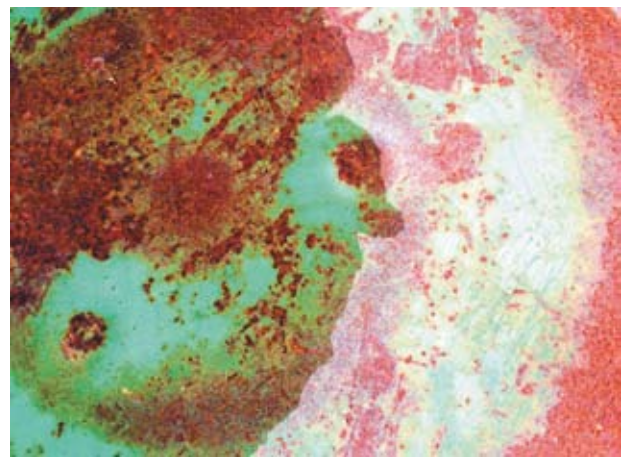


After months of pushing and pulling paint with the majority of output unsatisfactory, the door will open to the most pleasing work. Much later, as this process contracts, the realisation comes that this is how it is always going to be, but with the non-productive times lessening. There is undercurrent, a wheel turning within a wheel.

Even though I have more understanding now of how the creative process works for me, I am still in awe of this sudden burst of creative energy and wonder where it comes from. I do know that the secret is to move with it when it erupts and accept the work. When the output stops and I fall in a heap, I wonder how I even kept up the pace. If the work is exciting and the pulse is strong, that is enough.

This energy is powerful. It drives and moves everything, and speeds me into the unknown. The work that emerges from this phenomenon is luminous, like turning on a light. In this state, all that I have ever learned, tried or practised becomes one, so that the connections of previous years are revealed in the new work. Energy then is my mainstay, muse, tool, and lifeline. It builds up like an electrical storm, with the lightning moving faster than the human eye, but being glimpsed out of the peripheries. When the storm releases its energy, there is a window of opportunity. I can't waste it on the menial tasks; I use it for pure creativity. While the tap is turned on, the feelings abound and flow around and remain in the work. An artwork that is pure energy can be felt; it reaches out and encircles you. Energy is an inherent gift for all creative people. The secret is to find the key to the generator and understand and internalise the rhythms. This comes from revisiting what happened before and during the process and afterwards taking notes to help recreate the scene for next time.



How do I work in this flow? By learning to work one image from the last, keeping the focus and the form, until later works begin to fail. As I increased studio time, my ability to do this increased. When tiredness inevitably sets in, I regroup and rest. Now is the time to slow down the pace and, as a painter, I do the mundane jobs such as finishing edges, backs, varnishing, and making new canvases. It can be a time for preparing for the next body of work, for rest or to take time off from the studio catching up on other important issues. But not for too long as I need to go back in for more while there is still an edge to the last body of work.

Above Chains at the Railway Workshops Ipswich and eroded surface on a drum lid 2005
Right Sub Rosa 8 90 x 90 cm acrylic on canvas 2005 Private collection

Energy and Action



Setting up a place to create is important. I aim for peace and harmony in my workspace. I find music can trigger feelings by touching my inner core, the place where my values and beliefs are stored. So I am selective with music and have it available to play whenever the need arises, in a way that doesn't require constant attention. Preparing myself mentally and spiritually by learning to settle any aimlessness through reading and research are good ways to start the process until inspiration kicks in. Planning a working day depends on whether creating while fresh is important or if I feel I will work best if I have attended to other pressing business first.

When a new body of work is to begin, preparation of materials sets the scene. Experimentation during the conceptual stage allows ideas to be tested and considered. Often small works become sounding boards for expansion of a concept, but remain artworks in themselves. From a smaller work may emerge a vision that evolves into a whole series of larger, stronger works that never might have evolved within a contained plan. I take action and start on a series of works when I know what end result I am looking for. I consider process and don't procrastinate. The works show me where they want to go and I adjust and learn from each new work. Striving to make each work fresher than the last, I am not afraid to go back to a mediocre work to make it an outstanding work. Even if I lose the painting physically, I have gained it intellectually, and find it coming back at a later stage in a more satisfying way.