

Artist Statement: The Light I've Seen from Here.

This body of work had its origins during the creation of my first show with Australian Galleries in 2019. The essential ideas were painted in long format watercolours, the images primarily of the landscape in the Southern Highlands. At the time my wife Juliette and I made frequent visits to Bowral. The images, that came from dozens of photos, were trying to weave the light and atmosphere of what I photographed.

An unforeseen situation occurred preventing us from making our regular visits there and gradually I began investigating the landscape and terrain close to where we live, during our walks in Garigal National Park. In saying that, the most important element in the making of this body of paintings is Juliette. For me it is about our journey together. She is my muse, my sound board, and if beauty exists within the work it comes from her love.

In these works I use egg tempera medium on square panels. I varnish the finished work to protect the surface. The history of egg tempera stretches back to the first few centuries A.D. long before oil painting. It was the primary medium of early Christian icon painting. Where in time oils can fade, tempera seems to get richer and more luminous.

Growing up in rural Canada I was influenced by realist painters and more figurative image making. My main influence was a group called The Maritime Realists, especially the painter Tom Forrestall who was influenced by Andrew Wyeth, whose main mediums were egg tempera and watercolours. Wyeth had an over-arching influence on all the Maritime Realist work, as well an effect on my work and the way I view the act of painting.

Tempera is just a simple mixture of dry pigment, egg yolk and water. I use this medium because it restrains me and makes me think deeply about each mark. It has to be applied very thinly like watercolour and built up slowly over time. In the end it gives a rich and luminous surface and special atmosphere to the image.

Also in this show are a number of watercolours some of which provide the point of departure for the larger temperas. My use of a square format allows me to condense and focus the composition to produce a powerful and active image.

Although the images are highly figurative and sourced from photos and sketches, they are in no way meant to be photographic. For me it's my way of communicating to the viewer something of what I felt when I was moved by the scene.

For many years after coming to Australia my work drew a great deal on my love and nostalgia for the Canadian landscape. It took considerable time for me to understand and fully appreciate the Australian landscape, not just because of the vast variations compared to Canada. To see it more clearly and more fully understand, I had to reinvent and adjust my mark making to tell a different story.

Paul S. Miller