

FELICITY O'CONNOR

Highly Commended in Contemporary Art Awards 2015

Emotional Abstractions

By Dr Julie Rees

Known for her abstract oil paintings, Felicity O'Connor is an artist who continues to pursue the seemingly boundless potential of her medium. Her work visually explores the connection between physical locations and the emotional realms of the psyche. Felicity aims to evoke an emotional response from her audience by using layers of colour, and gestures that knit over and under the surface of the canvas. Her expressive marks feel perfectly controlled, creating a painterly language that can be interpreted by any viewer.

A registered psychologist equipped with a Master's degree in Art Therapy, Felicity brings forth her knowledge of these fields in her art practice—with powerful results. Conceptually, her works are both landscape and inscape paintings sparked by an emotional response to physical and internal environments. Each piece encapsulates moods or moments that have been translated onto canvas through the aesthetic elements of mark-making and colour. Her emotional and physical impressions of the natural world proliferate throughout her practice and are undoubtedly evident in her work *She is only happy in the sun* (2015). In January this year, the quality of this work secured Felicity a 'highly commended' in *Contemporary Art Awards 2015*.

In *Aqualeger* (2015), Felicity draws inspiration from her local beach in Avoca Beach, New South Wales, to symbolise her internal feelings and physical sensations of being immersed in a current of gentle water. Part of her creative process is to find a colour and mark that are equivalent to these responses towards the external environment, in



this case, the beach. By employing a soothing colour palette, the painting conveys a sense of gentleness and serenity. This approach can be observed throughout her art practice and authenticates her overall conceptual concerns.

As a professional painter, Felicity has studied with well-known Sydney artists such as Elizabeth Cummings, Aida Tomescu, and Idris Murphy. Her work has appeared in popular art competitions including *Gosford Art Prize*, *Waverly Art Prize*, *Hornsby Art Prize*, and *Black Town Art Prize*. Consequently, Felicity's work has been extensively acquired and commissioned, including 75 paintings for the Norman Foster building *Lumiere Regent Place* in Sydney. Felicity's art practice is based on the Central Coast of New South Wales where she currently runs a business coaching other artists to connect to their creativity and to help them find ways to grow their art practice into a sustainable business.

Felicity traverses the spheres of her emotional and physical responses to various conditions and locations. The process by which she digs deep into her inner and outer worlds is also that by which she seeks out and achieves a perfect balance between colour and gesture. Upon

seeing Felicity's work, the viewer is prompted to question or consider their own landscape and inscape experiences.

On this page top, *She is only Happy in the Sun* (2015), oil on canvas, 91 x 91cm

Bottom, *Aqualegar* (2015), oil on canvas, 122 x 152cm.

Images courtesy of the artist

Felicity O'Connor's artwork can be viewed at www.contemporaryartawards.com or by visiting her website <http://www.felicityoconnor.com.au/>.