbol of abundance and bounty and is associated with the element of Earth. The bee transforms nectar, and is seen a symbol of the soul, representing the element of air. The twelve stars represent the signs of the zodiac over which she has dominion and represent the element of fire. The waterfall is her deep emotional connection to mother earth and to the element of water, which we cannot live without. Her scepter represents her authority; it includes the symbol of Venus, which the Empress is deeply connected to, and the Earth, which she is mother of.

Elissa Crouch

Cambridge, Maryland

IV- The Emperor

Elissa grew up with an artistic family and was encouraged to try all forms of art. She chose rug hooking because it lets multiple disciplines define what she does and what she designs, along with dyeing and collaboration with other artists and using color in amazing ways.

As I painted the Emperor with wool, he evolved into the strong and confident person his card represents. I then decided he needed to be in a tent with a moon lit mountain range to show his majesty and mystical spirit. I felt his attitude of importance with his release of a firebird, as powerful, yet kind.

I wanted him to look approachable, a father figure with his flowing beard, and a symbol of his experience. I perceived him to be ancient Persian descent. I hope that this piece will be enjoyed and appreciated as much as I enjoy all the aspects of this fiber art.

Stephanie Allen-Krauss

Montpelier, Vermont

V- The Hierophant

Stephanie Allen- Krauss of Montpelier, Vermont, is a fourth-generation rug hooker. As a teenager, she learned to dye wool fabric and repair antique rugs in her early twenties.

I randomly selected the Hierophant as my card to research and hook and was quite surprised to find that it's closely associated with the Magician, the card my daughter chose to hook. Both the Hierophant and the Magician take power and knowledge of the universe to share with mortals, but it's shared in different ways. While the Magician takes raw power from the Universe to teach and inspire mortals, the Hierophant channels that power through conventional or traditional means, as in the religions of the world. Both tarot cards are filled with similar symbols, and yet are very different. Perhaps we are like our cards in this respect.

My research of the Hierophant inspired me to add some quirky little symbols such as the number 42 on the binding of the book in front of the Hierophant. According to the book *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Universe* by Douglas Addams, 42 is the "ultimate answer to life, the Universe and everything?", and I like the idea that maybe it is that simple...

Liz Marino

South Egremont, Massachusetts

VI- The Lovers

Liz Marino is a certified rug-hooking teacher. She and her husband, Tom, have raised llamas since 1984, specializing in fine fibered animals for the spinning market. Her favorite work to do is translating photographs into realistic rug.

This card represents relationships choices. Tarot believers accept the concept that there is no random connection and that the cards come to you with life lessons to teach you. I accept that my choice of The Lovers has a special meaning to my life and me at this time. I was attracted to the image of the deep connection between lovers and earth. There was no difference between the human form and the true form of nature. I have always believed that the strongest spiritual connection is one aligned with earth forces out of which the universe and the natural world are conceived.

While working on this piece, there was a request of me by the universe to look at my life in a way that I had to trust the universe as one would trust one's lover, with all of me and with no reservations. For me this was a very intimate piece to work on and there were answers given to me at the end of my piece, which I am trying, a day at a time, to make changes in my life for my better self.

Lynne Fowler

Onancock, Virginia

VII- The Chariot

Lynne Fowler's work is often very personal. This piece is no exception. Her family members frequently find themselves in one of her hooked pieces. Private moments in her life may suddenly become public. As an artist, her goal is to share her life and experiences with others. Often people may wonder the meaning behind a particular piece. Provoking a question and creating a dialog pleases this artist.

The chariot signifies the conflict between good and evil. The warrior is returning home from battle. I decided I wanted a female warrior.

I used my granddaughter as a model. Her beauty and innocence is contrasted with the tremendous power of the horse. Her strength is shown by her light touch on the reigns. The smile on her face shows that she is in control. The simplicity of the background is another contrast. The Horses are alive with color and movement while racing through sharp planes of color.

I want this piece to be a tribute to my feminist granddaughters. May their path through life be sure and strong and may good always prevail against evil.

Jennifer O'Rourke Lavoie

Huntington, Vermont

VIII- Strength

Jennifer O'Rourke Lavoie has practiced her art in the world of theater, dancing, singing, teaching, parenting, and rug hooking. She finds inspiration in her family, the natural world and spiritual teachings. Art is one way of expressing what she learns, and it is also a lens through which she experiences her life. She is grateful for her home in Huntington, VT, her husband, Jim, and her two fabulous daughters.

What is strength?

Where do we hold it?

When is it required?

How can strength manifest itself?

Can we feel it?

My daughter Avery, the subject in this portrait, has lead a life deeply connected to the wild world. My earliest recollection of her connection to nature was walking with her in the woods, as early as she could walk, and having her point out to me its wonders. She wanted to make sure that I was aware of the intense beauty all around us. She was the teacher and I, the student. She continues to teach me about the balancing act and the strength that is required to lead a life of courage and compassion.

Liz Alpert Fay
Sandy Hook, Connecticut

IX- The Hermit

Liz Alpert Fay received a degree in Textile Design at Boston University in 1981. Since that time, she has maintained a studio working in the textile arts, and most recently has begun creating mixed media sculpture. Liz's work can be found in both private and public collections.

The Hermit card is the number nine, the date of my birth. That is the first reason I chose this card. In addition, the meaning of the card resonated with me, and I felt it would be a challenge to interpret. I was interested to see if I could portray the feeling of spirituality in an abstract way. The most important thing about this card is that the Hermit is always alone. Standing on top of a mountain, he represents solitude, and teaches one to honor the wisdom within. To emphasize this fact, I chose a white border rather than the specified black to further set the Hermit apart from the rest of the deck. The star, comprised of two triangles pointing in opposite directions, commonly refers to both male and female, or opposing and balancing energy. When the star is depicted with this card, it is an acknowledgement from the universe that you are on the right path. To me, this card acts as a reminder to find the strength to look within, challenge oneself, and hopefully travel along the right path.

Rae Harrell
Hinesburg, Vermont
X- The Wheel of Fortune

Rae lives in the powerful vortex of Vermont with her husband. Life is good. Art is her joy.

The Wheel of Fortune represents, for me, the karmic life I lead. It's about the ups and downs, for richer or poorer, according to my own ride on that pendulum of action and reaction. To some, the wheel seems fickle and scary, but for me it is a direct reflection of my ability to negotiate the path of my life with the highest good for all as my beacon. It is beautiful and mystic and I am in awe of its magical powers.

Lisa Chaloner

Merrimack, New Hampshire

XI – Justice

Lisa Chaloner is a certified rug-hooking teacher who began hooking in 1991. She has taught weekly and bi monthly classes for a decade. When she is not hooking, she spends time dyeing wool or working on her other textile projects. Lisa loves to explore the use of color in rugs.

Justice appears as a calm, serious woman seated on a stonewall, with a winter field behind her. She wears her red robes of authority and her white undergarment of purity. Her crown, another representation of authority, also signifies her esteemed position. On that crown appears a small square, which symbolizes insight. A blindfold covers her eyes so that an impression based on appearance cannot be formed. Justice holds a double-edged sword in her right hand and scales in her left. The sword reminds viewers that there are always two sides to each issue and points neither left nor right to represent impartiality. The scales denote balance and equality. I chose to symbolize her humility by hooking her barefoot, next to the humble hare. The watchful deer epitomizes cautious decision making, while the snow owl exemplifies wisdom. Justice is seated in the winter landscape to emphasize that impartiality and objectivity may place one in an uncomfortable position. Justice does not represent punishment, but embodies accountability, responsibility and neutrality.

Kathleen Herbert

North Grosvenordale, Connecticut

XII- The Hanged Man

Kathleen Herbert is a certified rug-hooking teacher. She teaches in the Northeast section of Connecticut. She collects antique hooked rugs and uses them in her lectures on the history of rug hooking. Kathleen's other hobby is collecting Mourning Art, gravestone rubbings and epitaphs.

The Hanged Man shows a man suspended, upside down, between the underworld and the heavens. He wears a peaceful expression, giving us the impression he is hanging of his own free will. He wears red pants representing passion, a blue coat for knowledge and yellow shoes representing his high ideals. Around his head, a bright yellow halo shows spiritual attainment. This is a card of ultimate surrender, suspended in time and of sacrifice to the greater good. It tells us to contemplate on the necessity to break old patterns of behavior and bad habits that restrict us. The Hanged Man may also indicate that you are feeling stuck or restricted in your life. In this way, he is about letting go. It is about emotional release, acceptance and surrender to your present circumstances. Become more vulnerable yet open to different experiences, which will help you end the struggle and give up your need for control. When you really let go of all your worries and concerns, you will find they disappear and a new reality is possible.

Doug Rankin

Halifax, Nova Scotia

XIII – Death

Doug Rankin is a certified rug-hooking teacher for 17 years. He enjoys hooking all types of rugs, but Oriental designs are his favorite genre.

The Death card is less about something dying and more about how a person deals with endings. We require time to come to terms with the fact that something we were used to is no longer a part of our lives. Even as something is taken from us, something new is created. That new thing will not be the same as what was lost. As westerners, we see 'Death' as a frightening card because we often see Death as an end. However, in other traditions, Death is just as natural and important, even if it is a sad part of an on-going cycle. In a karmic sense, you die so that you may be reborn.

In choosing a rug to hook, I am attracted to ones that present a challenge. That was very evident with this one. This is one of the ways I can improve my abilities as a teacher. During this project, I hit a wall for a period of time, but worked through it. This should teach me to be a little more patient with my students.

Jule Marie Smith

Ballston Spa, New York

XIV – Temperance

Jule Marie Smith is a rug hooker living in Ballston Spa, New York. Making rugs is her pleasure. She loves the freedom of creating original art. Color play is all, making the creative process like a challenging game.

I felt fortunate that Temperance was available. I've always been drawn to that card and I have studied the Egyptian tarot. I am interested in ancient esoteric knowledge. For me, the aspect of balance and moderation has been very important. With difficulty, and moving backwards two steps for every one, I seek this balance.

I am a colorist, so I choose to make my card primarily bright. I enjoyed the book of dark outlines as it greatly enhanced the contrast, which I also love. I am fond of the close value colors play in the wings, which are present in some representations, but not in the Egyptian. I suppose it wouldn't be mine without a touch of 'border,' so I added the lotus flower in the middle ground.

Emily K Robertson

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

XV - The Devil

Emily Kay Robertson is a prize-winning fiber artist. Her medium is the traditional hooked rug technique. Robertson has been a textile artist for the past 23 years. She holds a degree in art education and has taught rug hooking classes in the U.S. and in Great Britain. Textiles and all of the textile arts have long been an interest of hers, but the medium of traditional rug hooking has kept her interest because it allows her to make anything she can imagine.

Researching the Devil card, I discovered that what it symbolizes is that much of what we blame on the Devil is of an individual's own making. Chains bind us to tradition, habits and to other people that may be harmful, and those chains can be removed and left behind if one seeks spiritual, mental and physical health. I wanted to show that it is always a possibility to leave harmful situations and to walk in the light.

The creative process is one full of mystery. Anything can begin the conceptualization process. Color and its use are a major part of rug making. I use 'as is' wool or dye my own to achieve just the effect I am looking for in the finished piece. I often find, as I begin to hook, the piece takes on a life of its own and that it will tell me what needs to be added or done to it to make it memorable.

Michelle Miccarelli

New Haven, Connecticut

XVI - The Tower

Michele Miccarelli is an award-winning fiber artist and certified rug-hooking teacher. Her goal is to expand her creativity daily and to guide everyone to find their creative voice through art.

Sometimes the unexpected turmoil and drama of life can knock the foundation right out from under you. What you believed is now disproved. The Tower will fall no matter what you do. The storm will pass. It is time to put out the flames and rebuild, renew, recreate, reinvent. What an amazing opportunity.

Cyndy Duade

New London, New Hampshire

XVII – The Star

Cyndy Duade is a certified rug-hooking teacher who lives in beautiful New Hampshire. She believes that rug hooking is a creative adventure, which stimulates the imagination and satisfies the soul.

My vision of The Star landed in a place of renewal and great spiritual meaning. The mountains are those I know well. The nearly naked woman kneeling at the edge of a pool is dressed in the ancient Polynesian way, symbolizing innocence, honesty and openness. She has nothing to hide, fear or shame and shows strength and serenity. The water gourds she uses as pitchers were grown and decorated to carry the life-giving water from mountain streams. She pours one into the pool and the other onto the ground. Her act embodies the principle of giving and nourishing. She has one foot on the ground, showing her practicality and good common sense. The other is in the water, representing intuition. The stars represent strength, inner tuition, resources and hope, which leads to enlightenment. The l'iwi bird in the tree represents the sacred ibis of thought, roosting in the tree of the mind. The symbols on the inner border are those found on ancient Kapa fabric, made by pounding mulberry bark and used for clothing, bedding and sails. I am grateful for the journey The Star has taken me on and the lessons I have learned.

Celeste Bessette

Littleton, New Hampshire

XVIII – The Moon

Celeste is a certified rug-hooking teacher. Her passion is high chroma color and she is presently working on a series of Tiffany-esque stained-glass pieces. 00

The Moon card reminds us that our subconscious self is vitally important to our ability to live a full life. It is a place where our dreams live as well as our nightmares; where we maintain our balance; where all of 'who we are' is acceptable; where no one is allowed to judge us.

Mary Doig

Mahone Bay, Nova Scotia

XIX – The Sun

Mary Doig, from Mahone Bay, Nova Scotia, has been hooking rugs for twenty years. Mary enjoys hooking everything from fine to super wide cuts and is honored to participate in the “Exploring the Tarot” project. The Sun is the nineteenth card in the Major Arcana. It represents fun, warmth, positivity and success. Even when it is reserved, it remains positive, meaning depression or lack of success is temporary. Elements of this design were adapted from some elements in the original card: sunflowers, a stone wall, a sun burst, and a red sash, which have been translated into the border.

The Sun is hooked with a combination of new and reclaimed, hand dyed and as-is wools.

Linda Rae Coughlin

Warren, New Jersey

XX – Judgement

Linda Rae Coughlin has been creating hand hooked/mixed media art with recycled materials as an artist since 1992 in her Warren, NJ studio. She has lectured and taught classes on creativity in the United States, Canada, Wales, Fiji, Japan and Australia.

The Judgement card makes the completion of one cycle of life and the beginning of another. Nothing is more permanent than change, and we can now bring forth new ideas, relationships, fine health and good attitudes. With no more cares about judgment for the self and/or others, true happiness is found.

The angel in this card symbolizes the divine messenger who gives us all the opportunity to awaken our consciousness. The trumpet is there to help us hear this call. The red crosses denote physical matter and healing. And the hands are there reaching to the heavens.

Judgement is a tool given to all of us from the spirit to help us make good and wise decisions. An inspirational card it shows us that we all have supreme power to live magnificent lives. Listening to our inner voice and trusting what we hear will lead us to a place of true manifestation, divine light, and harmony.

Devin Ryder

Somerville, Massachusetts

XXI – The World

Devin is a self-taught artist using textiles and drawings/paintings as her media. Over the years she has taught or practiced hand spinning, yarn dyeing, rug weaving, rug hooking (traditional and punched), beadwork and punch needle embroidery. She has always loved stylized patterns and is a certified Zentangle® teacher. She is a longtime student, practitioner, and teacher of tarot, meditation, ritual, and other sacred arts.

I started working with the tarot in the 1970s, using it not for fortune telling but rather as a reflection of the psyche, and I have been learning from its wisdom ever since. Because The World is usually regarded as the final card in the Major Arcana, I wanted to create an image for this rug that would integrate all of the rugs that preceded it – thereby tying the exhibit together. The Tree of Life (also called the Qabala) portrayed on this rug is an esoteric diagram of The World – not just this world, but also all the visible and invisible worlds in existence. The esoteric Qabala is many-layered framework and has, since the 19th century, been associated with tarot. The cards of the Major Arcana have been matched to the paths between the spheres on the Tree. In the rug, I have placed the cards of the Tree in their commonly accepted positions, as a way of summarizing and integrating the Arcana for this exhibit (Universal Waite Tiny Tarot cards, © 1971 U.S. Games, Inc.).

Pris Butler

Gainesville, GA

Back of Card

Pris Butler is a graphic and fine artist, and a rug hooker that has been teaching nationally for 14 years on the circuit. Her latest works are largely about women, she feels that are somewhat unappreciated many times and just likes hooking them.

I saw a tarot card deck about African animals and decided that since I had a room decorated in jungle theme that I would like to hook a rug about women in Africa. The borders are an African fabric design. The rug depicts the Sun, the Moon and stars, seen many times on the back of the deck of the tarot cards. The journey through this project was fun, I just played in color, trying to show daybreak and evening as part of the theme. The Sun/Moon was an attempt at an African style mask, but it somehow wandered away from that. From one end of the rug, you see the Sun and daylight, and from the other end, you see the nighttime, and the Moon.

