

Retrospective of artist's work

A RETROSPECTIVE exhibition of works by the late artist Joan Mackenzie will be on display at The Studio Art Gallery in the Harbour Bay complex in Simon's Town from Friday. Launching at 6.30pm, the Un(en)titled exhibition runs until March 13, with free access to the public between 9am and 6pm every day of the week.

"It deals with the very important issue of land ownership, a subject that keeps emerging. Even today, it is something we South Africans have to consider. The whole exhibition is a conversation to get people to talk about such issues affecting us South Africans," said the artist's widower, James Mackenzie. James, who had lived with his artist wife for 31 years, said he had made a vow at her death that he would store her work until a perfect venue became available to exhibit it. "The Studio Art Gallery is a brilliant new gallery and its owner, Marc Alexander, was curator and Museum Technologist of the Pretoria Art Museum." His wife was born in 1941 and died in 2004. James said he and Alexander assembled the exhibition. Alexander said: "It is ironic that, 15 years after Joan's death and 19 years after her original exhibition, the issue of land and entitlement is still as unresolved and contentious as ever. "Her textural and textual statements have, therefore, lost nothing of their impact; her art is as relevant today as it was in her lifetime."

Alexander said Mackenzie had in the 1990s unearthed a 1940s railway worker's "free" ticket, together with a 1950s "white" political pamphlet, which the worker had pencilled over with a simple sum that he could not add up correctly. "These three elements encapsulated a time in a land where 'culturally conditioned' people possessed a mindset that would never 'add up'. "For the artist, finding that railway ticket initiated intersections of personal memory, myth and historical fact," said Alexander.

James said his late wife had initially gone into business, but had yearned her whole life to become an artist. "Even when living in England in the 1970s, she took up a silk-screen printing and fine art course and basically started her own style of art. "She spent eight years studying at Unisa and graduated with a fine arts degree in the year 2000," he added.



Un(en)titled - cardboard, wire and foil printing plate.