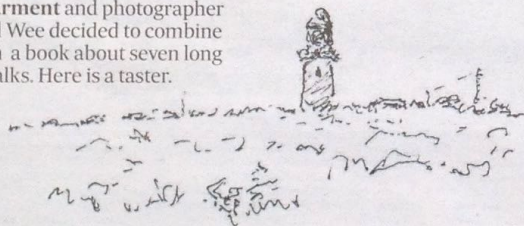




THE LONG WALK

Adventure In 2011, artist and writer Tom Carment and photographer Michael Wee decided to combine skills on a book about seven long bush walks. Here is a taster.



We approached this project as a pair of amateurs. As a *plein air* landscape painter, my main concern was usually

to find a good spot to sit and make a picture, rather than walking very far, or naming the plants and animals I saw.

The discipline of preparing for a three- or four-day walk, where you have to carry your own food and a tent, was new to me. An inn or guest house, lights twinkling, is an uncommon sight at the end of a day's tramp in Australia. You have to plan carefully, allow enough time to arrive at each destination before dark, carry enough clean water and tell people where you've gone. We had a lot to learn.

We didn't do all seven walks together, or at the same time of year. When I trekked the Overland Track in Tasmania in January, 2011, with my family, it was warm and wet during the day, and leeches were curling out of the mud. When Michael walked there in November of the same year, it snowed.

[The fourth walk took Carment and Wee to Western Australia, covering the 135 kilometres from Cape Leeuwin to Cape Naturaliste. The drawings and photographs here come from this excursion.]

Our last day was short, just 14 kilometres. We saw a flock of black cockatoos making a racket in some trees, like a rugby team on a celebratory bender. Then they flew off, with backs straight as spears. Further on, we passed through flowering melaleucas, halved with small bees. At times, the gap between the branches on either side of the track was narrower than my shoulders and I could feel the bees' wings touching my skin.

Michael went on ahead, walking quickly, wanting to finish and get out of the hot sun.

The heath on the last headlands had been given a haircut by the wind. A big swell rolled in below them. Once I saw a pod of dolphins, swimming languorously in a wave, moving south. I counted 23 of them.

Finches, not much bigger than cicadas, flitted in and out of the low bushes.

The track rose up and I had my first sight of our destination - Cape Naturaliste Lighthouse. It was smaller than Leeuwin, and I stood there and did a quick drawing.

Approaching its base, I met a group of tourists who were puzzling over some signage at a crossroads.

"Cape to Cape? What's that?" asked one of them. I couldn't help myself, saying, "I've just done it. Well, when I touch the lighthouse I will have."

"Really? How long did it take?"

"Six days."

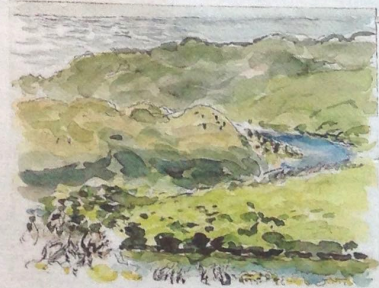
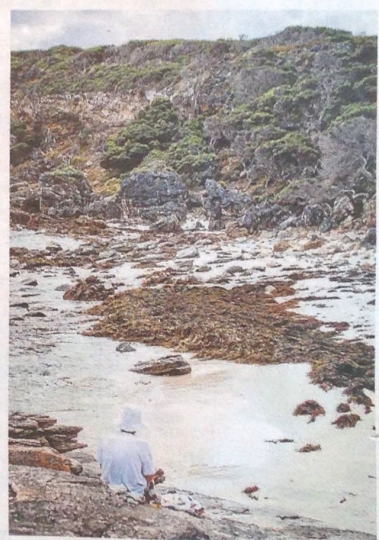
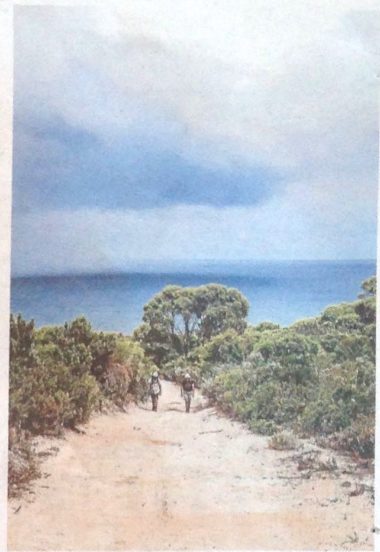
And they all clapped and I felt embarrassed. **✪**



Top: nine weeks after WA's November 2011 fires, there was little regrowth to be seen. Above: carrying one's own supplies is a learned discipline. PHOTOS: MICHAEL WEE

This is an edited extract from *Seven Walks* by Tom Carment. Photography by Michael Wee, published by Roc/Hin, \$69.95.

Tom Carment features in the Dobell Australian Drawing Biennial 2014, Art Gallery of NSW, to January 26, and Tom Carment - Paintings and Drawings, King Street Gallery on William, Darlinghurst, Sydney, to December 20.



On the 135-kilometre journey from Western Australia's Cape Leeuwin to Cape Naturaliste, Tom Carment was moved to paint coastal scenes, top left, at Margaret River, left, and, above, the Margaret River estuary, top right, the duo venture inland and, centre right, Carment paints at Bobs Hollow.