

## **Fire Country Artists Statement**

Fire Country is a furniture and photography installation addressing the physical and cultural significance of fire in Australia. It draws the burnt landscape into the domestic space, revealing its intrinsic beauty as part of key environmental mechanisms. These works are representative of our contemporary relationship with fire and potential for better engagement in the future.

Comprising a living room and dining setting, the furniture pieces are made from Australian Eucalypt timber species burnt to carbon black, sealed with animal fats, and inlaid with polished bronze casts of new leaf shoots and post-fire fungi.

The surrounding gallery hang of black and white imagery on burnt timber frames features photographs taken from various ecosystems in NSW, ACT and SA that have experienced catastrophic fires in recent years.

We live on a continent whose unique ecosystems have evolved in a symbiosis with fire. Most of the country's plants and animals rely on seasonal burns for germination, regeneration, and preservation from catastrophic fires. Emblematic of this is the Eucalypt genus, whose shoots we see emerging from burnt limbs.

Fire is always here. First Nations people learnt over millennia how to control destructive wildfires and turn them into low intensity cultural burns. These burns are distinct to each ecosystem and timed perfectly to ensure the best outcome for the germination of seeds, clearing of dead plant material for new growth, and the safety of endemic flora and fauna. Contemporary Australia lives in fear of fire. With colonisation, First Nations' knowledge of Country was overlaid with incompatible perceptions of land management. Urban sprawl, land clearing, and avoidance of fire has led to a point today where catastrophic wildfires cost lives, species, and ecosystems.

Fire Country attempts to embrace fire in Australia as a part of our collective culture. Referencing the symbiotic relationship that fire has with our continent's landscapes, the work captures the intrinsic beauty of this interplay through the iconic Eucalypt. Through this series of furniture and photography we want to offer not just sorrow for what we've lost, but also hope for our future.