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David Thomas has been a practising artist for over twenty-five years and during that time has travelled widely. Realising that art comes from within, David sublimes his artistic expression through the landscapes he depicts, mainly paintings and drawings. He creates both in the landscape and his studio, which for some time has been an airy room in the upstairs of one of the dilapidated sheds in Docklands, an artistic enclave.

Whilst talking in his Docklands studio he shares, "Land always has stories to tell. Each landscape has a different resonance about it. My landscapes can be dark and moody, then you may come across the surface of the moodiness with something softer... like a flower, which encourages a romantic sort of feeling. Women too, can have that effect on my paintings."

His paintings are rich in colour and contain a fineness and attention to detail that rewards the observer - the petals on a flower, the lace on a girls blouse... that reveal an appreciation for minute beauty that nestle amongst the sweeping grandeur of his landscapes.

"I would call my painting 'romantic narrative landscapes'. They're not overt; a lot of the story is in the detail, making it an active thing with the viewer." David says of the relationship between audience, artist and the 'work', "If you come up close to my painting and explore them, you will see lots of details. It is how my story fits in with others' stories."

His latest work is inspired by time spent over recent years at the Falls Creek artist's camp, with fellow artists like photographer Peter Bennett. David describes the experience, "Once you get up above the

tree line, the feeling is more universal, mythological. The huts up in the mountains have a lot of history. I love faded glory, things that have been well worn. You take artists from the urban environment and it is exhilarating. We do plein air work (paint in the open air), hold late night discussions...everyone loves it".

David's relationship with landscape and nature began from formative experiences he had as a young boy growing up in Nhill during the 60's, where the quiet life of the country town belied the bustling life of its smaller inhabitants "I spent my time exploring the wonder of it all... down at the creek looking at the trout, the bark on trees, looking for lizards..." he recalls.

As a family they moved around a lot, due to his

of place



father's work as an academic, spending time not only within Australia, but Canada and Papua New Guinea.

After studying art in Geelong, he moved to Melbourne in the 80's. "My first studio was near Flinders Street, it was a desolate area with many homeless people, drunkards," David reminisces. "Artists were there from the get-go and in the 90's it started to have life. Now artists can't afford it, which is why our space in Docklands is so precious. I have had many studios over the years, experiencing the weird symbiotic relationship between artists and developers. We are here by their grace, but it isn't long before artists have to move on from the more affordable spaces"

David's studio has a priceless view, which stretches from the Melbourne CBD skyline to the Bolte Bridge, a "great irony" he says, considering he paints

landscapes. It is sometimes a challenge to get to the inner place where he can work on a painting, sometimes up to an hour. "It is such a different headspace. You could call it a meditation; you go into almost a trance after a number of hours. I work at night because at least I can keep going. I hate packing up when I am in that space."

"I am envious of other peoples' time to create their work... time spent in their studio.

If I don't paint for a while, I don't have peace of mind. It gives you a chance to explore the other, more spiritual side of life, the life of the spiritual realm... it is the polar opposite of the life we are encouraged to live."

David is also inspired by his other career, that of a Museum Officer for the Monash University Museum

of Art, which involves installing exhibitions, like a recent one of Freud's personal art collection, for the heads of departments. "I grew up around universities, so they are a second home to me. I know where all the pieces live in all the campuses – they are like my little babies. I would have to say I am the expert on the collection, what we have, where it is, and its history. I love my job because I am making a difference to the corridors."

When asked what it is like being around so much work by other artists, David responds, "You have to separate yourself. I am informed by what I see, yet have learnt to be strong in my own conviction." Like his paintings, David has a strong connection with his inner landscape and the journey by which it is explored. That in itself is an art.