

Ruth MacLennan

A FOREST TALE



Image above and below: Ruth MacLennan, *A Forest Tale*, 2022, Still. Image courtesy of the artist.

The British Premiere of The Film *A Forest Tale* by Ruth MacLennan

23 February 2023 – 1 April 2023

Preview: Wednesday, 22 February 2023, 6–8pm

Open Monday–Friday 1–6pm; Saturday 10am–5pm

High-res still images can be found [here](#). All images: courtesy of the artist.

Pushkin House presents the latest film by **Ruth MacLennan**, shot in Russia and finished one day before the beginning of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. Consisting of several different narratives, *A Forest Tale* portrays the complex world of the sub-arctic boreal forests of Russia, which serves as both a habitat and a source of life for many people. As a community, they use advanced equipment, while enthusiastically reviving obsolete technologies that may offer more sustainable alternatives; they concern themselves with the past of their families, as well as consider leaving their lives in the North behind; and while they actively participate in the lives of their communities, they equally have to rely on their own resilience.

Ruth MacLennan said: *“This film was shot over two weeks in December 2021 in remote areas of European Arctic Russia. The northern winter is a time for gathering round a fire to find comfort and delight in sharing stories and food. The unfinished stories in A Forest Tale are collectively made, words in motion, fashioned by hand, voice and long experience, tales of a place through time. Time here is elastic, playing backwards and forwards, as people and forest hold out against*



present threats including climate change, industrial logging and political adventurism, working to survive and flourish in the future. The trees – larch, pine, fir and birch – and forests are the matter and world of these stories and lives, incarnate in the houses, tools, artefacts, food and heat.”

“While A Forest Tale was being filmed, Russia was assembling thousands of troops on the border with Ukraine, and a sense of foreboding was in the air. We spoke of our fears of what might be about to happen. But the film was finished before the invasion of Ukraine, and therefore it seems important to let the voices and places of that moment speak for themselves, and not distort them with hindsight. Something good happened in that little corner of Russia, though the war can make it hard for people to appreciate that anymore. A film, at least for its duration, replays that elastic time again, conjuring a ‘what if’ to replace the desperate feeling of ‘if only’.”

A Forest Tale was co-commissioned by [Film and Video Umbrella](#) and [Arctic Art Institute](#).

Notes to Editors

Key details

Ruth Maclennan *A Forest Tale*
23 February 2023 – 1 April 2023

Location

Pushkin House
5a Bloomsbury Square London WC1A 2TA

Opening Times:
Monday–Friday 1–6pm; Saturday 10am–5pm

Admission: Free

Social media:

Instagram: [@pushkinhouselondon](https://www.instagram.com/pushkinhouselondon)

Twitter: [@Pushkin_House](https://twitter.com/Pushkin_House)

Facebook: [Pushkin House](https://www.facebook.com/PushkinHouse)

Youtube: [Pushkin House](https://www.youtube.com/PushkinHouse)

About the artist:

Ruth Maclennan (b. London, 1969) is an artist and writer. Her work includes films, multi-channel moving image works, photographs, performances and writing. Her recent films examine how the climate emergency has irrevocably transformed ways of seeing and understanding landscape and place – both for inhabitants, and as representation. Maclennan exhibits widely internationally. Her film *Treeline* (2021, commissioned by FVU and Forestry England) is made from hundreds of clips of footage of forests submitted by people across the world, and is currently on show in Artists' Film International at the Whitechapel Gallery, London. Since April 2020, Maclennan has contributed to the international collective, The Crown Letter. She is known for her films set in post-Soviet countries, including *Call of North*, *Hero City* and *Cloudberries*, filmed in Arctic Russia (London International Film Festival), *Theodosia*, filmed in Crimea a year before its annexation by Russia (supported by a Joanna Drew Travel Award), and *Capital* and *Anarcadia*, filmed in Kazakhstan. Exhibitions include *Icebreaker Dreaming* (solo, Pushkin House), *Anarcadia* (solo, FVU/John Hansard Gallery), *Terrapolis* (French School, Athens), *State of Mind* (London School of Economics), and *The Body. The Ruin* (Ian Potter Museum, Melbourne). She has a PhD from the Royal College of Art and is Institute Associate at Scott Polar Institute, University of Cambridge. Her films are distributed by LUX. <http://www.ruthmaclennan.com/>

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