



Working with the idea of veiling space Janet Laurence has utilised the obscurity of the semi transparent screen to create a sublime atmosphere. With spaces that elude the veracity of the real and yet all the while disconcertingly proposition us with their concrete specificity a transcendent psychic space is opened up in our imagination. This exhibition 'Ferment' continues her glasshouse series that make reference to the conservatory, apothecary, medicinal gardens, natural history vitrine, and the botanical museum. This reference is then juxtaposed against the modernist glasshouse and its reflected garden.

Are these ideas and imaginings for possible works in larger form? Maybe, but as models they take on a new aesthetic dimension all their own. For once she reduces the scale of veiled space down to miniature size Laurence intensifies the psychological potential of the veil, generating highly charged and tightly contained secret gardens that overwhelm our sense of place in the world. Further, the tenuous placement and fragility of each environment perched on steel scientific-like stands at eye level turns the space of the gallery into a simulated garden of sorts referencing a play between the artificial and natural. Each interlocking plane works to irregularly alter the optical coherency of our viewing experience as the miniscule see-through sheets, that traverse the order of the cube within which they are placed, chart out an intricate network of crevices, crannies, and corners. Together the glass veils coordinate an alternative vision of the garden, one that eludes the symmetrical and geometrical ground plan common to classical gardens.

Through her consistent use of simple geometric forms such as the rectangular glass panels that come in cool blues, greens, and aquamarines, Laurence sets a chilly tone of minimalist clarity and existential solitude. Bordering on a laboratory and futuristic garden the constellation of glass screens imprinted with lists of botanical species and samples creates a multiplicity of visual lines and corridors which upon closer inspection we see are filled with strange vials and bottles containing plant fragments and residues, powders and liquids.

In her larger installation works Laurence exposes the viewer to a variety of perceptual and corporeal possibilities that differentiate and attenuate space once the viewer moves around in them. In these smaller versions the unbounded nature of perceptual processes is heightened through spatial condensation and enfolding. In spite of the fact that the screens largely function as spatial divisions they are a far cry away from a concept of spatial obstruction. In this instance, like Laurence's use of the veil in the past, the translucent partitioning treated with washes of color intensifies their sense of interiority and privacy. The build-up of screens differentiates the tightly compressed environments into a complex spatial configuration, and as the space of each individual environment is divided the oppositional and immutable nature of the screen is slackened. Each individual work approaches invariant forms that transcend regularity and stability.

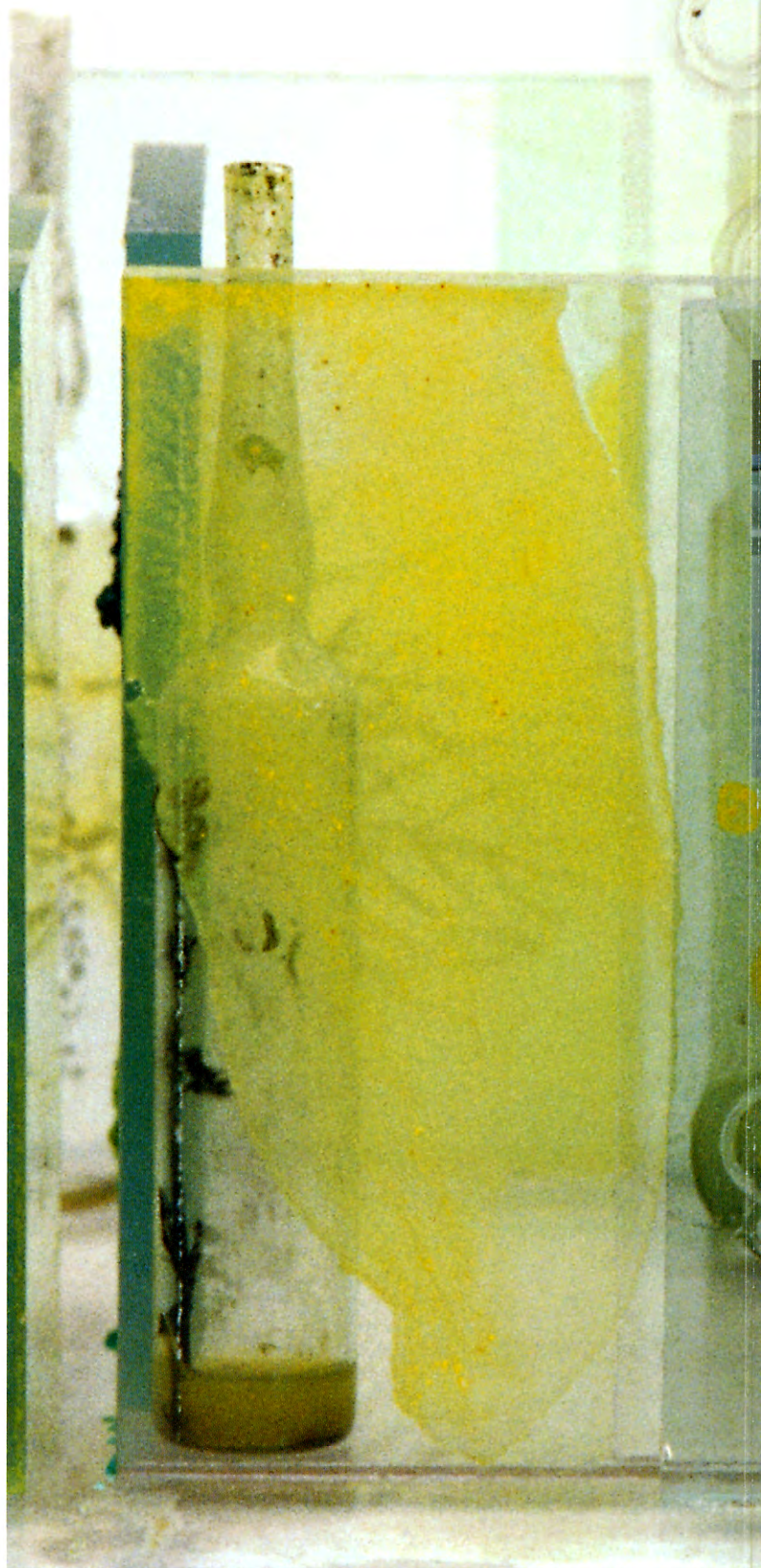
In this way it could be said that these spaces are not determined through molar but molecular organisation. A molar organisation would produce contrasting and disparate spaces presupposing that the category of space itself is essentially integrated as each different area is considered to be a segment of space. With molecular organisation differences nuance space in ways that configure it along co-ordinates of indeterminacy. What I am thinking of are spaces that are not without consistency yet they are not self-sufficient separate modules based on a concept of self-identity. In other words, Laurence proposes cellular systems of creative assemblage. Likewise, the zones of molecular formation enable the screens to leak and space to escape a stratified structure. Stratified space can only ever construe space as a container in which events take place and bodies are inserted. Interestingly, Laurence rethinks the relationship between space and time. That being, space might not simply be the container in which bodies and events are able to relate to one another but it may also be considered as a dimension of their relation.

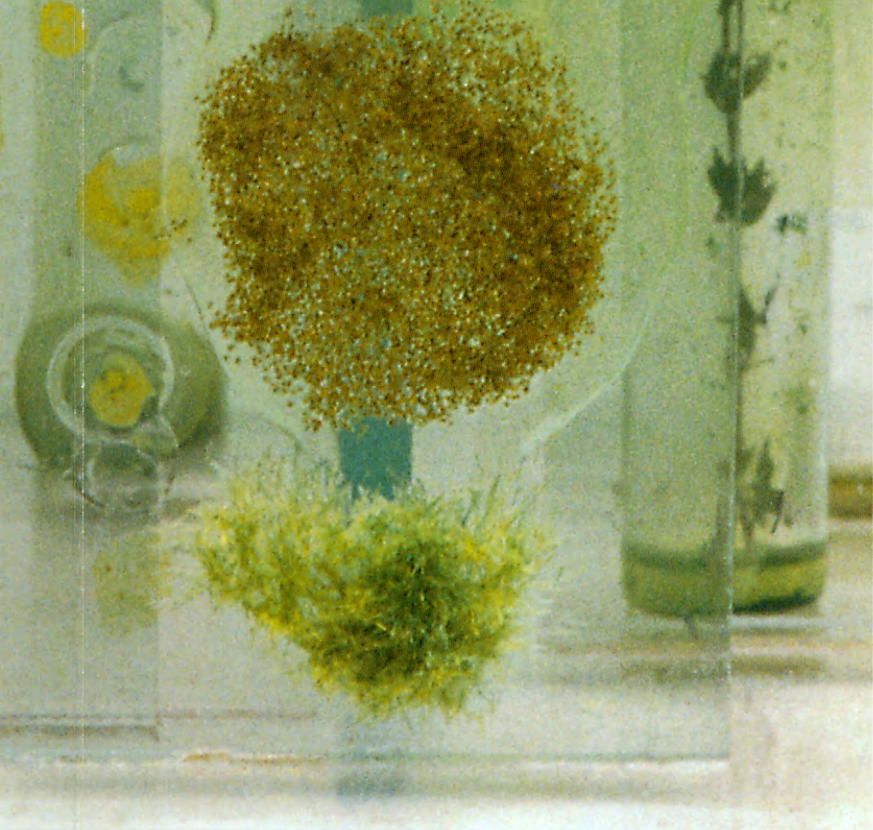
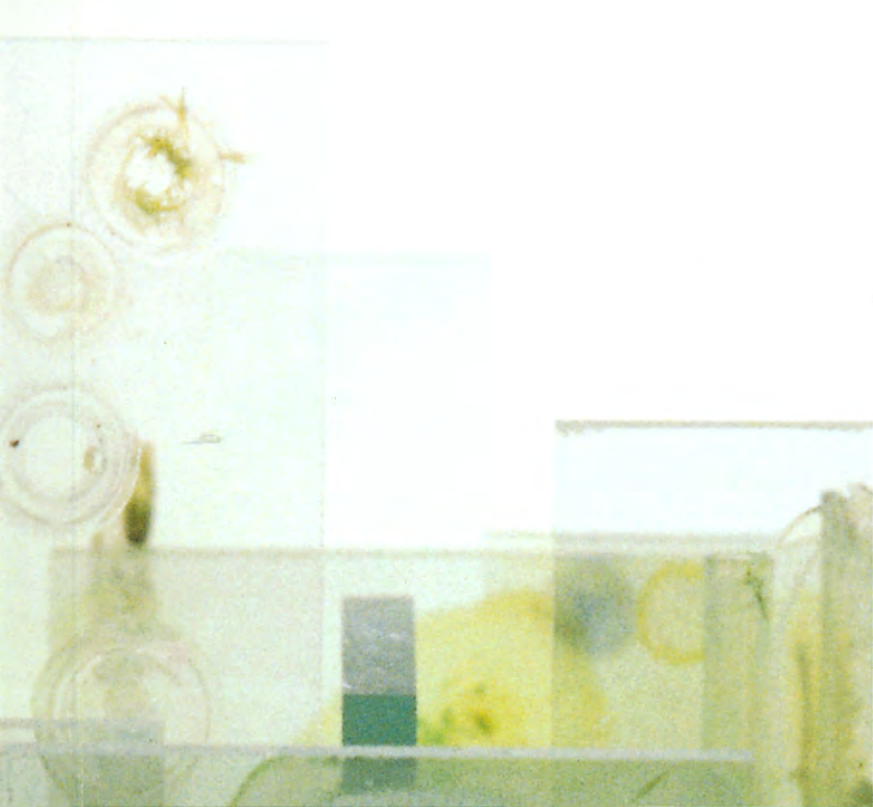
The dissolving translucency that marks these ghostly Glasshouses acquire a desiring dimension, one that is not based on what the spaces lack but what they give rise to: partial objects and flows. Laurence

lures the viewer to participate in that strange mixture of real and imaginary, tempting us to consider reality in ways that disturb the sheer facticity of the real. The principle of measurement at the heart of any system that seeks to catalogue and order botanical species ignores the temporal simultaneity of physical growth and change. Meanwhile life systems are mobile and indeterminate in form, relying on a simultaneous flow and flux that is ultimately open to new directions, each change in the system does not constitute an unvarying immobile separate entity. Rather, the creativity of any system lies in its capacity to transform, to become something new. And it is here where Laurence's use of the veil as a seeping modality of separation and her referencing of biological classificatory systems is the most critical. Poignantly querying at what point does fact end and fiction begin we begin to wonder whether or not we can really know what reality is? To state what reality actually is would undermine the very condition of transformability that life entails. Ultimately, Laurence's non-linear works evoke processes of flow and fracture, through which an admixture of excess and divergence produce coexisting territories and zones. The creation of molecular spaces expresses an ephemeral architecture that dissolves the boundary between inside and outside.

By creating a series of tiny spaces that one takes a peek into Laurence invites us to enter a delightful world of make believe and enchantment. Everything about these tiny fermenting environments perches us in between fantasy and actuality and much like Alice in Wonderland, who, after peering through the looking glass, was transported to a strange world of mystery and play Laurence entices us to discover the child within all of us once more.

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left: detail, *Medicinal garden 3*, 2002, glass, Marblo, acrylic, plants, minerals, oil, pigments

above left: detail, *Trace elements (Botanical/endangered)* 1997 glass, oil, wood

above centre: detail, *After Farnsworth* 2002, acrylic, duraclear, Marblo, steel

above right: detail, *Ghost glasshouse* acrylic, Marblo, oil, steel

inside fold: detail, *Greenspace 1* duraclear, glass, stainless steel

front cover: detail, *Medicinal Garden 4* 2002 glass, Marblo, acrylic, plants, minerals, oil

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