

SYDNEY LIVE



Aussie as . . . Rosa Fedele with one of her paintings celebrating our love affair with the Holden

picture: JOHN FOTIADIS

Driven to remember

The Australian Icons Suite

Iain Howells Art Gallery

Art

These were the cars in which Australia learned to drive, made love, and drove to the drive-in. The glamour of the Holden motorcar through the years is what Sydney artist Rosa Fedele set out to capture with her latest set of paintings.

There's the magic of the 1950s and '60s, and film beauties Sophia Loren and Gina Lollobrigida — though it was also a chaste time, she says.

For a lot of people growing up in the 1950s, the FJ was their first car.

The Balmain-based artist used girls from the suburb as models, and draped them over the iconic chassis of the cars for the oil on canvas works.

They range from a classic 1954 FJ to a 1972 LJ Torana, "a very funky little car".

The paintings capture and do justice to an era that renders many Australians, including our prime minister, more than a little misty-eyed.

And for the artist, the project represents a decade-long labour of love.

"It's been on the back of my mind for the last 10 years," Fedele says.

"I wanted to paint a story about the Holdens but I didn't start until two years ago."

Half the fun, it seems, was in researching the images and the signs of the times.

"I did a lot of research. A lot of it was done in the State Library, going through the microfiches of old copies of *The Women's Weekly* from the '50s and '60s for the fashions, the times — and the cars," Fedele says. "It was all very glam and I wanted to capture a vintage feel in this

retrospective. But it was also a chaste, innocent time."

The broad range of cars includes a 1966 Chrysler, one of Fedele's favourites and "a really beautiful old car".

Fedele says the paintings reflect her passion for the dramatic, and her love of light.

The Australian Icons Suite exhibition is part of a new display of 35 of Fedele's works.

□ *The Australian Icons Suite* by Rosa Fedele until July 21 at Iain Howells Art Gallery, 230 Darling St, Balmain

TIM GILL