

Artist chases the light

Outdoor work on shortlist

By SAM RIGNEY

CARDIFF artist Rachel Milne enjoys the challenge of painting outdoors.

The ever-changing light and unpredictable weather forces quick work and quicker decision-making.

And it has helped produce some of her best work, including *View Through the Shed*, which has been shortlisted in the \$20,000 NSW Parliament Plein Air Painting Prize.

The term "en plein air" refers to the practice of painting outdoors, in direct engagement with nature, where the transitory effects of light can be observed and recorded.

"The light changes quickly and you have to chase it," Milne says.

"You have to work fast and make quick decisions. It really forces you to express how you feel quickly and succinctly. You don't get a chance to second guess and you can't fiddle.

"It can produce some really good results, and you never quite know what is going to happen."

Milne decided to paint the work at home when she was inspired by the view through her back shed.

"I love our shed; it's full of tools and other stuff," she said.

"Beautiful light comes through the shed and shines through the trees.

"The house is quite tidy, while the shed is quite chaotic.

"I like to try and shine the

light on the beauty of ordinary life, and that's what I was trying to do. To me there is an awful lot of beauty looking through the shed. It sums up suburban Australian life and I hope maybe it is a familiar image for some people."

Milne's work will be on display at Sydney's Parliament House alongside the 41 other finalists in this year's prize. The free exhibition runs from June 17 to July 31. The winner will be announced on June 24.



Rachel Milne's painting *View Through the Shed*, inset, has been shortlisted for a painting prize. Pictures: Peter Stoop