

NEW ENGLAND PICTURE 2004

New England Regional Art Museum, Armidale

Group Exhibition

I lived here (Armidale) as a child until I was 14. My family roots are here. I also lived in Sydney for a while, for about 20 years. I decided eventually that I needed to move back to the country for painting, because it's the natural and not so much the urban environment that motivates me to paint. The obvious place to come back to for me was Armidale. I love the Tablelands with its variety of landforms, and the wonderful Gorge country where the land drops away suddenly towards the east.

It's the drama in the light that mostly captures my imagination, which is probably an Australian wide thing but I think New England has its own unique sort of light. The flora has a wild ruggedness about it. I suppose landscape inspires me anywhere but I tend to paint and be more inspired by the inland rather than the coast, and I prefer to live in a cooler climate. There are wonderful textures in the grasses here, and the changes in the colours from summer to winter, I like that as well because it starts to get quite bleak looking. During these times the straw colours are broken up by areas of sage and rust colours, but it is all quite subtle. The light, light is a big factor for me in painting. I guess it's the main thing that motivates me to paint, especially in the evenings when all that bleached looking landscape totally alters and is transformed into something rich and vivid, and all those wonderful steely blues, mauves and pinks start to appear on the eastern horizon.

I think generally my paintings require a bit of adjusting to. They are not immediately accessible. You might say they are an acquired taste. That's a fairly common response I get from the work anyway. I'd rather paint what's beyond what we see with our physical senses, or attempt to. I certainly don't like the viewer to be anchored to a physical location in their imagination. I'd rather my paintings to trigger something inwardly, that they may not have tapped into before. The aim is to hopefully appeal to the viewer on a more subconscious level, so if I use place names in my titles, I think it limits the imagination and the viewer's ability to ultimately gain something from it at a deeper level.

When I look at landscape, I try to break it down into patterns of light and dark so that it virtually becomes a cacophony of abstract shapes and colours. I attempt to capture this with quick pencil scribbles and then add worded colour references. I've developed this bizarre way of describing colours- coral pink with slightly pea green edges for example. I'll then work from these references on a larger scale, on canvas and board in the studio.