

## Life and Work of Artist Louise Henderson Explored in New Exhibition



Louise Henderson  
*Cubist still life 1954*  
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki,  
purchased 2019

*Louise Henderson: From Life* is the first major survey of work by French-born, New Zealand artist Louise Henderson (1902–1994) and opens at Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki on Saturday 2 November. Featuring work from across Henderson's seven-decade career, the exhibition traces the development of the artist's bold and colourful abstract style.

In 1925, Henderson emigrated to Christchurch to join her husband, a New Zealander, and quickly established herself as a central figure in the local art scene. She would go on to work alongside major figures including Rita Angus, John Weeks, Colin McCahon and Milan Mrkusich. Henderson was one of the first New Zealand artists to commit herself to an overtly modern style, but despite her prominence there has been no comprehensive survey of her work until now.

*Louise Henderson: From Life* reappraises Henderson's remarkable and complex practice, exploring the evolution of her art and the periods she spent working in Paris, Christchurch, Wellington, Auckland and the Middle East.

The exhibition includes early watercolours of the Canterbury landscape, abstracted still-life compositions, sensuous Cubist representations of the female figure and lyrical explorations of the New Zealand bush. It culminates with the monumental series *The Twelve Months*, an ambitious undertaking that Henderson completed when she was 85 years old.

In 1993, Henderson was recognised for her services to art and appointed a Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire.

Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki director Kirsten Paisley says: 'Louise Henderson cuts a unique path through New Zealand's art history. With her vitality and restless creative spirit, Henderson produced an outstanding and rich body of work. This exhibition will show the strength and continuity of her vision, and will leave a younger generation of artists with a new appreciation for her energy and creativity.'

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Louise Henderson  
January 1987  
Private collection, Auckland

Blair Jackson, director of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū, says: 'Henderson's career included not only painting, but design, embroidery and education. Her practice defies easy categorisation and, as a consequence, she has been underexposed in our art history. *Louise Henderson: From Life* is the first attempt to examine her remarkable career.'

Published on the occasion of the exhibition, a substantial publication on the artist's life's work will share new research into Henderson's complex and wide-reaching career.

*Louise Henderson: From Life* has been jointly developed by Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki and Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū. The exhibition was co-curated by Felicity Milburn and Lara Strongman (Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū), and Julia Waite (Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki). It will open in Christchurch in June 2020.

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#### For images and interviews

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#### Exhibition details

*Louise Henderson: From Life*

**When:**  
Saturday 2 November 2019–  
Sunday 8 March 2020

10am – 5pm daily, except Christmas Day

**Where:**  
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki  
Cnr Kitchener and Wellesley Streets  
Auckland, New Zealand

**Free with Gallery entry.**

**Events:**  
A range of special events will be on offer for Gallery Members and the public exploring themes relating to *Louise Henderson: From Life*.

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## Accompanying publication *Louise Henderson: From Life*

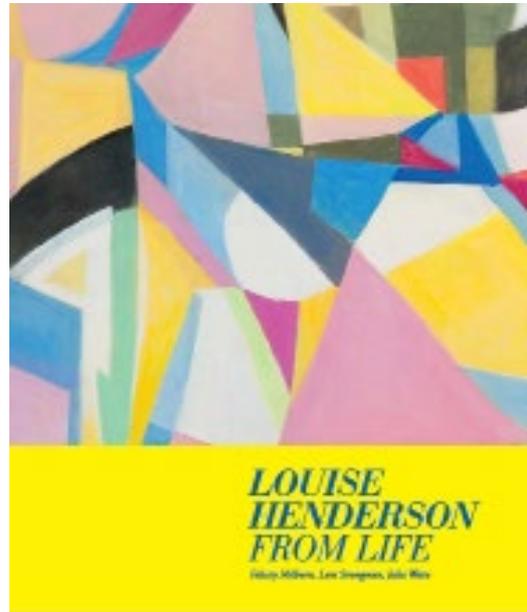
There's no one quite like Louise Henderson in Aotearoa New Zealand's art history. A dynamic Frenchwoman who found the freedom to be herself, Henderson trained in embroidery and design before becoming a pioneer of abstraction. Across seven decades devoted to making art, the vitality of Henderson's work was only matched by the intensity with which she approached living. This beautifully illustrated publication traces Henderson's contribution to New Zealand art history and includes previously unseen archival material. *Louise Henderson: From Life* reappraises the artist's remarkable, complex practice and positions her as an energising ancestor for a new generation.

*Louise Henderson: From Life*, has been co-published by Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki and Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū on the occasion of the exhibition of the same name. The book illustrates paintings from the exhibition alongside other key works, and includes essays by the three exhibition curators – Felicity Milburn, Lara Strongman and Julia Waite – and contributions from four other writers and art historians, Christina Barton, Maria Lluïsa Faxedas, CK Stead and Linda Tyler.

Forthcoming November 2019  
RRP \$65.00

## Louise Henderson 1902–1994

Born in Paris in 1902, Louise Henderson emigrated to New Zealand in 1925. She attended the Canterbury School of Art and later studied with the French cubist artist Jean Metzinger in Paris. In 1953 Henderson became the first New Zealand artist to have a solo exhibition at the Auckland City Art Gallery (now Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki), and by the 1960s she was widely recognised as a leading New Zealand artist. In the 1993 Queen's Birthday Honours, Henderson was appointed a Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire for services to art.



Louise Henderson in her studio with  
*Home in Dieppe* 1957, circa 1957

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