

## Climate catastrophe explored in performance art at Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki



Photo courtesy of Kirsty Blake. Image source:  
<https://twitter.com/alastairprior/>

**Acclaimed New Zealand artist Alicia Frankovich, whose large-scale choreographic performances have been shown at major art venues and events around the world, brings a striking new work to Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki. Responding to one of the most pressing global issues – climate change and its effects – Frankovich interprets the Australian bushfires of 2019–2020 in an original performance work for New Zealand audiences.**

On 1 January 2020, parts of Aotearoa New Zealand woke up to an orange sky that would be experienced around the country throughout the first week of the year. Caused by a 5.5 million km<sup>2</sup> expanse of thick smoke, it originated from bushfires burning at unprecedented scale along Australia's East Coast.

*AQ/2020*, a commissioned performance work from New Zealand artist Alicia Frankovich, draws upon the imagery, personal stories and news media that emerged during the Australian bush fire season of summer 2019–2020. The work will be presented at Auckland Art Gallery for two weeks from 21 October 2020.

Auckland Art Gallery Director Kirsten Lacy, says, 'Alicia Frankovich's *AQ/2020* is an acutely relevant work about the critical state of our environment, and introduces climate issues as a key theme in the Gallery's forward programme. This topic is critical for our community. Our audiences. Ourselves.'

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Frankovich explains: ‘The title, AQI2020, refers to the Air Quality Index, a scale to measure air pollution and associated risks. AQI2020 stems from my firsthand experience of sustained, severe smoke levels that infiltrated my Canberra apartment where I was living and rose to alarming levels, with one notable occasion over New Year’s Eve 2020. The region was surrounded by smoke – from the Orroral Valley and Currowan fires – which lingered for more than 60 days. Over the evening of 31 December 2019 and into 1 January 2020, the Air Quality Index in Canberra peaked at levels 26 times those deemed hazardous.’

Auckland Art Gallery Curator, Contemporary Art, Natasha Conland says, ‘Alicia Frankovich is one of the preeminent New Zealand artists of her generation. She is part of a global art movement that responds to and reinterprets contemporary life through performance and movement. *AQI2020* is an ambitious work that powerfully reflects on the contemporary challenges of climate change.’

Frankovich, who has been based in Berlin, Canberra and Melbourne since beginning her career in Auckland, is known for her expansive performance and installation works, including recent large-scale works at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney; and Palais de Tokyo, Paris.

Frankovich’s performances are part of a new wave of movement works linking the sculpture, dance, sound, and endurance. Her work typically includes a cast of diverse ‘real world’ participants and uses source material from news media, social media and lived experience to explore human relationships.

For *AQI2020*, Frankovich draws on social media images of the bushfires – in particular, an image shared on Twitter showing a group of people who had fled from a caravan park in Batesman Bay, NSW, to converge in thick orange smoke on a nearby beach. Combining elements of choreography, sculpture and installation, *AQI2020* will feature performers inside a large, transparent orange box that echoes daylight distilled through an orange smoke-filled sky. Acting out a choreography based on experiences, anecdotes and images, the performers will respond to the bushfire season.

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**For images and interviews**

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**Exhibition details**

*Alicia Frankovich: AQI2020*  
  
**When:**  
 Wednesday 21 October–  
 Wednesday 4 November 2020  
  
 11.30am–3.30pm daily  
  
**Where:**  
 Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki  
 Cnr Kitchener and Wellesley Streets  
 Auckland, New Zealand

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### About the artist

Alicia Frankovich was born in Tauranga, New Zealand, and lives and works in Melbourne. She has a BVA in sculpture from AUT, Auckland (2002) and an MFA from Monash University (2016). She received an Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship to undertake a PhD at Monash University. Frankovich is known for her performances, sculptures and videos and for her enquiry into exhibition situations that engage viewers within exhibition formats. Recent shows and performance commissions include *The Work*, Kaldor Public Art Projects, Sydney (2019); *Microchimerism*, *Starkwhite*, Auckland (2019); *After Blue Marble*, KUB Billboards, Kunsthaus Bregenz (2018); *Atlas of the Living World*, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam (2017); *OUTSIDE BEFORE BEYOND*, Kunstverein für die Rheinlande und Westfalen, Düsseldorf (2017); and the TarraWarra Biennale (2016).

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