Glacier’s Lament
Jiabao Li, Cooper Galvin
2021, Audio Visual, Performance

https://www.jiabaoli.org/glacier

Glaciers are sentinels of climate change. They are the most visible evidence of global warming today. This series of work embodies the stunning beauty, rapid change, fragility, destructive power, and magnificence of glaciers. At the same time, they challenge the audience with the dramatic, irreversible ecological damages from climate change.

There are four color cards in PANTONE for glacier blue. However, in real glaciers, this blue color is variable and dynamic. As glaciers are disappearing, this unique blue is also disappearing. The blue color in the hanging color comparison tube was sampled and blended by the artist from glaciers in Alaska. When one glacier calving happens in the world, one color comparison tube fell down. At the end of the exhibition, all 60 tubes fell down, forming a painting on the canvas beneath.
In Glacier’s Lament, we used data from glacier melting in the past 60 years to compose music and dance with local musicians who have witnessed the recession of the Mendenhall glacier over their lifetimes in Juneau, Alaska. Each note is one season in a year. In the winter, the glacier is frozen so the pitch is low. In the summer, the melting rate rises so the pitch is high. Towards the end, the melting overflows into spring and autumn, and the melting in the summer becomes faster. We filmed the artists performing the piece on the glacier, in collaboration with the glacier’s own sounds.

Technical Requirements:
This exhibition is viewable online at any time without specific technical setup. Both the video and light installation will be presented via a talk at the conference.

Previous exhibitions:
- Anchorage Museum, Alaska, 2021
- Donghu Shan Art Museum, China, Jul–Nov 2020
- Global Just Recovery Gathering, Apr 2021
- Artists in Nature International Network, Dynamic natural connections, 2021
- STARTS Prize, 2021
- Fast Company World Changing Ideas Award, 2021
- Broto Art-Climate-Science, Nov–Dec 2020

Credits:
- Artist and Director: Jiabao Li
- Producer: Cooper Galvin
- Videography Director: Ryan Cortes Perez
- Composer: Lindsay Clark
- Choreographer: Anouk Otsea
- Cellist: James Cheng
- Data Sonifier: Jiabao Li

Data provided by glaciologist Marco Tedesco from Columbia University