

EMBERS, EPICORM: **ART of the EUROBODALLA**

6 to 24 July, 2022
Incinerator Art Space

Participating Artists:

Walhunja/Ngarigo Cheryl Davison-Overton
Mirabel FitzGerald
Jennifer Hawkins
Julie Mia Holmes
Raewyn Lawrence
Amy Schleif
Jo Victoria



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ART SPACE

Willoughby City Council is gratefully acknowledged for the provision of Incinerator Art Space

2 Small Street Willoughby NSW 2068
Wednesday to Sunday 10am-4pm
www.willoughby.nsw.gov.au/arts
Incinerator Art Space is a Willoughby City Council facility



Supported by South East Arts

Contributors to *Embers, Epicorm: Art of the Eurobodalla* acknowledge the Traditional Owners, the Walbunja and Yuin, and their Country on which the Eurobodalla is located, as well as the Cammeraygal and their Country, on which the Incinerator Art Space is located. We pay our respects to the Elders in the past, in the present and those that are emerging, with particular respects paid to Walbunja/Ngarigo Cheryl Davison-Overton and her Community for her participation and important contributions to the exhibition.

Walbunja/Ngarigo

Cheryl Davison-Overton - Central Tilba



Cheryl Davison-Overton is a leading trained artist from the Far South Coast of New South Wales. Her mother's family are Walbunja people from Eurobodalla and the Ngarigo people in the Snowy Mountains region. Her family is deeply connected to the Wallaga Lake Aboriginal community.

Davison-Overton has inherited deep cultural knowledge from her family and is a recognised artist and cultural teacher in the Far South Coast region, exhibiting nationally and internationally. Davison-Overton has studied at the School of Applied Design in Canberra, Fine Arts at COFA, UNSW and most recently, Creative Arts at Deakin University.

Davison-Overton owns and operates Mungala Bugaali in Central Tilba, where she retails her paintings, prints, handprinted homeware designs and locally made Community crafts. Davison-Overton is a revered cultural leader, painter, designer and Aboriginal Creative Producer of the Four Winds Festival. Davison-Overton leads the Djinama Yilaga Choir, an intergenerational Yuin Choir which performs song in Dhurga language. Her work is held in major art collections such as the National Gallery of Australia, NSW Art Gallery, the National Museum of Australia, and many private collections both national and internationally.

'Gulaga', an ancestral Mother, is one of the most important creation stories that Davison-Overton tells through her practice. Together with her Community, she passionately communicates stories of Gulaga and her power which protected them from the western approach of the fire front, and encourages the implementation of traditional fire management practices to help prevent similar fire events from repeating.

Davison-Overton has especially created 'Unsanctified' for the exhibition, graciously sharing her important cultural knowledge and personal response to the fires.

"We know the fire; we know the Black Cockatoo was created from the fire. We know this from our language, our stories, our song.

The forest is the guardian of our sacred sites. The clearing of forest has removed these guardians, exposing our sacred sites, exposing our hidden stories. No longer sacred. Unsanctified."

Walbunja/Ngarigo Cheryl Davison-Overton, June 2022

#cheryldavison

@mungala_bugaali_gallery @djinamayilaga

Mirabel FitzGerald - Guerilla Bay

Mirabel FitzGerald is an artist printmaker who studied painting and printmaking at the Byam Shaw School of Art, London and graduated in 1965 with a NDD (National Diploma of Art & Design). In 1998 she was awarded an MFA from The College of Fine Arts, UNSW.

FitzGerald spent many years teaching art in Sydney at The Willoughby Workshop Arts Centre, The National Art School as well as casual children's and adult art classes. In 1979 FitzGerald was appointed to The Sydney College of the Arts, The University of Sydney, teaching in Foundation courses and Printmaking. She coordinated the Printmedia Studio for many years, until her retirement in 2006 as an Honorary Associate Professor.



FitzGerald has maintained an active studio practice over a long professional life and held numerous solo and group exhibitions in Australia, England, Europe, Thailand and China. Since 2009 FitzGerald has lived and worked on the South Coast of NSW, continuing her art practice and exhibiting locally, in Canberra and in Sydney. She held a two-person exhibition with Mark Ward at The Basil Sellers Exhibition Centre, Moruya, in 2019. FitzGerald's work is held in the NGA, AGNSW, Eurobodalla Shire Council, private and University collections.

FitzGerald enjoys observing her surroundings via a printmaker's lens, with her varied techniques capturing delightful levels of detail - reflecting an intimacy with nature's phases of healing which the bushfires forced locals to examine - searching for new life, whilst clinging to miniscule signs of what once was.

"For some months after the devastating fires that burnt so close to home, I was unable to deal with the momentum of the event, let alone synthesise the experience into artmaking. The early works described the residue of ash and blackened leaves, which for months washed up with every tide and filled every rock-pool. The linear pattern across the beaches evoked Chinese ink paintings of mountain ranges. These drawings, collages and etchings such as 'Aftermath-Guerilla Bay' and 'Embers' were responding to the desolation of the fires and the after effect on our environment. It took a while before I could appreciate the intense green of the epicormic growth on the blackened trees as signs of wondrous new life and recovery.

The scarring of the natural landscape, the massive loss of native wildlife runs very deep, but the bush has an extraordinary resilience which is buoying up the community that lives here."

Mirabel FitzGerald, June 2022

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Jennifer Hawkins - Dalmeny



Jennifer Hawkins is a writer, poet and visual artist whose artworks come from her passion for making: design, problem-solving, playing with materials and processes, and finding extra levels of meaning.

Hawkins was educated at the Canberra School of Art in Visual Art and Graphic Investigation (1981), after having completed a Bachelor of Arts in Modern Languages (Chinese) at Canberra University (1978).

Hawkins has exhibited extensively in southeast New South Wales, Canberra and Victoria and her artwork is held in several collections including the National Gallery of Victoria, Australian National Library, Sackner Archive of Concrete Poetry Iowa University and Basil Sellers Art Collection. A number of her publications of poems are also held in the Australian National Library collection.

Hawkins lives in a hamlet on the southern reaches of the Eurobodalla and is inspired by the natural beauty that surrounds her. With a passion for the environment, Hawkins' practice speaks up about species extinction, with the urgency that we act now. Emphasising that human population growth is the major cause of habitat destruction, Hawkins' captures such environmental fragility with the ethereal and synthetic articulation of *Once Were Trees*.

Hawkins honours the resilience of her local community, rendered in *Fire Tiles*, a wall installation of 120 unique representations, stressing that every person's experience of the fire event is different.

"The bushfires were an intense event shared by the whole Eurobodalla community. Yet, each person's takeaway from that time is individual: breathing smoke; evacuation centres; charred trees; injured animals; the first glimpse of blue sky."

Playing with Fire, an interactive association game, playfully brings together some 52 words used commonly by the community throughout the event, asking players to associate them with equally common and unsettling visuals.

"The fire memories are still very present here; many homes, studios, and business premises have still not been re-built. There are people who visibly wilt if the fires are mentioned in passing. At the time the community took on a sub-vocabulary and I have collected nearly 100 of those words, but I did not proceed with fire-work at that time. It was all too raw."

Jennifer Hawkins, June 2022

@jenhawkart

Julie Mia Holmes - Moruya



Julie Mia Holmes is a printmaker, seller and reader of books, lover of birds and avid gardener inhabiting a little patch of forest in Moruya Heads on the South Coast of NSW.

Holmes' work is grounded in the natural world with a focus on the little things people tend to ignore; molluscs, insects, understory. She explores this through varying forms of printmaking, predominately etching and linocut, drawing, embroidery, and sculpture using recycled materials.

Holmes studied Printmaking and Drawing with Honours at the ANU's School of Art in Canberra and has exhibited in solo and group shows in Sydney, Melbourne, Fremantle, Adelaide and Queenscliff. She has been a finalist in the Fremantle Arts Centre Print Award, the Waterhouse Natural History Art Prize, Peebles Print Prize and the Basil Sellers Art Prize.

Holmes' drawing and printmaking practice is always interconnected, as she experiments with considered, yet sometimes happenstance, drawing, carving, mapping of marks and memories.

Six months after the Black Summer Fires, Holmes felt an urgency to capture and express her detailed observations of regeneration, after a period of feeling too traumatised to enter her studio and being surrounded by the blackened landscape. Holmes was drawn to painstakingly capturing her observations, utilising the therapeutic benefits of the slow and considered process of linocutting. Diverging from traditional printmaking, yet harnessing familiar materials used by the artist, Holmes also created a series of delightfully light and ethereal, one-off plywood works, charred with a soldering iron, and finished with gouache and chinagraph – choosing plywood as a representation of the loss of forest and commodification within the building industry, whilst the soldering iron inflicted scars of collective trauma – human, flora and fauna. The artist also merges her printmaking and drawing practice with gestural drawings made with sticks and ink directly onto a lino block. These marks were slowly carved and contemplated over the course of a few months, then mapped once more through frottage with coloured pencil on Japanese papers.

"What do you do when your world is on fire?

You crave green like there is no tomorrow.

You look for signs of resilience and energy in new growth and green shoots.

You observe the tiny wonders around you - birds, insects, molluscs and flowers, the beauty inherent within fragility.

And you bear witness to change, to give the overlooked a voice.

A memorial for all things lost."

Julie Mia Holmes, June 2022

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Raewyn Lawrence – Moruya

Raewyn Lawrence completed a Diploma in Fine Arts in Painting at the National Art School, and has exhibited in several solo and group exhibitions in the southeast of NSW, as well as in Sydney, Adelaide and the USA. Lawrence has enjoyed winning several local art prizes, most recently the Eurobodalla Art Prize in 2020.

The Eurobodalla Shire Council recently hosted a solo exhibition by Lawrence, titled *Recovery* at the Basil Sellers Exhibition Centre (The Bas), in Moruya, which explored the destruction and renewal of the surrounding bushland in the region after the bushfires.



Lawrence's work is expressive in its articulation, as well as containing elements of fantasy and otherworldly realities of our consciousness. Her most recent work is inspired by the beauty of the Eurobodalla region including landscapes of forest, mountains and the sea, representing the hope of the region in recovery. She is passionate about colour and enjoys the development process of drawing and colour planning in the comfort of her artist studio.

For *Embers, Epicorm*, Lawrence has continued to focus on and marvel at the gradual regeneration of the bush close to her Moruya home, whilst still mourning the loss of previously dense native forests. The Far South Coast of New South Wales is renowned for its unique landscape of spotted gums soaring from a thick understory of lush burrawangs. Lawrence captures the revival of this precious landscape in her luminous green series, signifying hope observed in some areas, capturing the surprising lushness of the return of new growth, peppered with blackened reminders of the fire event. In contrast, her ashened works lure us into the eery detail of what once was – a beautiful and captivating allusion to the delicateness and diverse plant species that once dominated the coastal bushland fringes, which may struggle to return.

"I'll not forget the smoke and constant noise of sirens, of water-bombing planes and helicopters. Also, the eeriness of black eucalyptus leaves raining down from a brown apocalyptic sky as the fire approached town. Then the wind changed.... We were lucky."

"The landscape has changed so much since the fires. From the bare black trunks, ash covered ground, and then..... the vibrant red epicormic shoots and luminous greens of the under-story - it has been a privilege to witness how the forest can return. In my work I have tried to recreate the intensity of colour and the finest details of regeneration, right down to the release of tiny seeds. I want to express what has been lost, but also what has returned."

Raewyn Lawrence, 2022

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[@raewynlawrence_painting](https://www.instagram.com/raewynlawrence_painting)

Amy Schleif – Moruya Heads



Schleif was born in the USA and studied a Bachelor of Fine Art at Wisconsin-Milwaukee (1999), before relocating to Australia and undertaking a Master of Art Visual Art at the Australia National University School of Art (2009), where she discovered her love of working with glass.

For over fifteen years, Schleif has been closely associated with Canberra Glassworks, whilst living on the Far South Coast. She has exhibited extensively in the USA, New South Wales and Belgium and is an active member of Ausglass. Schleif's practice is experimental as she works simultaneously in glass, oil paints, wood and found objects.

"The impact of the Black Summer fires had a significant impact on my art practice and perspective. Initially I found that all the complex emotions that I was feeling and lingering were emerging as an undercurrent in my work from immediately following the fires, and that is continuing today. The idea of continuously living in recovery now underpins a part of the perspective I take when making work. I feel as though I am recovering from that event at the same rate the bush is recovering from that event."

Amy Schleif, June 2022

For the exhibition, Schleif has created three unique windowed glass works, traversing the artist's experience during and after the bushfires, providing viewers with an insight into her personal responses to the event. From the threat, then arrival of the embers, to the transcendence into a state of detachment from reality, and finally to an acceptance and ability to reflect and see into a hopeful future, Schleif's body of work provides an outlook into layered experiences.

Schleif's practice begins with using reclaimed bed linen as a substrate for the emotive oil painting that is layered behind a reclaimed timber frame window. Once the painting is complete, Schleif then begins the arduous hand engraving of both sides of the glass in the window (the two large works in the exhibition took 3 weeks each to engrave).

Read Amy's Story
Shelter in Place

@amy.schleif



Jo Victoria - Mossy Point

Jo Victoria focuses on revealing hidden stories in landscapes in her creative practice. Informed by her numerous academic pursuits including a Bachelor of Art in Anthropology and Fine Art from ANU (1985), Masters in Ethno Architecture from the University of Queensland, and more recently a Masters in Visual Art in Ceramics from ANU School of Art (2016), Victoria uniquely interprets the natural and human worlds.

Victoria has exhibited extensively and received numerous awards throughout the southeast of New South Wales, as well as in Darwin and Denmark where she recently undertook a residency.



Victoria's home and studio survived the fire front but many artists on the South Coast weren't so lucky. Victoria continues to make work in her Mossy Point studio and has exhibited extensively locally and nationally, with a number of international exhibitions and residencies completed in recent years.

In *'hope in the bones'* Victoria has created a powerful and haunting tribute to all the living things that died in the Black Summer Bushfires of 2019/20 which devastated the South Coast environment where she lives. Charred porcelain bones hang like burnt carcasses, but, within their form, tiny vulnerable representations of hope can be revealed. Burnt eucalyptus leaves that actually dropped in showers of burnt embers around her home on New Year's Eve were collected in the hours before the fires came through. These are grim reminders of the power of natural forces in our climate change reality.

Similarly, Victoria's delicate cocoon vessels, formed precariously through a process of dipping organic material in porcelain and burning it out during the firing process, replicate natural forms which are simultaneously fragile yet resilient. They are symbols of survival, organic entities struggling in climate changed environments.

"When I was considering making work for this show I was asked to explore something positive that has emerged from the NSW fires, and at the time I really struggled with this. I didn't feel anything positive, only despair for the environment and our future. It wasn't until the devastating floods in northern NSW this year that I understood that it is human nature and the way communities come together at moments like these that reveals the little, small glimmers of hope."

Jo Victoria, June 2022

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