



# ORIENT-EXPRESS

Eastern & Oriental  
magazine

OUT ON  
THE TOWN IN  
KUALA LUMPUR



## Chiang Mai and the North

A NEW JOURNEY ABOARD THE  
EASTERN & ORIENTAL EXPRESS

**PLUS** Inside the new A380 plane • Artists of Australia





Elisabeth Cummings', *Night Studio* 2004, left, reflects her bold, expressionist style.

## A ROOM WITH A VIEW

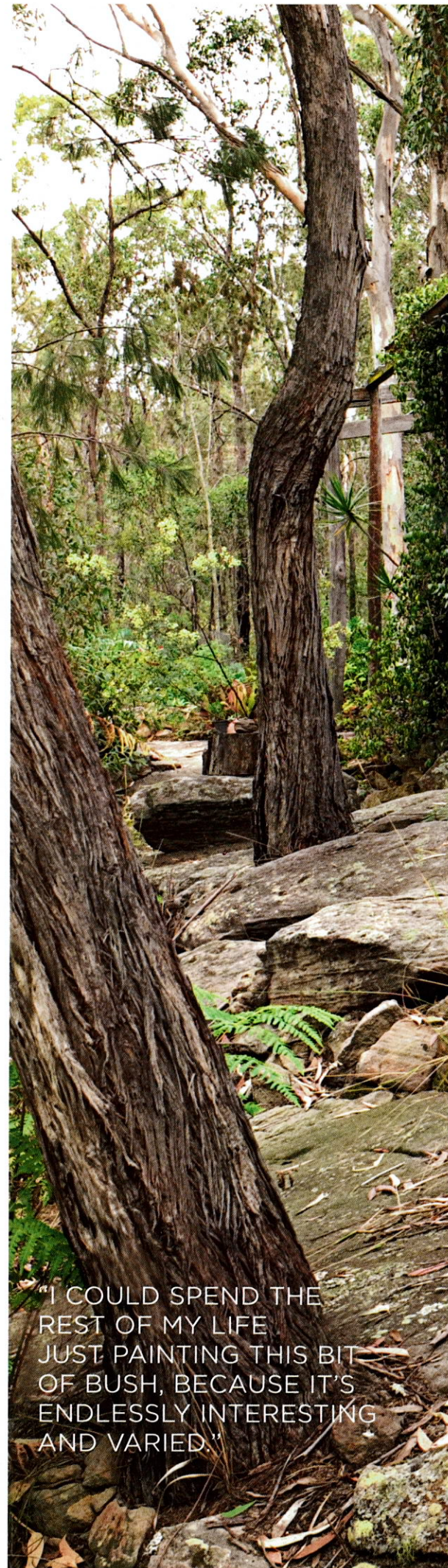
Success has come late for Elisabeth Cummings, an artist who has been exhibiting her work since the late 1950s. After being seemingly invisible for decades she is now in demand, with private collectors and public institutions queuing up to buy her paintings. A modest person, Cummings enjoys the fact that there are now many people who seem to appreciate her pictures, but it doesn't change anything. She is still "quietly plodding along".

Since 1990 Cummings has lived alone in a mud-brick house in bushland near Wedderburn, on the outskirts of Sydney. She is part of a makeshift artists' community where everyone has their own properties built to their specifications. Cummings has one of the smaller places, an attractive bungalow with undulating walls, exposed beams, and a verandah that looks on to a gully filled with ferns and gum trees. "I could spend the rest of my life just painting this bit of bush," she says, "because it's endlessly interesting and varied." She does, in fact, spend a lot of time drawing on the verandah. A few steps take her back into the studio area, a few more into the lounge and kitchen. When she has a big painting pinned up in the studio she can study it from many angles. Sometimes, out of the corner of her eye, she catches a glimpse of where the work has to go next.

Cummings has been referred to as an "abstract expressionist", because of the loose, gestural manner in which she paints. Yet she is just as happy to see herself as a painter of landscape and still life subjects. She always starts from observation, making numerous quick sketches in pencil or charcoal. These drawings might provide the basis for a large canvas, but she does not follow a rigid blueprint.

"I love putting the first marks on the big blank canvas. It's when I get to the middle stages of a painting that I fall into total confusion. When I'm beginning I may have an idea, a memory of something, but often I just start with random marks and colours; sometimes with the basic lines that describe the image I've got in my mind. Then it diffuses and becomes something else. It just goes its own way, and then eventually comes back to some part of what I was looking for... I like to let the paint, the random shapes and lines, take me somewhere. I don't want to follow one idea right through to the end."

Cummings describes herself as a great procrastinator in the mornings, but when the painting is underway she takes a keen pleasure in the work. By the time the daylight begins to fade, she feels she could go on and on.



"I COULD SPEND THE REST OF MY LIFE JUST PAINTING THIS BIT OF BUSH, BECAUSE IT'S ENDLESSLY INTERESTING AND VARIED."



