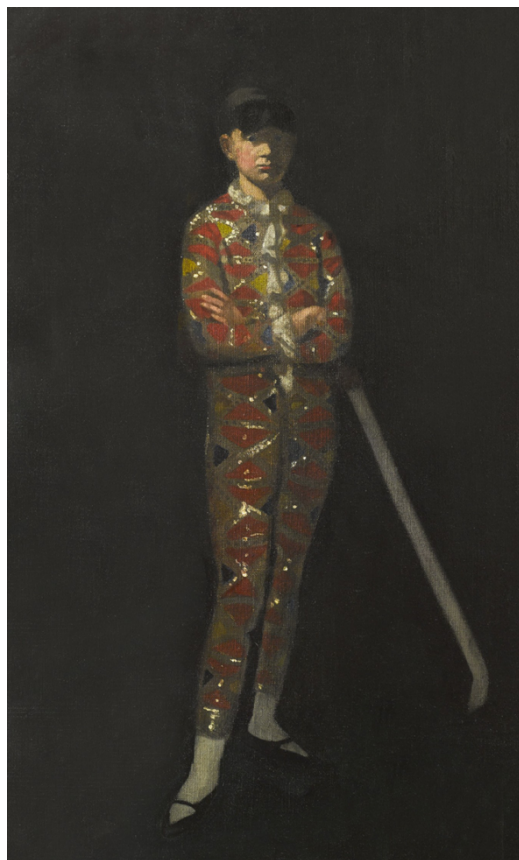


**The Nicholson Women
2 MAY - 29 JUNE 2024**

PRESS RELEASE

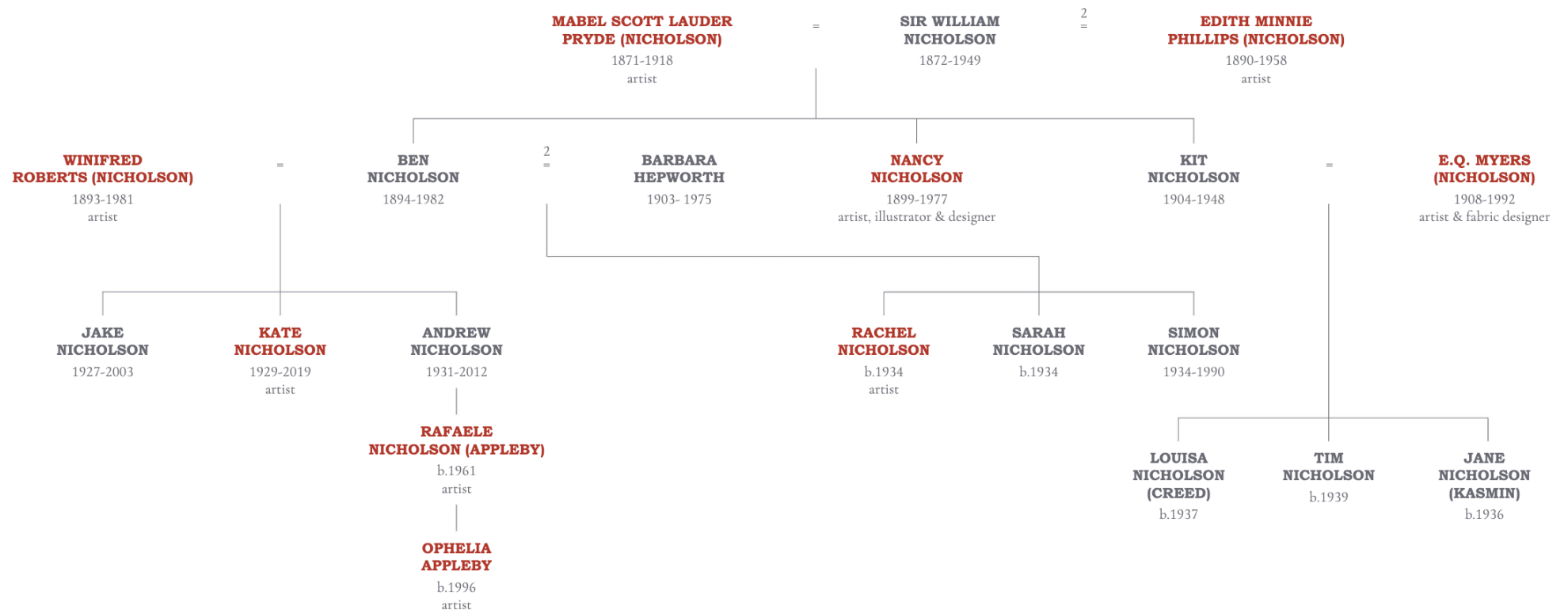


Mabel Pryde Nicholson Artist's Daughter, Nancy as Harlequin, c. 1910, Oil on canvas, 101 x 63.5 cms
Photo credit: The Fleming Collection, London

The Nicholson Women exhibition brings together work from nine female artists of the exceptionally talented Nicholson family, varying in their practise from painters and illustrators to designers and printmakers. With works spanning from the late 1800's to the present day the show reflects on the historical significance of the female artists in the family who have helped define the movements and styles that they explored.

Often overlooked until the recent attention given to redress the balance for female artists in British art history, the exhibition explores the work of Mabel Pryde Nicholson (1871-1918), Edith Nicholson (1890-1958), Winifred Nicholson (1893-1981), Nancy Nicholson (1899-1977), EQ Nicholson (1908-1992), Kate Nicholson (1929-2019), Rachel Nicholson (b. 1934) as well as the future generation of Nicholson women Rafaele Appleby and Ophelia Appleby.

NICHOLSON WOMEN FAMILY TREE



Mabel Pryde Nicholson (1871-1918) was the younger sister of the artist James Ferrier Pryde. She was the first wife of Sir William Nicholson (1872-1949) whom she met when they were both students at Herkomer's Academy in Hertfordshire. They had four children; Ben, Tony, Nancy and Kit. (Ben Nicholson- the Modernist artist). Most of Mabel's paintings use her own children as models in striking, characterful poses, sometimes in theatrical costumes; the family were avid theatregoers who kept a costume box and the figure of Harlequin was a favourite subject.

Mabel started to paint seriously when her fourth child Kit went to school. Then in the years before the First World War her paintings flourished and became part of family life. 'Prydie' participated regularly in group exhibitions at the Goupil Gallery and she had a solo show at the Chenil Gallery in 1912 in London. After Mabel sadly died of pneumonia in 1918, she was given a Retrospective exhibition at the Goupil Gallery in 1920 with the help of her son, Ben.

Following Mabel's death Sir William married **Edith Nicholson (1890-1958)** in 1919 (born Edith Minnie Phillips). She had married Major Jack Stuart -Wortley, who died in France in 1918. Edie and her husband had been family friends of the Nicholsons for some time before the War. Major Jack Stuart Wortley was fighting in France, and so was Tony Nicholson (Mabel and William's son). When Jack was reported missing Prydie naturally sought to support Edie with her two young children, during the very difficult months before he was confirmed killed. Then when Prydie herself died, and shortly after Tony was killed, the remaining members of the two families shared a common grief. There had been a close relationship between Edie and Ben, who painted each others portraits in 1917.

However after the war it was the friendship between Edie and William that blossomed, and they were married in 1919. William and Edie went on honeymoon, together with her two young children, John and Ann, to the South of France. A daughter was born to them in 1920. That year William returned with his new family to Rottingdean, where he had lived with Prydie before the war, this time to Burne-Jones' old house on the other side of the Rottingdean pond from the Grange at North End House.

Edith first exhibited as Elizabeth Drury in 1924 but later painted under her own name.

Mabel's daughter **Nancy Nicholson (1899-1977)** was an artist and designer who founded Poulk Press with the poet Geoffrey Taylor in 1930 at Tytherington, near Warminster (after her marriage to Robert Graves had dissolved). Nancy's creativity was devoted to textile design, but letterpress printing formed an important second string. Nancy would have been familiar with block-printing from a young age and strongly influenced by her father William Nicholson who had published woodcuts for *Twelve Portraits* and *The Square Book of Animals*.

Nancy had married Robert Graves in 1918, their four children were born between 1919 and 1924. Nancy's early work included illustrations for poems by Robert, for example *The Owl* a magazine edited by Robert Graves and William Nicholson in 1919. She also illustrated book covers for *An Indian Day*, 1927 by Edward Thompson and Tolstoy's *A Prince of Outlaws*.

Nancy's output was relatively small and making a living was hard as a single mother. Commissions for letterheads came from a small circle of family and friends in the thirties. In 1937 Nancy and Geoffrey printed notepaper for her brother Ben Nicholson and for Barbara Hepworth.

E.Q. (Elsie Queen) Nicholson (1908-1992) was designer and painter whose work was marked by a natural lyricism and a delight in space, light and movement of line. The daughter of the novelist L.H. Myers, she grew up in a circle of artists such as Frank Dobson and Cedric Morris. After training in Paris she worked on Batik for Marion Dorn and designed rugs. Her interest in images of the natural world would later translate into explorations of plant forms, in paintings and in her best known applied design "Runner Bean" (c.1950) which appeared both as furnishing fabric (used on H.M Yachts Britannia) and as one of her hand printed wallpapers for Cole & Son.

In 1931 she married the architect Kit Nicholson, youngest son of William Nicholson and Mabel Pryde. She assisted in the office he ran with Hugh Casson, which produced distinctive modernist buildings that were pioneering for their time. In the 1930's E.Q. began to use lino blocks for the fabrics which she designed and printed. In the 40's and 50's she made fabric designs for machine printing, for The Edinburgh Weavers. Her career lasted 15 years from 1941 and she had a solo exhibition at the Hanover Gallery in 1950 – Kit died in a gliding accident in Italy in 1948.

Rachel Nicholson (b. 1934) is a painter, daughter of Ben Nicholson and Barbara Hepworth. She moved from Hampstead to St Ives, Cornwall in 1939. With no formal training Rachel began painting still life compositions, like her father, then to landscapes of Cumbria, Derbyshire and the West Country where she had spent most of her childhood.

Great-granddaughter of Winifred Nicholson, **Ophelia Appleby**, lives and paints in Cumbria. Ophelia studied at the Royal Northern College of Music for her degree and has exhibited and performed at the Grange Gallery in Rottingdean, former home of Mabel Pryde Nicholson.

Winifred Nicholson (1893-1981) enrolled at the Byam Shaw School of Art in London in 1912, continuing to study there during World War I. In 1920 Winifred married Ben Nicholson and they worked alongside each other in Italy, France, Devon and Cornwall. Winifred was a member of the Seven & Five Society and exhibited with the Society in all their exhibitions until its closure in 1935. Whilst in Paris in the 30's she began to paint abstract paintings, exhibiting them at the Seven and Five Exhibition at the Zwemmer Gallery and at the London Gallery in an Exhibition of Constructivist Art, both times under the name of Winifred Dacre. By 1938, with war looming and after her separation from Ben, Winifred returned to England to her house in Cumberland. Winifred was a keen traveller and visited the Hebrides and Western Scotland during the early 1950's, painting lyrical and light filled landscapes and flower paintings. She also travelled in Greece, France and Morocco.



Kate Nicholson (1929-2019) daughter of Ben Nicholson and Winifred Nicholson, was a painter and studied at Bath Academy of Art 1949-1954. She taught art at Totnes High School for two years before she moved to St Ives in 1957 and became a member of the Penwith Society of Arts – the more abstract breakaway group of St Ives artists. Kate painted still lives and abstract works from her homes in Cumbria and Cornwall. In the 1960s and 1970s, she painted alongside her mother, Winifred and the two travelled together frequently, visiting Greece, North Africa and the Hebrides.

Great-granddaughter of Mabel Pryde Nicholson, **Rafaele Appleby** paints in her studio on Hadrian's Wall with views of the Cumbrian Fells to the south, and her garden to the north. Rafaele's paintings and pastel drawings are focused on colour and light and are often inspired by the nature that surrounds her.