

CONCEPT AS A TOOL FOR EXPLORING PROBABILITIES
The idea that painting can be immersive and can convey the energy of nature, merging emotion and memory through the application of colour to a surface.

IT'S AN INTERESTING QUESTION: HOW DOES IT FEEL?
In this digital age, do you think it's more difficult for artists to connect in a meaningful way... is isolation a problem?

NATURE'S RHYTHM AND HUMANITY'S RHYTHM — AS A PAINTER, IT'S AN INTERESTING QUESTION: HOW DOES IT FEEL?
in itself. If I could expand the list — Helen Frankenthaler, Grace Hartigan and Berthe Morisot too — they are all great women painters and colourists.

THROUGH THE EYES OF A PAINTER

Ginny Fisher talks to four leading New Zealand painters about how artists such as Matisse, Monet and Gauguin — whose masterpieces all appear in the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki exhibition *A Century of Modern Art* — changed the course of painting as we know it, and inspired their own work.

TORI BEECHE

Tori is a Queenstown-based painter renowned for her colourful and symbolically rich interior paintings that reference historical images and personal memories often infused with her Scandinavian heritage.

In *Dancer Resting*, 1940, one of the last paintings Matisse made before turning to collage cut-out works due to his ill health, he uses thin oil paint to draw outlines, and in the flat areas he reveals the movement of his brush. The collage-like contrast between the black and the lighter, brighter colours shows he worked by his own rule set. What strikes you as successful in this work? And are the rules of painting made to be broken?

Matisse's unique mastery over both composition and colour is universally recognisable, and at the time he painted this work he was at the top of his game. I am drawn to the confident simplicity of his composition, his technical virtuosity — evident in the simple forms he uses to

render the space. I love how he elevates these geometric place holders with decorative patterning and has a bold yet harmonious colour palette. His brush strokes are evocative in their confident lightness. Yes, the rules are made to be broken, but in painting it is definitely useful to know and understand the rules first, but breaking them can produce unexpectedly wonderful results.

Matisse often painted interior spaces filled with symbolic objects. You also paint interiors, what has drawn you to this genre?

As a painter I'm drawn to the formal painterly concerns interiors offer and the narratives they hold. Our homes are spaces that offer beautiful formal compositions, strong vertical and horizontal lines and forms to observe light and shadow play. Some are full of colours and patterns like the description you give of Matisse's work. While others are tonally neutral, with minimal items like the work of interior Danish painter Vilhelm Hammershøi. I think of my

paintings as portraits of spaces. We occupy these spaces and they become like containers, holding our social, emotional and aesthetic narratives.

Creating a distinct visual language can be challenging: most of the works in this exhibition are examples of drastic changes of direction in painting styles over the past century. How do you strive to carve out a niche of your own?

I love that painting is so loaded with history, it would be impossible to not consider it. I recall the reaction to my paintings at art school was I needed to appreciate the fact my work relies heavily on the understanding of art history. In fact, they are as much about painting as they are about the subject I select to paint. As painters we are responding to the status of painting, the era and location in which we work, and of course the institutions we are educated in. I work on crafting a painterly language that communicates moments in time by evoking feelings of nostalgia.



SERAPHINE PICK
Puff, 2021, oil on linen, 1300x1050mm. Courtesy of the artist and Michael Lett Gallery.



CLAUDE MONET
Winter Lilies, about 1932, Toledo Museum of Art, Purchased with funds from the Libbey Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey



TORI BEECHE
Transitive Pattern, Wool Calamanco Quilting & Wood Turning, 1925.



HENRI MATISSE
Dancer Resting, 1940, oil on canvas, Toledo Museum of Art, Gift of Mrs C. Lockhart McKelvey, 1942.