

RACHEL GITAI ORIGINALS

Mixed Media Using Pure Silk, Hand Made Paper And Textile Oils

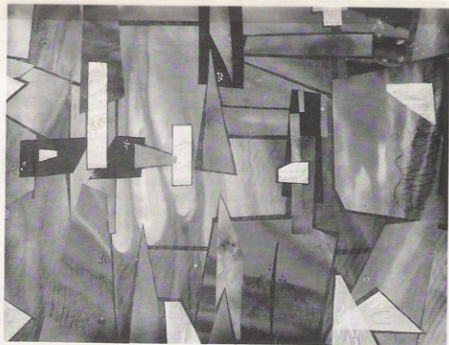
Rachel Gitai's hand painted pure silk collages give an impression of gay colourful abstract designs. Their lovely colour harmonies, elegant frames and mounts are an interior designer's dream.

However, on closer scrutiny of the many works on display, especially the unframed ones, where it is possible to really appreciate the work that has gone into them to provide such an exciting variety of colour, texture and design, I found the work was beginning to grow on me. Each painting is original and unique. Of mixed-media they are built up with either geometric or organic shapes made of different textures of silken materials, glued onto a background of several layers of hand-made and painted paper, or plain coloured linen. This gives them a third dimension, a shallow relief, which adds to their interest.

Painting on silk is an old technique done in the Far East for many years, the same methods now used by Rachel Gitai, who has to import the raw silk from Israel.

The silk painting technique is long and complicated and needs great patience. First, the silk has to be soaked in hot and cold water alternately, in order to stabilise the warp and woof fibres of the material. For example, in a very large scale work done recently the artist was requested to portray the feeling of deep sea streams. In order to achieve this effect the material had to be stretched unequally to suggest the pull of various currents in running water.

The painting work is done exclusively by using concentrated silk paints and fine small brushes, the same used in water-colour painting. Many hours of painting are necessary before the final background effect and layout is completed. The work is done in rainy wet weather (when it occurs in the Transvaal!) or the early morning hours. Great patience and a stable hand are required to achieve satisfactory results. When the painting is finished the material needs to remain for up to two days in dry con-



ditions and then will be steamed to stabilise the painting.

Only then is the painted material ready for the real creativity to commence. Materials of different colours and textures are cut into pieces of different shape and integrated to form the desired art work.

Rachel Gitai has an impressive *curriculum vitae*. Born Rachel Rosenblit in Israel in 1954, she attained a B.A. degree in Creative Art and Literature at the University of Haifa in 1975. At the same university she subsequently obtained a Teaching Art Degree 1977, and a M.A. degree in planning aesthetic education in 1979. All this and at the same time, as an academic teacher, concentrating on the teaching of children's book illustration, creativity, visual communication and interior design, she set and managed a photography laboratory in the Israel Defence Force. In 1984 she earned her P.H.D. in Education at the Technicon, Institute of Technology, Haifa.

1984 was also the year Rachel and her husband and family came to South Africa. A member of the British Institute of Interior Design, she wrote articles in the Israeli interior design magazine *Man and his House*, as well as running a consultancy for overseas families coming to South Africa. After returning to Israel for a year in

1987, Rachel has been back in South Africa since September, 1988 and is now busy producing interior design and modern art works from her home in Johannesburg.

Rachel found that interior design concepts are influenced by the same aesthetics as fine art and this inter-relationship inspired her to start producing works specifically to complement decor schemes, modern as well as eclectic. These highly unique mixed media and silk paintings are worth acquiring not only as decorative pieces but as original art works.

