

Glenn Barnett

Landscapes My Way

Edited by Trevor Lang

Art created by people with disabilities has a distinctive edge and speaks of triumph over adversity. This talented South Australian landscape specialist is a mouth painter.



Glenn Barnett of Port Lincoln in South Australia is a Member of Mouth & Foot Painting Artists Pty Ltd. He delights in painting beautiful landscapes with brushes held in his mouth.

Like many artists, Glenn has developed his skills over the years and experimented with a whole range of mediums.

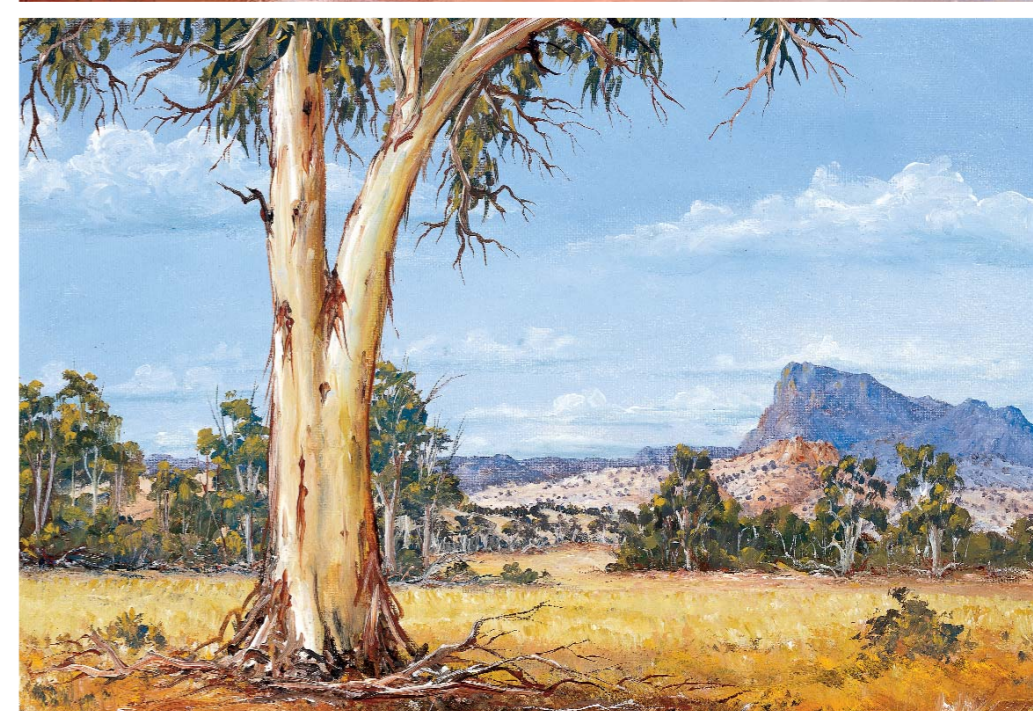
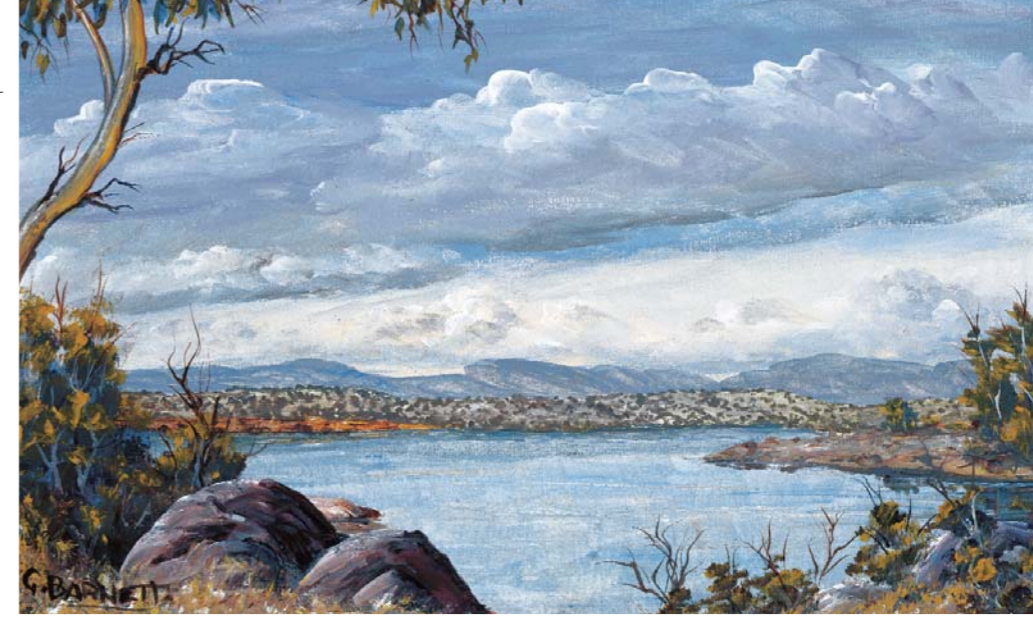
“After a few years of painting with watercolours, I turned to oil paints. I enjoyed their flexibility; the way they worked into each various colour, and the ability to wipe off a mistake,” Glenn explains. “Then, in the mid 1970s, I tried acrylics. At this time I was talking to schools and community groups and demonstrating how I painted. It did not take long before I found it very difficult to actually achieve much of a result painting quickly with oils – so I turned to acrylics.”

Glenn has found that each medium has its different techniques. As he ‘played around’ with acrylics it soon became obvious that they dried very rapidly.

“In using this medium, I had to do it ‘my way’,” he says. “I continued to use painting boards with canvas drawn over them, and occasionally an actual canvas. However, when I first attempted to paint on canvas pads, I found a base that was much better (for me) to work with.”

Normally, Glenn works in his studio drawing subjects from his imagination (those that come out of his head) and photographic images shot by his wife when the pair visits areas of interest. At times he also works on location. Another method he employs is to gather a series of images from various places and ‘make up’ a compilation work. Then, there are pictures he creates by simply ‘playing around’ ... these paintings are compilations with a lot of imagination.

“Over the years, I found it simpler to work from the sky to the foreground – sometimes laying down a base colour and at other times just ‘going for it’,” Glenn relates. “I never



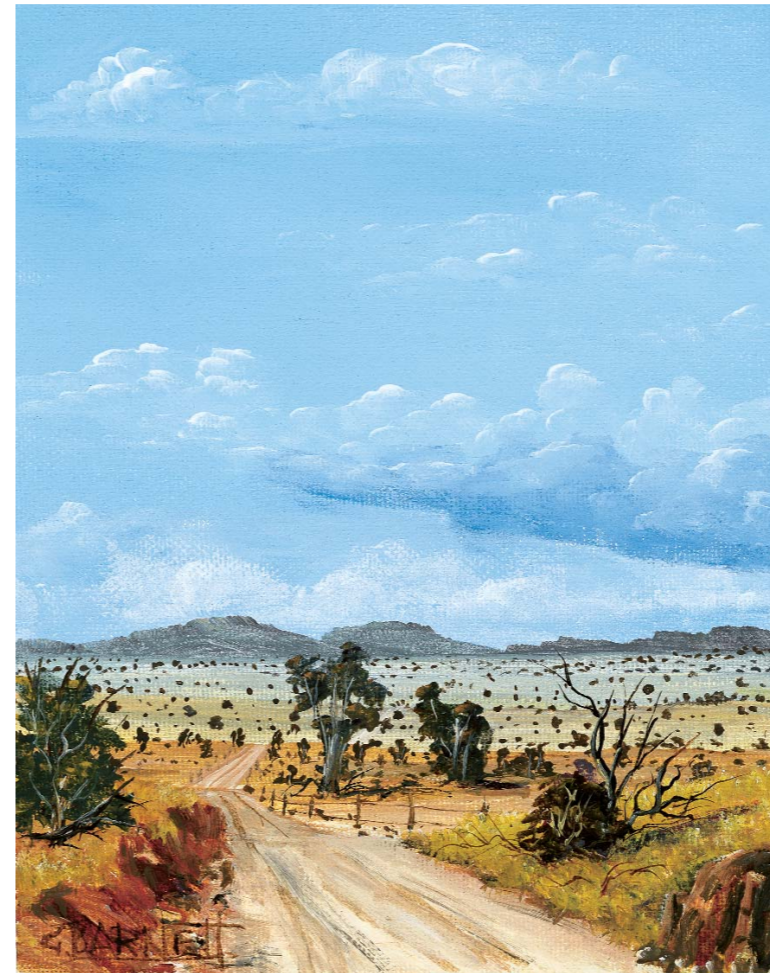


really sketch in first. Instead, I attempt to complete either a base or a complete section in one sitting. Acrylics dry fast ... which is very beneficial at times and a real problem at other times. So I am never happy with a finished painting; just small sections.”

“My palette is very limited,” he continues. “I use only about ten to twelve colours to make all of my hues. I nearly always use the same colours, with just a few different ones if I paint a non-landscape work. As my painting begins, I usually never want to paint over a sky – but because I work forward through the work, it becomes essential. Thus I may simply paint over a completed finished section and paint it out.”

As a teenager, after three years of painting by himself, Glenn Barnett had three lessons (his only ones) with the Art Master of one of Adelaide’s colleges. The Art Master led him to do three different exercises: Colour mixing, perspective, and a shaded building across the other side of a paddock.

At the conclusion of the three lessons, the Art Master said to Glenn: “I cannot teach you anything. You have the basics. Go and find your technique.”



Glenn has followed that advice, albeit within his own particular limitations.

“I changed a few times with techniques and with mediums, and I am still learning,” he claims. “There are times when I really want to paint large works – but it is physically impossible. Also, I would love to be really free-flowing and very loose. Occasionally I can be.”

In closing, Glenn Barnett shares his philosophical approach to his creativity, and hints at the frustration felt by many artists when criticising their own work.

“I do it my way,” he says.

“Who knows ... maybe one day I will be happy with a painting that I think I’ve finished.”

Despite his personal doubts, this artist is capable of bringing happiness to countless other people who view his clever and engaging pictures. ■

