

# JANET LAURENCE

## ONCE WERE FORESTS

### 15 MARCH - 15 APRIL

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GALLERY



Revered contemporary artist JANET LAURENCE returns to ARC ONE Gallery this March. Following her 2021 Antarctic Arts Fellowship, Laurence will exhibit a new body of work incited by two galvanising encounters with extreme weather.

A few years ago, Laurence witnessed two events that sent a chill through her. The first was in western Iceland, when she was taken to the funeral of the Okjökull glacier. An elegy for a massive, once-permanent body of slowly moving ice, the funeral acknowledged that it had now finally melted into nothing. Among this small crowd of mourners, Laurence felt alive to the vulnerability of nature.

This feeling was enhanced a few months later in Canberra, when a freak, intense hailstorm devastated the city, and was estimated to cost \$1.65 billion dollars of damage. Laurence was taken to see the CSIRO glasshouses, where decades-old experiments in climate

and food research lay in ruins under shards of broken glass and huge stones of ice.

These two events are memorialised in ONCE WERE FORESTS, which includes a series of work that led Laurence to her epic 2021 Antarctic Fellowship. Laurence never considered travelling to the great ice continent before. With one of the most verdant careers in Australian art history, chlorophyll flows through the veins of Laurence's work. But following her major survey exhibition *After Nature*, held at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, she was looking for a new perspective to explore. This ice elegy represents her continuing investigation into the fragility of our world, from a fresh and deeply poignant vantage point.

ONCE WERE FORESTS features a powerful accumulation of icy windows. Laurence has created works of sublime delicacy, with veils of grief layered over moments of great awe. Comprising sheets of ghostly images, the landscape of Iceland breaks through; a rugged, mossy terrain, it emerges greener than ever with bare touches of an opaque, blue-white frost. Comparable to a great choir sonorously singing each part of an elegant requiem, these are mighty, important works from an artist offering tenderness to a grieving world.

*Janet Laurence is renowned as a leading contemporary artist in Australia, and is one of our earliest and most significant ecological artists. Her work is represented in the collections of every national and state gallery in Australia, as well as numerous international and Australian museum, university, corporate and private collections. In addition to this, Laurence is a prominent figure in contemporary public art, with many permanent installations gracing significant public and private architecture and gardens. In 2019 she was honoured with a major survey exhibition *After Nature*, curated by Rachel Kent at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney.*

**For all enquiries, interviews and images please contact ARC ONE Gallery at [mail@arc1gallery.com](mailto:mail@arc1gallery.com) or 03 9650 0589**

IMAGE: Janet Laurence, *The Blue of Time*, from *The Glacial Glasshouse Series* (detail), 2023, Duraclear on shinkalite, acrylic, oil pigment, 100 x 217 cm.