Helen Rae working on a fashion-inspired drawing.

Photo: Sami Drasin
At 81, Helen Rae does not fit the bill for a typical emerging artist. She got a late start—at age 52—when her mother enrolled her at California’s First Street Gallery and Art Center, a program for adults with disabilities. Although she’s been nonverbal and deaf since birth, Rae’s drawings have a strong, clear voice that shows her gift for sourcing inspiration from the world of haute couture.

**Personal Style:** Rae’s drawings in colored pencil and graphite reinterpret high fashion images in the artist’s unique, expressive technique.
Model Subjects: She combs magazines for images that catch her eye—whether that’s Karlie Kloss in a black-and-white Oscar de la Renta gown shot by Annie Leibovitz or a model in a Julien d’Ys floral headdress captured by Willy Vanderperre.
Big Break: No one saw her work publicly until 2014, when gallerist Paige Wery showed her drawings in a group show at the Good Luck Gallery in Los Angeles. Rae then received her first
solo show there in 2015, which sold out, followed by an exhibition in 2017 at White Columns in New York.

“I love Helen’s interpretations of fashion ads, her bold use of colors, and great fashion sense.” — Beth Rudin DeWoody

Helen Rae, June 5, 2018, (2018). Photo: Courtesy of Tierra Del Sol Gallery
A version of this article first appeared in print in our 2019 Late Fall Issue under the headline “Galerie Emerging Artist Award.” Subscribe to the magazine.