

Katherine Boland

WHILE THE WORLD BURNS #2

Launched in 1947, the symbolic Doomsday Clock was created by scientists as an indicator of the world's susceptibility to apocalypse. The closer the time is set to midnight, the closer the world is considered to be to catastrophe. Seventy years ago, the clock was set at seven minutes to midnight. Today, it is set at 100 seconds to midnight.

In this work, Katherine has used composited images of stained and inscribed timber panels, burnt with a blow torch in her studio, to create an abstracted Doomsday Clock. This charred and blistered disk, a scorched Earth suspended in dark space, speaks to her fear that we are running out of time to stop the catastrophic impact of human-induced climate change. It is a call to action to save our precious planet before it is too late.

THE FIREFIGHTER, KIAH, NSW

This work was made using well-worn firefighter's apparel and images of burnt bushland Katherine captured after the fires. The use of a frontline garment worn to fight fires is both eerie and evocative. Following **FIRE**, this work will enter the Bega Valley Regional Gallery's permanent collection.

CRIME SCENE

"Fuelled by my own terrafurie at "those who command the forces of Earth destruction", I created Crime Scene—a three metre facsimile of the blue and white chequered tape police use to designate a location associated with a committed crime. In this case, human beings have committed an environmental crime against Earth. The 'tape', composed of charred and distressed squares of timber, perhaps remnants of an incinerated forest or a burnt-out building, cordons off the corner of a room. As we step into the space to inspect the work, we become part of the crime scene. To some degree we are all, with our unlimited and incessant wants and desires, environmental criminals exacting a devastating toll on Earth's finite natural resources."

"I DON'T HOLD A HOSE, MATE"

"This work embodies Prime Minister, Scott Morrison's infamous justification for his Hawaiian holiday during Australia's catastrophic 2019/20 bushfire emergency when 33 people lost their lives and hundreds of homes were burnt to the ground. A vintage firefighting hose with a drooping bass nozzle hangs below a fake brass plaque, speaking to the PM's phony, salesman-like persona and his limp response to the climate crisis."

John Gollings

AFTERMATH

AFTERMATH is a huge print of an aerial photograph over the Kinglake area following Victoria's 2009 bushfires.

Shown in a solo exhibition at the McClelland Gallery in 2012, in bringing out AFTERMATH for **FIRE**, John says: "There is a fundamental change in the landscape after fire has razed the vegetation and revealed the underlying topography and the hidden marks of man."

During the Black Saturday bushfires on 7th February 2009 as many as 400 individual fires burnt across Victoria. Killing 173 people and injuring 414 others, this mass fire event resulted in Australia's highest ever loss of life from a bushfire.

During the week leading up to Black Saturday, rolling heatwave emergencies were caused by power blackouts and 'brownouts' cutting off air-conditioners, resulting in severe heat stress and the reported deaths of 374 vulnerable people. The state morgue was receiving around 50 bodies a day, more than a tripling of the usual number. As a result—in what is believed to be the first time in Victoria's history—a plan involving hospitals and funeral directors storing bodies had to be activated. The state's emergency services were stretched to breaking point.

The fires were mainly centred around Kinglake, Marysville, Narbethong, Strathewen and Flowerdale regions which were all but completely destroyed. Stripped of vegetation there is a curious play of black and colour, of patterns and textures, that is only revealed in the destruction of the bush. John flew over and captured this horrifying destruction.

Jody Graham

Jody Graham's practice encompasses drawing, mixed media, sculpture, performance, and installation. Her work celebrates the broken, the displaced, and the forgotten, and speaks to her long-nurtured compulsion to restore and rescue within an anti-consumerist, re-use and re-cycle ethos that informs and motivates her practice.

Jody says: "Several weeks after the 2019/2020 Black Summer megafires swept across large parts of Australia I visited the Blue Mountains, spending time immersed in the burnt landscape that stretched as far as you could see. Witnessing this extensive damage in ominous silence raised deep questions about climate change and how we can better care for the environment and wildlife. Artworks I created are made from materials found in the aftermath of those Black Summer bushfires."

TRASHED 2020/2021 DIMENSIONS VARIABLE

TRASHED is created from cans and plastic and glass bottles thrown out on the side of The Bells Line of Road along the 30-kilometre stretch from Mount Tomah to Browns Swamp at Lithgow, NSW.

The extent of what is chucked out by people, often while on scenic drives, became evident after the 2019 December bushfires burnt away trees, shrubs, and undergrowth previously concealing litter along the highway. The Pink cans in the work represent the tonnes of pink fire retardant dumped onto the bush from aerial support during bushfires.

GRASS FIRE

"While researching the Black Summer fires I was moved by stories from people who were affected. During this time, I connected with Den Barber who runs Yarrabin Cultural Connections (YCC). Den is an Aboriginal man, descendant of the Traditional Custodians from Mudgee of the Wiradjuri people in the Central Tablelands of NSW.

What I discovered from Den helped me understand more about cultural burning and how it is all about caring for the environment. I like the measured risk in cultural burning and the careful supervising of flames burning low, so they do not get out of control and burn the canopies of trees.

When I made GRASS FIRE, I invited nature to participate in the process by submerging the drawing in a dam, drawing with rocks underwater, and recycling burnt branches into mark-making instruments. I hit and swung large charcoal sticks at the paper, trying to land the mark in the right spot. Often, I got it right; but there was a managed risk, just as with cultural burning. My intention throughout the mark-making process was to create a drawing that echoes the meditative dance of flames during a cultural burn."

LOSE GRIP – CROW CLAW

"While collecting burnt cans for Trashed I discovered many dead birds, killed in the Black Summer bushfires. The crow whose claw forms part of this work I found lying dead on the side of The Bells Line of Road, Lithgow, NSW, having suffocated in bushfire smoke. To document their plight, I made this implement to memorise the catastrophic effect climate change and resulting wildfires have on wildlife. My art is a testimony to their endurance but also a declaration that we must protect and preserve their diminishing environments.

WALKING STICK CHARCOAL DRAWING TOOL

Charcoal from 2019/2020 Black Summer fires repurposed into a drawing instrument, attached to a broken walking stick also recovered from the fires.

Fiona Lee

Fiona Lee's work has just been in Maitland Regional Art Gallery, Newcastle Art Gallery in *THE ART OF PROTEST* exhibition, and soon to appear at the Manning Regional Art Gallery.

In Fiona's words: "Art helps you process life. When an artist loses everything in a bushfire, how do they come out the other side?"

UNPRECEDENTED FIRES AND A GARDEN HOSE (2021)

"Made of melted scraps of tap and garden hose, this work is imbued with promises of survival, tortured by the heat of bushfire that took my home in 2019. The impotent remnants are resurrected though, to form the word UNPREPARABLE - the new reality of climate driven fires.

"The ferocity of bushfires is soon to be so severe in Australia due to climate change that they will be near impossible to extinguish" says former NSW Fire Chief Greg Mullins. This futility is depicted in my work.

We need to tackle fires at their source; climate change. We simultaneously need to preserve and support our natural carbon sinks that were decimated in these fires by eliminating native forest logging. Our forests are worth much more standing."

CARBON TAX (2021)

"Ordinary families like mine are being taxed for and by a system that is eating up and burning down the world around us. Bushfire survivors like us are paying the cost of the mining and burning of fossil fuels. We need to make the polluters pay for the damage they are causing and urgently develop an ambitious plan to replace our aging and unreliable coal-burning power stations with clean energy sources like wind and solar, backed up by batteries."

Louise Morgan

FUTURE FOSSILS (*Phascolarctos cinereus*) scares us into realising what we are losing

In Louise's words: "Our fauna and flora experience and symbolise the worst consequences of our impact and for many, extinction (localised or total) is an impending reality.

This work imagines a future fossil of one of Australia's most iconic and treasured species - *Phascolarctos cinereus* (the koala). Like much of our native fauna and flora it has for a long time suffered compounding threats due to placing human and corporate will, profit and interests over adequate and robust protections for habitat.

It is a reflection on the collective grief that has been building over the years due to our negligence towards the environment, climate and ourselves amidst the trauma of consequent catastrophes.

We continuously fail to protect even one of our most recognisable and loved native species. How do we resolve ourselves while we continue on the same path of settling for status quo and ineffective policy and actions from our leaders across governments and private businesses?

The decisions and actions that we demand of our leaders now decide whether or not this period of time is tarred with a dark mark.

Benedict Sibley

I GUESS I'LL HAVE TO CHANGE MY PLAN (No. 2) 2020

In Benedict's words: "I am interested in the hyperimage; a symbolic image or collection of images sifted from the everyday; images that resonate or coalesce around a subject.

Baudrillard likened reality to "just like the movies", but the hyperimage, unlike cinema, demonstrates that this type of documentary image, or image cluster is all the more terrifying when it depicts what is actual.

Ours is a Dreamworld and Catastrophe.

I witness the disaster and I'm thinking of Dresden."