



The Rosaleen Norton Gallery

Welcome to my Rosaleen Norton Gallery. These are just a few pictures to provide you with an introduction to one of the most important pagan artists of the twentieth century.

Biography

Rosaleen Norton was born in Dunedin on 2 October 1917 but her orthodox Protestant family moved to Sydney's North Shore when she was 7. Rosaleen (or Roie as she was known to her family and friends) said that she experienced various forms of psychic apparitions throughout her life and considered them part of the natural order. She started drawing at aged 3, but was expelled from Chatswood Girls Grammar School after disrupting her classmates by drawing bizarre pictures of supernatural phenomena. She studied art at East Sydney Technical College, where her vivid imagination was encouraged, and she started exploring ritual and the occult.

Rosaleen was also a talented writer, and her gothic short stories were published in Smith's Weekly, then one of Australia's most popular newspapers. She started a career at Smith's as an illustrator and cadet journalist, but her illustrations were considered a little too warped for mainstream readership, so she lost her job after only eight months.

Aged 18, she then decided it was time to leave home, so she took the train to Kings Cross, working as an artists' model to support herself, and started reading esoteric literature. She married a man called Beresford, and they hitchhiked and trainjumped their way around the East Coast of Australia for a while before moving back to The Rocks area of Sydney. Rosaleen divorced her husband when he returned from the war, and started contributing illustrations to a monthly journal, Pertinent - it was through this magazine that she met her magical and artistic partner and soulmate, the poet Gavin Greenlees. It was also during this time that she started experimenting with hypnotic trance states.

In 1949 she and Gavin moved to Melbourne and she had her first exhibition at the University of Melbourne. Unfortunately it was raided by the police two days after it opened, and Rosaleen was charged under obscenity laws, but charges were dismissed in court and she was awarded costs. But the scandal didn't sell a lot of her paintings, or lead to further shows, so she and Gavin moved back to Kings Cross, where Rosaleen became a prominent bohemian character, attracting many visitors. After their dilapidated flat was raided by the Vice Squad, Rosaleen and Gavin were arrested on a vagrancy charge, and were approached by a publisher named Wally Glover, who offered work to them as his assistants. But after seeing their work, he decided to publish a limited edition book called "The Art Of Rosaleen Norton (with poems by Gavin Greenlees)", which was released in 1952. It was heralded as indecent by the newspapers of the day, and Wally Glover was charged with producing an obscene publication. Two of the works in the book were ruled as obscene and Wally Glover was fined. The publicity attracted notoriety and artistic commissions for Rosaleen, but sent Wally Glover bankrupt.

As time went by, rumours spread about Black Masses and Rosaleen's devil cult, and she became known as the "Witch of Kings Cross". The Vice Squad raided yet again in October 1955, after joke photos of Rosaleen and Gavin dressed in ceremonial garb were stolen and handed to the police. Consequently a cafe owner who had been displaying some of Rosaleen's work was arrested and charged under the Obscene Publications Act, and Rosaleen was linked to an English conductor who was arrested at Sydney Airport with a cache of pornographic photographs. Also around this time Gavin Greenlees was institutionalised for schizophrenia, and he later tried to kill Rosaleen with a knife during an attack while he was on temporary release.

Rosaleen supported herself by selling paintings and making charms and hexes for a chosen few, as well as any publicity from her public image as a Witch. Her celebrity was increased in the mid-70s after an Anglican Church report into the occult, but she spent her later years with her cats, music and books, and died of colon cancer on 5 December 1979.

"The Art Of Rosaleen Norton" was reprinted in 1982, and Rosaleen's talent and notoriety still live on.

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Gallery

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Important Note:

All information and pictures are sourced from Nevill Drury's excellent biography on Rosaleen, "Pan's Daughter: The Strange World Of Rosaleen Norton". If you are interested in more of Rosaleen's work, I would suggest that you try and find this book - it was published in 1988, but seems to be quite hard to find. [Gleebooks](#) in Sydney is a good starting point.

PLEASE don't steal the images from these pages - Rosaleen Norton is already underrecognised and overplagiarised.



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