

FROM THE AIR

'Skyscapes above the clouds' by artist Leigh Glover

Through the ages humans have had a fascination with flight. The magic and wonder of birds circling above us has intrigued us and we ask ourselves what it must feel like to fly. The idea of flight has developed from the ages of myth to the present day. And within the last century we have seen the astonishing development of commercial aircraft which has brought air travel to us all.

In the days when commercial planes all flew at a much lower altitude, an eight-year-old boy entered an essay competition on the theme "Why I like to travel." He wrote "I like to fly to see the way the clouds are made". He won that competition and an airline picked up the line for its publicity: "Fly to see the way the clouds are made."

I share that boy's sense of wonder. And when I fly I love to watch the clouds. I cannot be the only one to identify with the desire of Greek mythology's Icarus who wanted to fly higher and higher. When I fly I am often mesmerised by the view from the cabin window. It is fascinating to see landscapes of suspended water droplets, to see a depth and weight of clouds that you can fly through, to look across skies to distances which not long ago we could not have even imagined. It is a surreal experience where our day to day reference systems can not measure what we see. I never cease to be amazed by the perspective, the shapes, the colours and the brightness above the clouds.

My theme *From the Air* has stemmed from an interest in the way clouds have been portrayed by artists in the past. I think of the marine works of ships in storms of the Flemish and Dutch painters, of Turner's atmospheric oil paintings and of Constable's painting studies of clouds. But these artists were never able to see above the clouds.

My paintings use a combination of acrylic and oil on canvas. They were inspired by personal observations while flying. In cloud formations I found a defined mass and shape and yet moments later as the edges faded the shape had transformed or disappeared altogether. The paintings aim to convey the clouds continuous development and amoeba-like movement. In some works you will note an intense brightness of clouds that are exposed to the sun as well as reflecting the light from the clouds beneath them. In these paintings simplicity and lightness of atmosphere were achieved by "holding back" the paint. Other pictures focus on the power of growing storm clouds and these require strong brush strokes and heavier paint work.