

Burn Before Reading Jenna Lee

Gertrude Glasshouse

Friday 3 October –

Saturday 8 November 2025

Burn Before Reading draws upon the ecological phenomenon of epicormic growth, where new shoots emerge from beneath the bark of trees following fire trauma, allowing them to regenerate. Eucalypts, known for their resilience to extreme environments, sprout vibrant neon green growth against their blackened trunks after bushfire.

In Jenna Lee's new installation, language is treated as an ecosystem. Just as landscapes can recover after devastation, so too can languages endure and flourish. *Burn Before Reading* honours the lasting presence of language in Country, and the ways it carries knowledge and vocabulary essential to understanding and caring for the environment.

One at a time, words, like leaves, return.

Artist biography:

Jenna Lee is a Gulumerridjin (Larrakia), Wardaman, and KarraJarri woman with Japanese, Chinese, Filipino, and Anglo-Australian (Irish and Scottish) ancestry. Lee's practice explores language, materiality, and the transformation of inherited narratives. Fascinated by what is lost in translation, she investigates the spaces between words, capturing the subtleties of language through immersive installations, works on paper, sculpture, and multimedia.

Working primarily with books as colonial artefacts, Lee interrogates dictionaries that poorly document First Peoples' languages, combining these sources with Larrakia linguistics to reflect on the world she observes. Through deconstruction and reconstruction, she engages with materials that echo the past, revealing hidden stories and the unseen forces shaping our understanding of history and identity.

Acknowledgements:

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Glasshouse is generously supported by Michael Schwarz and David Clouston. In 2025, Gertrude celebrates one decade of Glasshouse.



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List of works

1. *Burn before reading* 2025
pages of Aboriginal Words and Place Names,
calligraphy ink, florist wire, glue
dimensions variable
2. *Loose leaf (litter)* 2025
pages of Aboriginal Words and Place Names
dimensions variable

All works courtesy of the artist and MARS Gallery,
Naarm Melbourne

