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**What draws you to paint landscapes?**

It always seems to give me somewhere to go. I knew I wanted to paint and landscapes became something I developed an interest in. I was born in the country and later grew up on the edge of a national park so a lot of time was spent out in the open. I began a degree in environmental science when I left school so also had a desire to understand and interpret the landscape.

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

I have a bit of a problem with the notion of contemporary art but as a landscape painter this a great time to be working. It's a given that pictures are of their time. Nowadays it's not so much a case that there is a particular school or way of working. Contemporary art, if we're to use such a phrase, is nothing if not diverse.

**What do you gain from working in the landscape?**

Contemplation—time to think and observe and process all that is going around about me. I use the landscape as a starting point only and then let it develop into something else in the slower process of building work in the studio. Going out into the landscape forces you to be decisive and work quickly.

**Can you outline your process from plein air to studio?**

The more time you spend in a landscape the more elusive its essence becomes but if you take back even a small amount of what it offers up you are very sustained back in the studio. With the New Zealand painting, I did a number of small oil paintings on primed paper and, as soon as I got back, while they were still fresh, I made several more in the studio and they have a similar feel of immediacy and getting it down. Others were much more about a distilled New Zealand landscape and these have been made more slowly with preparatory drawings as a way in.

**What materials did you find most useful on the trip?**

I mainly used oil paints, which is my typical way of working. But having been introduced to the water-soluble oil paints on the trip I have been experimenting with them. It's been interesting to find another medium that presents a slightly different way of working.

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

I had been intimidated at first about the idea of working with a number of other people and even spent the first day away from the group working on my own. It was the first time I have worked with other practicing artists in such a way. But it was great to be lost in one's own work and also be with others similarly engaged, while at the same time becoming aware of their ways of working and seeing. ■

Peter Simpson is represented by Art House Gallery, Sydney and Mossgreen Gallery, Melbourne.  
[www.arthousegallery.com.au](http://www.arthousegallery.com.au)  
[www.mossgreen.com.au](http://www.mossgreen.com.au)  
[www.petersimpson.com.au](http://www.petersimpson.com.au)

# PETER SIMPSON

**Peter Simpson** is widely recognised for his representation of the quintessential Australian landscape. Simpson grew up in the Hunter Valley in New South Wales, before moving to Melbourne to attend art school, where he was awarded a Graduate Diploma in Painting from the Victorian College of the Arts studying with Michael Shannon. Simpson has been painting for more than 20 years. His work has been acquired by several prestigious collections, including BHP Billiton, The Australian Club and Artbank. Peter lives and works in Sydney.



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01 **Cloud coming down Mt. Ruhapehu**, 2009, oil on canvas, 84 x 183cm  
 02 **Study Castlepoint**, 2009, oil on paper on board, 18 x 25cm  
 03 **Study Castlepoint**, 2009 oil on paper on board, 18 x 25cm