

IDRIS MURPHY

Idris Murphy's extensive career as a painter has been widely lauded. Since 1988, Murphy has been Lecturer at UNSW's College of Fine Arts, Sydney, and in 1994 received his Doctorate of Creative Arts from the University of Wollongong. Acknowledged as one of the most influential landscape painters in Australian contemporary art, his work is held in the public collections of the National Gallery of Australia, the National Library of Australia, Canberra and the Art Gallery of NSW. Murphy has received critical acclaim as a finalist several times over in the Sulman and Wynne Art Prizes. This year, following the New Zealand tour, a survey exhibition of Murphy's work—*I-Thou*—was held at King Street Gallery on William and at the Hazelhurst Regional Gallery, Sydney.



What draws you to paint landscapes?

There is a quote I like in Christopher Neve's book the 'Unquiet Landscape', where he says: "Painting is a risky process precisely because of the trials and errors and intuitive revisions that this kind of inarticulate thought involves. But the truth strikes you, when you see it, as unmistakable because it represents not just a way of seeing landscape but a state of mind." New Zealand is another state of mind.

These are the things that enticed me originally to go to New Zealand: Colin McCahon, to see the land and to see what he has made of it, and from it, first hand. To somehow use it as a contrast to the desert country that I am most at home with.

What do you gain from working in the landscape?

It is as Cézanne has said "keeping contact with nature".

Can you outline your process from plein air to studio?

My approach to painting has been changing somewhat over the years however all the works depend in some way on a response in front of nature. There are broadly two ways that I work, one is the works that are produced on site and the other, usually larger works, which are produce from memory in the studio. The words 'nature' and 'memory' need to be qualified but suffice to say that I need the two approaches that somehow come together in this process.

What did you enjoy most from the trip overall?

What I enjoyed was the challenges of finding a new set of problems, particularly a completely different set of colours. And having to rethink how one might deal with a foreign land. And lastly, but not least, seeing some works by Bill Hammond who has truly netted something of which I have had only a brief encounter. ■

Idris Murphy is represented by King Street Gallery on William, Sydney
www.kingstreetgallery.com.au

- 01 **The Desert North Island NZ** (detail), 2009, acrylic on board, 45 x 45cm
- 02 **Reflections, Castlepoint**, 2009, acrylic on board, 145 x 145cm
- 03 **Changing Clouds, Mt Ruapehu**, 2009, acrylic on board, 145 x 145cm
- 04 **Driving past the gauze, Castlepoint**, 2009, acrylic on board, 95 x 95cm

