

Sue Lovegrove*Meltwater*

22 November to 14 December 2024

The experience of sitting still, quietly watching and bearing witness to a glacier imperceptibly melt is both compelling and horrifying. Over the next century, 80% of Europe's glaciers will completely melt and become extinct due to irreversible human induced global warming. In 2014 a glacier in Iceland, Okjökull, was declared extinct, and there are now glaciers in the alps that have been reduced to remnant patches of 'dead ice', (ice that is no longer moving). The temperature in the Arctic is rising faster than anywhere else in the world and as a consequence Arctic ice is melting at an alarming rate. The impact of this melting will forever change the cultural and natural landscapes of Arctic countries and the European Alps with catastrophic ecological consequences. As well as that there is the tragic loss of the uniquely beautiful and fragile aesthetics that glacial landscapes embody.

This series of paintings is based on my research trip to Iceland last year when I was able to crawl around, get up close to, listen to and gaze down on several different glaciers. The sheer beauty of the surface with its wrinkled sculpted skin, the scale of the rivers of ice plummeting down from 2,000 metres to sea level in a space of just a few kilometres and the overwhelming sense of vulnerability and fragility was mesmerising. One of the things that struck me so profoundly was the sense of movement and life that was encapsulated in the stillness of the sculptural forms, created by the constant sounds of running meltwater beneath the ice, the groaning of shifting ice within its belly and the occasional collapse of the ice breaking off. I have tried to capture this sense of movement and the life force within the glacier by focussing on the glacial meltwater.

The paintings shift between abstraction and figuration as I bring together different viewpoints including aerial mapping of the vast, sediment rich, braided river systems flowing from the melting ice and the sculptural forms, the crevasses and seracs of the glacier in a precarious state of collapse floating in their own meltwater to highlight the glacier's scale, beauty, transience and fragility. I intend to draw attention to what is at stake and what the potential loss is.

In this series I have continued to use fields of repetitive tiny white brush marks that have become a kind of signature mark making in my paintings. They echo my underlying desire for a minimalist abstraction based on the homeostatic rhythms of the body as well as the shimmering pulse of energy found within the landscape. The repetitive act of painting these tiny brush marks generates a stillness contained within the movement of the image. The accumulation of the lines into a sequential field of marks is both miniscule and expansive at the same time reflecting the ephemeral and ongoing transformation of the solidity of ice melting to liquid. For me the colour of white has become synonymous with a multitude of ideas and concepts including the colour of ice, the colour of the cold air biting your cheeks, the colour of the wind, the colour of light reflecting on water, the colour of time and the colour of movement.

My aim in these paintings is to create meditative quiet images that reflect the precarious existence of the glacial ice, its fragility in the current state of ecological stress and which stimulates a sense of

wonder and beauty in the viewer. I hope to quietly shift people's understanding of our relationship to the landscape and our responsibilities towards it, albeit slowly. Glaciers are living ecosystems that need our respect, care and protection in order for them to survive.

- Sue Lovegrove, 2024

Sue Lovegrove's works reflect her close relationship to the natural environment, her relationship to place and her concerns around environmental issues. Her paintings explore the interplay between surface and depth; with layers of subtle washes creating an exquisite depth and fine delicate lines, produced with highly detailed and exquisitely fine brushwork, creating rhythms and patterns of movement across the surface. Combining her knowledge of both Persian miniature painting and European watercolour traditions, Sue brings historical landscape painting into a 21st Century context. Bridging abstraction and figuration, Sue's paintings are sensory responses to landscape that sing with representations of shimmering water, light, air, space and are vibrant with the rhythm of wind and weather.

Born in Adelaide, Sue Lovegrove graduated from ANU School of Art with a Bachelor of Visual Arts in 1990 and a PhD in 2002. Her PhD research was on Aboriginal women's painting from the desert with a focus on Indigenous perceptions of pictorial and cultural space in painting through experience of everyday life. Sue has undertaken numerous residencies in remote locations including Iceland, Antarctica, Macquarie Island, Maatsuyker Island and Tasman Island and, in 2015, she studied Persian miniature painting at The Prince's Foundation in London. In 2018, she was awarded an Australia Council Grant to publish 'The Voice of Water' in collaboration with Tasmanian poet Adrienne Eberhard, bringing together Adrienne's poems and Sue's paintings. Sue won the 2020 Elaine Bermingham National Watercolour Prize in Landscape Painting and was awarded a Highly Commended in the 2017 Hadley's Art Prize. Sue has had over 30 solo exhibitions around Australia and her work is represented in numerous private and public collections including the National Gallery of Australia, National Gallery of Victoria, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Parliament House, Macquarie Bank, Canberra Museum and Gallery and the University of Canberra. Sue works and lives in Luruwita/Tasmania.