

Go for Broken!

VINTAGE STYLE REFLECTS COLORFUL STAINED GLASS

PROJECT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY KAREN HANSON WEST

As a rug hooker who is curious about the history of rug hooking and rugs that were made in the past, I occasionally browse rug hooking books or look on eBay and other online sites for “vintage” or “antique” hand-hooked rugs to give me ideas. It was on one of these sites that I first encountered the broken glass or, as some call it, the stained glass rug pattern.

MATERIALS:

- » Assortment of wool scarves, jackets, skirts, or rug scraps.
- » **Scissors:** I like to use bent handle or duckbill scissors to cut close to the hooked stitches when you are trimming them.
- » **Cutter:** I used a Bliss cutter with an #8 blade, but any cutter or cutting scissors will work.
- » **Hook:** Each project I do seems to use a different hook, but for this rug, I used a Hartman Irish Hook.
- » **Permanent black marker:** This is used to draw the lines and pattern on the backing material.
- » **Backing material:** I usually used monk's cloth, but for this rug I used rug warp.
- » **Hoop:** I used a 17" Morgan No Slip Hoop.

I had seen images of this design hooked in the 1920s and '30s in the books *Hooked Mats of Newfoundland and Labrador: Beauty Born of Necessity*, compiled by the The Rug Hooking Guild of Newfoundland and Labrador, and *From Rags to Riches: North Country Rag Rugs* by Rosemary E. Allan. I was drawn to the many colors used in this design.

I also love wool, shopping at thrift stores and repurposing materials. Fortunately for me, these pursuits align well with rug hooking! After encountering the broken glass rug image, I quickly decided that I wanted to make a colorful broken glass rug using repurposed thrift-store wool. It would also be a great way to use up wool scraps, which was a primary motivation for this rug design in the past. I went searching at nearby thrift stores and gathered lots of colorful wool scarves, wool skirts, and a heavy black wool winter coat in addition to the stash of wool I have collected at home. The black coat was perfect as I knew I wanted to put a black border around all the broken pieces, and I also wanted it for the border around the rug.

PREPARING

To prepare the wool scarves and coat, I washed them in warm water and dried them in the dryer. This helps to felt them so they are thicker, fluffier, and easier to hook with. I then cut the scarves and coat using a Bliss cutter with a #8 blade that I had recently purchased used. This was the first rug for which I used the Bliss cutter as I usually hand cut my wool with scissors.

For the backing, I decided to use rug warp, as I had some of that material leftover from another project. I usually use monk's cloth for most of my rugs, but I wanted to try a different backing and found that I liked using rug warp.

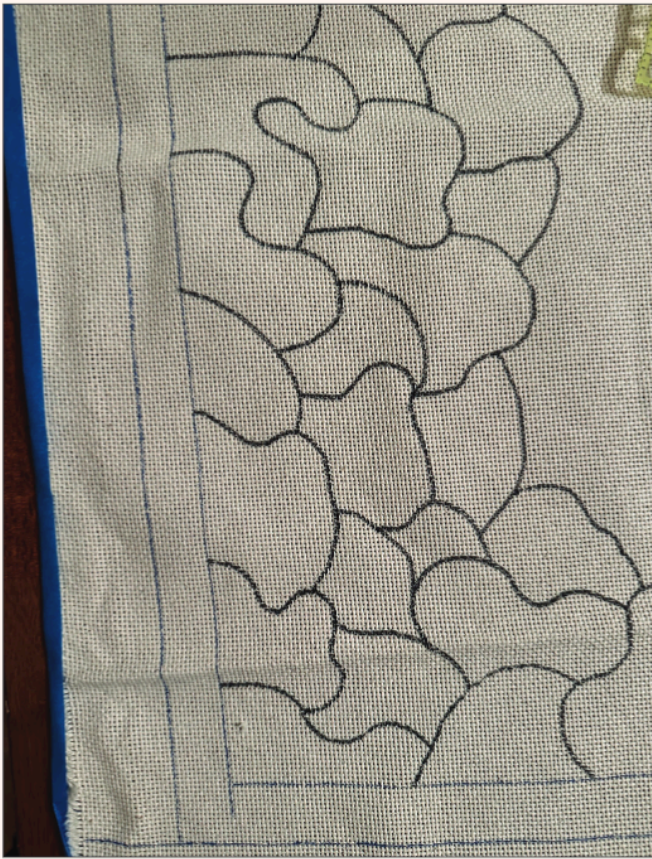
DRAWING

I also knew I wanted to make a floor rug, so I drew the rug outline with a black permanent marker to be about 37" x 23", leaving about a 3" border of extra material for finishing the rug. I put painter's tape around the border to prevent the rug warp from fraying. I then drew a 1" border inside the border—this would be for the black border.





Broken Glass Rug, 37" x 23", repurposed wool on rug warp. Designed and hooked by Karen Hanson West, 2023.



Drawing the pattern on the monk's cloth.



To hook the rug, I like to use a Morgan hoop.



After drawing the pattern, I started to hook in the black outline.

The next thing to do was to draw the broken glass pieces. This is fun because you can draw them however you desire. I tried to make most of the pieces similar in size as I didn't want a lot of very small pieces. And I liked having curvy flowing pieces rather than square corners.

HOOKING

To start, I hooked some of the black broken glass border pieces. To keep the backing material tight, I used a 17" large circular quilting hoop. For this project, I used a Hartman Irish hook, which went through the rug warp backing with ease. After doing some of the black wool inside borders, I hooked some of the inside color pieces. As I moved the hoop, I would continue this method.

I randomly chose the different colors as I went. I also opted to use patterned scarves, not just solid colors, as I like the pattern that is created when they are hooked. I tried not to put the same colors too close together. And I decided not to use white/cream or other very light colors since this rug would be on the floor and dirt would show easily on lighter colors. After completing the inside colors, I hooked the outside border, which had five rows of black wool.



Starting to fill in the colors.



I randomly selected where to put the different colors in the rug.



Filling in the colors.



Ready to start the black border.



Hooking the black border.



Working on the black border.



Almost done—just have to bind the rug.

A closeup of the binding on the back of the rug.



FINISHING

To finish my rugs, I usually fold under the extra backing material and whipstitch it using three-ply wool yarn. I was originally going to finish this rug using that method, but I decided at the last moment that I wanted to try something different (and quicker)! After removing the painter's tape, I cut the rug warp extra border material to about 1.5" and, using my sewing machine, sewed a large zigzag stitch around the edge of the backing to help prevent it from unraveling. (Of course, using a sewing machine or serger to sew the edge is not essential, as you can just fold the raw edges under.)

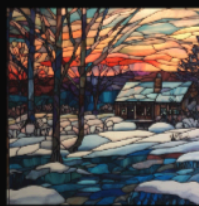
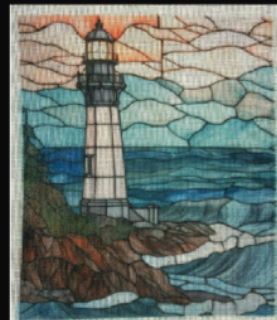
I folded flat the edges under on the back side of the rug and whipstitched the edging down around every 1/2" using upholstery thread. I then put a damp tea towel over the top of the rug and, using the cotton setting on my iron, pressed the rug in place for about 15 to 20 seconds, then moved it around the rug. And then you are finished, and you will have a beautiful broken glass rug! I love the vibrancy of the colors of this rug and also that it was made with upcycled materials.

RHM

Karen Hanson West was first introduced to rug hooking by a friend's mom. After researching primitive rug hooking, she designed and hooked her first rug in 2017. Since then, she continues to make primitive rugs as well as explore different rug making techniques, such as knotted rugs, locker rug hooking, and proddy rugs. Most of her rugs are made with wool and yarn found at thrift stores, as she loves upcycling. She lives in the Pacific Northwest with her husband and two sons.

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