

greer taylor
ephemeral
(lessons in grief)

ephemeral

(adjective)

describes something that is transitory, existing only for a short time: such as your breath, a day and yes, your life...

derived from the Greek ἐφήμερος
(ephēmeros):

of, for or during the day; living or lasting a day.

Often used in reference to non-human nature, especially short lived insects or flowers, such as those that swarm or bloom for only one day.

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That which is ephemeral embeds grief – grief for that which is lost: be it our lives, a tree, a species.

But this reality of loss is as it must be: all things on this finite living planet are part of a life-death-life cycle: without death there cannot be new life.

I have come to understand that grief, unlike its usual portrayal, is a powerful enabler, for it teaches us what we love... it teaches us that we love... it also reminds us we *will* lose that which we hold dear.

And at this time when we are experiencing the end of things that should have outlived us by millenia, we are having to navigate the loss of even this.

I sense we need to learn to live on the edge of tears, to call in grief as the healer and the holder of our love for that which has been lost – and could still be lost.

As we surrender to the clarity of grief, we find it teaches us that we can proceed, enfolding our capacity to remain proactive in the face of loss.

The poem on the following pages was written with this understanding in mind.

proceed

in grief I feel

rain
running
down the cheek
of my soul

in grief I hear

frogs singing
at my grave

in grief I see

the moon
full
against
a velvet sky

in grief I touch

the body
of my lover
... like descending mist

in grief I smell

soil
after rain
: petrichor

in grief I taste

all
that is sweet
dissolved in time

in grief I know

that I love
what I love

in grief I speak

of that
which I love

... in grief I can proceed

Each of the works in this exhibition has been made from elements found in nature.

The images are of works made in wild places from things found around me on the day. The sculptural works bring items found in nature into the gallery in combination with human-made elements.

Each work is an exploration of ephemerality:
the life-death-life cycle that we are all part of...
that we must be part of
that we must acknowledge we are part of
...a reality we must embed in our very beings.

In our troubled times grief will travel with us as we navigate the future. But by befriending it we will find salve and enablement to navigate the consequences of our inadequate custodianship of this planet. To face head on the destruction of habitat and the ensuing loss of species we had shared the planet with and what this loss of fullness means to our lives.

In leaning into grief we will know what we love enough to be inspired to let go of our current way of life (to allow *it* too to be ephemeral – to pass from us), to actively seek a life for each one of us and our communities in reciprocity with nature's ephemerality.

inbetween

In between here and there is a space filled with tears, a valley in your heart holding that which is lost, memories of that which is loved.

As we sink into the ambivalent valley of inbetween, holding equally that which was and that which is now gone, we allow grief to become tear filled joy, informing us of the depth of ourselves and our capacity for complexity.

found sticks, cotton thread, recycled wood, paint, 2019
110 x 100 x 4 cm

spread

This planet and all life on it, is as it is as a result of eons old mechanisms of interconnectedness: a spread of connections between living things of all species that allows the planet to perpetuate a complex system of connections that are extraordinarily robust and ongoing if it is allowed to thrive, but extremely easily damaged if interfered with.

This work, like life's web, balances on a fine line between robustness and fragility – if only small parts are damaged, it, like our planet, is at risk of disintegrating.

found sticks, enamelled copper wire, acrylic, metal, 2015
height & depth dependent on ceiling height, width 150 cm

stick voices (mix 3)

This is a collaborative work – I approached Brent Williams to make a sound work to accompany the work *spread* in an exhibition at MARS Gallery in Melbourne in late 2015.

This work is composed of sounds created by hitting sticks against each other or other things.

To me what has been created is the rustle of the silence of a forest – the sound of something becoming something else.

two channel audio, 2015

20 min 45 secs

produced by Brent Williams

here you stand

This poem points to your own ephemerality, an invitation to allow grief to teach you what you truly love – this is where the dance of life is found.

This work's existence, painted directly onto the gallery wall, is itself ephemeral: at the end of the exhibition it will be painted over to allow for the birth of the next exhibition, to become a memory embedded in the layers of paint upon the wall.

paint on wall, 2019

250 x 80 cm

painted by Simon Thomas

sleeping leaves (tears for lost trees)

One of my first memories in this life is being taken for a walk by my father through a grove of wonderfully tall Sydney Blue Gums not far from where we lived. I have been in love with trees ever since. I am sure that the nutrients that make up me now have at some point been part of a tree.

This work is a lament for the all too many trees that have been lost at the hands of humans, before their time.

Trees lost out of fear of bush fire or falling limbs, claiming views, for profit and in the name of 'progress' ...
to the steady creep of a changing climate.

found leaves, linen, cotton thread, pins, 2019

13 x 575 x 4 cm

return : wire brush

Embedded in the idea of ephemerality is a 'return' of something to another form, its atoms being assembled into something else – perhaps a descendant of its current form, perhaps something completely different.

In this work what was a simple wire brush made of wood, is returned to its connection with tree, sprouting twigs instead of wire, here, held bracketed in a nest of parentheses fashioned from the back of a discarded wooden chair. It can though, never be tree again while held here out of the flow – only if it is allowed to decay into the ground may it may one day return to the living force that is tree.

spent wire brush, found twigs,
recycled wood from chairback, acrylic, MDF, paint, 2019

60 x 100 x 15 cm

images of ephemeral works made in wild places

These works are not planned, I am drawn into making them, like a choreographer drawn to create an impromptu dance.

Each work, like a dance, exists for only a short time before being blown away on the next current, each element continuing on its journey to become something else... its ephemeral existence captured in the blink of a camera lens.

Each work tells something of the moment in time in which it was made, from what is happening in a forest that day, to the progress of a rock on its journey to become soil... each work a ceremony of acknowledgement of the earth and its cycles.

digital images printed on fine art paper, 2010-2018
sizes variable

limited edition prints (unframed)

images of ephemeral works



beached seaweed floats arranged
around low tide rock



fallen red eucalyptus leaves arranged
in dark after-rain pool with reflections



fallen crushed mulga-wattle flowers
arranged on pebble in dry creek bed



fallen tea tree flower petals arranged
in circle around tiny pool

images of ephemeral works



fallen gum flowers arranged
in crevice of rock



fallen red eucalyptus leaves
arranged in sand next to river edge



fallen baronia flower arranged in
indent of rock



fallen eucalyptus leaves arranged on
recently exposed rock at river edge

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Shoalhaven Regional Gallery, Nowra

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