



Deep Breathing

Resuscitation for the Reef

Janet Laurence
20th Oct - 14th Dec 2015

Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle
Grande Galerie de l'Évolution / Jardin des Plantes
36 Rue Geoffroy-Saint-Hilaire 75005 Paris
Métro: Jussieu/Censier Daubenton/Austerlitz

Palais de la Porte Dorée
Aquarium Tropical
293, avenue Daumesnil 75012 Paris
métro: Porte Dorée

www.fiac.com
www.artists4paristclimate2015.com/fr/e



Deep Breathing

Resuscitation for the Reef

Created for Artists 4 Paris Climate 2015 and FIAC 2015

Janet Laurence is a leading Australian artist whose multi-disciplinary practice is a direct response to contemporary ecological catastrophes. Laurence creates metaphoric propositions based on scientific knowledge and her own first-hand experience of threatened environments. She sees her role as an artist not as one of didacticism or activism, but as an interpreter of the natural world and the devastation it is facing in the Anthropocene – our current epoch of human-induced environmental change.

The work

This installation is about the Great Barrier Reef in Australia's north, a World Heritage site that is the planet's largest living structure. As resident artist for the Australian Museum she spent time researching in their research Station on Lizard island in the Great Barrier alongside climate and marine scientists. She spent much of the time underwater, seeing the impact of climate change. The reef's biodiversity is greater than any other in the world: scientists name new species against a tide of extinction. It's multitude of corals and marine diversity is slowly dying because of warming sea temperatures and acidic waters. Across the three major ocean basins, underwater heat waves have torn through tropical regions, with corals losing their colour as the algal partners (symbionts) that provide much of their food leave the coral tissues. Bereft, corals are beginning to starve, get diseased and die. In underwater deserts the bleached calcium carbonate skeletons shatter and tumble as severe tropical cyclones pass through with increasing frequency and intensity.





Reef hospital

Laurence has created a hospital for the Reef's threatened corals, and other marine species visitors to the hospital can examine a vast range of materials images and film projection along with specimens – drawn from the collections of the *Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle* (MNHN) and the Australian Museum. The specimens are metaphorically nursed back to health in a immersive setting of an imaginary hospital. Laurence makes visible the invisible and offers hope for the healing of the natural environment. Laurence invites viewers to contemplate the subject not politically or pessimistically, but with empathy. If we can care for marine life in the same way that we care for our own species, there is a chance of deflecting environmental catastrophe. Laurence's response is a faint but deeply felt call, an emergency response: a hospital for the Reef in this time of ecological crisis, intends to aid survival and effect transformation. This is a haven for the rest and restoration of marine life. Colour is transfused and connected to life-support systems for breathing. Scientific vessels, medical and alchemical apparatus are assembled to heal the ailing 'patients'. In Laurence's practice, art enters into the essential dialogue of environmental politics to create and communicate an understanding of our global inter-connection, and to restore our vital relationships with the natural world, where vital research for the future of coral are ongoing.



Above: Video stills - *Deep Breathing* 2015 screened at *Palais de la Porte Dorée*, *Aquarium Tropical* and *Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle*, Paris.

Video links: [Deep Breathing - Resuscitation for the Reef \(Part 1 & 2\)](#)



Above: Reef wards

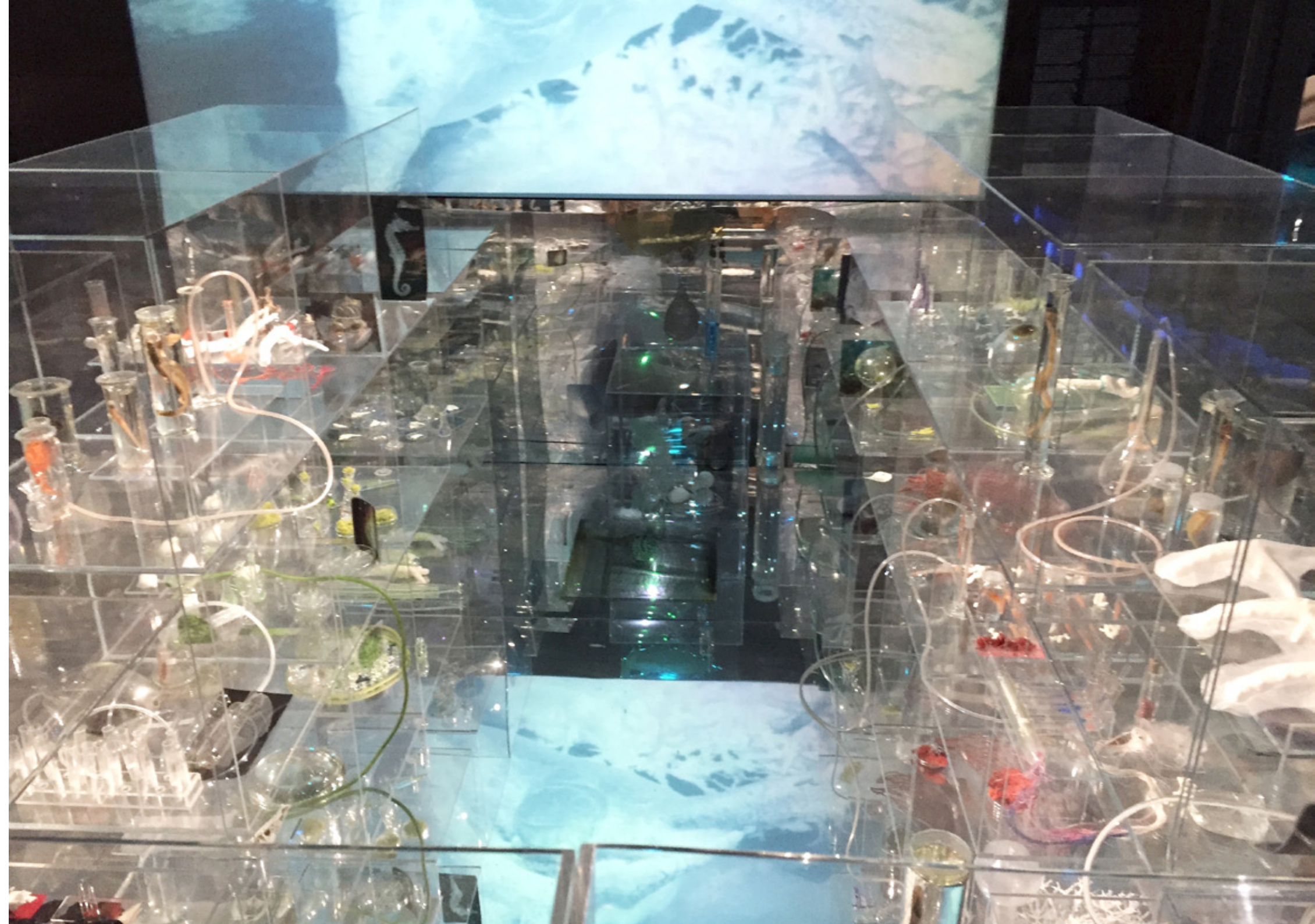


Above: specimens borrowed from the *Australian Museum* and *Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle*





Above: specimens borrowed from the *Australian Museum* and *Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle*



The life world

I am making propositions through works by creating spaces of perception that can bring us into contact with the 'life-world'. Janet Laurence has had a long and profound engagement with the 'life-world'. Over twenty-five years, her practice has extended to painting, sculpture, installation, photography, architectural and landscape interventions. The major themes that have emerged in the work include: the relationship between the museum, the natural world, and notions of preservation; the exploration of hybrid landscapes, that involve a fusion of natural and urban elements; alchemy and the transformation of elements from one state to another. Laurence is deeply concerned with the changes in our midst and the human impact on the natural world. She explores what it might mean to heal, albeit metaphorically, the natural environment, fusing this sense of communal loss with a search for connection with powerful life-forces. Her work alerts us to the subtle dependencies between water, life, culture and nature in our ecosystem. In the face of this, we do yearn for a form of alchemy, for the power of enchantment or transformation. It seems that the only place for that sensation is the place of art.

- Victoria Lynn, excerpt from essay '*Handle With Care*', Adelaide Biennale.





Artist Biography

Exploring notions of art, science, imagination, memory, and loss, Janet Laurence's practice examines our physical, cultural and conflicting relationship to the natural world through both site specific, gallery and museum works. Experimenting with and working in varying mediums, Laurence continues to create immersive environments that navigate the interconnections between all living forms. Her practice has sustained organic qualities and a sense of transience, occupying the liminal zones, or places where art, science, imagination and memory converge.

Janet Laurence lives and works in Sydney. She has been a recipient of both a Rockefeller and Churchill Fellowship an Australia Council Fellowship and the Alumni Award for Arts, University of UNSW. Laurence was a Trustee of the Art Gallery of NSW, a former Board Member of the VAB Board of the Australia Council and is currently a Visiting Fellow at COFA NSW University.

Laurence exhibits nationally and internationally and has been represented in major curated and survey exhibitions and her work is included in many museum university and corporate collections as well as within architectural and landscape public places.

www.janetlaurence.com



a visit by Climate Angel (Deborah Hart)

Project Supporters

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Project press

Le Monde

Madame Figaro

Intelligent Life

Sydney Morning Herald

Video links

Deep Breathing - Resuscitation for the Reef (Part 1 & 2)