

## Jim Potterton Paintings from the Edge of the Sea Artist's Statement

The edge of the sea is an emotionally charged territory. It provokes an immediate response that often catches me off guard. Frequently, I'm surprised. "What's the ocean up to today?" is my question when I first arrive at the shoreline. There is very little else in my day that get me to say "Wow" like the first sight, smell, and sound of the sea.

So then what's it like to push paint around on a canvas inspired by this powerful emotional reaction? At first blush an empty canvas (no matter how large or small) seems as vast as the sea, full of exciting possibilities, yet scary. How soon will I find myself out of my depth, flailing about in a small panic? Frequently I start by just dog paddling around aimlessly with some big brush strokes until something starts to emerge from the semi fluid mess. Color choices at this point are simple. I'm usually just making contrasting marks with opposing shades. Often it's the thick and thin layers of paint that rule.

It's about that time I begin to come to my senses. Early on things get tactile as my fingers begin to notice smooth, rough, bumpy, coarse, grainy and mushy. I'll play awhile with my hands, palette knife and the edge of the brush handle. It's from this stew that the major shapes begin to emerge and I start to feel the basic tensions that will provisionally organize what I want to say.

At this point the pacing starts; up close and then, steps away. All the time I'm seeing what is there and eliminating competing marks. I'm trying to keep out of the way of the strong, organically suggestive parts of the painting that usually show by happy accident. I'm finding subtle ways to bring just enough praise to these sweet regions of the image. My aim at the end is to do as little as possible so the painting speaks loud and clear about something both you and I know is true about how things sometimes are.

The vast majority of these paintings were completed during the past year. They were inspired by a morning I spent painting in the mist at the edge of a cliff. Most were painted entirely in my studio in Santa Cruz.