

# Anna McKee

## *WAIS Reliquary*

2014

**Silk, glass, wood, water, and sound**

### **Courtesy of the Artist**

Traditionally, a reliquary was a container used to hold the relics or physical remains of important religious figures such as saints or martyrs. Anna McKee's sculptural *WAIS Reliquary* holds the artifacts of the Earth: thousands-of-years-old water samples collected by scientists from ice cores on the West Antarctic Ice Sheet (WAIS). McKee's installation translates scientific data related to the ice cores into a colorful visual form.

Although McKee's graph-like artwork at first appears abstract, it actually represents West Antarctica's temperature history over the past 68,000 years. Each colored silk strand represents 100 years of ice, and each glass ampule (a small sealed vial often used by scientists or medical doctors) is filled with water extracted from the ice. The changing colors reflect the changing conditions of the ice over time—in essence serving as a reliquary or lamentation for climate change.

The sound you hear is a composition by McKee's collaborator Steve Peters. He recorded and electronically processed the tinkling sound of the glass ampules to evoke the air bubbles, gasses, fissures, and layers contained in the ice.

## **Special thanks to Anna McKee's WAIS Reliquary Team**

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