



'Winter, Downs Road'. Oil on Linen. 710 x 1420mm. 2025. Private Collection, Asia

It is just over a year since I sat down to compose a Newsletter – far too long, time gone far too fast. Another fortunate year in the haven of my studio here in Cambrian Valley, so a group of new paintings to share.

Recent Paintings

Scattered through this newsletter is a selection of my most recent paintings. My 'babies' (which in many ways they are) have recently found wonderful homes and collections throughout the world.

Milford Galleries Exhibition

Most important news is that from 22 August to 21 September 2026 a survey show of my work is opening at Milford Galleries, Queenstown. Since 1995 I have chosen to place my paintings privately within a small group of collectors from within New Zealand, Asia, Australia and the USA. While having a private waiting list is a lucky situation for me, it comes with a problem: going directly from my studio to the new owner, the paintings are not seen in the wider public arena. But paintings are made to be seen and discussed and I have grown ever more conscious that only a few know exactly what I have been doing. There was a very successful exhibition of selected landscapes in 2011 (at Pataka Museum of Arts and Cultures in Porirua) but the range of my practice has largely gone unseen in recent years.

For some time, Stephen Higginson at Milford Galleries, has been suggesting that we should correct that limited viewing and gather up from private homes and collections a representative group of my paintings. So on 22 August 2026 Part One of a planned two-part survey will open at the Queenstown gallery – about 30 works, largely borrowed from owners within the immediate Queenstown Lakes area, mostly from the past decade and including oils, egg temperas, three watercolours with some drawings on display. Along with the landscapes are paintings of my wife Fiona (my love letters to her), and work from time spent in Antarctica and Europe.

Milford Galleries are doing a significant colour catalogue with essay and the whole show will be on their website. I'm looking forward to it and if you are in the region during the exhibition please do drop in. There will also be a number of events surrounding the exhibition. If you would like to be informed about events or be to be advised when the online exhibition goes live email vanessa@milfordgalleries.co.nz. Part Two is planned for February 2028.

Farewelling Friends

The year has been marked by sad, unwanted losses for me: several very close friends have left the stage and my life feels much diminished by their leaving: Kate Langley, Brian Turner, Peter Ashton, Paul Carrad, Garrick Tremain, Marshall Seifert, and on the 13th July, Sam Neill. All added a great deal of enjoyment to my own life. I admired them, and I feel still the privilege of calling them my friends. But, as my own Mum said before she died "Life goes on". At this age – 78 now – losing mates is a frequent occurrence, but none the easier for that. Every one of them impacted my life and times positively and have left treasured memories.





'Lest we Forget'. Oil on Linen. 910 x 1070mm, 2025. Personal Collection

Renovations

Home life was upended for many months over the last year, with a Portaloo parked at the main entrance during the middle of winter. Tradies arriving early every day to build a new kitchen (keeps The Wife happy...), renovate the existing bathroom and transform the house garage (more storage facility than ever home to a vehicle) into a spacious new guest bedroom and ensuite. Many of you will know what this sort of renovation entails, and only recently has a sense of order and quiet replaced the noise, the drop sheets, the dust and the constant cheerful (mostly) banter of the various stripes of tradesmen. Fi and I hold our builders from Corson Construction: Sam, Jake, Amanda and Lachie in very high regard, and enjoyed immensely their company and their unsung skills — even if it was for longer than planned. All done now and everyone happy.

Travel

Much as we would have loved to have clocked up more air points to our beloved Europe we did manage a couple of trips across to see my daughter Melissa and grand daughters in Melbourne, and to take in the excellent 'Impressionists Paintings from Boston Art Museum' at the always wonderful National Gallery of Victoria. As ever, peering at the real paint was thrilling, the evidence of the artist's hand and thinking so obvious and revealing, and always inspiring. Imagining each of these beautiful works starting life the same way our own paintings do, as a blank flat rectangle awaiting the first touch of brush or charcoal is a truly humbling experience.

Public Engagements

I've fielded requests for talks and enjoy supporting causes important to me – from a morning in the vibrant classroom with Alexandra Primary School kids and their paints, to the Queenstown Photographers group, to interviewing Dick Frizzell at the Writers Festival in Queenstown about his entertaining memoir 'Hastings', to sitting with dear friends Jillian Sullivan, Glenn Turner and Owen Marshall discussing the life and work of our mutual mate Brian Turner. I enjoyed chairing a discussion with the young stars and makers of the engaging (and disturbing) film 'The Weedeaters', and sharing with Sam Neill the microphone in support of Sustainable Tarras in their opposition to Santana's planned open cast gold mine in our beloved Dunstan hills, so close to Cromwell, Wanaka and to home.



'The Shearer's Dining Table'. Egg Tempera on Gesso. 610 x 812 mm. 2025. Private Collection, New Zealand

Entertainment Recommendations

We always get great feedback on our list of podcast, book and television watching suggestions. If anything has really grabbed you do let us know – we love getting recommendations – no matter the topic we always learn something fascinating.

Podcasts: in the studio, encouraging me to keep sitting at the job I listen to podcasts more than anything else these days. Much to Fi's distress I find the political landscape in the USA compelling, in the same way a fatal road accident is impossible to ignore: we are living in truly unprecedented times, and I worry that it may be impossible to recover from the damage being done to a once-respectable nation: when truth, morality, tradition, decency and dignity are all rejected, where does a good citizen turn?

I appreciate the views and insights of Kara Swisher and Scott Galloway on their "Pivot" podcast on YouTube; as I do Galloway's "The Prof G Podcast." Discussing daily the intersection of law and politics its always informative to listen to (and watch) Michael Popock and colleagues on his "Legal AF" podcast. Another admirable speaker/writer is David Brooks. Look for his "How To Know a Person" talk on YouTube. And there is always "The Rest is Politics" for UK overviews, and its equivalent "The Rest is Politics USA" from the States.

Of course the number of Arts documentaries and programmes continues to be astonishing and a rich source of entertainment and learning. It amazes me that almost every name which comes to mind can be found in some filmic form on YouTube. It has become an easily accessed replacement for the Public Library of my younger days...thinking of a painter for whatever reason I frequently dive into YouTube and see what's there and I am seldom disappointed.

Screen: the Sydneys are stay-at-homes par excellence, and after work each evening you'll find us slumped on the sofa watching the extraordinary range of choices on Netflix etc. Some which linger in the memory include: The Seat (Netflix); The Diamond Heist (Netflix); Chris and Martina – The Final Set (Netflix or TVNZ on Demand); Titanic Sinks Tonight (TVNZ on Demand); The Split, Series 1 and 2 (TVNZ on Demand); All Her Fault (TVNZ on Demand); Malpractice (TVNZ on Demand); Made You Look; A True Story about Fake Art (Arts Channel, Sky); 7/7 The London Bombings (Sky and SkyGo).



'Ice Swimmer'. Oil on Linen. 750 x 910mm. 2025. Private Collection, New Zealand

On a lighter note when in need of cheering up I love watching bloopers and out-takes from movies and tv series – there are plenty to choose from, and they lift the spirits. If you are in need of an easy laugh, check out Milton Jones and his one-liners. And Stephen Wright too.

Incidentally, loving film-making and film-makers as I do I have enjoyed recently the YouTube series "Behind the Scenes" posted by a character called "Serious Feather" in which actors and Directors etc talk about the making of some of the classics e.g. "Midnight Cowboy," "Billy Liar," "Deliverance," "Fargo" and "The Graduate" amongst many others.

Books: the column of books beside my bed seems only to rise. Many excellent reads this year past, including: "Tony Fomison – The Life of an Artist" by Mark Forman; "Beyond the Border and Other Poems" by Owen Marshall; "Book of Lives" Margaret Attwood's memoir; "A Fire in His Soul" Miles Unger on Vincent Van Gogh in Paris; "Notes on Being a Man" and "The Algebra of Happiness" by Scott Galloway; "How to Know a Person" by David Brooks; "The Upside Down World: Meetings with the Dutch Masters" by Benjamin Moser; "My Family: A Memoir" by David Baddiel; "Artists, Siblings and Visionaries: Augustus John and Gwen John" by Judith Mackrell.

And I am so delighted to report that the major publication "The Art of Terry Stringer" is the most magnificent and beautiful book on any New Zealand artist I have ever held in my hands. We are so thrilled for our dear friends Terry and Tim. Terry has been a sophisticated and distinctive sculptor in a parallel career to my own – more than 50 years now – and this book by Massey University Press does perfect justice to one of our very best. It is being launched in September 2026. In the name of transparency I have to proudly confess we enjoy 12 of Terry's works here at home. And would love more...

Fi loves her Kindle, and her favourites of late include: "More or Less Maddy" by Lisa Genova (sensitive telling of a young adult living with bi polar); John Boyne's "The Elements Series: Water, Earth, Fire, and Air" (four interconnected stories examining trauma, guilt, and complicity from four distinct human perspectives); "In the Great Quiet – A Novel" by Laura Vogt (masterful work about a woman's race to be part of the Oklahoma's land rushes in 1893); "Strangers, A Memoir of Marriage" by Belle Burden (the disintegration of a marriage); "The River is Waiting" by Wally Lamb (themes of guilt, institutional brutality addiction and redemption – heavy themes but beautifully written); "Private Equity" by Carrie Sun (memoir exploring the dark side of the US finance world). Continued...



'Magpie Tree'. Oil on Linen. 750 x 1200mm. 2026. Private Collection, New Zealand

Books continued: "Careless People: A Cautionary Tale of Power, Greed, and Lost Idealism by Sarah Wynn-Williams" (former Kiwi who worked for Facebook – brave and harrowing); "Private Resolutions: Coming of Age in New China" by Yuan Yang (intimate portrait of modern China told through the lives of four ordinary women, each striving for a better future); "Hello Beautiful" by Ann Napolitano (reimagining of 'Little Women' told through four sisters in Chicago in 1980s) and "Skin Deep" by Liz Nugent (clever psychological thriller exploring themes of beauty, ageing, imperfection, health and illness).



'Warbird'. Oil on Linen. 605 x 760mm. 2026. Private Collection



'Bathroom, Delft'. Egg Tempera on Gesso. 610 x 610mm. 2025.
Personal Collection



'In Amsterdam 2023'. Egg Tempera on Gesso. 606 x 760mm. 2026.
Personal Collection



'The Rabbiter's House, Gimmerburn'. Oil on Linen. 760 x 1200mm. 2026. Private Collection, New Zealand

Finally, 25th July, Joanna Wane of The New Zealand Herald did a very good story on my work and the upcoming exhibition. For those of you not *Herald* subscribers, it is available via our website. Fi, Teddy, Tinks and I thank you for your interest and valued support. We send best wishes and hope the days ahead are healthy, productive and satisfying for you all.

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