



Caitlin Reilly with her painting of a tree-lined road.
Photo: Digby Hildreth

Chasing light down local roads

As a sickly orange glow fades slowly in the West, and with the pandemic hazard retreating in Australia, people are entitled to indulge in a certain lightening of the spirits, a daring to believe that brighter days lie ahead. It's a mood, or rather, a phenomenon, that Bangalow's Itsy Bitsy Art Space artist Caitlin Reilly sought to

capture in a new series of oil paintings.

"I wanted to do something uplifting at the end of the year," she says. "2020 has been heavy, a shocker, so calling the series *Light at the End of the Road* is an apt way to suggest that there are better times coming."

But while some of the real-world news is

encouraging, the 'message' in the new work goes beyond the headlines.

The paintings, depictions of Northern Rivers back roads, have a deep emotional resonance. For Caitlin, they are autobiographical, "a very personal response to place", but they're likely to strike a chord in the hearts of every local who has driven through Myocum, along Possum Creek Road, or down the back road to Byron.

Some of her roads are a blend of memories, but many are instantly recognisable: narrow winding country byways, fringed with dense vegetation, which we take for granted, or find fault with – routes along which we lay down the tracks of our lives – ferrying kids to school, heading out for a day at the beach, or to a romantic assignation; trees, bush, farm fences all bearing witness to our unique personal journeys.

The roads are real, and the light too is more than a metaphor. Capturing light on canvas, how it falls on the ground, or plays with the foliage, offers a beguiling challenge to all painters. "Don't you love it when you drive through these roads and see the dappled light, the shadows. It's so lush. Painting land and seascapes is a wonderful thing to do as a painter," Caitlin says.

Reilly repeatedly returns to the late John Berger's dictum: Look until you see what you thought wasn't there.

"That's an exquisite definition of landscape painting," she says.

But the subject's essence may only appear in the course of making the painting – bang! – with the application of a dot of titanium white, or a dab of the chameleon-like caput mortuum.

"The experience of applying paint, I just dissolve into it; it becomes timeless. That's where my spirit comes to light," she says.

Light at the End of the Road shows at Gallery 3, Kendal St, Byron Bay from December 18 to January 18.

Digby Hildreth

BANGALOW

vets

We believe in helping people through helping their pets.

**Consultations • Vaccinations • Surgery • Digital X-ray
 Ultrasound • Endoscopy • In house lab and blood machines**

cmjlegal

For All Your Legal & Conveyancing Needs

**Technical Expertise. Local Knowledge.
 Innovative Solutions. Excellent Results.**