



This painting was created on Bundjalung land, in Huonbrook, northern NSW, an area impacted by the Black Summer bushfires of 2019/2020.

The country here was thick, dense rainforest. When the sky broke through a gap of trees, you could see the dusk blue mountains cradling the horizon. With the lush growth burned away, towering slabs of naked rock were revealed, strangely bald. Skeleton trees clung to their sides.

Last December, my partner and I drove from Victoria to northern New South Wales to visit my family. With no air-con, our clothes turned slick against our skin. We passed endless scorched paddocks, flashing fire trucks and ravaged forests. The trees black stilts and the ground grey ash, still sizzling. In January, TV screens blazed with the devastation in other states. But the sky in northern NSW finally caved. And brought the rain.

I painted this between showers, sitting by the road not far from where my Dad lives in Huonbrook. A narrow, winding track leads to Dad's, climbing up the hills and carving through the rainforest. Both sides of the road charred where fire flew across the gravel. As I sat painting the trunks and the dry red soil, I thought about how it was before. I'd never known fire to touch this part of the earth. I thought about the people who experienced the wrench of loss, for the animals considered 'livestock' and for those who lost their homes and lives.

The devastation of the bushfires is a sharp reminder to honour our home on earth. And to evaluate the impact of our everyday choices. Painting outside helps me pause, to slow down, observe, and to recognise the experience of sharing space with other beings. With my brush I found new shoots of green by the roots of the black trees.