

The Hive welcomes new creative talent to the region

A STRONG ethos of supporting local artists pervades The Hive Gallery and gives it a real sense of belonging to and from the region.

The gallery's December exhibition Flora, however, provides an opportunity to welcome interesting new talent from further afield due to the connections in the work over the natural environment themes.

Francesca Sykes grew up in the Adelaide Hills surrounded by bushland.

"My love of nature comes from my mum, a zoologist and botany enthusiast who used to restore the local bushland throughout my childhood," she said.

Sykes moved to Melbourne in 2008 to study at RMIT, majoring in Interior Design.

After experience in the field, she returned to focus on furniture design, then in 2020 was honoured to undertake the prestigious S.A. Jam Factory Associate program and explore the Japanese shou sugi ban technique for furniture applications. Her "Bloom after Burning" vases exhibited in Flora incorporate this technique.

"I've driven past so many sites where bushfire has torn through the forest or a building and the image of black ghostly trees with beautiful greenery shimmering out in buds always resonates deeply with me," she said.

"For me this has always evoked really strong emotions about loss, recovery, hope, and the deep sense of country - the knowledge that this land regenerates with fire and that with the destruction there comes new life.

"It's a hard thing to describe, but I think many Australians identify with this feeling, and I've found that people respond to my work with this same emotion - a deeply Australian understanding that even through fire/loss there will be recovery/hope."

Sykes joins Helen Masin, a Gippsland artist.

Masin creates still life work to remind us that unassuming beauty is significant. For Flora, she captures detailed yet stunningly simple oil paintings of native Victorian flora that have survived many bushfires.

Meet the artists at The Hive Gallery, 41 Smithton Grove, Ocean Grove tomorrow (Saturday, December 3) from 2-4pm and welcome new talent to the region.

Flora runs until January 2.



ABOVE: Helen Masin creates still life work to remind us that unassuming beauty is significant. RIGHT: Francesca Sykes has experience in interior design and furniture design. LEFT: "Bloom after Burning" vases by Francesca Sykes. Photos: SUPPLIED.