

elixir

JANET LAURENCE

The Echigo Tsumari Triennale is a visionary project under the directorship of Fram Kitagawa and Art Front. It is regarded as the major event in the Japanese contemporary art calendar while at the same time managing to involve the local community to realise and then maintain the projects.

The Triennial has commissioned project artists such as Christian Boltanski, Magdalena Jetelova and Yayoi Kasuma. Architectural projects have also been commissioned including MRDV's No Butai Cultural Centre—a white building that disappears in the deep winter snow—and Takaharu and Yui Tezuka's Museum of Natural Science built from red rust cor-ten steel and bunkered into the landscape.

Elixir is a site-specific permanent artwork that forms part of the 'necklace' of art, architectural and landscape projects that are transforming a mountainous traditional rice-farming community and its spectacular landscape with its radical seasonal changes in Echigo Tsumari, Nigata Prefecture, Japan.

The Elixir house is a small, restored, traditional wooden storage-house. The interior of the dark wooden house is transformed into a laboratory-like space evoking an old apothecary and a botanical museum. It is an experiential space that immerses one in the essence of the surrounding landscape.

The wooden interior room of Elixir is lined and layered with glass veils stained with plant fluids, and inscribed with the plant names, botanical drawings and medicinal remedies from the surrounding environment (sourced from ancient books and individuals within the region). Around the edge hang elongated blown-glass vials, each containing plant specimens that exhibit the plant used in the region's elixirs.



In the centre of the room is a layered cantilevered glass bench, laden with glass laboratory vessels. These are filled with the elixirs: extracts of plants mixed with *shochu* as potions which one takes from tiny glass beakers. A glass box containing the clear *shochu* fluid sits above, playing out the Japanese poetic of light from shadow in reflections. Janet Laurence, *Elixir in vials*

This art project belongs to the ‘Glasshouse’ series of works. These often interface with architecture and landscape to create elemental, immersive and enmeshed spaces where I use a language of porosity and fluidity to create a fusion with the environment to bring us into contact with the life-world. This slowed, in-between space where fixity of meaning becomes fugitive enables notions of transience and transformation to be invoked.

These works form an exploration of reflected and veiled environments in the physical world. They allow one to engage with a way of looking within the world rather than at the world. They invite the viewer to experience themselves through materiality in a reflective space of the ‘natural’ environment.

JANET LAURENCE is a mixed media, installation artist whose work has been included in major survey exhibitions and collections, nationally and internationally. She is well known for her site-specific and public works often collaborating with architects and landscape architects.
