

Arctic influence evident in Pumphouse exhibit

Maria Klassen
The Local

Captivating reflections of sky and sea abound in the current exhibit *High Arctic Light* at the Joyner Gallery at the Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre, the work of artist Janet Read. The journey through this engaging display of the Arctic landscape runs from now until Oct. 29.

Read is a painter, musician and poet. She grew up near Lake Simcoe and has always loved the water's edge. During artist residencies in Newfoundland and Ireland, she sought access to the sea. This led to a lifetime investigation of the ocean — a metaphor for strength and fragility. Water in its many forms continues to inspire her work. She says she does not use photographs, and does not work on site. Read paints from memory of what she has seen on her travels.

She says she hopes to forge a connection between her work and the audience, inviting them to experience the Arctic landscape on a deeply emotional level. Read

uses an array of mediums such as linen canvas instead of cotton, and hybrid drawing and painting on Dura-Lar. The hybrid combination consists of oil and graphite powder. Dura-Lar is a clear, glossy polyester film, used as an artwork surface for permanent inks. Her interpretation of light, colour and shape invokes an emotional resonance into a mysterious landscape.

Read says her experience in the Arctic changed her colour palette towards azure blues and icy aquas, with just a touch of reds and purples, hinting at the wildflowers of the arctic tundra or the lights hidden in the ice. Blue is a dominant colour. It can suggest the depth of an iceberg, in the layering process of her work, or the knowledge of a world rich in colour below a frozen surface. She translates her personal dialogue with the landscape into a visual language. All of her Arctic works have a sense of space and light that combine to create a transcendental experience for the viewer.

At the heart of this exhibition lies a spiritual response to the landscape



Artist Janet Read with two of her paintings on display at the Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre: *Tundra Light* and *Arctic Seas*. (Aimee Medina)

and the imperilled ecosystems of the North. Read says she hopes her work will heighten awareness and nurture a sense of stewardship for the delicate equilibrium of our planet. The urgent environmental challenges that confront the high Arctic include the rapid degrada-

tion of permafrost, sea ice and glaciers.

Read's ongoing body of work presents landscapes of consciousness, from being in the natural world in the Arctic, and from encounters with those for whom the high north is both wild and home.

"My paintings are re-

flexive of my personal experiences, always aware the indigenous voices must be heard to tell their own stories and history," she says. "My work tells the story of a visitor, a sojourner, to a remote and sublime region of Canada."

The opening reception will be held Sunday, Oct.

15, from 2 to 4 p.m., with Read offering comments around 2:30 p.m. Come out and chat with the artist personally, savour her artwork, connect with fellow art enthusiasts over refreshments, and enjoy an assortment of wine provided by Chateau des Charmes.