

KATE MCKENZIE LEWIS



ABOVE LEFT: Kate McKenzie Lewis, *Smoke swallows*, 2026. Oil on canvas, 50 x 70 cm. PHOTO: CHRISTO CROCKER.
COURTESY: BETT GALLERY, NIPALUNA/HOBART.



ABOVE RIGHT: Kate McKenzie Lewis in the studio. COURTESY: BETT GALLERY, NIPALUNA/HOBART.

Why pay attention?

Kate McKenzie Lewis has steadily built recognition for her distinctive oil paintings, most recently being recognised as a finalist in the 2026 Shepparton Art Museum Regional Art Prize, the 2024 Waterhouse Natural History Art Prize, 2022 Hadley's Landscape Prize and 2024 Fisher's Ghost Art Award. Lewis is set to present her first solo exhibition with Bett Gallery, marking a significant milestone in her early career with a gallery that this year celebrates 40 years of nurturing emerging practitioners to stellar heights.

What do they do?

To date her paintings have revealed her immersion within the landscape. In *Ember*, Lewis has chosen to explore 'found imagery', visiting bushfire-affected areas in Tasmania and Victoria, then further extending her knowledge through photographs and photo clippings.

"Working primarily in expressive oil painting, and incorporating recycled and found materials, I approach landscape as both personal history and ecological responsibility. Central to this practice is an interest in light, how it reveals, distorts, and transforms perception of the environment.

What's going on?

Lewis was fortunate to work with the esteemed artist **John Wolseley** in 2023. She says, "...that experience helped me understand working collaboratively with the environment. Understanding how he thinks of his work as not just his but as an extension of something more is illuminating." In responding to an ongoing concern with bushfire-affected landscapes, these 30 small paintings hung salon-style, and a handful of larger works in *Ember*, navigate dramatic senses of destruction, horrific loss, and the uneasy beauty that can emerge in

their aftermath—the alluring resonance that remains.

The gallery says...

"Kate is a trail runner out there in the landscape. Her early oils, exquisite paintings on road signs, showed a beautiful application of paint, a gentle aesthetic. In this current suite of paintings she is grappling with the heady subject of bushfires, sparking a political urgency, an awareness of our tenuous relationship with this precious environment. Her manipulation of perspective, light, colour and scale piques the viewer's curiosity, creating a dynamic oscillation between imagined moments and real memory."

See it at...

Kate McKenzie Lewis: *Ember*, 1 – 23 May 2026 at Bett Gallery, Nipaluna/Hobart.

COURTNEY KIDD



ABOVE: Kate McKenzie Lewis, *Tangled and choking*, 2026. Oil on canvas, 100 x 120 cm. PHOTO: CHRISTO CROCKER. COURTESY: BETT GALLERY, NIPALUNA/HOBART.