

A LIFE IN COLOUR

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Artist Caz Novak on the power of colour and why you should give yourself permission to play

What inspired you to become an artist and what was that journey like?

My early twenties dream was to live in a cottage by the sea and paint. Instead, I became a teacher, moved from Wellington to Taranaki, and then met and married a wonderful man (who coincidentally owned a seaside bach). It was not until ten years later, while recovering from postnatal depression, that I picked up my paintbrushes again. This daily connection with paint and colour played an integral part in my journey and opened the door to my life as a painter.

Inspired by nature, my work has evolved in style from contemporary realism to botanical symbolism and is now shifting towards abstraction. With over twenty-five years as a working artist, I feel incredibly grateful for my work and to those who buy, collect, and enjoy it.

Your work is filled with the most vibrant of colours. What calls you towards such a colourful aesthetic?

Colour has the power to uplift, calm the senses or bring energy and is such an integral part of my work. My paintings always begin with a colour story and it's this element that captures my thoughts and dreams. Living and working so close to nature, my palette is also influenced by the saturated colours of the West Coast - vivid sunsets, reflective black sand, lush coastal foliage, and bright clear skies. I use vast quantities of paint which I apply with either large brushes or a palette knife, creating a rich combination of colour and impasto texture, which adds a sculptural quality to my work.

Which is your favourite painting you've ever done?

I'm always most passionate about what's currently on my easel and this year I have found myself drawn to looser brushstrokes, freer forms, and larger canvases - culminating in a new series titled Evoke. This series features expressive, abstracted floral forms that evoke garden memories and celebrate the rejuvenating energy of time spent in nature. The colour palette for this series draws on a sumptuous mix of rich vibrant hues and soft, dream-like tones.

Where is somewhere you dream of visiting - from the past or the present?

Some places steal your heart and we have found that to be true of the Cycladic islands of Greece. The combination of dramatic landscape, aqua sea, and ancient architecture is a heady combination of happiness! We hope to return to experience more slow travel through its quiet, less populated islands. Amorgos is on our bucket list and I'm looking forward to hiring a scooter, breathing in the wild herbs, and enjoying the stunning colours, food, wine, and warm people.

What tips would you give others on how to enhance their creativity?

Make time for your creativity. Be open to what inspires and feeds your imagination. Give yourself permission to play with materials and ideas without expectation. It's these times of pure exploration where the magic happens.

What other artists (or creatives in other fields) are you inspired by?

An artist I'll always be inspired by is Van Gogh. He boldly painted the colours he saw and experienced, and his unique voice shaped those who followed. My morning scroll on IG brings colour inspiration from a variety of interior designers; one of my favourites is Anna Spiro Design for her confident mix of colour and pattern. Music is also a constant inspiration and companion. I enjoy discovering the playlists of other creatives and depending on what I'm painting, setting the sound mood.

Outside of the studio, what brings you joy?

Many things! To narrow it down, I would have to say spending time with family and friends, and even better if you can combine it with good food, sea swims, beach walks, yoga, and travel. ■

