

Project: Being an Effective Voice for the Environment

On Saturday 29 March, the Conservation Council ACT Region held a one-day Symposium titled 'Being an Effective Voice for the Environment'. The symposium preceded the ACT Region Environment Awards as well as Earth Hour activities at Parliament House. I was invited to represent an artist's perspective.



Forest by Natalie Maras, polymer clay, metal leaf, rosewood

To set the scene, Lish Fejer from 666ABC Canberra Sunday Brunch spoke about the need to refresh the green image and used some examples from her own life to illustrate the power of personal change. Tim Hollo, founder of Green Music Australia and former Communications Director for Australian Green leader Christine Milne followed with the message that the only way to protect our environment is to change our culture (by shifting priorities and telling new stories about our world and our position in it).

These plenary speeches were followed by three case studies in creative communication. Josh Creaser from 350.org spoke about activism as a communication tool. Dr Andrew Pike, Managing Director of Ronin Films, gave some advice on films and distribution for aspiring filmmakers. I then spoke about my work as an independent artist working with scientists on natural history subjects- to find and share new stories. I also spoke about my work supporting WABA to draw together artists, scientists and conservationists for the benefit of Australian flora and fauna.

The Conservation Council symposium was a timely opportunity to reach out about WABA's symposium 'Discover Wildlife: Art & Science'. In light of all the needs expressed at the symposium, it was opportune to remind the audience that art has the capacity to draw interest and feeling towards little known or under-appreciated subjects. Art can be a vehicle for community contact and inter-disciplinary exchange of ideas. Sometimes, environmental messages are best delivered through art.

