



Evening Bay, pastel, 41 x 53cm (16 x 21")

I have to be ready for a sudden light change. I like to use heavy 385gsm paper cut to 71 x 51cm (28 x 20") with deckle edges on two sides to suspend the painting onto a mount board when I frame it. Next I spray a heavy fixative. When it's dry I run my finger across it so that the nap will be raised and quite durable for many coats of pastel. I do a lot of blending and use all ten fingers, the heel of my hand and the ball of my thumb — each one for a different colour. A quick wipe on my apron will get the worst off, but I wash them when they're all dirty.

During a midmorning break, the clouds have whipped away and the sun has come out. I change over and start on "Twig". I'm sorry to cut off work from "Fire" because it's going well, but using the light is more precious. When I'm painting this "Rider from the Sea" series, I'm always intrigued by the difference between reflections and shadows and the different colours they throw down. Shadows are always in the blue/purple range, and the reflections in the dark umbers. Where they interlink, the two together make a very dark shadow. The seaweeds however, are best

high and dry with the sun shining through them.

Having just laid in the groundwork on "Twig", I'm distracted for two hours by a customer. Selling a painting and serving them coffee is one of the most important end products of my work, because I live entirely off of my painting. It's lovely to say "I do it only for myself", but I challenge any professional to deny that it's wonderful to sell a painting, to have commissions and a regular and lively discussion with critique from artist colleagues. Without interaction between like minds, it's too easy to become self-indulgent and stale. It keeps me on my toes.

It's 4:00 p.m. and too dark to continue "Twig", so I'll return to "Fire" for a couple of hours.

Tuesday

Today is very bright and stormy, so I continue with "Twig". The wind is battering against my window. It can be distracting, but with a painting going well I don't notice it. I finish the background before I even start dotting in the branch. I won't be doing any spraying on this work because the tones are too fragile.