

DAVID LIDBETTER

ARTIST STATEMENT / BIO

Born in Hamilton in 1962, David Lidbetter developed an early appreciation for the Canadian wilderness. As a child, the times spent travelling with his family through scenic provinces became the catalyst for his future painting career. His early artistic education came from the High School of Commerce Visual Art Program, as well as courses and workshops through the Ottawa School of Art, the Nepean Visual Arts Centre and the Mississippi Mills School of Art. Lidbetter has been painting highly identifiable and unquestionably Canadian landscapes in oil since 2004.

He works close to his home and studio in Gatineau, Quebec in areas like Temagami, the Ottawa Valley and Algonquin Park. It is no coincidence that his work is reminiscent of the vistas explored by other landscape painters like Tom Thompson and The Group of Seven. David will spend hours and sometimes days in local forests and nearby lakes photographing, studying, sketching and absorbing the information he will later turn into paintings. He works primarily in oil on board and most recently has introduced casein and watercolours.

He says of his ever-evolving work: "The scenes that capture me are often the ones that would immediately be overlooked by others. Something usually catches my eye, such as a change of light or a strong contrast of colour and shapes. I look for inspiration in what may be considered bleak and desolate landscapes. A blanket of winter snow with a single bare tree silhouetted against a cold grey sky. A band of translucent, pale orange light breaking through a dark storm cloud over a frozen lake or a single autumn leaf left hanging after the first winter storm provides endless possibilities for dramatic paintings. By looking past what one might consider the more conventional beauty of nature, I attempt to illuminate the unexpected. I love the surprising natural sense of balance and design found in landscape. The line, the abstract space and fractured colour are what interest me most. After a few sketches and photographs, I will return to my studio where I continue to strip down and fine-tune the scene to its most minimalist composition. Woven into the design and abstraction is an even more important element. For me, my landscapes must have emotional content. Feelings of isolation, solitude and quiet pervade in my works. I am not interested in painting pretty pictures.

I also enjoy the process of working with materials that help to tell the story. I paint in oils, applied in thin glazes like watercolour and work towards thicker and more varied surfaces. I want the viewer to be excited by the textures, colours and contrasts in my paintings. Most of all I love the discovery. Every new painting I treat like a fresh new start, in the spirit of traditional Canadian landscape painters such as the Group of Seven. Additional influences include Franz Kline, Robert Motherwell, Paterson Ewen and Jean-Paul Riopelle. From these modern masters, I hope to learn from the past and strive to create a more contemporary idea of landscape painting."