



# RENEWAL

A commemorative exhibition for the  
10 Year Anniversary of the 2009 Victorian Bushfires

**25 January – 25 February 2019**  
Eltham Library Community Gallery and  
Wadambuk St Andrews Community Centre



# MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR

COUNCILLOR KAREN EGAN  
Nillumbik Shire Council Mayor



## Welcome to *Renewal* – A Black Saturday Memorial Exhibition.

A decade has passed since the Black Saturday fires tore through Victoria – including Nillumbik – the darkest day the State has ever experienced.

But hope is a flame that burns eternally. And like a phoenix rising from the ashes, renewal fuelled by hope and courage, has emerged in the community.

Last year Council put a call out to artists to respond to the theme of *Renewal* in an exhibition across two galleries: the Eltham Library Community Gallery and at Wadambuk St Andrews Community Centre.

The art includes a range of media – painting, ceramic, sculpture, etching, jewellery, print, wool, film and photography. As promised, we have exhibited all of them.

Art speaks from the heart, often saying what words cannot. The artworks in this exhibition depict just that: healing and renewal.

A dragonfly was the first sign of life artists Dawn and Gary McDonnell saw on their property when they returned after the fires. The metal dragonflies they created out of old burned fencing and barbed wire have become symbols of hope and renewal to them.

Some visitors to the galleries will smile, others will be reduced to tears.

But what I believe all will take away with them is the message of courage, healing and hope.

Mayor, Cr Karen Egan

COVER IMAGE

CATE LAIDLER

*Eternity in an Hour* (detail) 2018  
Watercolour and mixed media on Fabriano  
36cm x 46cm



## MARIA BARBARO

*Cockatoos Across the Valley* 2018

Acrylic  
52cm x 52cm

The renewed landscape encourage precious wildlife back to our valley. The once scorched hills are now dressed in green and breathe again. The ghostly tree trucks along the hill tops, still bare are a sad reminder. It is this contrast between old and new that inspired my painting, celebrating the renewal by Mother Nature.



## CATHERINE BLAKEY

*Forest Regeneration* 2010

Latex casts, acrylic paint, ink  
50cm x 48cm

I made latex casts of fallen burnt trees in The Kinglake National Park. As the regeneration began I consistently used these in painting the recovering forest environment as a way to help my own recovery following the fires. This began a replacement of my own art practice and through working with other community residents, the regeneration was an encouraging motivation for all. It is wonderful how the Australian forest renews itself.



## JANET R BODDY

*Renewal – New Growth under Darkened Sky* 2018  
Acrylic on canvas – diptych  
76cm x 152cm – 2 panels

While a faint smoke haze still appears to hover in the landscape, trees are showing green – evidence of new growth emerging out of a blackened sky. In the bulk of the painting (through an entanglement of branches) are signs of hope – depicted in the colours used – touches of green, yellow ochre and blue. The blue hints that skies will clear.

### *strength and renewal*

*I'm as strong as a tree  
bending with the wind  
though coming back  
to stand straight and tall*

*when leaves flutter & fall  
renewal always comes  
with the seasons and growth  
until reaching full height*

*I'll stand as long as the tree  
through fire storm and flood  
my roots firm in the ground  
earth will nourish me*

*a broken branch cannot be mended  
but new shoots come  
bringing the tree again into balance  
so I begin again like the tree*

© janet r. boddy



## DEBORAH BOWEN

*Regrowth* (detail) 2018  
Kiln formed glass  
32.7cm x 24cm x 4cm

Renewal starts with regrowth, whether it be the regrowth of confidence after adversity or the regrowth of plantlife after destruction. Nurturing and healing need time for regrowth to occur. I started my glass journey after a period of intense ill-health and I relish the enjoyment I get from creating glass pieces.



## SALLY BOWEN

*Beyond* 2018  
Oil on canvas  
106.5cm x 106.5cm

*BEYOND*  
*I breakdown, reflect, rejuvenate*  
*I contemplate, create and celebrate*  
*I go beyond*  
*I am renewed*

*Beyond* is an elemental painting of what is seen at the surface of reflections and within. Ripples expand the soul to the boundless opportunities to enable a renewed state.



## GLYNIS BROWN

*Courage* 2018  
Watercolour  
56cm x 56cm x 3.5cm

In the face of adversity, humanity often draws wisdom from nature. As a tender shoot emerges from the parched earth, so does hope from a broken heart: a symbol of courage, resilience and faith in the continuity of life.



## BUTTERFLY STUDIO ARTISTS

*Blessing Pods* 2014  
Handmade paper, wood, soil, wire, beads, feathers, stone, and other natural materials  
Various x 6

This artwork was originally created in 2014 to commemorate the fifth anniversary of Black Saturday. The pods exhibited here today are handcrafted from natural materials by artists that have a deep connection to these places (Christmas Hills, Kinglake, St Andrews, Strathewen and Steels Creek/Yarra Glen). Soil from each community has been placed in its respective pod, mixed with mulch and infused with ancient sunflower seeds. A sixth pod represents the wider community of Nillumbik, and acknowledges that all have felt the far-reaching effects of Black Saturday.

*We invite you to write a simple word of reflection, inspiration or gratitude and place it in the pod with others collected in 2014.*



## DIANNE COLLINS

*Regrowth* 2018  
Ceramics  
21cm x 2.3cm

*Regrowth* speaks to the uniquely Australian resilience of re-emergence and growth from devastating setbacks. Like our iconic eucalypts which have developed extraordinary survival mechanism and structures to ensure regrowth after severe bush fires. So too has our community developed the critical structures and provided the essential support for *Renewal*.



## PATRICIA CRISFIELD

*Life goes on* (detail) 2017  
Watercolour  
52cm x 43cm framed

It is reassuring to remember through the toughest times, that life does go on and growth and renewal will happen.



## MICHELE DODD

*Resilience* 2018  
Watercolour and pencil

After the loss of my home and 127 year old National Trust listed church in the Black Saturday fires, I struggled for a long time to paint/write again. In 2017 I finished a novel, wrote a new picture book and started to believe in myself as an artist again. This illustration symbolises renewal. All is not always lost.



## TESS EDWARDS

*Amen* 2000  
Digital print  
40cm x 40cm x 4cm

Painted over pages from a French prayerbook, this work is part of a large series called *Metaphysical Fishing*.

This was done at a point of personal challenge. The *Amen* is the end of an era of my life, with hope for the future to come. The burnt bush and falling leaves (tears of grief) are present, but that 'Amen' brings with it, closure.



## AFSANEH FARAHBAKHSH

*Life Goes on* (detail) 2018  
Acrylic  
81cm x 56cm x 4cm

Hope is still there even though everything is lost. Family always support each other. Black days will turn to white one day.



## TRUDY FITZMAURICE

*Freedom* (detail) 2012  
Biro ballpoint pen  
83cm x 59cm (unframed)

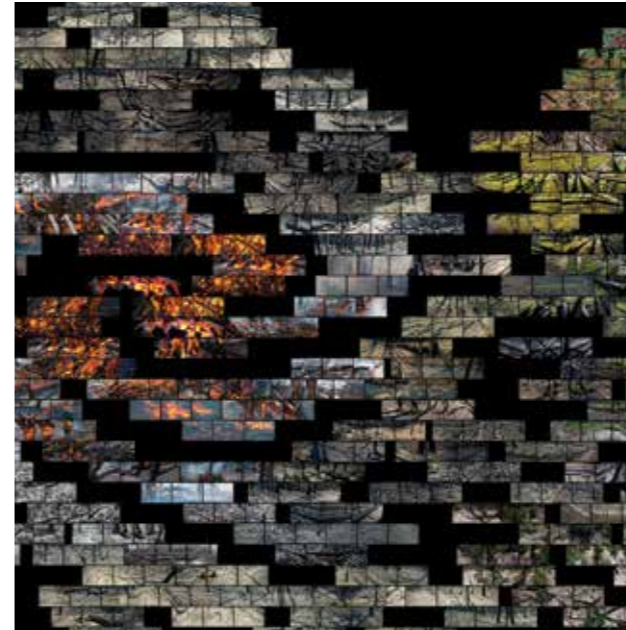
This piece represents new growth, rebirth of nature, ongoing renewal and the giving of freedom and the enjoyment of life itself. Representing us in our day to day life, the freedom of giving and nurturing without expectations, and if you are blessed with the reciprocation in some form makes it all worth it.



## SILVI GLATTAUER

*A Decade* 2018  
Photogravure – 5 plates  
120cm x 40cm  
Framed size 133cm x 53cm

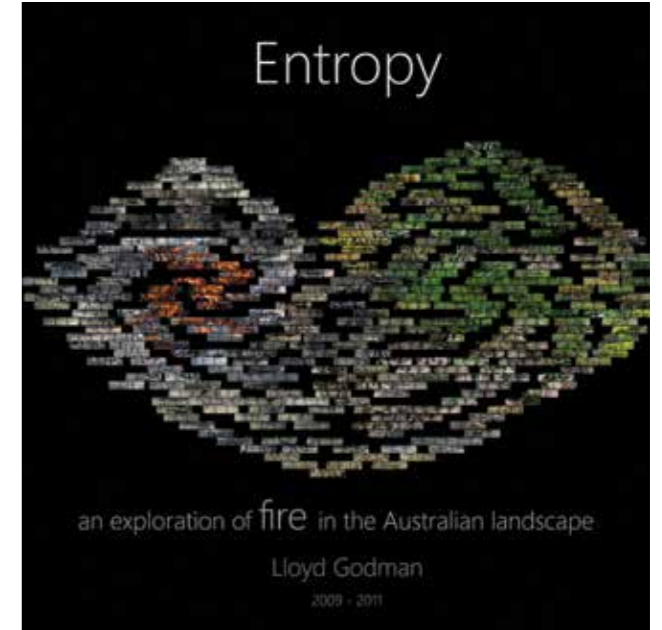
A walk in the Kinglake National Park on a rainy afternoon, the bush comes to life, new growth frames the stark beauty of burnt remains. The destruction of the fire now provides me with new interpretations in these images.



## LLOYD GODMAN

*Entropy String 25* (detail) 2010  
Composite Pigment Print  
110cm x 194cm

Consisting of 354 triptychs from 1062 individual photographs the work tracks the renewal of the bush from a few days after the fire to two years on. It plays with the micro and macro abstract and realist, order and chaos.



*Entropy Book* 2014  
Print on demand book  
28cm x 30cm unopened

The *Entropy Book* chronicles the regeneration of the bush after the fire and documents the various projects that evolved from the extensive series of photographs taken by the artist.



## RHONDA HEARITY

*Heath Honours Memories* 2018  
Water colour and gouache  
45cm x 55cm framed

The bright pink flowers of the *Epacris Impressa* (common native heath found in southeast Australia) invites a feeling of optimism and hope.

The theme of 'renewal' is represented in the subtle green trees in the background with scars of the fires still obvious on the trunks.



## ONA HENDERSON

*Ancient Silent Sentinels* 2018  
Watermedia  
56cm x 70cm

Grasstrees are survivors – indigenous 'fire dreamers' through eons of time. The 2009 bushfires burned hot throughout much of the bush but these graceful grastrees started to sprout again quite quickly – silent sentinels with black trunk and fresh green 'skirts' announcing renewal of ancient promise from Gaia, Earth Mother. These symbols of regeneration often stand starkly in the landscape to remind us of the ability to stand strong and resilient against the chaos and destruction that follows a huge bushfire. The spirit of place is strong.



## LEIGH HEWITT

*Morning Light* 2018  
Oil on board  
70cm x 60cm x 2.3cm

On a recent winter camping trip along the Murray I made a habit of rising early to catch the misty morning light, to see the ancient land waking up for a new day. The diffused light seemed to make everything glow with the potential of fresh beginnings.



## STEVE HOLDEN

*After the fire* 2009  
Ceramics  
Three pieces: 14cm x 11cm; 13cm x 9cm; 12cm x 10cm

The three tipi-fired earthenware vases that make up *After the fire* were created under the guidance of Judy Trembath at Twin Chough and Globe Pottery. Tipi firing is itself a process of some violence: superheated air funnels from the cone of the tipi with a roaring sound. Similar, as many fire-affected people described, to the jet engine sound of the Black Saturday fires. The firing is quite random, and some pots do not survive. These vases embody the violence of their making.



## LOUISE JADE

*Plenty River* (detail) 2018  
Oil pastel on rag paper  
70cm x 45cm

After losing all my life's work in a fire, I have now regained my artistic drive and moved from black and white images to works of vibrant colours.



## LINDA KEAYS

*Burned Tree Lazarus* 2018  
Silver, copper accents, peridot gemstones, smelter slag  
8.5cm x 5.5cm

I believe that jewellery reflects the thoughts and life events of the maker. The black lava-like textured piece of smelter slag reminded me of the burned trees in the Kinglake area. I responded to the theme by creating in silver the type of branches which can sprout in a near-miraculous way from apparently dead stumps. This work features the vigorous growth which sprouts from apparently dead, burned tree stumps.



## CAROL KITE

*23 Stories* 2010  
Steel, monoprints, pegs  
120cm x 122cm

The metal grid forms the structural matrix of this artwork. The metal reinforcement was used in the rebuilding process of homes, our stories and our supportive connections. The grid allowed for the creative rebuilding of lives, families and communities. The 23 prints peg together old stories, new stories and the unknown stories. Our strength lies in our connection to each other and our humanity. Remembering those who we lost in the fires.



## ELISABETH \_KULUGITAGO

*Leaves* (detail) 2018  
Recycled eco dyed paper and natural materials  
110cm x 30cm x 20cm

Joy of eco-dyeing connects me to land like a hunter-gatherer. Returning from walks with small wonders gathered from trees and roadside, alchemic crucible of pot on stove. Water and heat and rusty metal – stew and brew and anticipation. New leaves are growing in the rich dark wild. These leaves press themselves into paper leaving an image of themselves like shy elusive poetry. They could all blow away on a windy day. Melt back into land and grow again into tree, leaf, life. Simple mysterious wonder.





## CATE LAIDLER

*Eternity in an Hour* 2018  
Watercolour and mixed media on Fabriano  
36cm x 46cm

A roundel, with its age rings, undulating cracks and marks represent life. Each ring marks a complete cycle of seasons: decay and renewal; deconstruction and reconstruction. Growth is marked, hour by hour, in each band. As a tree slowly grows old, it also grows stronger. Seeds that contain its very essence regenerate the process of growth. Marked here is an eternal cycle of being.



## DAWN & GARY MCDONNELL

*Dragonfly* 2018  
Recycled metal  
70cm x 60cm

A dragonfly was the first sign of life we saw on our property after the Black Saturday bushfire. The dragonfly has become a symbol of hope and renewal. There was a lot of old, burned fencing and barbed wire after the fire so we decided to use it to make our dragonflies.



## FIONNA MADIGAN

*Easter* (detail) 2018  
Mixed media on stone paper  
91cm x 61cm

This work bears testimony to the resilience and beauty of the natural world. As an artist in residence at Dunmoochin foundation in Cottles Bridge, I inherit the legacies of the landscape, and the people who have survived bushfire.



*Bush Calligraphy* (detail) 2018  
Mixed media on stone paper  
73cm x 98cm

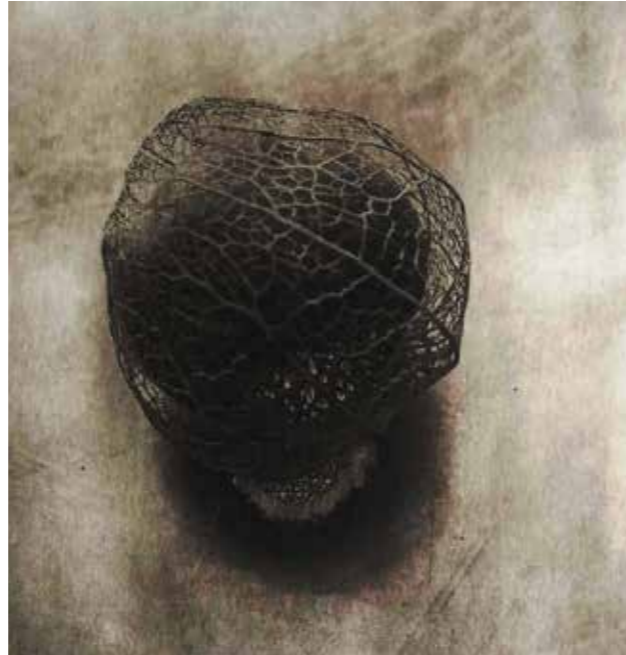
*Bush Calligraphy* looks at the way in which humans inscribe our lives, our values and our history on the landscape. As a newcomer to the area, I was not directly affected by the fires, but I inherit the legacy of those who were.



## MARGARET MCKENZIE

*After the fires* (detail) 2018  
Digital movie of photos and mini movies  
Digital DVD

After Black Saturday, I was deeply affected by loss of life and destruction, and wanted to help the victims. My amateur movie records my feelings and the efforts of volunteers who wanted to help at the time.



## LEANNE MOONEY

*Seed Pod 2018* (detail) 2018  
Photo Gravure  
A4

A seed holds the potential for new life and renewal. My work has been primarily about the issues of loss. I find myself looking through a folio of work I made at a workshop at Baldessin Press with fellow artists from Butterfly Studio in 2018. This workshop was eight years after we founded Butterfly Studio and worked together on over 300 bushfire recovery events. The commonalities between these people, my work, and Butterfly Studio is that we worked together to renew human spirit and our connection to community and nature.



## GREGORY O'CONNOR

*Watery Grave* 2018  
Serigraph  
39cm x 39cm framed

The unique flora and fauna of Nillumbik is a source of inspiration for many artists who live and work here. The beauty of this region continues to regenerate from the effects of drought and bushfire. *Watery Grave* is a comment about the impact of single-use plastic bags on our landscape and environment.



## MAUREEN ORDERS

*Quercus Suber*  
*Strand Tall* (detail) 2016-18  
Dowel, marine rope and cork oak  
72cm x 180cm

21 strands of mature cork oak conjure a stand of trees that now having been taken to their altered state appear as a memory of growth, revelry and reflection.



## LINDA PEARSON

*Homage to Marion Oakley* (detail) 2018  
Oil  
75cm x 90cm x 3cm

The Black Saturday fire devastated the town of Strathewen and killed many of its residents. Artist Marion Oakley had one of the houses that escaped the destruction. She wanted to help people recover and start again. She decided that everybody would probably need a new letterbox and though it was only a small thing, it was a good place to start. She invited the residents of Strathewen to her house and between them they made about 60 exquisite mosaic letterboxes. It wasn't 'formal' therapy but bit by bit people began to open up about their trauma. *A problem shared is a problem halved.* Many of the letterboxes are personalised and feature hand-made tiles of beloved animals and plants that had been destroyed. The inspiring words on this painting were taken from a tile on one of the letter boxes. People like Marion are the heartbeat of a community. She has touched and inspired many people (including me and I have never met her). The letter boxes are now a tourist attraction.



## PETRA REECE

*Sunday Morning (so soon after rain they noticed green)*  
(detail) 2018  
Oil on linen  
112cm x 137cm

The fire had gone, the rain had fallen, the trees and grass were coming back to life.



## SUE ROBERTSON

*Red Box Transpiring* 2018  
Oil  
76cm x 142cm

Transpiration is the process where plants absorb water through their roots and then give off water vapour through pores in their leaves. Made up of the movement of water and nutrients through the tree, this process has a cooling effect. Eighty percent of the cooling effect of a shade tree is from the evaporative cooling effects of transpiration.

Forests transpire. Transpiration is vital to the earth's ecology and is being reduced by our decimation of the forests. This painting relates to renewal as it speaks to the importance of protection of trees and forests. Without the presence of trees and forests, we are risking a healthy cycle in the production of rain.



## TARA STUBLEY

*A Song* 2016  
Oil on linen  
198cm x 270cm x 2.5cm

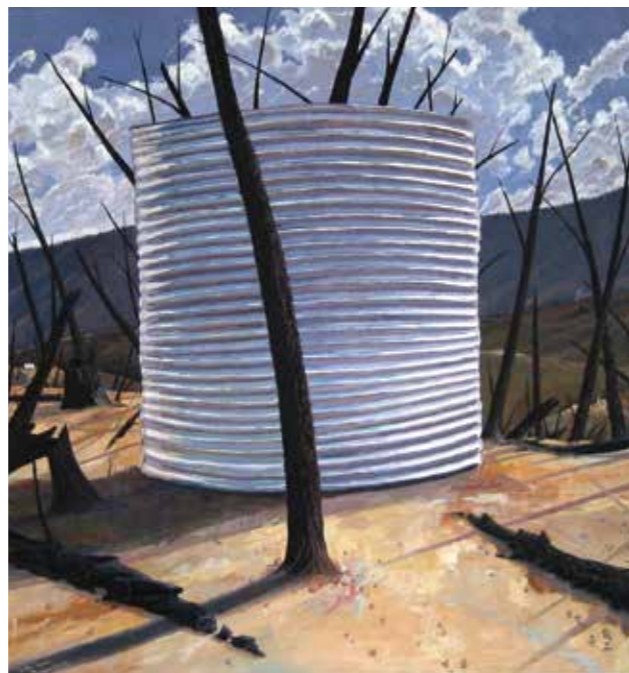
When I was growing up, Rosemary was like the fairy godmother of the bush of Strathewen; she gave me the words, the song and the dance as she did to so many kids in the community. Her message was in the magic of every tree and the plants that existed for a reason; how we had to be careful not to stand on the precious native orchids and other tiny wildflowers. We needed to look after the bush for the future but also for ourselves to connect and heal. This painting is about the shared song of our body and the body of the land. We are innately connected and what heals one, heals the other. Painted seven years after the fires after a walk around Rosemary's property looking at the new growth, tending to the weeds. She is, as so many are still, contending with the grief, but as nature slowly renews itself there comes a greater sense of hope.



## PHILLIP SAYERS

*Renewal works on reclaimed timber boxes (8 pieces) 2009*  
Oil on timber boxes  
various

This series of works on timber boxes depict locations along Bald Spur Road showing signs of renewal and recovery from the fires. The boxes themselves are reclaimed (some from St Andrews Market) and are symbolic of new life and a new purpose. The images show signs of things slowly returning to 'the new normal' for the community and the environment..



*Renewal 2009*  
Oil on Linen  
190cm x 180cm

This painting was created in the studio from a small timber box study. Slowly nature started the process of recovery, as new growth sprouted from burnt trunks and emerged through the charred ground. Other signs of life recovering were bins put out for emptying, piles of burnt rubble ready for removal and the delivery of new water tanks. To me these objects represented the process of renewal and recovery by nature and the community.



## SYD TUNN

*Past, Present, Future (detail) 2018*  
Mixed media  
Triptych – 3 individually framed but hung  
1 on top of the other; each 40cm x 35cm

Past, Present, Future.

Grasstrees are one of the strongest stayers of the plant world after bushfires. They regenerate very quickly from the crown. I've painted them for many decades – they've inspired me with their resilience and ability to renew themselves.

Here the past is represented by dark sky for Black Saturday, green for renewing, and gold for the future.



## MAGGIE VALI

*Wishbone Road (detail) 2017*  
Watercolour, pen and ink  
73cm x 59cm x 2cm framed

*Wishbone Road* is a self-portrait of the chaos of my fragmented memories from 7 February 2009. The door that would not shut against the storm, the skeletal remains of a shed once filled with memories, a girl's childhood protected and sealed within a green bottle, a wobbly tooth that was left behind and found again. I styled it to look like watercolour illustrations from children's picture storybooks as stories were a large part of my childhood. This artwork was influenced by images from a favourite childhood picture book *The Red Tree*. Although the image is full of chaos I tried to instill a moment of hope, a bit of magic, a wish.



## ELIZABETH VERCOE

*Simple Renewal* 2018  
acrylic on gallery wrap canvas  
100cm x 100cm

my heart remembers  
the sweet truth of a blossom -  
simple renewal.

the great adventure  
renewal and mystery  
one breath at a time

The seasons of nature and life constantly deliver the promise of renewal. It is up to us to nurture this possibility with at least two hands and one heart.

To pick up a paintbrush is to take a journey. The excitement is palpable and I love the delicious anticipation of standing in front of a blank page or canvas... The explosions of colour and the freedom of creation. Messy globules of paint ricocheting across the paper. A moment somewhere. Space and time collide. Colour and light merge.

Painting sustains and nourishes me... it's a gentle reminder to Live in Each Moment.



## KATHY WACEY

*The Phoenix rises from the Flames* (detail) 2017  
Mixed medium  
57cm x 47cm

Like the mythical bird, the Phoenix, who burns in his nest and from the ashes, a fledgling Phoenix rises, renewed and reborn ... so does the forest after the bush fires.

The painting depicts the trees standing in the first winter snow fall after the fires. The trees are rising, renewed and reborn.



## MARK WOTHERSPOON

*Clemmie at Lascelles paddock* 2018  
Acrylic and oil on canvas  
76cm x 122cm

I have done a number of paintings at this site and I never get tired of painting here. Painted this spring, it best represents renewal to me.



## WOMEN GATHERING AFTER FIRES FELTING GROUP

*Spiral of Life* (detail) 2010  
Wool  
120cm round

Spirals are deeply embedded in the nature of things; galaxies, delicate shells, ancient carvings and cave paintings, double helix genes.

As a symbol, the spiral can represent a journey or cycle through death and rebirth. When we decided to make a communal felted piece as part of the Women Gathering After Fires initiative, what could be more fitting than a spiral? We created a space in which women could come

together and access the arts as part of healing, both individually and in community.

We began with free felting workshops at a temporary venue, which evolved into an ongoing Felting Circle. Women gathering to explore the tactile colourful medium of hand-felting.

Everyone who came contributed to laying dyed wool into a large loose spiral, incorporating a butterfly into the back of the design. The heart of this woolly colourful spiral became the key visual image for promoting the Felting Circle.



## SUSAN ELIZABETH WOODFALL

*Black Saturday – Charred Forest* (detail) 2016  
Photography on brushed metal  
76cm x 120cm framed

My work explores the bush's charred remains regenerating several months later. Vegetation from seeds left behind on the forest floor forge a new beginning; nature's continuation of life.



*Artist Book* 2016  
Artist book, hard bound in matt black  
A2 full colour

This artist book tells the story of a couple that lived in the Strathewen region at the time of the black Saturday bushfires and their decision to remain on their property on the day and how they managed to survive.

## NILLUMBIK SHIRE COUNCIL

### Arts and Cultural Development

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 [nillumbik.vic.gov.au/arts](http://nillumbik.vic.gov.au/arts)

 [Nillumbik Arts and Culture](https://www.facebook.com/NillumbikArtsandCulture)

## CURATORIAL TEAM

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Sarah Hammond

Community Arts Officer, Nillumbik Shire Council

Joel Watson

Edendale Farm Coordinator, Nillumbik Shire Council

– Installation/Technical Assistance

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Nillumbik Shire Council acknowledges and thanks all the exhibiting artists and volunteer gallery assistants who made this exhibition possible.

This exhibition was among seven Nillumbik community initiatives collectively awarded Victorian grants of nearly \$33,000 to mark the 10 Year Anniversary of the 2009 Victorian Bushfires.

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## WADAMBUK ST ANDREWS COMMUNITY CENTRE

35 Caledonia Street, St Andrews

### Gallery hours

Monday – Thursday 9.30am – 1.30pm



WADAMBUK

St Andrews  
Community Centre

## ELTHAM LIBRARY COMMUNITY GALLERY

Panther Place, Eltham

### Gallery hours

Monday – Thursday 10am – 8.30pm

Friday – Saturday 10am – 5pm

Sunday 1pm – 5pm

Closed public holidays

ELTHAM  
LIBRARY  
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GALLERY