



Nothing stands in the way of colour or the beguiling effects of light and movement that the works exude like a fragrance. *Redcoat Rose* (2018), for example, features a play of red and mauve as the centre of painterly interest and visual power, while the form of the rose is a residual starting point that is of secondary importance.

Zandbergen paints fluently with an intense pleasure in her task that helps give a perfect match between subject matter and technique. It all seems effortless, as if she creates her works like a bird singing its song—something joyous and spontaneous. Undoubtedly this belies the application and knowledge that underlies every stroke and mark, but it does help give a confidence and conviction to her paintings of flowers and gardens, despite the well-worn themes.

She has said that she layers her paint, guided by instinct, and she is at her best when the abstract expressionist style is given free rein. It is the paint that gives life and meaning to the art, at times so tactile and so intermeshed across the surface, that it has a relief-like persona. Using impasto, she creates thick dabs and strokes of paint which form ridges and hollows that agitate the surface to suggest that it is in constant movement. This effect cannot be fully appreciated in reproduction and requires the physical presence of the canvas. Scale also comes into the equation. The bigger works are more effective as in *Bloom* (2018). It is likely that her paintings could succeed more powerfully on an even larger scale. When she does occasionally pick out individual roses for closer attention in their drawing, some of the magic evaporates. This, however, is rare.

The exhibition has continuity between the eleven works with an effect of consistency and application that adds to the meaning of the individual pieces. Zandbergen is not exclusively a painter of gardens and flowers. She has recently also painted landscapes, one of which of Mt Cook is on view upstairs in the gallery. This work proves that her signature style works equally well in suggesting the surfaces of rocks covered by snow as flowers in bloom in a garden. This is a compelling show that has painterly power beyond the obvious attractions of the subject matter.

## Auckland

### Holly Zandbergen

#### *Compositions of Nature*

Black Asterisk, 14 June–18 July

MICHAEL DUNN

Paintings of flowers and gardens are an ever-popular genre in contemporary practice despite the obvious problems of such subjects seeming hackneyed, gaudy or too pretty. Among New Zealand artists today, Karl Maughan is perhaps the best-known painter of gardens with bright flowers rendered in large scale so that there is maximum impact. Unlike botanical artists who focus on hard-edge descriptive rendering of individual flowers and plants, painters like Maughan work in a looser, more generalised manner in which the

various blooms can be identified but not closely seen.

Holly Zandbergen's *Compositions of Nature* series belongs to this latter category. She studied painting at the Dunedin School of Art and has exhibited with the Rebecca Hossack Gallery in London and New York. Her works in this series have an immediate appeal and accessibility to the viewer. Based on flowers in her mother's garden, they have something of the freedom of colour and gestural handling that one associates with late Monet in his Giverny garden paintings. Her works are decidedly abstract and are conceived as an all-over display of strokes and marks made by a palette knife which puts the stress on the act of painting, the process, more than representation.



(above) HOLLY ZANDBERGEN

*Redcoat Rose* 2018

Oil on canvas, 1200 x 1600 mm.

(left) Holly Zandbergen's *Compositions of Nature* at Black Asterisk, June 2018, with from left *Garden Passage* and *Bloom*.