



RAE RICHARDS

PAST IMPERFECT – FUTURE CONDITIONAL

26 November to 13 December 2014

THE UNIVERSITY
GALLERY



Rae Richards

This survey exhibition of the long career of Rae Richards mounted by the University Gallery, demonstrates its commitment to celebrating the history of the visual arts in Newcastle. It also honours an individual artist whose work is in many institutional collections and gives continued pleasure in many of our homes. Institutions have been happy to lend works, with friends and often their descendants, keen to have their favourite pieces included.

But Rae's work is not only popular, with many virtually sold-out exhibitions including regular events over many years at Anne von Bertouch's gallery, it has also been included in important national exhibitions such as the Wynne and Sulman Prizes and in a solo show in the Qantas Gallery at Australia House in London.

This survey covers more than fifty years of artmaking. It provides an opportunity to see hung together the three distinct mediums in which Rae has operated, sometimes involving innovative ways of reinvigorating traditional craft techniques. However, Rae firmly asserts she is primarily a painter.

When she came to live in Newcastle in 1957 with husband and three young sons, it was possible for the first time to regularly attend an art school. Rae just missed the Passmore years at the Newcastle Branch of the National Art School, but she cites Brian Cowley as the most useful teacher she ever had.

She and a group of fellow students formed the Low Show group, exhibiting the first hugely popular modernist-inflected paintings in Newcastle in that heady time in the 1960s when the fledgling university was the catalyst for opening up the city to new prospects in music, theatre and art.

It was also in the 1960s that Rae began experimenting with appliquéd fabric hangings. Unlike her evocative paintings of landscapes, they featured heraldic and narrative subjects, densely patterned and intensely coloured, for boldly decorative works commissioned, with assistance from the Wool Board and



OPPOSITE: *Autumn*, oil on canvas, 57 x 67 cm.
On loan courtesy the artist.

TOP: *Still Life 5*, oil on canvas, 64 x 79 cm.
On loan courtesy the artist.

ABOVE: *Still Life II*, oil on board, 64 x 78 cm.
On loan courtesy Pam Edwards.



ABOVE: *T.H. Jones*, oil on canvas, 92 x 70 cm.
Donated to the University of Newcastle Art Collection by
his daughters.

OPPOSITE: *Sunk Lyonesse*, 1960, oil on board,
85 x 112 cm. The University of Newcastle Art Collection.

the Craft Council, for public institutions: colleges, churches, schools and offices, culminating in the great series of banners of saints and symbols in Christ Church Cathedral, Newcastle.

Nondescript fabrics become magically modulated colour blocks. Fabric hangings have monumental presence in public spaces, so do fabulous beasts designed for domestic interiors. The exhibition includes one set of four made for the University Great Hall and another epic group for AMP's new office in Hobart, using the story of Noah and his Ark as appropriate theme for an insurance company.

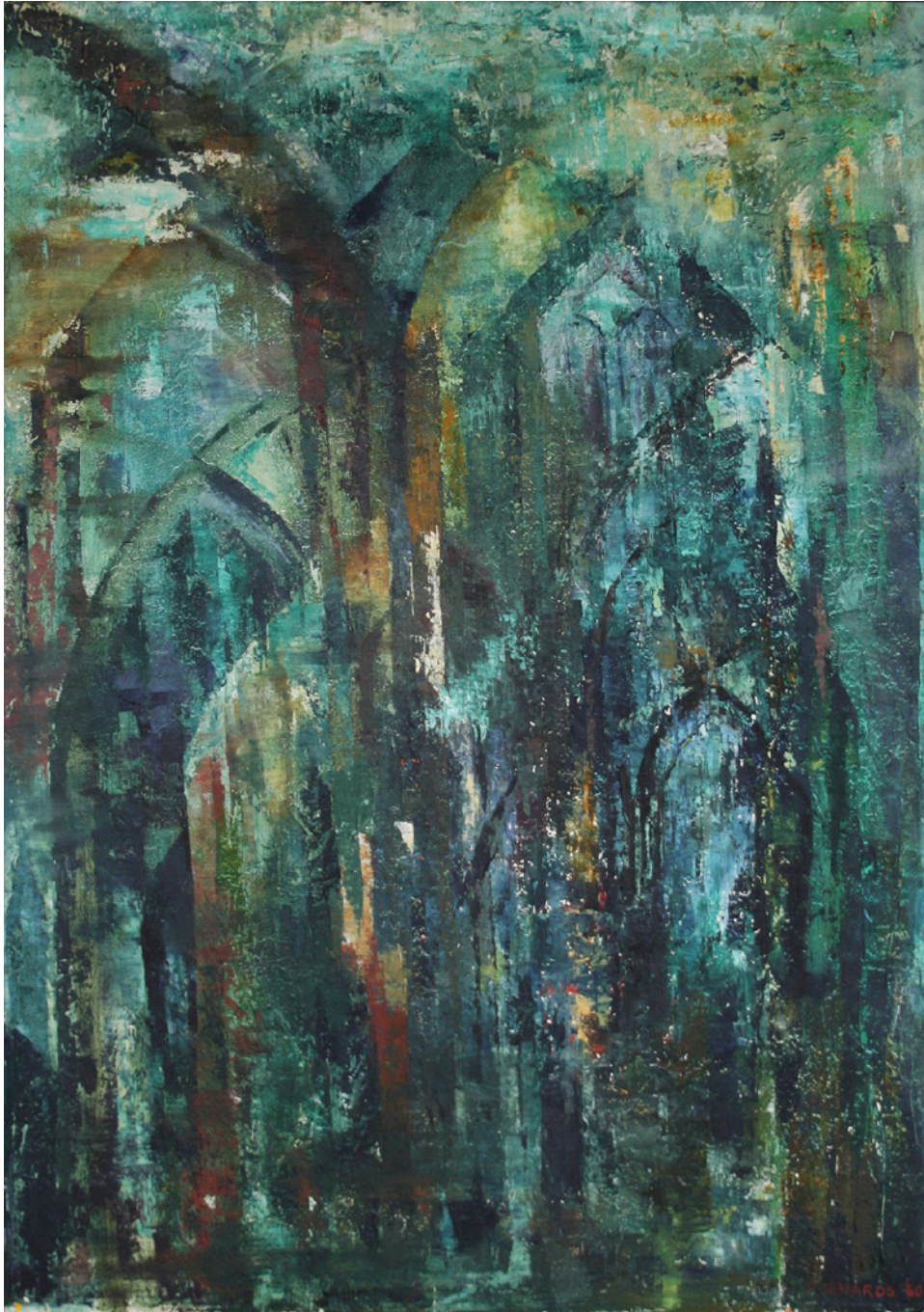
In 1981 she completed a Graduate Diploma in Professional Studies at Alexander Mackie, Sydney. Further impetus came while accompanying her distinguished metallurgist husband on business trips, where she took opportunities to study folk fabric traditions in the USA and Japan, and to immerse herself in the clear light and life-enhancing antiquities of the Mediterranean world. Painted ceramics became a new area in which to extend the pleasures of creation. Rae's bowls and platters, thrown by Sean Nicholson, and panels of vine-bearing tiles, celebrate the Lucullan delights of shared leisure.

Delight in domestic detail shines through the ever-growing group of still-life paintings. Lemons and cabbages, pewter pots and earthenware bowls now often transcend the artist's pleasure in small things, becoming in recent times studies in statuesque authority.

Viewers to the exhibition will notice that there is no chronological hang or stylistic breaks. An opulently coloured continuum brings surface and heritage together in an artistic odyssey of nearly sixty years.

If the Past is necessarily imperfect and the Future opaquely conditional, Rae Richards entreats us to savour the Present.

– *Jill Stowell, November 2014*







OPPOSITE LEFT: *Cockatrice*, fabric appliqué, 121 x 63 cm. On loan courtesy Ken Dutton.

OPPOSITE RIGHT: *One Day of Creation*, 1996, fabric appliqué, 204 x 99 cm. On loan courtesy David Middlebrook and David Scotman.

ABOVE: *Hill Town*, oil on canvas, 124.5 x 154 cm. On loan courtesy Julie and David Rich.

FRONT COVER: *Tree of Life*, 1974, appliqué on wool, 153 x 260.5 cm.
The University of Newcastle Art Collection.

BELOW: *Lion Rampant* (detail), fabric appliqué, 86 x 80 cm.
On loan courtesy Marjorie and Dennis Biggins.



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