

Jane Burns – Listed

MARS Gallery

Listed, an exhibition of textile-based works by Jane Burns, presented deconstructed images of critically endangered animals native to south-eastern Australia.

Burns studied sculpture at VCA and has since worked across photography, printmaking, textiles and installation. While continuing to make art, Burns' focus over the past two decades has been on environmental education, and her engagement with contemporary environmental issues has had a significant influence on her art practice.

Inspired by the captive breeding and species recovery programs being carried out by Zoos Victoria, Burns began working with images from the Zoos' archive of some of Australia's most endangered species. The ten works exhibited in Listed form part of Burns' larger series *By a Thread*, each of which highlights an individual animal selected to represent a specific species.

Burns states that as an artist she is interested in 'presenting the potential loss of animal species and the issues threatening their existence to help nurture a connection to these animals and support conservation outcomes'. Integral to the *By a Thread* series are the biographical notes which accompany each work, including descriptions of the threats facing each species and a guide to positive action which can support their survival.

Weaving is a metaphor for the interdependence of species, with the interconnectedness of each animal, plant and insect within an ecosystem contributing to the integrity and balance of the whole. Each species has an integral role to play to the health and harmony of the fabric of the system. The introduction of predators such as foxes or the removal of habitat through land clearing causes significant imbalances to occur and can be catastrophic for vulnerable populations. Impacts on one component have a ripple effect across all the others.

Burns' process to create the *By a Thread* series involved printing the images onto woven linen and then carefully removing the weft (or horizontal) threads. Left behind are the warp strands, long filaments of the original form delicately suspended. In the Listed exhibition, these works hung like fragile mist, evoking the precarious situation of each individual animal and their associated ecosystems.

The ghost-like images in Listed represented some of Australia's most iconic species such as the Tasmanian devil and Orange-bellied Parrot, as well as lesser known but important species such as the Guthega Skink and Plains Wanderer. Brush-tailed rock-wallabies were once common throughout Eastern Australia but now face imminent extinction. Once abundant in eastern Victoria, thousands were killed for the fur trade in the 19th century

almost wiping out the entire species. Approximately 20 individuals are now all that remain in the wild in Victoria and numbers in NSW were dramatically reduced by the 2020 fires.

Through *Listed, Burns* reminds us that we have a role to play in the survival of these fragile species. But with major catastrophic events such as the recent fires predicted to continue or worsen in coming years, our own survival is now also increasingly threatened. Our destiny as part of a global ecosystem is dependent upon our ability to care for the land and to take heed of these collapsing species. By bringing greater attention and action to saving these endangered remnants, we have a greater hope of safeguarding our own future.

Bryony Nainby, Museum and Gallery of the Northern Territory

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