

NICHOLAS METIVIER GALLERY

MICHAEL SMITH | *NAVIGATOR SEAS*

PRESS RELEASE

June 15th – July 13th

Nicholas Metivier Gallery is delighted to present *Navigator Seas*, an exhibition of new paintings by Michael Smith. The exhibition coincides with Smith's much anticipated museum exhibition, *Sea of Change*, at the Beaverbrook Art Gallery in Fredericton, New Brunswick.

Navigator Seas will open in Toronto on Saturday, June 15th and run through Saturday, July 13th. There will be an opening reception on Saturday, June 15th from 1-3 PM including an artist talk with John Leroux, Manager of Collections and Exhibitions at the Beaverbrook at 1PM. A new catalogue published to accompany *Sea of Change*, will be available mid-June for purchase through the gallery.

Michael Smith's latest paintings mark a new approach to seascapes, a subject he has investigated throughout his career. Infusing the surfaces with vibrant colours and raw gestural strokes, he expands the historical tradition through a contemporary lens. In 2018, Smith completed a residency at the Beaverbrook Art Gallery where he encountered a 19th century painting by George Chambers of the ill-fated expedition ship, the H.M.S. Terror. Growing up in the British Isles, Smith was already an expert on J. M. W. Turner's merciless seascapes, and he found Chambers' depiction of a shipwreck occurring in the Canadian Arctic fascinating. The painting's strong sense of emotion expressed through colour and light resonated deeply with Smith, inspiring new works and encouraging him to look more broadly at other maritime voyages.

In contrast to Chamber's painting, which envisions a hauntingly frozen scene, Smith's interpretations of the sea are in perpetual motion, blurring the lines between past and present, abstraction and representation. It is a remarkable experience to stand in front of one of his immersive paintings and see and then unsee, the suggestion of a ship's body, mast or hull. Peeking through the waves, it presents itself to us fleetingly before being swept away by the fervour of the sea. Filled with energy and light conveyed through Smith's dynamic layering of paint, the unexpected injections of pink, turquoise and yellow colours move in sharp trajectories across Smith's canvases.

"The rush of the heartbeat, of being in a place at a particular time, I want that to be part of the dynamism of the painting — in the restless marks and gestures as they work this wrought surface — of what it means to express something that could never be static, always fugitive."

- Michael Smith