

'Oh, what a stitch up!' cries artist



Details, details: one of Karen Nicol's creations

Exhibition

LACE

Rebecca Hossack Gallery
LONDON

The embroidery master Karen Nicol spends most of her time embroidering pieces for big-name fashion designers, including Clements Ribeiro, Chloe, Julian Macdonald, John Rocha and Matthew Williamson. Now she has decided to step into the limelight and establish her work not just as fashion, but as art. In her first solo show, she will exhibit 16 skirts that she has created especially; each can open out and be hung as an art piece.

"Changing the context of the work, putting it into a gallery gives it a different view," says Nicol, who is currently working on a skirt depicting landscapes, in homage to the woodcarver Grinling Gibbons. "It also means I can take ownership and re-address the balance, because fashion consumes textiles and I get overlooked. But the trouble with embroidery is that it has unfortunate connotations. I wanted to create pieces that

St George and the Dragon, depicting a lace St George on his horse slaying the dragon. *Shot Silk* is covered with circular holes with a fine embroidered dead heron hanging from the waistband. "I want to subvert the traditional skills of lace making. My pieces suspend embroidery in the air, often with 3D flowers that I sculpt from cut-out pieces of material I have embroidered."

Stringfellow is made of old linen warp thread from a loom and embroidered with cream plastic animals and bone game-counters found in a flea market in Paris; while *Scribble*, made of old threads, is a random scribble. *Black Forest* is composed of torn strips of fabric embroidered with forest animals, leaves and dancing bears.

"Making work for art galleries is very exciting," says Nicol. "I have a free rein to do what I want. I spend all my time serving designers and in fashion, there are constraints of cost and practicality. Here I can go mad."

Charlotte Cripps