

JULIE HARRIS

Julie Harris, graduated from the National Art School, Sydney, where she received the school's Print Prize, traveling and living in the UK for several years. Arriving back to Australia 1980, Harris's work has focused on her surrounding landscape and this is explored in the numerous group shows in which she's participated – from the Art Gallery of South Australia's *Modern Australian Works on Paper Naracourt* in 1987 to Hazlehurst Regional Gallery's 2007 *Works on Paper* exhibition. Following numerous solo exhibitions at Legge Gallery, Harris moved to Richard Martin Fine Art in 2006 and since that time has had a touring survey exhibition in some of Australia's finest regional galleries. Her work is held in private collections around the world. She is represented in the New England Regional Art Museum, the University of Sydney and UTS Union public collections. Harris is the 2009 AGNSW Paris Residency Recipient.

What draws you to paint landscapes?

When I moved back from London in the late 70s, I moved out to the Wollombi area—very dense bush, very isolated with no electricity or phone. I guess we did the whole alternative lifestyle thing, which made for a very intense experience and, as such, landscape became my subject matter. Landscapes provide a rich source of material and an endless supply of subject matter—both literally and philosophically. There is a lot to be inspired by and I find I use it as a springboard for my painting. What I try to do is paint the experience of being in a particular landscape instead of a literal observation.

What are your views on the currency of landscape painting in contemporary art?

The landscape tradition carries a rich history and one that is still evolving. We're becoming more liberal with our interpretation—and the Aboriginal movement, which I think is one of the most exciting, has opened the boundaries even further—as has [Rosalie] Gascoigne, whose works became symbols of the landscape around her home.

What do you gain from working in the landscape?

To work en plein air is to reinvigorate the palette, it keeps you in touch and fuels the imagination, it makes one look more closely and it helps with the repository of signs and marks. It helps to open up my practice.

Can you outline your process from plein air to studio?

I use the en plein air work mainly as note taking, to walk and to experience the physicality of a place and to really look at a landscape. It helps me understand more about the way I want to interpret that place. I use the works done on site to feed into the studio pieces. It's a matter of searching for the works and hopefully something will percolate through to the canvas.

What materials did you find most useful on the trip?

I mainly worked in ink and gouache with a series of quick sketches



to warm up in black and white and then gouache. I drew in notebooks with pen and ink, small studies of rock surfaces, shadows on the hillsides, patterns of the felled trees behind castle point, then ink and brush for a broader view and gouache to get some idea of colour although I did take liberties! I find working out of doors I like to have a medium that is instant. Not too much fuss setting up or drying.

How did you find the experience of working with a large group of painters?

I think because as a painter one spends inordinate amounts of time on one's own, it 's very rewarding to be in the company of others, and to realise the points of similarity even though we were all coming to the landscape from different directions. The group chosen I particularly enjoyed for the variety of approaches and to spend such an intense time together was really satisfying. ■

Julie Harris is represented by Richard Martin Art, Sydney.
www.richardmartinart.com.au
www.julieharris.com.au



01



01 **Ruapehu**, 2009, gouache, 38 x 57cm
02 **Headland Castlepoint**, 2009, ink on paper, 75 x 55.5cm

02