

Ian De Souza

# He'll Take You There

by Lyndal Stuart

Prior to the Australian Impressionist movement, European artists grappled with the Australian landscape because they could not understand or accept it. Prejudices from 'home' restricted them from doing so. Once that understanding is there, you can see it, you feel the landscape as more than just what meets the eye.

Ian de Souza can see it. He carried his perspectives from a West Malaysian home, and an even more culturally diverse family background, and settled in Western Australia to

paint full time in 1980. If you haven't been to Western Australia, his art will take you there.



**I**n the late 1940s with shiploads of other European migrants, my grandparents first set foot on Australian soil at a port called Fremantle in Western Australia. My grandmother still looks back on her first Australian meal of sausages, peas and potatoes with delicious nostalgia. They headed east to Sydney, but plenty



of those shiploads stayed. Over 50 years later, I can see why.

I went to see the place affectionately called 'Freo' for myself, my partner hails from Perth, and everything I had heard of the place is true. The clanking vessels arriving and departing, broad footpaths accommodating alfresco dining reminiscent of the home towns



*Sunset on Northbank* 1986 Watercolour, 56x75cm

from which the migrant contingency originate, and the sociability that just oozes out of the place.

This is why I can flip through the book *Reflective Impressions: Ian de Souza, Fremantle 1980s – 2000* and relate to the smile on my loved one's face as he points to familiar locations depicted by Ian de Souza. The smile

indicates more than superficial recognition, it is a feeling. He can see the elderly men with hats sitting in the mall, he has experienced the sun soaked afternoons in one of the many cheery pubs, and it's all there in this artist's paintings. Colour, animation, history and change.

This is all summed up poetically by

David de Vos in the first pages of Ian de Souza *Reflective Impressions Fremantle 1980 – 2000*, the book detailing a profile of the artist and his selected paintings of Fremantle.

Like the first European colonial artists, de Souza struggled with the colour and light of his new home. When he settled in Western Australia,



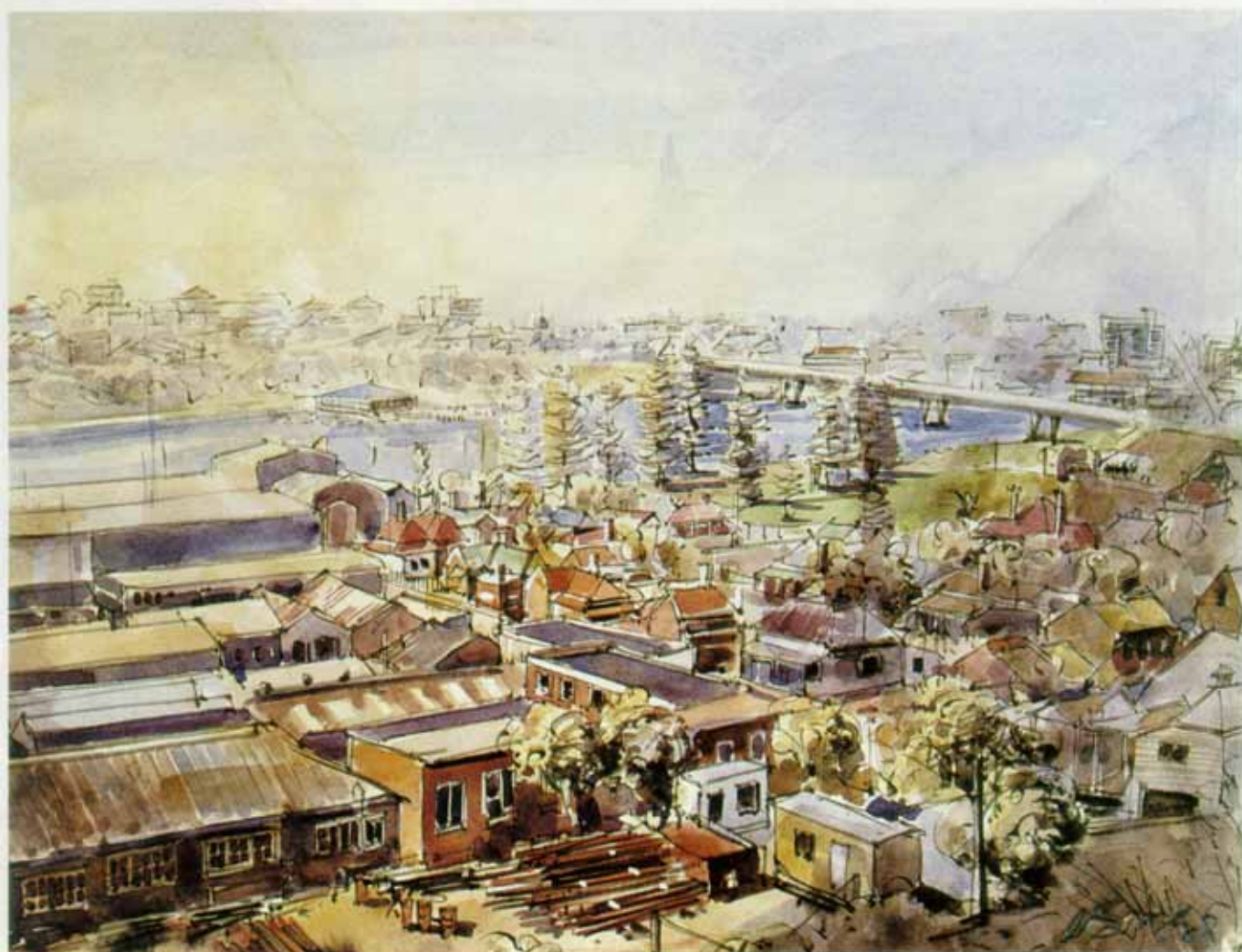
*Windjana Gorge*  
1999 Gouache,  
56x75cm

de Souza sought out the influence of one of the masters of light and atmosphere, John Turner.

Hints of Turner's impact on de Souza's work is evident in his work throughout the 1980s, particularly his work in 1986 including *Conflicting Rays over Bridges and Waterways* and *Sunset on Northbank*. However, as the years move on to the 1990s, de Souza's art connects with his home, and the result is vibrant, bold, linear and captivating. So much of the mood of Fremantle is reflected in his impressions.

The 62 year old self-taught artist is based in Fremantle, but his art has travelled beyond Fremantle and the city of Perth. Thousands of kilometers outside the city limits lies an expanse of some of the most breathtaking country you will ever

*View of North Fremantle* 1983  
Watercolour,  
38x55cm



“My life has changed so much and the varied experience translates into a variety of arts, but I paint the life that surrounds me, what I see, and the biggest influences on my life have been light and people.”

see. *The Kimberley's Through My Eyes* is a new series that explores the personification and energy of the landscape in West Kimberley. This will be the subject of an exhibition on show in Sydney at the Michael Commerford Gallery in Rushcutters Bay until 28 September 2001. The series marks a new and exciting transition for de Souza, a new journey through colour, rhythm and form.

Ian de Souza is no stranger to change or travel. From his childhood in West Malaya, he has moved through Singapore, to Australia, then pursuing his musical background, sung his way through Europe, Asia, and the Middle East with his fellow performer and second wife. All the while his spiritual and artistic mentor, Father Tom Cruice, who had initiated de Souza's passion for painting, wrote



*China Blue at Bathers Beach* 2000 Gouache, 56x75cm

*Trades Hall and the Old Esplanade Pub* 1984 Watercolour, 37x55cm





to him and encouraged de Souza to return to his art.

When he returned to Australia in 1980, he returned to his art with gusto, obsessively painting every day prior to breakfast. The Fremantle paintings developed, and the Kimberleys have followed.

"Everything has changed over time," de Souza states. "My life has changed so much and the varied experience translates into a variety of art, but I paint the life that surrounds me, what I see, and the biggest influences on my life have been light and people." ■

*Waiting for Supper* 1987 Oil, 91x117cm

Ian de Souza's art can be viewed at:

The de Souza Garden Studio (by appointment), Fremantle WA, phone (08) 9335 6797  
Voyager Estate Winery, Margaret River WA, phone (08) 9757 6354.  
Gallows Gallery, Mosman Park WA, phone (08) 9286 4730.  
Accent on Waratah, Dalkeith WA, phone (08) 9386 2000.  
Michael Commerford Gallery, Rushcutters Bay NSW (02) 9331 3888.

For stockists of the book, *Ian de Souza Reflective Impressions Fremantle 1980 - 2000* visit the web site [www.iandesouza.com.au](http://www.iandesouza.com.au).



FINAL STEP

by Ian de Souza

The most difficult part of any painting is actually getting down to work and starting it! When selecting a subject, I try to get into myself and gradually, whilst drawing, I feel the rhythms and activity of my surrounds. Then the painting just flows...



# Rhythms of a Busy Port

**MATERIALS**

- Archers smooth, HP 300gsm paper
- Charcoal, sealed with spray fixative
- Art Spectrum watercolours and gouache: Burnt Sienna, Cobalt Blue, Cerulean Blue, Prussian Blue, Raw Sienna, Rose Madder, Ultra Marine, Yellow Ochre
- Brushes: 12 round, 5cm (2in) house brush

**STEP 1**

I find the centre of the page and work out towards the boundaries. Using charcoal, I compose the main structure, which enables me to sketch out my thoughts and feelings. I want sound, activity and rhythm to be conveyed in my impression of a busy port. Once I have finished sketching out my feelings, I am aware of the composition, design and balance of the drawing. I seal the drawing with a fixative prior to painting.



STEP 1

**STEP 2**

Flooding the paper with paint, my brush strokes echo the rhythm of the port. I consciously leave harmonious areas of white paper and use primary colours of Cobalt Blue, Rose Madder and Raw Sienna. I work rapidly and spontaneously to depict the immediacy of the images, and the activity of the port. I place Rose Madder, a sky colour, elsewhere in the painting to maintain uniformity.

**STEP 3**

Building shapes and structures with stronger values of the same primary colours, I execute quick brush strokes, leaving a lot of white so that when I return with colour these spaces will take up the colour clearly. I am hearing the sounds of a busy port on the paper.



STEP 2

**STEP 4**

The work should now be thoroughly dry. When it is, I tie all the loose ends together with solid forms such as 1st and 5th values and thicker paint. When I paint I think of five major values, whatever happens inbetween, happens by accident. See my Master's Hints and Tips for a value guide. I define the jetty, cranes, buildings, slips, murky waters and pylons, which are dark and stained with use.

I use Burnt Sienna, Yellow Ochre and Prussian Blue when painting in these elements of the subject, and at this stage I am using a Round Brush No 12 and all of my strokes are horizontal and vertical.

I wash the sky in Cobalt Blue, diluting the colour as it comes down to the skyline. At the same time, I deepen the water in the foreground.

**STEP 5**

Time to add the finishing touches. I use the Round Brush No. 12 and white gouache to pick out the solid forms



**STEP 3**

with a light drawing technique. I highlight the vertical and horizontal sides of the pylons, jetties, masts, buildings, the shore and the reflections in the water.

Finally, touches of reds and yellows bring the painting to life.



**STEP 4**

**MASTER HINTS AND TIPS**

*By Ian de Souza*

- You will find that by using Archers smooth paper, HP 300 gsm, that the paint floats on top and captures the light and fluidity of the scene.
- Ensure your board is completely flat at all times.
- Use a large brush and plenty of paint.
- Be conscious of maintaining the balance of the painting at all times.
- Go with the painting, allow it to happen by itself as the paint flows and dries.
- If it is required, dry the painting with a hairdryer.
- Values: 1st is white for light, 2nd value is half light value, 3rd value is mid-light, 4th value is half dark and 5th value is for the darkest shadow.