



Artist Andrew McIlroy, exhibiting at Armadale.

Plunging in tumult

Exhibition | Gene Swinstead

AN Armadale exhibition has an artist going with his memory's flow this week.

Andrew McIlroy's *Against the Tide* opens at Axia Modern Art today.

As a boy McIlroy dreamed of the sea, diving off the Portsea pier, tumbling and twisting in the water. He latterly read Tim Winton's *Breath*, in which two boys dream of conquering the west's huge surf.

"I try to recall how I felt underwater and incorporate it on

Winton's books spur late-starter's ride

canvas," the Richmond artist said.

"Most often I ended up with water up my nose and thinking of sharks and stingers, of even drowning. I try to capture on canvas the movement, the tumult and desperation before reaching the surface.

"My paintings are not representations of actual places, rather experiences."

McIlroy, 43, said Winton's books inspired many of his paintings, notably *Against the Tide* and

Azure Descent. They are two of 15 in McIlroy's latest exhibition.

The Melbourne University graduate gave away a corporate life in 2001 to be an artist, albeit with trepidation.

"I felt I was 20 years behind, but it has been an extraordinary ride," he said. "Artists must be inquisitive. They must be commercially and creatively successful. The trick, though, is not to compromise one's art".

McIlroy draws on the techniques

and traditions of European masters such as Delacroix, Rubens, Rembrandt, Poussin and Turner. He recently toured Europe to learn more.

"My art takes many hours," he said. "It is very physical. I paint big. I have to paint and let it dry, paint and let it dry, and build the layers. Often my legs and arms give up before my mind does.

"I have to put everything into it ... that same energy of fighting against the tide, perhaps."

► ***Against the Tide* is at 1010 High St until February 28. Inquiries: 9500 1144.**