A RARE spotlight is shining on Cumbria's farming women, at the latest exhibition to be staged at Kendal's Abbot Hall Art Gallery.

In specially created sheds, visitors have the chance to immerse themselves in the stories of five women who work the land by watching individual films.
about their lives.

The intriguing show - Tracing the Landscape: Cumbrian Farm Women - is by
Glasgow-born artist Patricia MacKinnon-Day. Commissioned by Lakeland
Arts, she spent a year with women aged between 30 and 80 across the
county. Some have managed farms for generations, while others are newer
to agriculture.

Patricia's exhibition is described as offering "a play on all the senses" with
each shed featuring historical farming artefacts from the neighbouring
Museum of Lakeland Life & Industry, part of Lakeland Arts' collection, as well
as possessions and materials chosen by the women.

Female roles in farming are explored alongside the hopes and frustrations
experienced in an industry often seen as "a man's world". Although the
women have wide-ranging, passionate and differing views on agriculture,
they are united as women farmers.

"To these five women, farming is not a job but a way of life. It is in their
blood," said Patricia, who studied fine art at Liverpool School of Art and
completed an MA at Royal College of Art London.

"Male voices around farming are well-documented; however, women are
often overlooked. Women farmers always seem pushed into the background.
I wanted to bring the stories of this often marginalised group to the fore."

Lakeland Arts' events programme for 2018 links to the nationwide
celebrations of the Representation of the People Act 1918, which allowed
women to vote for the first time in Britain. "There is a sub-text to the
exhibition that the stories of women in agriculture are often invisible," said
Patricia. "The exhibition will also look at the standing of the women in their
communities as they consider where they sit in society."

Lakeland Arts says it is delighted to be working with Patricia and using
contemporary art to explore the lives of Cumbrian communities. Jennie
Pitceathly, head of learning, said: "The five women who feature in the
exhibition are rooted to the landscape, the land and their communities.
Tracing the Landscape will bring their voices and experiences to a wider
audience."

The landscape and farming-themed show coincides with Abbot Hall's display
of Monet's masterpiece Haystacks: Snow Effect - believed to be the very first
time a Monet has been displayed in Cumbria.

Also on show is new contemporary digital work by Katie Spragg. This
includes a stop-frame animation which explores memories, experiences and
interactions with nature; and While Away, which sees visitors recline on a
chair to watch grass made of porcelain blow in the wind. Both works are said
to " evoke a sense of wonder about being outside in nature".

The Tracing the Landscape exhibition comes at a time when there is
increased focus on the Lake District, its landscape and people, after it was

For more, visit lakelandarts.org.uk