

VANISHING

These paintings capture the many ecosystems that lie within the areas of tahun'e-linah¹ (Huon River) and takayna (the Tarkine wilderness area). They are under constant threat from industry, (sub)urbanisation, and the destabilising effects of climate change. I live and paint in the Huon Valley and regularly explore the bushland and river systems that permeate the region. The landscape and terrain are varied, home to some of most remote and inaccessible places on Earth. The Tarkine wilderness area is similarly varied, with coastlines comprised of outcropping strata that date back to the Proterozoic era around 1 billion years ago. It is also home to the largest tract of cool-temperate rainforest in the southern hemisphere, and its species are ancient - relicts of the Gondwanan supercontinent, surviving some 175 million years of continental drift and climate fluctuations.

The scars of the 2019 summer bushfires are ubiquitous in the southern bushlands of Tasmania, as with the alpine areas of the Northwest. The regenerative nature of fire-loving eucalyptus and sclerophyll forests means new growth will yield after rain. But in a warming climate and drier summers across Australia, bushfire severity and frequency are predicted by scientists to increase, threatening to destabilise this cycle of regeneration². More alarming still is that Tasmania's cool temperate rainforests and alpine heathlands have not evolved with fire as part of their cycle, and therefore do not regenerate with the same ease as eucalyptus³. With increased temperatures and reduced rainfall comes ecological collapse; key species supporting biodiversity eventually fail, taking with them all dependent and interconnected plant and animal life.

The *Vanishing* refers to this imminent threat of increased bushfire upon the Tasmanian landscape as it responds to climate change by the degradation of its ecologies. Charcoal has been collected from the remains of these fires, ground to varied consistencies and added to the work as pigment or texture. Some works feature stylised skeletons of leaves and limbs receding from their extremities to portray partial die-off from drought and heat. These works are a culmination of my concern and interest in the functions and formations of the natural world and the effects of global warming that will occur in my lifetime, particularly in Tasmania's richly diverse and primeval landscape.

¹ Plomley, N J B (n.d.). *Tasmanian Aboriginal Place Names*. Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery

² Tolsma, A., Hale, R., Sutter, G. and Kohout, M. (2019). *Post-fire dynamics of Cool Temperate Rainforest in the O'Shannassy Catchment*. Arthur Rylah Institute for Environmental Research Technical Report Series No. 298. Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, Heidelberg, Victoria.

³ DPIPWE (2017). *From Forest to Fjaeldmark – The Vegetation Communities – Highland treeless vegetation* (2nd ed.) Tasmanian State Government

Note on Aboriginal place names

Tahun'e-linah is the Aboriginal name for the Huon River and comes from the languages of the South East Nation in Trouwunna/lutriwita. This is one of the many spellings recorded by Plomely in his text on Tasmanian Aboriginal place names. Modern incarnations of this name are found in existing places around the Huon, in Talune, Tahune and Lune River. Takayna is the name given in palawa kani to the Tarkine wilderness area in Northwest Tasmania, taken from the Tarkiner people of Sandy Cape, North West Nation. It is my firm belief that as a Tasmanian landscape artist, I have a responsibility to learn and use Aboriginal place names wherever possible in the presentation of my art, thereby acknowledging first nations people and helping modern Tasmanians become familiarised with the original names of the places we love.

I pay respects to the Mouheneener of nipaluna, on whose land this exhibition is hosted, and to the Melukerdee people, the original custodians of the Tahun'e-linah, both of the South East Nation. I pay respects to the Tarkiner of the North West nation for who the takayna/Tarkine wilderness area was named, and to all other Nations across Trouwunna, including their elders past and present. I acknowledge that sovereignty of Australia was never ceded by first nations people, and that theirs is the oldest extant culture in the world.
<https://setac.org.au/> and <https://tacinc.com.au/tasmanian-aboriginal-place-names/>