

Moving across the country and settling into a new home is not easy. To assist with the transition, Auckland artist Tori Beeche drew on artist collective Mothermother for solace and inspiration. She tells **Rebecca Fox** about the resulting exhibition in her new home of Queenstown.

Finding home in a new location

MOVING from one end of the country to the other has led artist Tori Beeche to reflect on what makes home, home. "I think probably partly moving from Auckland to Queenstown has made it not just a theoretical exercise but a daily practice now," Beeche, who has lived in Auckland most of her life except for a few stints overseas and her time at the University of Otago, moved south to Queenstown as her husband Dave got his dream job, running RealNZ, about a year ago.

Not strangers to the area having holidayed there for many years and more recently having a house in Arrowtown, the pair were excited about the opportunity to live in the area, especially as their two girls are students the University of Otago.

"And in fact, I think it's always been on our kind of agenda to move down here at some point. The sooner the better. The whole family, the girls as well, we love the mountains, and we love living in the mountains. And love the life down here."

For Beeche it meant leaving behind a close-knit Auckland art community to start again. She has been part of the Mothermother Collective, an artists' run initiative created by Nat Tozer six years ago, since she did her post-graduate study at Elam School of Fine Arts having done her master's with Tozer. "They're an amazing group of artists that are incredibly supportive. So, you know, I was missing that a lot down here."

So during a phone call, Tozer suggested she invite a Queenstown artist to join the collective. Beeche issued an invitation to Arrowtown sculptor and contemporary basket maker Jasmine Clark after finding her to be very welcoming. It then developed into Mothermother's first exhibition outside of Auckland with Tozer joining them in the exhibition "Unifying Threads".



Work by Tori Beeche.

along with fellow Auckland artist Michelle Mayn and Hamilton artist Rachel Hope Peary.

As the collective is just as much about artists supporting each other as it is about exhibiting work, Tozer loves it when the two come together in an exhibition such as "Unifying Threads". Beeche, who is starting to feel settled in her new home after a year, is excited about the exhibition and the artists involved.

"They're very much creators. There's weavers and they build things as well as creating kind of experiences."

"I think that the opening should be really interesting with the musical elements that Rachel's bringing to it and Michelle's gift philosophy. I think just the whole Mothermother vibe is just so infectious and generous. I'm really excited to be bringing it down here and having Nat share that vision."

Beeche's art practice combines themes of nostalgic reflection and connection to place in paintings of rooms inspired by her photographs of her father's Norwegian

upbringing, many taken by her amateur photographer grandfather.

"My interest probably began in my childhood. My dad is from Norway and he told a lot of stories about his Norwegian heritage."

He visited his family back in Norway every four years trying to stem a sense of displacement and alienation he felt living in New Zealand.

"I think that kind of acknowledgement or pleasure that he got from me liking his Norwegian culture and his aesthetic kind of view of the world, perhaps influenced my kind of way of seeing things."

The paintings she has completed for "Unifying Threads" explore how patterns and decorative elements elicit a sense of recognition.

She references French writer Charles Baudelaire who says that it is mostly in the process of recognition that we feel at home in the world. And for him it's about capturing the permanent from the transient.

"And to me, I think there's a deep sense of permanence in many of the patterns I've described in the paintings I've



Tori Beeche, Arrowtown artist (formerly of Auckland) in "Unifying Threads" at Te Atamira.

made for "Unifying Threads".

"But I believe that that's also quite universally felt as well. People recognise black and white checkerboard tiles or ikat rugs or grandma's quilt patterns. They all kind of carry origin stories and have travelled with these stories all over the world. And people bring patterns of home and they decorate their homes with them. And it makes them feel connected geographically, maybe back to home as well as to the new location."

She has noticed it in herself in the way she has decorated her home and the rituals and routines she follows as ways of bringing her past and new lives together.

"And connecting with people that want to have conversations about the same

thing."

In her past work she has explored passions, the desire to find order and meaning in an arbitrary and chaotic world by imposing rules and codes to help make sense of things.

"But I think in "Unifying Threads", I've been thinking much more about patterns of community rather than maybe just the literal sense of a passion."

However, it was not until she was in her late 30s that Beeche discovered her interest in art. She studied music at school and went on to study commerce at the University of Otago before a career in investment banking in the United Kingdom and New Zealand.

"Then I did a complete 360 and went to art school." It was the result of a few life

events; her second daughter arrived premature at 24 weeks and she found working was not compatible with her ongoing health issues. She found herself looking for a creative outlet so was drawing and painting and also did a jewellery making course.

"Then I decided I'd like it to be more than a hobby and I wanted to study it. I knew I wanted to be a painter."

Right from the beginning she had a kind of an aesthetic of old world or nostalgia and the more she looked into it during art school she realised how looking back can help people look forward.

"I feel like there's a nice sort of way of keeping some of those rituals and ceremonies and the ways that we've had in the past that really could be very beneficial to life in the

future."

She spends most days in the studio, selecting the source material for her works and finding the structure to focus the room on whether it is a window or a doorway and then she adds the decorative elements.

"Quite often what I'm looking for is sort of some recognition or spark that reminds me of something that will help me solve the painting, whether it's something from my memory banks or perhaps sometimes books I've read. Sometimes I just need a little nudge to help me figure out what element the painting needs to work."

In between each body of work Beeche paints, she does watercolours and drawings to freshen herself and change her understanding of the compositional space she is working with.

Her colour palette is very limited as she prefers to mix her own colours from the base primary colours.

"I do think it's probably highly referential to the houses and things I saw when we travelled to my dad's family in Norway."

Beeche's late father loved seeing things he recognised from his history in her paintings.

"He got a great deal of enjoyment out of it."

TO SEE:

Unifying Threads, May 8-June 8, Te Atamira, Whakaari, Queenstown; **Wire Weaving workshop** with Jasmine Clark, May 13, 20, 10am; **charcoal drawing workshop** with Tori Beeche, May 29, 10am.



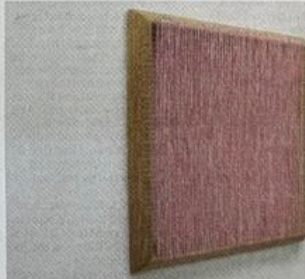
Auckland artist Michelle Mayn's *Guava Jelly & Jar* installation is a continuation of the work included in a previous Mothermother iteration. In it she gifts jars of preserved guavas; as well, her installation will include guava twigs bound by muka and hand-twisted and plant-dyed muka thread on wooden cotton reels as part of her practice of weaving, binding, twining and knotting, working primarily with hārekeke.



Auckland artist and Mothermother curator Nat Tozer works across moving image, materiality and social sculpture, exploring narratives of the underground to unearth objects and knowledge.



Arrowtown artist Jasmine Clark's work is woven by hand from natural and foraged materials, playing with form and shadow. Having learnt from her grandmother and mother, Clark went straight to art school and did a class on flax weaving and was hooked. She weaves using natural materials, often foraged to create her sculptures.



Waikato multidisciplinary artist Rachel Hope Peary uses labour-intensive techniques such as crocheting, weaving and woodworking and charts her ongoing practice and study of the non dualistic spiritual tradition of Kashmir Shaivism.

WHAT'S ON

GIGS

Catacombs, 10 the Octagon, Dunedin

Lovebox Ave

Culture 10am, Culture 10am

Te Atamira, Whakaari, Queenstown