

# YOU MUST SEARCH IT OUT

By **John Wilson FRAS**

**I was lucky to be able to paint plein air with artist, Les Graham, for a number of years and every time I had difficulty with a new or different subject Les's advice was always "Search it out." When you think about it, it is just common sense. How can you possibly paint a particular subject if you don't fully understand what it is you are attempting to paint.**

## NO SHORTCUTS

As a landscape painter this is particularly true, there are no short cuts, formulas or magic tricks. Every painting is so different and each has its own challenges and unique character. You must become a student of nature. You must "search out" whatever it is that you are planning to paint; you must have enough understanding of your subject to paint it with some degree of conviction. You need to study the subtle gradations of tone, colour. You must understand the theory of atmospheric perspective as well as linear perspective, colour, tone and line. You must gain an understanding of edges and effects diffraction has on some edges. Apart from these craft skills you must learn about nature itself. How can you possibly paint a sunrise if you don't understand what happens as the sun rises, and every day is so different. Along with learning about nature you must practice your craft skills as well as developing your own individual style and creativity. This will give you the tools to create your own beautiful landscapes.

## KNOWLEDGE

Most knowledge is gained the hard way, many painting trips and many hundreds of failed paintings. Some insight was generously given by fellow artists whilst more was obtained by attending workshops with some of Australia's best landscape painters. Artists like Doug

**"You must search it out: if you don't understand your subject, how can you paint it?" Les Graham, artist.**







***Narrow Neck Sunrise, oil on gesso on board, 100 x 60cm***

This is a larger painting and was recently awarded "Best in Exhibition" and currently one of two finalists in the Mortimore Prize. I was attracted to the crisp, cool, early morning light as it skidded across the ridge tops.

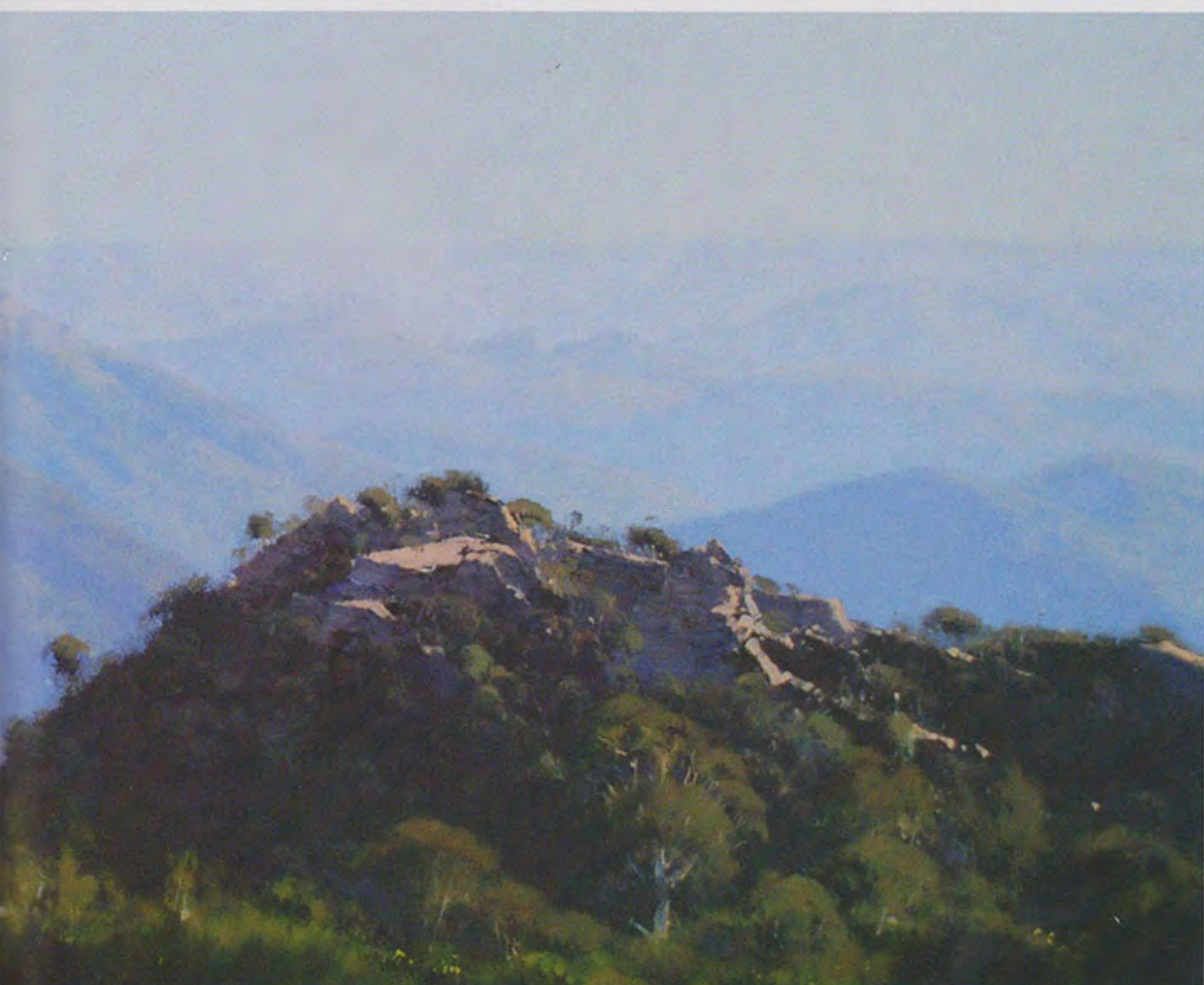
Sealy, Robert Wilson, James Wynne and the late Reg Campbell and Greg Turner. Robert Wilson (no relation) is not only a great artist but a great teacher and I learned so much by attending a number of his workshops.

**STARTING OVER AGAIN**

The inspiration for this article came from a recent exhibition I had in Beijing China. The forty paintings including several major works were all painted in various parts of China. The Chinese landscape is so different it was like starting all over again. Everything was unfamiliar, the light, the atmosphere was so different from here in Australia. "Searching out" and trying to understand unfamiliar shapes, colours and textures. "Searching Out" the subtle gradations of tone and light and atmosphere and then trying to find ways of putting it all down on canvas was a challenge.

**TAKE THE TIME TO STUDY YOUR SUBJECT**

Spending a little time studying and gaining understanding of your subjects is one big step towards painting better pictures. □



***Katoomba Blue, Katoomba NSW, oil on gesso on board, 120 x 50cm***

This was a commissioned painting of the Narrow Neck Plateau at Katoomba. It was composed from a number of smaller studies. The intense blues of the Blue Mountains can be difficult to paint at times, as some days they are so blue that they appear surreal. This painting is now part of a collection at Nelson's Bay, NSW.

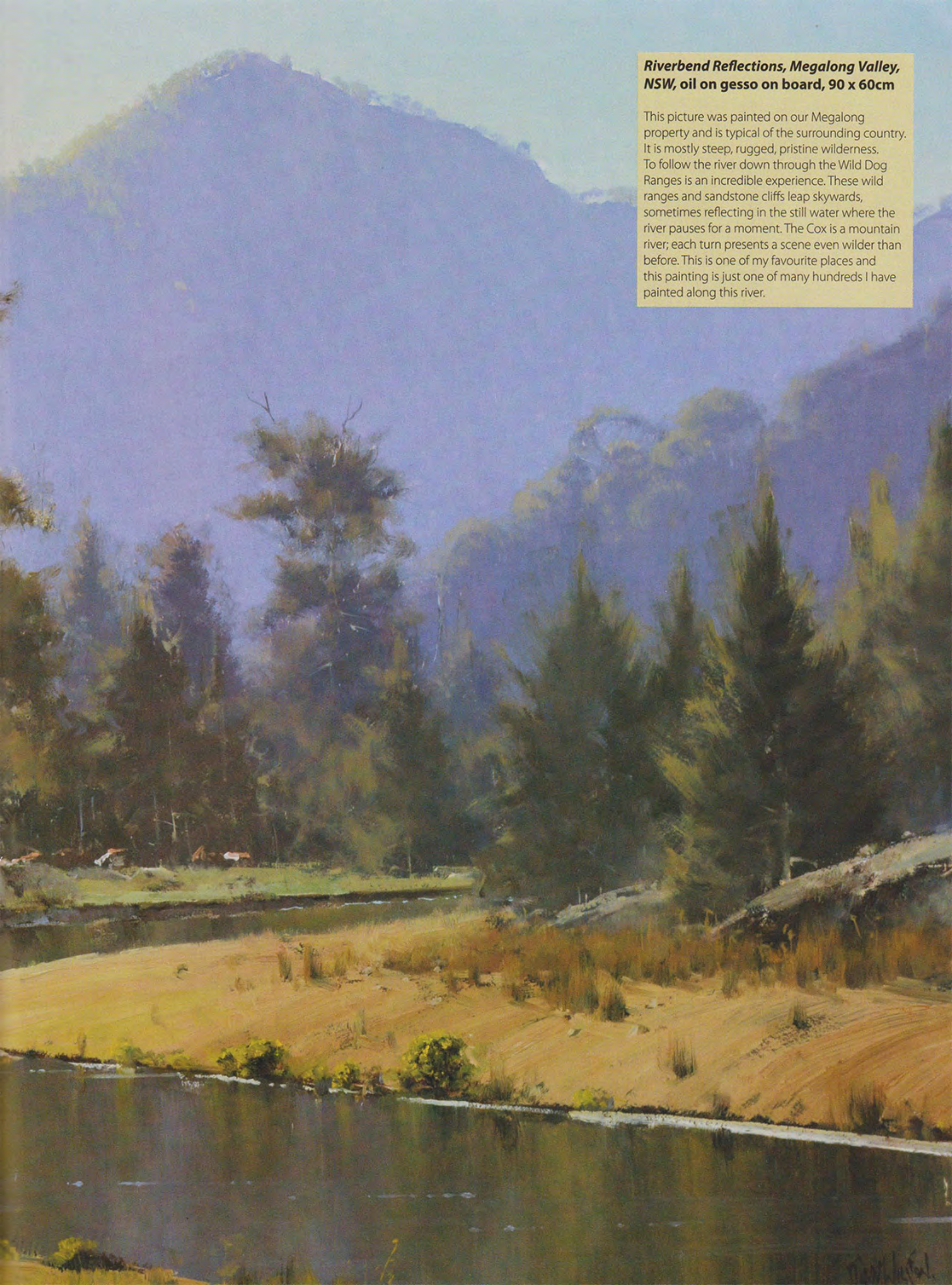




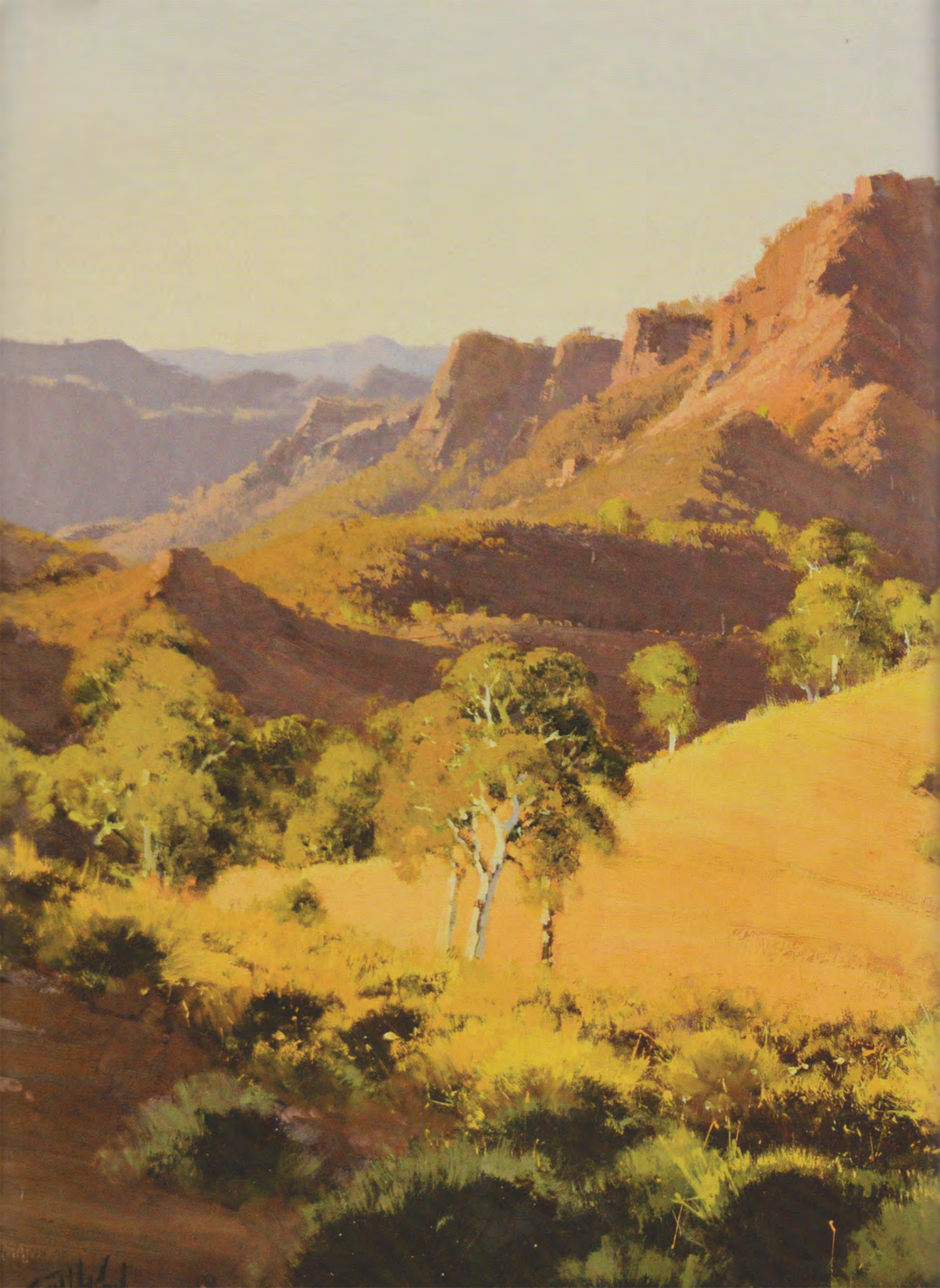


***Riverbend Reflections, Megalong Valley,  
NSW, oil on gesso on board, 90 x 60cm***

This picture was painted on our Megalong property and is typical of the surrounding country. It is mostly steep, rugged, pristine wilderness. To follow the river down through the Wild Dog Ranges is an incredible experience. These wild ranges and sandstone cliffs leap skywards, sometimes reflecting in the still water where the river pauses for a moment. The Cox is a mountain river; each turn presents a scene even wilder than before. This is one of my favourite places and this painting is just one of many hundreds I have painted along this river.









***Spinifex and Afternoon Light, Arkaroola,  
Flinders Ranges, SA, oil on gesso on  
board, 90 x 60cm***

The Flinders Ranges are an artist's paradise. The best times to paint are always the early mornings or later in the afternoon. This was painted on one of those afternoons when the light was warmer and more dramatic. The colours became hotter and hotter as the afternoon progressed.







***Murray River Gum, Howlong NSW,  
oil on canvas, 60 x 60cm***

This old Red River Gum lives on the banks of the Murray at Howlong. We discovered this spot when on a painting trip along the Murray River, west of Albury NSW.

**COLOURS USED IN JOHN WILSON LANDSCAPES  
(All Winsor & Newton Artist Quality Oils)**

Cobalt Blue	Cadmium Orange
French Ultramarine Blue	Cadmium Scarlet
Cerulean Blue	Rose Madder Genuine
Lemon Yellow	Viridian
Yellow Ochre	Burnt Sienna
Cadmium Yellow Pale	Titanium White



## about the artist

John Wilson is a highly respected and sought after artist/tutor and judge who has been painting for 42 years. He is one of Australia's leading oil painters, a multi award winning Artist who has had 47 solo exhibitions. John has exhibited in London, USA, Japan, Canada, Beijing China and Seoul Korea. John's paintings are in collections throughout Australia and internationally. His works have been reproduced extensively, including several articles in *Australian Artist* and *International Artist*. John was included in "Fifty Australian Artists" and the fine art book "John Wilson – Blue Mountains Artist". John is a member of the Australian Plein Air Artists Group. He is also a Fellow of the Royal Art Society of NSW and Patron of the Society of Mountain Artists.

John's new book, "The Journey Continues" will be available soon. The book includes stories from John's early childhood growing up at Katoomba and the Megalong Valley, to painting through Australia's vast inland and the magnificent cliffs and valleys of the Blue Mountains. Beautifully bound with a glossy dust jacket the new book features over 100 colour plates printed on high quality glossy art paper. "The Journey Continues" will be launched with a major exhibition later this year.

For details or orders please contact John:  
Wilson Fine Art Gallery  
Ph: **(02) 4782 3703**  
Email: [johnwilsongallery@bigpond.com](mailto:johnwilsongallery@bigpond.com)  
Website: [www.johnwilsongallery.com](http://www.johnwilsongallery.com)

