



LEO CHANG, OIL ON CANVAS 2010, 57 X 75 CM.

### Do you have commercial gallery representation now?

Yes, just recently actually, with Flinders Street in Sydney. In February I had a little show with Flinders St. They showed Jonathan Throsby and I, just testing how it was going to work and what I wanted to do and it went really well.

### Tell me about winning the Portia Geach Prize and what impact it has had on your art practice.

For a career thing, great! I had been feeling a little like my momentum was slipping and it went, bang! Right.

There you go with a lot of new people coming into the picture. I got to meet a lot of gallery people and the Flinders Street (representation) probably came out of that I think. That side of it has been really fantastic and getting to know the Sydney art scene a little bit below the surface.

Practically it was quite hard and I suffered a slump directly after, where everybody just wanted me to paint that painting again and were not interested in the work I was currently making. It's like the next album after a rock star's big hit. So there were pros and cons.

I dealt with it all just by getting back into the studio. There was a point where I had to get the balance right. After Portia Geach there were a lot of interviews and a lot of talking and just not enough art making.

### Tell me about your routine for making art. Artists make work in lots of different ways. Are you one of those disciplined artists, in the studio every day?

Well, I'm not disciplined like I write it down and that's my plan but I just can't help myself, so if I have time, I am in the studio every day. I usually go between a period of time where I am reading heaps and drawing heaps and really work-shopping things and that will go on for a few months and then I will have a real burst of painting.

### How often do you exhibit?

There are usually four or five things a year and that's usually a couple of competitions that I am getting into or trying to, and group shows.

### How do you manage that business side of things?

That is the bit that I find the hardest to find the time for. I am constantly regretting, "Oh I should have applied for that grant last year so that I could be paid to be making this work". It takes up a lot of time and I would like to get better at it. It would be very handy to have someone to help organise all of that stuff — to get the work out of the door.

### That's right, the work can't just stay in the studio. I think a lot of people don't understand that it's not just making the work, it's getting it out.

Yes absolutely, but also I think it can work the other way. You have to be involved in the studio enough that the work you are making is actually interesting. I have seen it happen with people that I know, and I have felt it with myself, that when you are doing really well and you are applying for everything, getting into a couple of prizes and things, there is not actually time to spend enough hours in the studio, making sure that your work is fantastic. You can spend time riding on the past work, so yes, that balance is hard.

### That is a constant thing, you are only as good as your next piece of work – never even your last one.

Yes exactly. Well you never like your last one anyway. The moment it is done it seems irrelevant, "Oh that old thing"! That is the area that I need to work on, finding a bit more time.

### What's coming up for you next?

I am now working toward a solo show at the beginning of next year at Flinders St Gallery, which I know is



plenty of time, but it is just enough time for me to get my head around it. The exhibition will require around eighteen paintings — which is quite a lot. I am coming out of a drawing phase so I am showing the drawings at the Wood, here in Braidwood, when Kelly re-opens in a month.

### For people who don't know how artists work, is there a rough rule of thumb about how long it takes you to produce one painting and are there lots of throw-aways in between?

Yes, the longest I would take to actually paint is maybe three or four days because I am much more likely to rip it off and start again. So people say, "Wow, you have done that so quickly", but there were ten really bad ones before that and some sketches and this and that which went on before I finish a painting.

### That's heartening!

Yes, but people say, you've got to save it all, but I am not precious about my paintings. I can do two day's work and then put them in the bin. I feel like I have to be very ruthless.

### Some people keep absolutely everything that they make, be it crap or not. I'm not of that school I'm afraid.

No I'm not of that school either. I already feel, being an artist, that I am filling the world up with too much stuff. Sometimes I think, "What I am doing, I am just making all this stuff. I should be a musician so that it is all out there in the ether". I am definitely ruthless, I turf everything. I'd like to go back and turf a few things that I have given people. I say to them, "Give it back, I can't bear to look at it — I'll do you another one". But they never want to part with it!

### How long is it since you graduated from art school?

Twelve years and it goes quickly. I think, oh twelve years of being an artist, I feel like I have only just started.

### Do you make an income from your art?

Yeah, it goes in phases. A couple of years ago I had a couple of good years which was really great and the family lived off that. I had a show in Metro in Melbourne that went well. Then I had a couple of years where I had good exposure but no real income. The thing that is hard, is that for your career, the choices you need to make are the ones that aren't necessarily financial. It is more important that your work gets hung in the Hobart Art Prize but hasn't made you any money than that you sold five landscapes. That's hard.

### When you won the Portia Geach Prize did that make your sales prices go up?

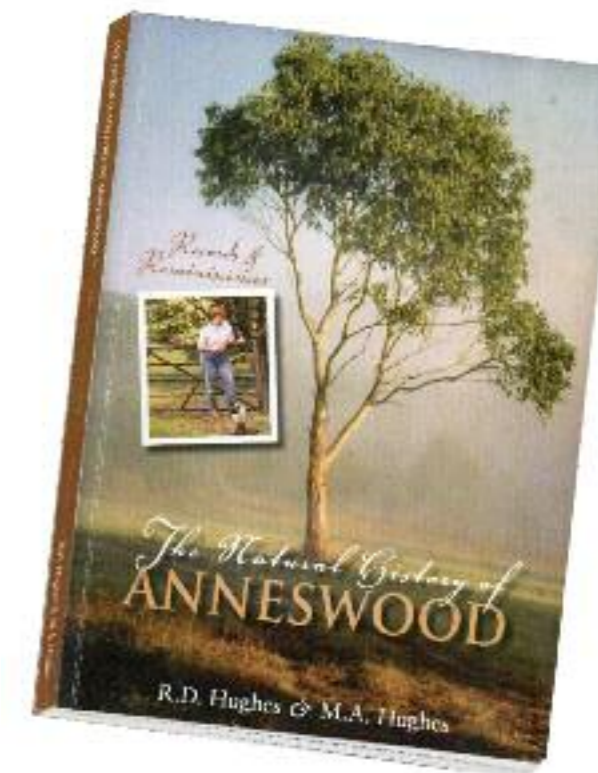
Yeah, well yes and no. Instantly the galleries say well we'll just knock that up a little bit but you have to be careful that you don't put the prices up too quickly. I try and leave all of that to the gallery owners. I find it quite hard pricing work.

### Conceptually, what are you working on now for your solo show?

Boys and bikes! That's the working title and it came out of all the drawing I was doing of Facebook holiday pictures. I love all the issues with privacy and exposure, copyright and access to images, so the work is coming out of those drawings.

### Fantastic — I'll look forward to seeing that, it sounds amazing. Thank you Kate.

Yeah, I better get back into the studio!



## All creatures great and small

Reviewed by Merideth McKinney

**H**OW MANY PLACES are blessed with their very own loving, meticulous study of the local natural environment in the form of a beautiful book? Braidwood must be among the very few.

In 1988, when they retired from the CSIRO in Canberra, Dick and Anne Hughes bought 30 hectares of land along the Mongarlowe River. Over the next 20 years, they not only taught themselves all they could about the land in their care. They kept detailed records as only scientists could. Finally, in 2011, they produced a book — *The Natural History of Anneswood, Records and Reminiscences* — that contains all they discovered.

For anyone living in and around Braidwood, the book is a gem. In a combination of entertaining prose and detailed charts and tables, it tells you all you ever wanted to know and more about every aspect of our local environment, under chapter headings such as The Place, The Plants, The Invertebrate Animals, The Birds, and The Mammals. The authors have almost literally left no stone unturned, and what they document is often fascinating as well as informative.

What's the bizarre sex life of the antechinus? Do wombats talk to themselves? Why are there suddenly so many cicadas one summer, and when will it happen again? Just what effect did the recent drought have on local birds and animals? You will learn all this and so much more. Braidwood is very lucky to have such a book.

*The Natural History of Anneswood* is available at a discounted price of \$30 from the authors (phone 02 6281 6432 or 02 4846 1011).

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Julie Ballard & Bente Hart

Mon – Fri 9 am - 5.30 pm  
Saturday 9 am - 12.30 pm