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What draws you to paint landscapes?

Living in Tasmania the landscape is never far from your consciousness—every window affords you a view to landscape. If I lived somewhere else, I would paint different subjects. I'm interested in the fluid aspect of landscape, the way the light changes, the drama, and the detail.

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

Where I live landscape is not a 'benign' space but the most politically contested space. It has real currency because of this. The divide between nature and culture is palpable. In terms of contemporary practice it remains relevant particularly when it references the historic, the political and the social.

What do you gain from working in the landscape?

Working directly in the landscape presents challenges—often the outcomes are unexpected and can be directly responsible for breakthroughs in the broader work.

When working directly from an ever-changing subject, you are forced to improvise and to make creative choices they may not present in other circumstances. As a *modus*, it can be very liberating, even exciting.

Can you outline your process from plein air to studio?

My process is quite simple really. I choose a point to work the subject. I may start with a thumbnail sketch or a watercolour to establish a composition. I photograph the subject throughout as a later reference. I produce a plein air study that I take back to the studio. Often these studies are complete in themselves but generally I would scale them up to a larger canvas in the studio. From then the making of the picture takes over.

DAVID KEELING

David Keeling was born in Launceston, Tasmania in 1951. He graduated from the Tasmanian School of Art in 1973, continuing at the Alexander Mackie School of Art, Sydney. He has been a finalist in the Wynne Prize in both 2008 and 2009. In 2006, he won the Tasmanian Glover Prize and this year was included in *Four Tasmanian Painters – Burns, Keeling, Wastell & Wolfhagen*, at the Holmes à Court Gallery, Perth. His work is in several major public collections including the National Gallery of Australia and National Gallery of Victoria. Keeling lives and works in Hobart.

01 **Macracarpa, Castlepoint**, 2009, oil on linen, 51 x 40.5cm

What materials did you find most useful on the trip?

I found I used the watercolour set a great deal for small works on paper. Because I chose to work in oils on this trip I found the mediums such as Oleopasto and Liquin very useful, especially because they dried over night. When we were at a place for more than one day I was able to develop the image much more the second sitting because in most cases the paint had dried from the previous day. That allowed me to build up the surfaces much more than I would in a single sitting.

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

I found it very stimulating working with a large group. We helped one another, gave advice, and swapped materials. The different approaches people took were always interesting especially when we dealt with the same view. We also entertained one another, which has its benefits when you are working so intensely. ■

David Keeling is represented by Niagara Galleries, Melbourne and Bett Gallery, Hobart.
www.niagara-galleries.com.au
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