



Nancy Hall



Who Knew Such Creatures Plied Our Waters?, 77 x 160 cm, hooked rug, burlap and recycled woolen clothing, Nancy Hall, n.d.

Traditionally, women's work goes unnoticed and uncelebrated outside the home (if, indeed, it is noticed there). I have taken a conventional form of textile production — hooked rugs made from recycled materials — and moved it out of the usual areas of expression. No lighthouses, barnyards, or family pets for me. I want the whole world to see that even in a rag rug a woman can speak her mind, reveal her soul, and revel in the absurdity of life. Making rugs is women's work; shouting about it is unheard of. On behalf of all those unsung artists, I want to make a very big noise.

The late Carol Shields talked about the invisibility of older women in our society and her desire to redeem them in her work. I, too, feel this need. The wool I reclaim from second-hand stores is almost exclusively women's clothing. How can I not do honour to the unknown donors, most of whom, judging by the styles, are getting on in years? They've worn these clothes to parties, to work, to funerals and

bar mitzvahs. Maybe they've even washed the kitchen floor in them. All this lurks in the fibre. These women *are* my rugs.

The subject matter I choose to depict is a blurred kind of magic realism between my imagination and my life. I know Ruth and Fiona. I live among fishermen. I have had to "climb" up and out. Loop after loop after loop, these real life stories are recorded as each rug's pile is formed. Making the rugs can be tedious (on average, six hours per square foot), but much of women's work is humdrum. Instead of reflecting mere labour, these rugs celebrate the joy of creation, the humour and delight of being alive (and giving life), and the ability to rise above the dreariness of the household. I venture to suggest that this desire to make the ordinary beautiful is universal among women. Why else would there be eye-dazzling quilts made from the family's old clothes or richly embroidered bed coverings from unravelled silk saris?

— Nancy Hall

Nancy Hall's rugs were exhibited in *Emergence: North to South* touring Manitoba and Saskatchewan during 2005. Her solo show *From Rags to Richness* opens at Gallery C-103 at the University of Winnipeg on October 20, 2005.



The Climb, 68 x 42 cm, hooked rug, burlap and recycled woolen clothing, Nancy Hall, n.d.



Ruth and Fiona's Last Day at the Beach, 91 x 13 cm, hooked rug, burlap and recycled woolen clothing, Nancy Hall, n.d.