

Matter of the Masters
Art Gallery of New South Wales
Janet Laurence

in association with:
Rembrandt And The Dutch Golden Age
Masterpieces From The Rijksmuseum



Janet Laurence
The matter of the masters



Janet Laurence's *The matter of the masters* explores the 'physiology of a painting' in her modular vitrine and haunting images derived from botanical illustrations and x-ray fluorescence scans. The work is inspired by conservation research and analysis undertaken on Dutch old master paintings in the Rijksmuseum in the Netherlands, especially works by Rembrandt, and supported by the conservation department of the Art Gallery of NSW. The study of artist's materials and their origins, is of interest to Laurence who explores similar intersections of art, science and nature in her multi-disciplinary practice.



Mapping X-ray Fluorescence

Archival cotton rag with ultra chrome pigment inks
600 x 3150mm

In *Mapping x-ray fluorescence* 2017, Janet Laurence has transformed a by-product of conservation analyses into a hauntingly beautiful work of art. The sequence of ghostly black and white images in this work are derived from X-ray fluorescence (XRF) readings of Rembrandt's painting *Portrait of Dr Ephraim Bueno* (1599-1665) 1646-1647. This cutting-edge technology is used by conservators to determine the elemental and chemical make-up of paintings, so that they can better understand how they were made. The fluctuating areas of white in each image represent the various elements found within the work's paint layers such as iron, calcium, lead, potassium and mercury



Plants Bleed Lakes 2017

600 x 4200mm
Dibond mirror, C type silver halide print on clear polyester (Duraclear) mounted on acrylic

A spectral range of colours sourced from plants is paired with their botanical illustrations to reveal the scientific origins. Colours created by plants, often referred to as 'lakes' are transparent and fugitive by nature, like nature.



Matter of the Masters

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Rembrandt's paintings have been the focus of forensic examination partly because very few details of his studio practice were recorded during his lifetime. The mystery and intrigue surrounding his materials and working methods was so great that he was likened to a sorcerer and an alchemist by his admirers. Here, Laurence poetically illuminates an element of chemistry and alchemy in Rembrandt's paintings by highlighting the incredible processes of transmutation that animal and plant matter have undergone to become a work of art.

Laurence explores the 'physiology of a painting' in her modular vitrine and haunting images derived from botanical illustrations and x-ray fluorescence scans. She has sourced from natural history collections raw pigments and binders commonly found in paintings and presents these substances like scientific experiments or specimens in a 'cabinet of curiosity'. In providing an artistic interpretation of the palette of Rembrandt and other Dutch masters, Laurence stresses that all matter stems from the environment and that nature and culture are deeply entwined.











Installation Views. Janet Laurence, *The matter of the masters*, 2017
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