

RESILIENCE

Hambidge, April – September 2020

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Artist Statement for *What Was, What Is, What May Be*

The small and bypassed details in Nature are ongoing sources of inspiration for my art practice. I have seen and experienced the resilience within Nature via its small parts. The engineering integrity of fractal patterns which grow a leaf mirror the branching fractal patterns of whole environments like a river delta or lightning for example. These details have revealed the power of the intimate/infinite for me. This is a huge motivation for my practice which celebrates and connects myself and others with Nature.

During my residency at Hambidge in Oct 2019 I experienced FALL. Living in Australia we don't experience FALL. I was incredibly lucky to be there in that one week where the leaves all turned vivid before beginning to lose their grip - an incredibly ephemeral experience. I had come to the residency with no planned work, trusting that within my ephemeral art practice I would conjure connections. My only agenda was to create work that spoke with beauty, an environmental narrative. My intention is towards an art practice that 'works' for the environment / in the environment. I didn't expect to be exhibiting these images.

The beauty in the diversity of fallen leaves was the catalyst for Growth Rings. Prior to the residency I had attended a climate rally in my local regional town. One of the speakers shared how protecting and saving old growth forests was one of the best ways to simultaneously mitigate global warming, protect biodiversity and counteract pollution. Old growth forest builds resilience. This fact struck me. Upon seeing a film about Hambidge's early life as a working farm, I realised that the incredible forest around me was secondary forest. I then found myself wondering what the original old growth forest might have been like? How big were the trees here?

I began investigating the endemic tree species, spending many hours (with help) identifying the various species – via their discarded leaves. After researching how large these tree species could grow, I created the ephemeral 'growth rings' to indicate their approximate girth (not at the root base) but at human chest height. This is the height used to determine the girth of a tree – chest height. I find this interesting, how we use our bodies as a measure for the tree. How we interpret the size of the tree at the height of our hearts. The leaf rings created (from the fallen leaves of that tree) trace the past and future size, not at the base, but at chest height– heart height.

Also included in this series is a work from Australia – created at the back of my home in secondary forest that was hazard reduction burnt. You can see from the size of the trees there is no tree greater than about 15" wide. These trees are essentially matchsticks and it goes like this for 100's of miles– there are very few 'ancestor' Old Growth trees, let alone forests – all have been logged. Understanding and responding to what happened to our forests here in Australia this summer became part of this work created in America – as a warning bell rung in burnt branches.

'Growth Rings' tells a story of our past, present and future with a single line. It is a story of hope and choice, celebrating and shining a light on not only individual trees their inherent majesty and capacity to provide habitat but their importance to the entire ecosystem which they live in and support. It is my heart that pulled me to work with these trees in this forest. It is love which builds resilience. This is a *Cove Forest* - 'What was, What is, What may be'?