

LANDSCAPE ART AND THE KIMBERLEY

On 4 August 2010, **Dr Cathie Clement** spoke to the Kimberley Society about the evolution of landscape art featuring the Kimberley. Her extensively illustrated PowerPoint presentation paid tribute to many artists – past and present. It offered insight into the history and breadth of the art but only from her perspective as a historian. For more informed comment, the audience was advised to speak with artists, visit galleries, or delve into the many books that describe and analyse landscape art.

The evening's topic had been chosen as the subject of the soon-to-be-published 100th edition of the *Boab Bulletin*. The Society had decided that a full colour edition was warranted and, as newsletter editor, Cathie felt that coverage of landscape art would provide an appealing memento. Twenty-two of the 81 images used in the talk went into the newsletter. Artists, estates of artists, [Antique Print Room](#), [State Library of NSW](#), [Project Gutenberg Australia](#), and several of the Kimberley Society's members assisted by generously allowing use of the images.

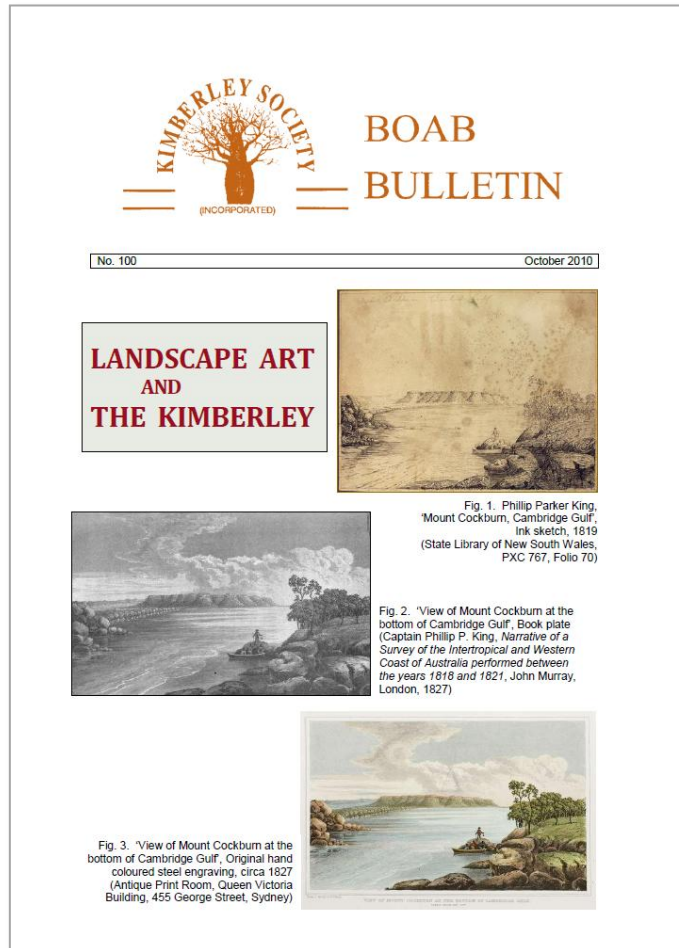
Additional copies of *Boab Bulletin* No. 100 (a 12-page, A4, stapled newsletter on 120 gsm CDC silk paper) were printed. Copies can be purchased from the Kimberley Society for \$10 each (including postage and handling in Australia). Members are entitled to a \$3 discount.

In selecting art works for her talk, Cathie distinguished between landscape, viewed in a Western or European context, and Country, viewed in an Indigenous context. Only landscape was covered because, as Cathie acknowledged, she does not have the expertise to discuss Indigenous art. She did mention, however, that Indigenous artists who include [Gordon Barunga](#), [Mervyn Street](#) and John (Prince) Siddon use Western conventions in their Kimberley art, sometimes combined with a traditional approach.

The early art

The Kimberley's first landscape art was largely topographical in style, produced by mariners to depict landforms, flora, fauna, water, people and culture. The journals kept by the earliest mariners did not survive, leaving us ignorant of whether they sketched any of the coast. [William Dampier](#) clearly had the skill to do so but, when his second book, [A Voyage to New Holland](#), appeared in London in 1703, its illustrations ran only to 'divers Birds, Fishes and Plants not found in this Part of the World, Curiously Ingraven on Copper-Plates'. The kudos of being the first non-Indigenous person known to have sketched a Kimberley landscape therefore belongs to [Phillip Parker King](#).

King's artistic endeavours, like those of other early mariners and explorers elsewhere, became a starting point for the portrayal of the coastal landscape. The engravers and other craftsmen brought their own touches when they prepared the sketches for printing.



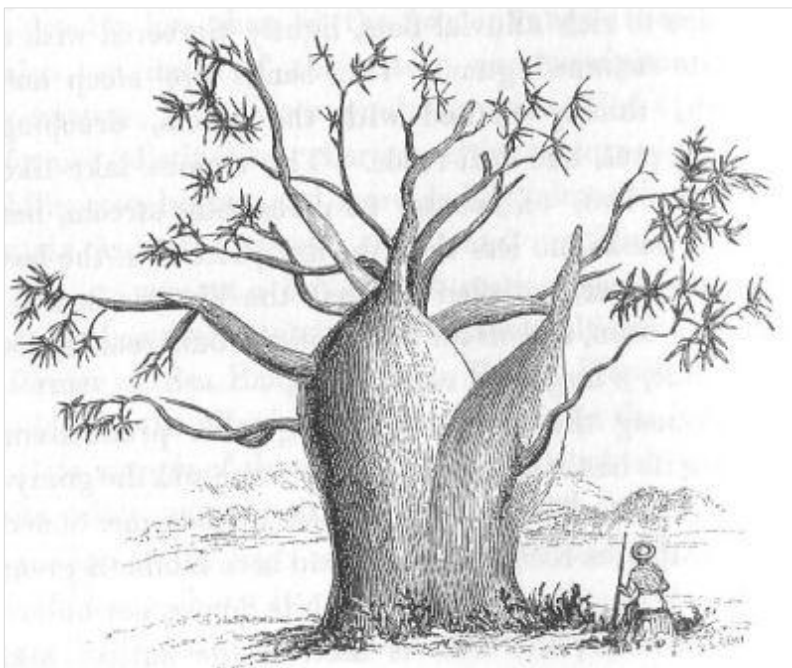
In some instances, they also inscribed their names, giving themselves a place in history. In the talk, and on the front page of the newsletter, Cathie used three renditions of King's sketch of '[Mount Cockburn, Cambridge Gulf](#)' to show how its appearance evolved.

Engravers, lithographers and artists who reproduced these early works were often well known in their own right. [William Hatherell](#), whose rendition of King's [Careening Bay](#) was included in the PowerPoint presentation, was born in England in 1855 and worked as an illustrator. His work graced magazines such as [The Graphic](#) and novels that included Mark Twain's [The Prince and the Pauper](#). He exhibited his paintings at the Royal Academy from 1879, and, in 1887, his work included renditions of historical scenes from Australia. Comparison of Hatherell's engraving with the [sketch](#) published in King's [Narrative of a Survey of the Intertropical and Western Coast of Australia](#) (1827) reveals slight differences in the human figures, the trees, the rocks in the foreground, and the cloud formation. Hatherell's colours also differ from those in an [aquatint plate](#) created by John Murray (the publisher of King's journal) in London in 1825.

While the changes made by engravers and reproduction artists were usually subtle – sometimes little more than the posture of a human figure – some were quite obvious. An example is '[Sandstone Cave with Paintings near Glenelg River](#)' drawn on stone by George Barnard (from a sketch by George Grey) and published in London in 1841 in volume 1 of Grey's [Journals of Two Expeditions of Discovery in North-west and Western Australia, during the years 1837, 38, and 39](#). When English artist Charles Hamilton Smith reproduced that sketch, his portrayal of the men and the vegetation showed only subtle differences but he omitted the two horses and a third man that Barnard, and presumably Grey, had placed near the pandanus in the original drawing.

The images selected up this point illustrated themes identifiable in the early landscape art of the Kimberley. Prominent features such as [Mount Cockburn](#) gave insight into the coastal landform; the [Prince Regent River cascades](#) showed an abundance of fresh water; and the cave scene near the Glenelg River had elements of natural history. Whether Grey saw the pandanus there is unknown. Its presence in the sketch could be indicative of either Grey or Barnard having taken liberties.

Greater natural history detail came from [John Lort Stokes](#). He was in the Kimberley at the same time as Grey but conducted his part of the expedition separately and then wrote [Discoveries in Australia; with an account of the coasts and rivers explored and surveyed during the voyage of H.M.S. Beagle, in the years 1837-38-39-40-41-42-43](#). Between them, Stokes and Grey introduced the world to trees that are now central to Kimberley art.



John Lort Stokes, 'Gouty-stem Tree', 1838, published in [Discoveries in Australia, vol. 2](#), T & W Boone, London, 1846 (Project Gutenberg).

Later artworks by [Thomas Baines](#) included both pandanus and boabs. Baines did not go into the Kimberley. In 1856, he remained at and near the Depot Camp (in what would become known as the Northern Territory) when Augustus Gregory and others explored to the south-west, along Sturt Creek.

No new non-indigenous artwork showing a Kimberley landscape is known to have been created in the 1840s or 1850s. Some might have been created in the mid-1860s, when settlers went to Camden Harbour, or in the early 1870s, when guano deposits attracted entrepreneurs to the off-shore islands. Yet, while drawings from those ventures are extant, no landscapes have surfaced.

An expedition led by [Alexander Forrest](#) in 1879 led to publication of the next batch of sketches. [Henry Charles Prinsep](#), a skilled draftsman and artist, prepared the sketches for the printing of Forrest's journal. 'First Arrival at the Fitzroy' showed wooded, grassy country abutting a wide expanse of river. In another sketch, the river emerged from sandstone ranges. The King Leopold Ranges featured in four sketches, with one of those showing Devil's Creek. The St. George Ranges also rated inclusion, with that sketch showing Mt Tuckfield in the distance.

After Forrest's expedition paved the way for pastoral settlement, the government funded more Kimberley work. In 1883 and 1884, parties of surveyors took with them an Irish geologist, [Edward Townley Hardman](#). His 1883 sketches, mostly of ranges and gorges, included Geikie Gorge (with the name Geikie Cañon), Windjana Gorge (with the name The Devil's Pass), and parts of the Grant Range (south-east of Derby), the St George Range, the King Leopold Ranges. His 1884 works, predominantly of places further east, included ranges, gorges, hills, rivers, river beds, and pools. Some were published as drawn while others were redone, either by Prinsep or by [Margaret E. Forrest](#) (later Lady Forrest).

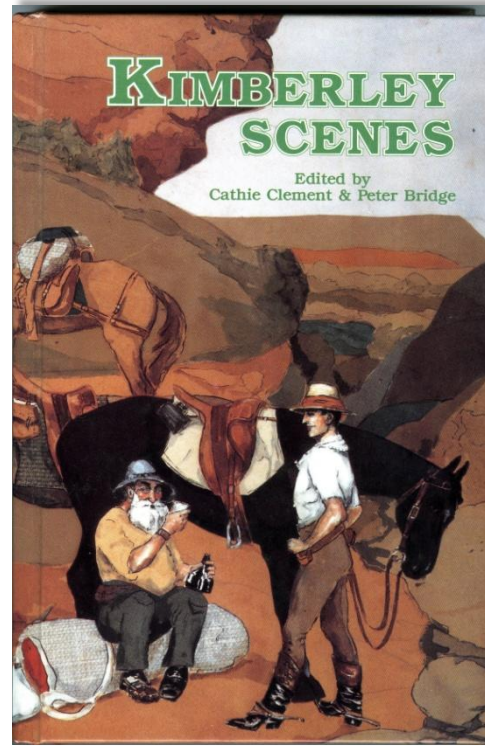
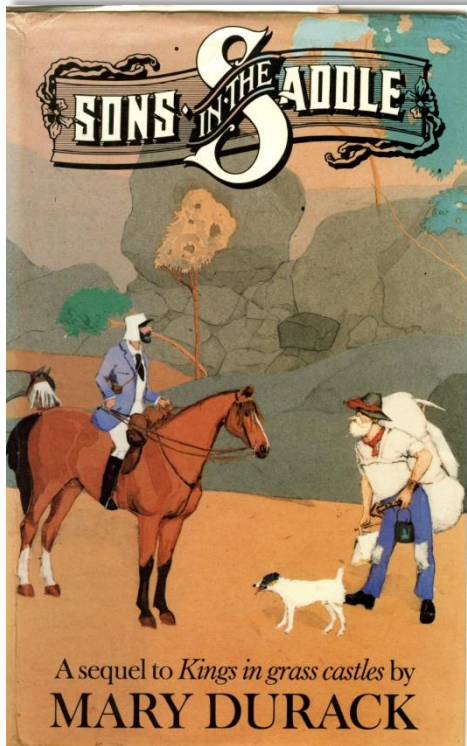
The likelihood of parts of the Kimberley being auriferous had been discussed already, and the release of Hardman's reports led to fresh prospecting. The Halls Creek gold rush followed, stimulating interest in the Kimberley and its landscapes.

One of the sketches that appeared was titled '[Views of the Kimberley District](#)'. This wood engraving was published on 29 June 1886 in the [Australasian Sketcher](#). The scenes it contained are: 1 (top left) A pool on the Elvire river; 2 (top) Panoramic view of the Panton district, looking S.W., with the Panton River showing between the hills in the foreground; 3 (top right) Erecting a trig. station on Rough Range; 4 (middle) View of the Ord River and plains from Dixon Range; 5 (bottom left) Mount Barrett; 6 (bottom centre) The Crater, Albert Edward Range; 7 (bottom circle) Permanent Brook, near Mount John; and 8 (bottom) Flora Valley, Elvire River in the Gorge, near Crater camp, Albert Edward Range.

[Samuel Calvert](#) showed more flair when he prepared a greater range of Hardman's sketches for [The Illustrated Australian News](#). Engravings of at least seventeen of those sketches appeared in print in 1886 and 1887, making Hardman's work the most publicised so far. Other wood engravings of '[Views at Cambridge Gulf](#)', one of which showed Mt Cockburn, were published in the [Australasian Sketcher](#) on 24 August 1886.

On 1 January 1887, Hardman's work (artistic and geological) received further exposure when [The Illustrated London News](#) devoted a page to them. Beautifully engraved by [G. Montbard](#), they depicted Caroline Pool, Albert Edward Range, Ord River, Permanent Creek and Rough Range. Sadly, Hardman passed away soon afterwards, struck down by typhoid fever at the age of 42 in Dublin.

In the meantime, a different type of artist had arrived in the Kimberley. Using the medium of water colour and collage, Arthur Slade Forbes turned out works in which both the characters and the landscapes were striking in their composition and colour. His art hangs on the walls of some Kimberley buildings, e.g. the Halls Creek Hotel. As the images on the next page show, it has also been used to create eye-catching book covers.



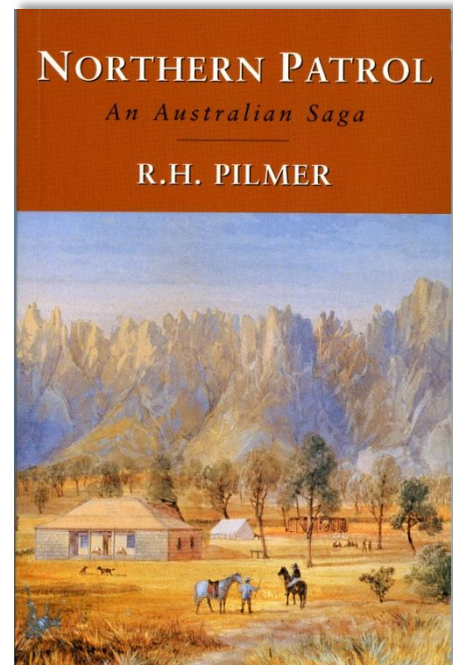
Portions of Arthur Slade Forbes's works, with the art forming a wraparound cover on each book. *Kimberley Scenes* also contains a portrait of Forbes, ten black and white plates of his sketches, two colour plates (water colour and collage), and a biographical note.

Forbes was a police constable assigned as a clerk to the first Warden of the Kimberley Goldfield in 1886. In 1891, he transferred to the colonial government's works and buildings section in Perth. He also joined the Western Australian Society of Arts and exhibited with that group in 1902 and 1903.

In 1887, another artist was eking out a living on sheep stations nestled below the ranges out of Derby. Rudolph Schuler, an aging German, had travelled far, and, like William Hatherell, he had contributed artwork to *The Graphic*. Yet, in the Kimberley, if he wasn't driving a team to or from the port, he used his hands mostly for station work.

Schuler mentioned to a station manager, Harry Bostock, that he could sketch, and he was asked to do 'a pencil sketch of the place, and to include the range in it'. Bostock sent the sketch "home" to his sister in England, with a description of the colours, and she sent back a painting. The colours in it are quite realistic. Rudolph Schuler died in 1889.

Portion of the English painting 'The Homestead – Lilmaloor Station', based on Rudolph Schuler's sketch, with the remainder wrapped to the back.



Perhaps the greatest exposure yet given to Kimberley landscapes occurred in mid-1888 when subscribers received the 26th part of the fabulous three-volume [Picturesque Atlas of Australasia](#). The atlas, edited by Andrew Garran, contained 700 engravings – both wood and steel. The Kimberley places among them were Geikie Gorge (Geikie Cañon), the Ord River, and Wyndham. The engraving of Geikie Cañon was based on Hardman's 1883 sketch but he received no acknowledgement. Only the name of the engraver, W. Mollier, appeared on it.

The sketches of Wyndham and the Ord River were attributed to a popular Sydney artist, [Julian Rossi Ashton](#), even though he is not known to have visited the Kimberley. The Ord River landscape resembled the one shown in the [Australasian Sketcher](#), and more recent research indicates that the Wyndham sketch was based on a series of three photographs taken in September 1886. The only other Kimberley image in the *Picturesque Atlas*, also attributed to Ashton, showed a boab tree. Nothing is known of the tree's location.

Only a few other 19th century artworks showing Kimberley landscapes have been located. In Cassell's *Picturesque Australasia*, which was published towards the end of 1889, volume IV carried an engraving by Chas. Wilkinson titled '[Mount St. John, from Permanent Brook Kimberley](#)'.

While part of Wilkinson's work bears a resemblance to the circular image published in the *Australasian Sketcher* in 1886, it is of a different calibre to that image. It is also much more detailed than Hardman's sketch. Nothing has come to light to show what material Wilkinson might have had to hand when he created this work.

Volume IV of *Picturesque Australasia* was the last in the series. It carried no Kimberley landscapes beyond the one mentioned above but it did present several images relevant to industries in the north-west. Of interest, too, is that an earlier volume in the series showed Captain Phillip Parker King's ship *Mermaid* beached at Careening Bay.

Picturesque Australasia was possibly the last of the nineteenth century books to carry engravings of Kimberley landscapes. In 1897, when W.B. Kimberly's *History of West Australia* came out, it was illustrated with photographs. None showed the Kimberley. *The Cyclopaedia of Western Australia: An Historical and Commercial Review*, edited by J.S. Battye and published in two volumes in 1912 and 1913, also used photographs. Some of those showed Kimberley landscapes.

The earlier sketches and engravings remained popular. Many of the illustrations from both *Picturesque Australasia* and the *Picturesque Atlas* were sliced out and coloured. The ones that survived are now in public or private collections, or on the market as rare prints or hand coloured engravings.

It is beyond the scope of this summary to trace each phase of landscape art in the Kimberley. Between them, the artists listed in the sidebars have produced an amazing body of work. In the landscapes painted by some of the more prolific artists, the themes mentioned in connection with nineteenth century works tend to be evident. [Elizabeth Durack](#), one of the region's best known artists, sketched and painted on the coast, on plateaus and plains, in ranges and gorges, and out where the boabs and pandanus grow. Born in 1915, she began to integrate the essence of the East Kimberley into her art while living on the family stations – Argyle and Ivanhoe – in the 1930s. Her drawings first appeared in print in *The Western Mail* in 1934.

[James Ainslie](#)

[Daisy Andrews](#)

[Helen Ansell](#)

[Julian Rossi Ashton](#)

[Graham Austin](#)

[T. Brian Aylward](#)

[George Barnard](#)

[Gordon Barunga](#)

[Carlo Baumann](#)

[Clifford Bayly](#)

[Jacinda Bayne](#)

[Phil Belfrage](#)

[Sheila Benford](#)

[Krim Benterrak](#)

[Emma Blyth](#)

[John Borrack](#)

[Desmond Brennan](#)

[Mel Brigg](#)

[Samuel Calvert](#)

[Michael Challen](#)

[Barbara Chapman](#)

[Madeleine Clear](#)

[Peter Coad](#)

[Rick Colless](#)

[Campbell Cornish](#)

[Ray Austin Croke](#)

[Brendon Darby](#)

[Ken Done](#)

[James Down](#)

[Russell Drysdale](#)

[Elizabeth Durack](#)

[Jeanette Dyson](#)

In the decades of creative endeavour that followed, Durack often made do with the only materials that were to hand. Her 1948 work '... the singing and the gold', for example, was one of the 'Ivanhoe' oils she painted on a canvas swag cover while working in her grass studio on the bank of the Ord River. She was also one of the earliest artists to depict the Kimberley from an aerial perspective.

Interestingly, the Kimberley presence of Durack's forebears and their contemporaries inspired [Helen Norton](#) to paint her Durack Series and Pidgeon (Jandamara) Series. She had moved to Broome in 1985 and would open Cockatoo Gallery there in 1999. Having since moved on, she now lives in South Fremantle and her work still embraces the Kimberley.

Other artists who established galleries include [Nadeen Lovell](#), [Ingrid Windram](#) and [Kimberley Kohan](#). Lovell first went to the Kimberley in 1989 after furthering her studies at the Julian Ashton Art School in Sydney. In Kununurra in 1998, she opened Diversion Gallery (later [Lovell Gallery](#)) to display her works and those of two other local artists. Her bold paintings incorporate boabs, stone and other things typical of the region. Windram moved to Broome in 1992 and established Windram Art there in 1995. Her paintings include pandanus at Cape Leveque, islands in archipelagos, boabs at billabongs, escarpments, waterfalls, rivers and creeks. Kohan first went to the Kimberley in 1992 and later had Lovell as a mentor while developing her skills with oil paint and gouache. She then alternated between those mediums and pastels, producing vibrant works that include water, trees and harsh, arid lands.

[Artopia Gallery](#) in Kununurra is one place to be assured of seeing paintings of the distinctive Purnululu (Bungle Bungle) landscapes. It holds Lovell's 16-metre '[Beyond the Beehives](#)' panorama. Other landscape artists attracted to Purnululu have included [Graham Austin](#), [Clifford Bayly](#), [Krim Benterrak](#), [Emma Blyth](#), [John Borrack](#), [Jeremy Holton](#), [Kimberley Kohan](#), [Guundie Kuchling](#), [John Lacey](#), [Anthony Lazberger](#), [Suzanne Lindhorst](#), [Jack Macale](#), [Gareth Morse](#), [Sidney Nolan](#), [John Olsen](#), [Matthew Perceval](#), and [David Shepherd](#). Macale's work has the added dimension of his cultural links to Country.

It was probably inevitable that [John Borrack](#) would eventually paint in Purnululu and other Kimberley places. Vast dry landscapes have always inspired him and, after a 1961 trip to Alice Springs, he began painting deserts. Later travel saw him painting in such places as the Flinders Ranges and the Pilbara before he visited the East Kimberley in the 1990s. He has since revisited for a longer period, producing wonderful works that also take in Lake Kununurra and the Cockburn Ranges.

While [Robert Juniper](#) has painted in Purnululu, his best known Kimberley landscapes portray the effects of tides on the mudflats. The aerial perspective in his work is said to date from an inland flight over the Pilbara in 1969.

[Mark Norval](#) is another mudflats enthusiast. He first exhibited his Kimberley works in Derby, his home town, in 1982 and continues to exhibit there, in Broome, Perth, and Kew, and

[Jean Elezovich](#)

[Jackie Ellis](#)

[Arthur Slade Forbes](#)

[Margaret E. Forrest](#)

[Liz Francis](#)

[Suzy French](#)

[Guy Grey-Smith](#)

[Peter Griffen](#)

[Edward T. Hardman](#)

[Pat Hartley](#)

[William Hatherell](#)

[Phillip A. Heath](#)

[Simon Hemsley](#)

[Leigh Hewson-Bower](#)

[Tina Higgins](#)

[Ian R. Hill](#)

[Christine Hingston](#)

[Jeremy Holton](#)

[Karen Hopkins](#)

[David Hume](#)

[Daniel Hutchings](#)

[Robert Juniper](#)

[Phillip Parker King](#)

[Douglas Kirsop](#)

[Kimberley Kohan](#)

[Mark Kraljevich](#)

[Guundie Kuchling](#)

[John Lacey](#)

[Anthony Lazberger](#)

[Mal Leckie](#)

[Michael Legge-Wilkinson](#)

[Suzanne Lindhorst](#)

elsewhere. His works, which also depict boabs, pandanus, ranges, gorges, water and flood plains, include both etchings and paintings. In some of the latter pieces, he acknowledges the influence of artists such as [Fred Williams](#). The Derby mudflats have also reached out to [Suzy French](#). Having lived in Broome and Fitzroy Crossing during her 20 years in the Kimberley, she writes of Derby: 'Here, I am surrounded by the inspiration for my work, from the heat crackled marsh expanse to the ancient boabs and across the sound to the magnificence of the buccaneer archipelago.'

The artists entranced by mud, water, floodplains and swamps have created a diverse range of works. Enticing billabongs and pools feature in paintings by [James Ainslie](#), [John Borrack](#), [Peter Coad](#), [Brendon Darby](#), [Douglas Kirsop](#), [John Lacey](#), [Peta Miller](#), [Irene Osborne](#), [Ken Rasmussen](#) and [Joel Smoker](#). Water also plays a role in works by [Judy Prosser](#) and [Beverley Skurulis](#). There, however, it is but one element of landscape that forms backdrops for the animated portrayal of Aboriginal people and animals. Their vivid paintings have an appeal similar to Elizabeth Durack's early works.

When it comes to beaches, contenders are again numerous. [Peter Coad](#), who began painting professionally in 1967 and first visited the Kimberley in the mid-1990s, is one of the artists who foregrounds the coastal vegetation while also capturing the sea and the shore. Other artists who have painted Kimberley beaches include [Jacinda Bayne](#), Phil Belfrage, [Krim Benterrak](#), [Brendon Darby](#), [Suzy French](#), [Daniel Hutchings](#), [Robert Juniper](#), [Douglas Kirsop](#), [Hal Missingham](#), [Helen Norton](#), [Judy Prosser](#), [Clifton Pugh](#), Barbara Sabin, [Julie Silvester](#), and [Denise Walker](#). Their paintings are as varied as the beaches themselves, and all have great appeal.

More coastal work than ever is being done as artists enjoy boat cruises, both as invited and paying guests. In September 2004 and March 2005, [Ingrid Windram](#) sailed on the *True North*, experiencing the coast in the Dry and the Wet, first as an invited artist and then as Artist in Residence. [Larry Mitchell](#), whose seascapes adorn the dining room on the *True North*, was a guest on that vessel in 2007 and again more recently. Robert Juniper went on a cruise in 2008. Pat Hartley, who goes on painting trips throughout the state with other artists, was on the *Coral Princess* in June 2009 and did a series of sketches on her lap while exploring along the coastal bays.

These new works complement the great range of coastal landscapes that have been captured in decades past. The magnificent rocky parts of the coast rival the best ranges, challenging every artist who tries to capture their essence. [Brendon Darby](#) and [Larry Mitchell](#) are foremost among those who have shown themselves equal to the challenge, painting large works that convey a remarkable sense of reality.

[Douglas Kirsop](#) and [Andrew Tischler](#) are the most recent of the cruise painters, having been guests on the *True North*. Kirsop has visited the Kimberley at intervals since the 1980s, capturing beautiful reflections of light, sky, clouds, trees and

[James W.R. Linton](#)

[Nadeen Lovell](#)

Alasdair McGregor

[Jo McIntyre](#)

[Jack Macale](#)

[Jeffrey Makin](#)

[Bruce Malloch](#)

[Mandy Martin](#)

[Robyn Mayo](#)

Josie Mazulla

[Lesley Meaney](#)

[Peta Miller](#)

[Hal Missingham](#)

[Larry Mitchell](#)

Clive Moffat

[Gareth Morse](#)

[Peter Mulder](#)

[Keith Naughton](#)

[Sidney Nolan](#)

[Helen Norton](#)

[Mark Norval](#)

[John Olsen](#)

[Irene Osborne](#)

[Jan Parish](#)

[Frank Pash](#)

[Matthew Perceval](#)

Charm Phillips

[Henry Charles
Prinsep](#)

[Judy Prosser](#)

[Clifton Pugh](#)

[Donald Ramsay](#)

[Ken Rasmussen](#)

land in expanses of water. Tischler is a newcomer to Kimberley art. He intrigued his fellow passengers by taking photographs, sketching a pencil drawing, and then, within only a few hours, using oils to carry the image onto canvas. His small works included vibrant paintings of the King George Falls and the Hunter River.

Landscapes have always fascinated artists, challenging them to capture the very things that make each place special. The results are as varied as the artists, and the world is richer for their labours. The works of those who have been mentioned here can be seen in art books, online, and, from time to time, in galleries that include Challen & Rafferty (Subiaco), [Gallery 360](#) (Subiaco), [Garden Art Studio](#) (Yallingup), [Greenhill](#) (Claremont & Adelaide), Jabiru Art (Herne Hill), [Jahroc](#) (Margaret River), Kensington (Norwood, SA), [Linton & Kay](#) (Subiaco), [McKenzies](#) (Claremont), [Mangkaja Arts](#) (Fitzroy Crossing), [Marsh Gallery](#) (Derby), [Michael Commerford](#) (Sydney), Monsoon (Broome), Stafford Studios (Cottesloe), [Seaview](#) (Queenscliff, Vic), [Wagner Contemporary](#) (Paddington), [Wentworth](#) (Sydney), and [Without Pier](#) (Melbourne).

Further Reading

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[Victor Rubin](#)

Barbara Sabin

[Brian Seidel](#)

[David Shepherd](#)

[Jules Sher](#)

[Susan Sheridan](#)

[Polly Shiner](#)

Charles Hamilton
Smith

John (Prince)
Siddon

[Julie Silvester](#)

[Beverley Skurulis](#)

[Joel Smoker](#)

Jenny Stacey

[John Lort Stokes](#)

[Kerry Stokes](#)

[Mervyn Street](#)

Traudl Tan

[Andrew Tischler](#)

[Denise Walker](#)

[Virginia Ward](#)

[Fred Williams](#)

[Tony Windberg](#)

[Ingrid Windram](#)

[John Wolseley](#)

[Vlase Zanalis](#)