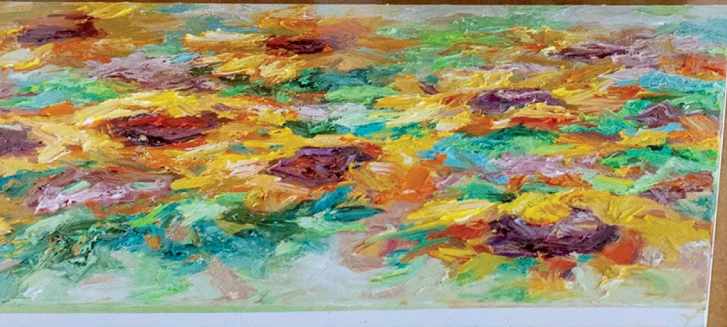


the Ōākura Post

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Ōākura
Artist
Caz Novak



Caz Novak – An Anthophile

Caz is a self-confessed anthophile, a lover of flowers. “That sums me up. I can’t go past a flower without noticing its colour and form, and how uplifting it is.”

We’re having a chat in Caz’s studio in her Messenger Terrace home. The windows are large and let in enormous amounts of natural light. The view is of the beach below and of the sea for as far as one can see. There’s an interesting collection of furniture, and then Caz, wearing a floral blouse of course. Caz has lived in this house with her husband Steve for 36 years. “It was originally a wee bach and we renovated and added on as we had our family of two daughters, Tess and Milla.”

Caz studied at Wellington Teachers College, which no longer exists. “It’s about to become a retirement village, so maybe I’ll move back there someday,” Caz jokes. “When I studied it was the only Teachers College in NZ that didn’t have exams and a lot of students hung out in the art room.” When asked if she was one of them, “I sure was” she quickly answered.

While she majored in art, her first job was teaching for 4½ years at West End School. She left teaching after the birth of her first child and began painting after the second child. “I thought, what do I really love doing?” That’s when she began painting coastal landscapes, gardenscapes and flowers. She’s been a

working artist for 26 years, evolving over time from contemporary realism and now moving towards abstraction. “I’m more interested in the colours and textures of nature than slavishly painting something in a realistic fashion.”

“Making art can be quite a solitary occupation but because of the location of my studio I feel very connected to nature and enjoy seeing people interacting with it. When I’m painting I’m often distracted by walkers, surfers, dogs, ponies and even the occasional Orca.”

Although Caz initially sold her paintings through galleries in New Zealand and Australia, it was the website she established in 1999 that created opportunities to sell directly to buyers. “I discovered a system that works well for me, as I really enjoy connecting with my art buyers and collectors. And it’s opened up a whole international market.”

Youngest daughter Milla, having grown up in Ōākura and now aged 28, is a digital designer and photographer and very much involved in the promotional side of Caz’s business. “It’s been great to have Milla onboard. She’s designed and built the latest version of my website and nudged me onto Instagram! As an artist there’s a lot of work that happens beyond painting with marketing, social media, shipping and communications all part of the mix. I’m very much ‘head-down’ when painting a new collection of work; then Milla creates the collection catalogue that’s sent out to my mailing list for sales. With Taranaki sales it’s nice for me to hand deliver the paintings or hang them in their homes. However most of

my paintings head to Auckland and many sell internationally.”

Caz’s newest series Evoke (2022) features evocative florals and a sumptuous colour palette of vibrant hues and soft, earth tones. The series brings together layered washes of paint with sculptural impasto (an Italian word used to describe a painting technique wherein paint is thickly laid on a surface so that brushstrokes or palette knife marks are visible). Many of the recent pieces in this series are tondo (round) in shape. “I like to mix the shapes that I paint on as it makes me challenge the boundaries of my compositions. This series is about evoking garden memories and I’ve deliberately kept the forms loose and expressive.”

The next collection Caz is working on takes a step back to view a wider vista of the garden, primarily inspired by the gardens in Pukekura Park. Caz is an avid Pukekura Park walker, being there at all seasons and noting what’s growing and the changing light. She’s about to start a large rectangular piece, again using impasto with gestural brushstrokes that mix and move the paint across the canvas.

To follow Caz’s newest and upcoming work, go to www.caznovak.co.nz or **Instagram @caznovakart**

Caz has generously donated artwork for raising funds for Cathy’s Care Centre at the Taranaki Retreat. Watch for more information forthcoming.

Elayne Kessler