

# On the Cold Edge: Creative Meditations on Svalbard

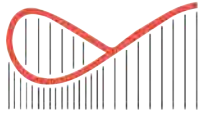
**REGENERATION:**  
Environment, Art, Culture

Vol. 2, Issue 1-2 • 2026

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## **On the Cold Edge: Creative Meditations on Svalbard**

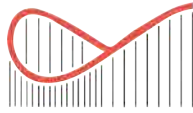
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### **Table of Contents**

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
Editorial introduction, On the Cold Edge: Environment, Art, Culture and the Arctic Circle, <b>Hester Blum, Candace Jensen, and Jacinda Russell</b>	
<b>Heroism</b>	<b>9</b>
Subjective Heroism 01, 02, 03, <b>Andrea Legge</b>	10
Anchorage at Virgohamna, <b>Harley Cowan</b>	13
Arctic: Crevasse, <b>Hannah Larrabee</b>	14
Final Day @ Gipsvika, <b>Hannah Larrabee</b>	16
Jessica Creane, <b>Harley Cowan</b>	17
Blah Arctic, <b>Jessica Creane</b>	19
Captain Jonathan de Rooij; Estée Turk, Sailor; Matu O’Flaherty, First Mate; Sarah Gerats, Expedition Leader, <b>Harley Cowan</b>	29
<b>Research</b>	<b>33</b>
Heartbeat. Port LYR, <b>Sergei Chernikov</b>	34
What Remains; Flotsam & Jetsam, Nordkappbukta, <b>Dianne Chisholm</b>	39
Drift, <b>Felicia LeRoy</b>	43
<b>Found Objects</b>	<b>46</b>
One Rock; Untitled, <b>Jacinda Russell</b>	47
Sundry Articles Found, <b>Laurie Glover</b>	51
Let’s Make a Deal; Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been, <b>Joan Albaugh</b>	67
Whale Bone, <b>Harley Cowan</b>	69

<b>Performative Actions</b>	<b>70</b>
Whale Bone, <b>Alexandra Lockhart</b>	71
Supporting Love, <b>Leonor Anthony</b>	72
Sergei Chernikov with Yeti Mask, <b>Harley Cowan</b>	75
The Things We Bring, <b>Joan Albaugh</b>	76
The Cuban Flag, <b>Leonor Anthony</b>	77
Anchorage at Sallyhamna; Svalbard Global Seed Vault; Jäderin Expedition Landing Marker, 1898, <b>Harley Cowan</b>	79
Macrophones; Body of Air: On Infrasound and Sensing Crisis, <b>Brian House</b>	83
<b>Objectice</b>	<b>87</b>
Brash Ice, Spitsbergen (I & II); Ablation, <b>Felicia LeRoy</b>	88
Aglarond, Esmarkbreen 78° 17.9' N 013° 56.1' E; Etele, Forelandsundet 78° 33.1' N 011° 16.7' E; Ichorous, Sóre Castrénoya 80° 32.7' N 019° 59.4' E; Lún, Monacobreen 79° 30.0' N 012° 33.0' E; Sérac, Selvågen 78° 33.1' N 011° 16.7' E; Thú, Bjónesskága 78° 34.3' N 012° 24.4' E; Vesicle, Nordkappbukta 80° 30.9' N 019° 54.9' E, <b>Paula Sćiuk</b>	90
Bergy Seltzer, <b>Felicia LeRoy</b>	97
A Thousand Words for Ice, Dahlbreenbukta; Moon Under Virgo Bay, Danskøya, <b>Osceola Refetoff</b>	98
Dahlbreen Glacier, <b>Dianne Chisholm</b>	100
Esmarkbreen Glacier; Esmarkbreen Glacier, <b>Harley Cowan</b>	102
<b>Walri</b>	<b>106</b>
Walruses at Smeerenburg, <b>Hannah Larrabee</b>	107
Walruses of Smeerenburg, <b>Harley Cowan</b>	108
80° North, <b>Hannah Larrabee</b>	110
Walrus Voyeur, <b>Candace Jensen</b>	112
<b>Reading the Landscape</b>	<b>113</b>
Mirari, Chermsideøya 80° 28.2' N 019° 54.8' E, <b>Paula Sćiuk</b>	114
"The World Is Here Too": Out of Place in Svalbard," <b>Hester Blum</b>	115
Anchorage at Gipsvika; Havhestbreen Glacier; Andrée's Launch Site, Virgohamna, <b>Harley Cowan</b>	126
Resting Place, <b>Joan Albaugh</b>	129
Vox Populi Vox Dei, <b>Candace Jensen</b>	130
Asemic Land Alphabet, <b>Candace Jensen</b>	145
Moonrise, Esmarkbreen, <b>Harley Cowan</b>	150

<b>Intimacy</b>	<b>152</b>
Arctic: Intimacy, <b>Hannah Larrabee</b>	153
Reclining Nude #Erikbreen; Reclining Nude #274, <b>Alma Noor</b>	154
Collapsing Landscape: No One Surface the Same as Any Other, <b>Jia-Jen Lin</b>	155
Arctic: Lover, <b>Hannah Larrabee</b>	157
Zombie Ice: Ancient Ice Sample #01; Zombie Ice: Ancient Ice Sample #02, <b>Zoriça Markovich</b>	158
Isbjørn, Stubendorffbreen, Dianne Chisholm	160
Svalbard Series: Movement Vignettes: Øy; Ice of Breen; Felt Essence of:; <b>Alexandra Lockhart</b>	162
 <b>Frames &amp; Infrastructure</b>	 <b>165</b>
Salt. Water. Obstruction., <b>Jacinda Russell</b>	166
Cars on Unnamed Road, Adventfjorden, <b>Osceola Refetoff</b>	171
No Easy Way Into Another World; A Defeat Is Better Than Nothing At All, <b>Terhi Nieminen</b>	172
Helke, Hornbækpollen 79° 36.2' N 012° 38.7' E, <b>Paula Sćiuk</b>	175
Running and Standing Rigging, S/V Antigua, <b>Harley Cowan</b>	176
 <b>Subjectice</b>	 <b>177</b>
Smeerenburgbreen, <b>Ashlin Aronin</b>	178
The Polar Silk Road, <b>Zoriça Markovich</b>	179
Dying in Dreams, <b>Hannah Larrabee</b>	181
A Road, or So it Seemed, <b>Joan Albaugh</b>	182
Dahlbreen Glacier, <b>Hannah Larrabee</b>	183
Ice Memory, <b>Zoriça Markovich</b>	184
 <b>Loss and Reflection</b>	 <b>185</b>
Untitled (Esmarkbreen), 2022, <b>Drea Zlanabitnig</b>	186
Farthest North, <b>Dianne Chisholm</b>	187
Subjective Heroism 04, 05, 06, <b>Andrea Legge</b>	189
Arctic: Chicxulub Asteroid; Widenfjorden, <b>Hannah Larrabee</b>	192
Impermanence, <b>Alexandra Lockhart</b>	195
 <b>The Voyage Home</b>	 <b>196</b>
Subjective Heroism 07, 08, 09, <b>Andrea Legge</b>	197
Approaching Svalbard, <b>Osceola Refetoff</b>	200
 <b>Contributor Artist Statements</b>	 <b>202</b>



**REGENERATION:**  
Environment, Art, Culture

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## Introduction: On the Cold Edge: Environment, Art, Culture and the Arctic Circle

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A multimodal collaboration between artists, writers, and scholars. This piece emerged from an expedition to the Arctic archipelago as part of the Arctic Circle Residency in Autumn 2022.

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The contributors to this special issue of *Regeneration* are artists, writers, and researchers who sailed around Svalbard on a tall ship with the expeditionary residency program **The Arctic Circle**. A High Arctic archipelago just 800 miles from the North Pole, Svalbard is notable for its polar bear population, substantial glaciation, geological significance, and history of mining and whaling. Over nearly three weeks in October 2022, as polar night approached, our expeditionary collective worked on creative projects during anchorages next to glaciers and shore landings on moraines, Arctic tundra, and cultural heritage sites.

Our work represents many disciplines and media: sound, painting, sculpture, data collection, poetry, fiction, nonfiction, public art, calligraphy, dance, performance, and game design. Each of us is multidisciplinary in our practice, and our projects are interested in history, presence, and futurity—in resilience and regeneration—at a time and place of environmental extremity. In addition to cameras, notebooks, laptops, and canvases, our tools and methods included hydrophones, atmospheric infrasound recorders, place-based choreography, 3D printing, pointed pen and brush calligraphy, found poetry, rock collection, and shipboard development of large-format photographic negatives in the style of historical polar expeditions.

What distinguishes The Arctic Circle from other artists and writers residencies is not just the presence of multiple armed polar bear guards at all outdoor project working sessions, nor the knee-high Arctic muck boots packed along with the tools of our practice. Strikingly, the residency is an atelier afloat, a studio aship in the Arctic Ocean. The *Antigua*, a 160-foot barquentine with a small crew of three sailors, was responsible only to wind and ice conditions and our artistic needs. We had no cell service, no internet, no news of the world, and no possibility of stepping away from our twenty-seven shipmates beyond the cordon set on shore landings by our rifle-strapped escorts. The expedition leaders were exceptionally skilled in polar survival; they are all also exceptionally skilled artists and thinkers, and we are especially glad to feature contributions by three of these Arctic polymaths (head guide Sarah Gerats, Sergei Chernikov, and Terhi Nieminen) in this special issue.

*Svalbard* is Norwegian for “cold edge.” In 1596 the Dutch navigator Willem Barentsz first approached the jagged punctures of the glaciated terrain and called the landform *Spitsbergen* or “pointed mountains.” No green land, Svalbard remains sharp, cold, and on the edge of human settlement. The archipelago lacks an Indigenous history, although Dutch, Russian Pomory, Danish, and English hunters and whalers began seasonal excursions in the late 1500s. At the turn of the twentieth century, coal mining drove the settlement of Longyearbyen, which was named for the American coal magnate John Munro Longyear. At 78° north latitude, Longyearbyen is the world’s northernmost town with a population over 1,000. Coal mining is presently

declining on Svalbard; the slopes of the mountains surrounding Longyearbyen nevertheless remain dotted with the infrastructural ruins of past mine shafts, and Russian and Norwegian miners still work the archipelago's thick, visible coal seam. Norway has administered the territory under the name Svalbard since 1925 (the historic designation "Spitsbergen," by which the archipelago was previously known, remains on the map as the largest island in the archipelago). Tourism and scientific research at the University Centre are growth industries even as Svalbard remains an industrial outpost; the median length of residency for Norwegians is only 3.6 years. Longyearbyen today has a population of around 2,300—fewer than the number of polar bears in the area—but a rich international culture animates the community, driven in part by its museums and two *in situ* artists residencies ([Artica](#) and the [Spitsbergen Artists Residency](#)).

Our own residency collective boarded the *Antigua* in Longyearbyen and slipped out of Isfjorden bound north. The ship had tiny shared cabins and just one common room that could hold us all, wedged into the stern. A small hut on the deck provided a few extra seats out of the weather; we called this coveted spot "The Quiet Car," after Amtrak's space of cellphone-free train travel. Each day, if atmospheric conditions permitted, we made two shore landings. We would gather our project materials, bundle up in cold weather safety gear, and drop into the Zodiac boats which ferried us to shore for several hours. The landings were all different: some beaches were crowded with stranded ice, others rich in Arctic tundra. Once, we communed with a huddle of 100 walruses that had hauled out on the strand next to the yellow-bricked ruins of Smeerenburg, an early seventeenth-century Dutch whaling station. We saw the remains of past visitors, their huts and abandoned tools, about which we trod carefully—in Svalbard all human detritus predating 1946 is considered "cultural heritage" and must not be disturbed.<sup>1</sup> Some of the most memorable landings were not landings at all but Zodiac cruises along the faces of calving glaciers whose colors, textures, and movements baffled our descriptive powers. Many of us at some point shed our layers and made a ceremonial plunge into the Arctic Ocean. At 4:00pm every day we were served a different freshly-made cake. In the evenings, exhausted and sense-dazzled, we took double helpings of *snert* (the Dutch name for split pea soup) and gave project presentations. Some of us contracted Covid. Packed together in a small ship several days' sail from Svalbard's only town, we took no mitigations, wore no masks, and let it run its course, luckily without serious effects (the pandemic had already postponed our residency twice). We may have been out of communication with the networked world, but as Covid reminded us—and as we were acutely aware in our own ecological and cultural meditations throughout our transit—the Arctic may look and feel otherworldly to outsiders, but has always been part of the world we inhabit.



A hot pot of *snert* (split pea soup), vegetarian and thus “for all.” Photograph by Hester Blum.

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The multimedia, interdisciplinary, creative meditations in “On the Cold Edge” are drawn from and respond to our experience of High Arctic flora and fauna; anthropogenic climate change; the history of resource extraction; the sound of calving glaciers; the Northern Lights; the rhythms of a masted sailing ship; and Svalbard’s geological marvels. While much of what is gathered here was either produced or assembled in part while on board the good ship *Antigua* or during our various landings during the residency, the collection reflects the significant processing—artistic, intellectual, situational—we have undertaken since returning from the cold edge. We recognize, too, that this collection also reflects the heterogeneity of our day jobs, as we variously returned to teaching art, writing, or gaming; working in tech, design, or architecture; creating and curating art, poetry, and dance; and guiding other Arctic visitors. These labors shaped our Svalbard artistic meditations. Our editing practice for this issue, in turn, has focused on making visible the work of assimilating and digesting how art emerges from and speaks to climate extremity. We understand “On the Cold Edge” as a curated statement. While we three have co-edited this issue, all twenty-three contributors have been our ongoing peers in reviewing the work of our collective. As such, the art and writing in “On the Cold

Edge” is often dialogic and reflects the impact that certain sites or experiences had on the whole cohort.

The Arctic icescape and landscape of our curatorial collective may be navigated in thirteen sections within *Regeneration* (the overview of contributions that follows is not comprehensive, we should note, and many of us have multiple pieces in this collection). The historical significance and ecological drama of the landing day at Smeerenburg—its northern prospect uninterrupted to the Pole—especially compelled us, for example: the pod of walruses (or **Walri**, we insist) lounging on the pebbled shore, ringed by glaciated mountains; the quiet gravity of the remains of both humans and processing vats from the early modern whaling era; a cultural heritage site strewn with snow-covered debris marking the launch sites for Swedish aeronaut S. A. Andrée’s Arctic Balloon Expedition of 1897 and Italian aviator Umberto Nobile’s airship attempt at the North Pole in 1926 (like most historical polar expeditions, both failures).

The issue’s curatorial logic was not primarily dictated by place, however, and the sections of “On the Cold Edge” bring into provocative relation our heterogeneous responses to Svalbard. **Heroism** (and its constantly shifting definitions) is a theme addressed in Harley Cowan’s updated portrait of a Crean[e] polar explorer, past and present, as well as in his photographs of the *Antigua*’s crew members. (These photos, like all Cowan’s contributions to this issue, were taken—and developed in his bunk aboard the *Antigua*—with the same large format camera technology used by the legendary photographers of polar exploration’s Heroic Age.) Hannah Larrabee’s Polaroid of the low-hanging October sun accompanies her poem “Arctic: Crevasse”; the weak-seeming sun nevertheless burned a hole through the very print, indelible imprint of the artistic process. Andrea Legge’s *Subjective Heroism* presents photogrammetric 3D model stills of the *Antigua* as interpreted by a handheld iPhone from a moving zodiac, while Jessica Creane’s *Blah Arctic* (after Amber Share’s illustrations in **Subpar Parks** of one-star National Park reviews) recasts the sublime through the entitled lens of a jaded tourist. Like Legge, Creane provides a searing, witty take on notions of bravery, egoism, and monumentalism.

Nautical data, spreadsheets, and numbers are collected, rewritten, and reassembled in a variety of mediums in **Research**. Sergei Chernikov’s *Heartbeat Port LYR* presents long-form layering of ship calls to Longyearbyen for each season, providing a data visualization of travel to Svalbard. Felicia LeRoy’s sculpture *Drift* was deployed to gather forensic information about the ship’s latitude, longitude, altitude, and knots traveled, while Dianne Chisholm’s poems “What Remains” and “Flotsam & Jetsam, Nordkappbukta” provide richly textured inventories of human polar detritus, yesterday and today. **Found Objects** continues and extends this cataloging impulse, and gathers material encountered in the landscape (driftwood in Laurie Glover’s long poem “Sundry

Articles Found”; the furtively collected pebbles in Jacinda Russell’s *One Rock*), or else transported to Svalbard for anomalous integration (the incongruous inflatable animals of Joan Albaugh’s paintings).

Many residents were drawn to the permanent and impermanent **Performative Actions** taken by visitors to Svalbard over the centuries. Dancer and choreographer Alexandra Lockhart shows how the body responds to the natural environment in a still from *Whale Bone*, for instance. Leonor Anthony laid claim to a Norwegian hunter’s shelter at Sallyhamna by planting the Cuban flag, and extended her ongoing project *Supporting Love*, in which she suspended a line of bras from *Antigua*’s mast. Sound artist Brian House’s *Macrophones* is a recording of atmospheric infrasound, or sound waves with frequencies well below human audibility; the macrophone he built allows a listener (pictured here, guide Sarah Gerats) to listen to the infrasound of a Svalbard glacier.

Ice dominated the landscape at each zodiac landing, and we examined it from both an objective and subjective viewpoint. In **Objectice**, Paula Ściuk’s photographs address the formation, disappearance, and luminosity of ice. Felicia LeRoy’s *Brash Ice, Spitsbergen (I & II)* and *Ablation*, captures the substance’s breakage and striations in glass sculptures as well as (in *Bergy Seltzer*) its rapid melting. Osceola Refetoff’s *A Thousand Words for Ice – Multispectral Exposure – Dahlbrebukta* reveals ice’s infrared spectrum, a kaleidoscope of color enhanced by filters in the photographic process. Later in the issue, in **Subjectice**, Ashlin Aronin’s sound piece *Smeerenburgreen*, Zorița Markovich’s *The Polar Silk Road* and *Ice Memory*, and Hannah Larrabee’s poems “Dying in Dreams” and “Dahlbreen Glacier” feature the artists’ navigation of their more personal encounters with the cryosphere.

**Reading the Landscape** finds Hester Blum (in her essay “The World Is Here Too”) feeling out of place in the Arctic, even as the art of Albaugh, Cowan, and Ściuk featured in this section offers up various visual languages for conning the landscape. In Candace Jensen’s lyric essay “Vox Populi Vox Dei,” the runic rocks of Svalbard animate an intertextual meditation on communication and relationship. This drive to connection spurs the work of **Intimacy**, as well, notably in the marvelous formal sweep of Sarah Gerats’s diptych *Reclining Nude #Erikbreen* and in Jia-Jen Lin’s triptychs from *Collapsing Landscape*. An attention to the forms and expressions of intimacy in Chisholm’s and Larrabee’s poems in this section are in evocative communion with Lockhart’s haunting *Felt Essence* performance.

The material tools, hardware, and structures that mediated our transit through the Arctic were far from tidy or frictionless. In **Frames & Infrastructure** Russell’s *Salt. Water. Obstruction* provides an unexpected portal into photography’s polar limitations, while Terhi Nieminen’s contributions *No Easy Way Into Another World* and *A Defeat Is Better Than Nothing At All*, as well as Refetoff’s *Cars on Unnamed Road*,

suggest a wry acceptance of Svalbard’s transportation challenges. This collection concludes, perhaps inevitably, with **Loss and Reflection** and **The Voyage Home**. Drea Zlanabitnig’s photo of Esmarkbreen, one of the final glaciers we visited, captures the astonishing instance—only seconds in duration—in which a section of the ice wall turned crimson in the late-arriving dawn. Chisholm’s and Larrabee’s poems, as well as Legge’s photogrammetry in these final entries, offer a different durational sense of that brief blaze of sun, calling our attention to the fragmentary, the atomized, the refused, the edge experience. The collaborative spirit and inherently dialogic nature of the creative processes at work in “On the Cold Edge” were ever attuned to these polarities.

The language of crisis saturates climate rhetoric—particularly regarding the Arctic—and threatens the sustainability of artistic and literary practices, as well. Yet capacious possibilities for new collective modes of survival continue to emerge. Our Svalbard collective’s contributions to *Regeneration* model how creative work can develop from and respond to conditions of environmental extremity.



Group Portrait, The Arctic Circle Residency, Longyearbyen, @Osceola Refetoff 2022.

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**Notes**

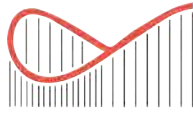
- <sup>1</sup> Svalbard Environmental Protection Act, 15 June 2001, <https://www.regjeringen.no/en/dokumenter/svalbard-environmental-protection-act/id173945/>.

**Competing Interests**

The authors of this introduction are the editors of the special issue.

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**REGENERATION:**  
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## Heroism

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A multimodal collaboration between artists, writers, and scholars. This piece emerged from an expedition to the Arctic archipelago as part of the Arctic Circle Residency in Autumn 2022.

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## Subjective Heroism 01, 02, 03

Andrea Legge



Subjective Heroism 01. Andrea Legge 2023

Photogrammetric 3D model still of SV Antigua and environment including camera POV data interpreted by handheld iPhone and Agisoft Metashape. Created October 10, 2022, at Liefdefjorden, Hornbaekpollen, Svalbard. Special thanks to The Arctic Circle Residency Program and The Canada Council for the Arts.



Subjective Heroism 02. Andrea Legge 2023

Photogrammetric 3D model still of SV Antigua under sail and environment including camera POV data interpreted by handheld iPhone and Agisoft Metashape. Created October 15, 2022, at Isafjorden, Templefjorden, Svalbard. Special thanks to The Arctic Circle Residency Program and The Canada Council for the Arts.



Subjective Heroism 03. Andrea Legge 2023

Photogrammetric 3D model (point cloud) still of SV Antigua under sail including camera POV data interpreted by handheld iPhone and Agisoft Metashape. Created October 15, 2022, at Isafjorden, Templefjorden, Svalbard. Special thanks to The Arctic Circle Residency Program and The Canada Council for the Arts.

The author declares they have no competing interests

## Anchorage at Virgohamna

Harley Cowan



*Anchorage at Virgohamna*, Silver gelatin print, 2022.

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The author declares they have no competing interests

**Arctic: Crevasse**

Hannah Larrabee

I didn't think  
Svalbard was a world  
of moss and lichen,  
especially in October,  
though certain places  
held a glaze of ice  
on each granite erratic,  
but then I didn't think  
I knew the Arctic  
before arriving;  
I was relieved  
by how little it  
cared for us  
my poems  
are an exercise  
in living in ways  
I cannot, though  
I studied, closely,  
the sharp peaks  
of the mountains,  
the moss-covered antlers,  
each glacier just out  
of reach, even the one  
I touched  
was running water  
underneath,  
it had no voice,  
if it had a voice  
the sound would break us  
into deep vermillion,  
thank God  
there are still places  
not subject to our pleasure,  
and the last morning

I took a Polaroid  
of the low Arctic sun  
and it burned a hole  
in my film, it said  
*in this blink of time*  
*you are alive*  
*look at all that you took with you—*

*November 15, 2023*

**Final Day @ Gipsvika**

Hannah Larrabee



*Final Day @ Gipsvika*, Polaroid, 3" x 4", 2022.

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The author declares they have no competing interests.

Jessica Creane  
Harley Cowan



*Jessica Creane*, Silver gelatin print, 2022.

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I collaborated with Jessica Creane, a likely relative of Tom Crean (the family spelling changed over the years), to make her portrait in the style of Frank Hurley's famous portrait of Crean with puppies. After all, I had my large format camera, black and white film, and a darkroom. Jessica, a writer, chose to hold a pen in her teeth in place of a pipe. Our tall ship had a dark, wooden door but, unlike Crean and his plethora of puppies, we had but one fully-grown dog onboard. He was named Hildago (not Hidalgo) and was brought along by our guide Piotr Kupiszewski. Hildago patiently sat for our one-second exposure, at least for the second attempt. The first time, he slowly slipped back to the floor the instant I had clicked the shutter.

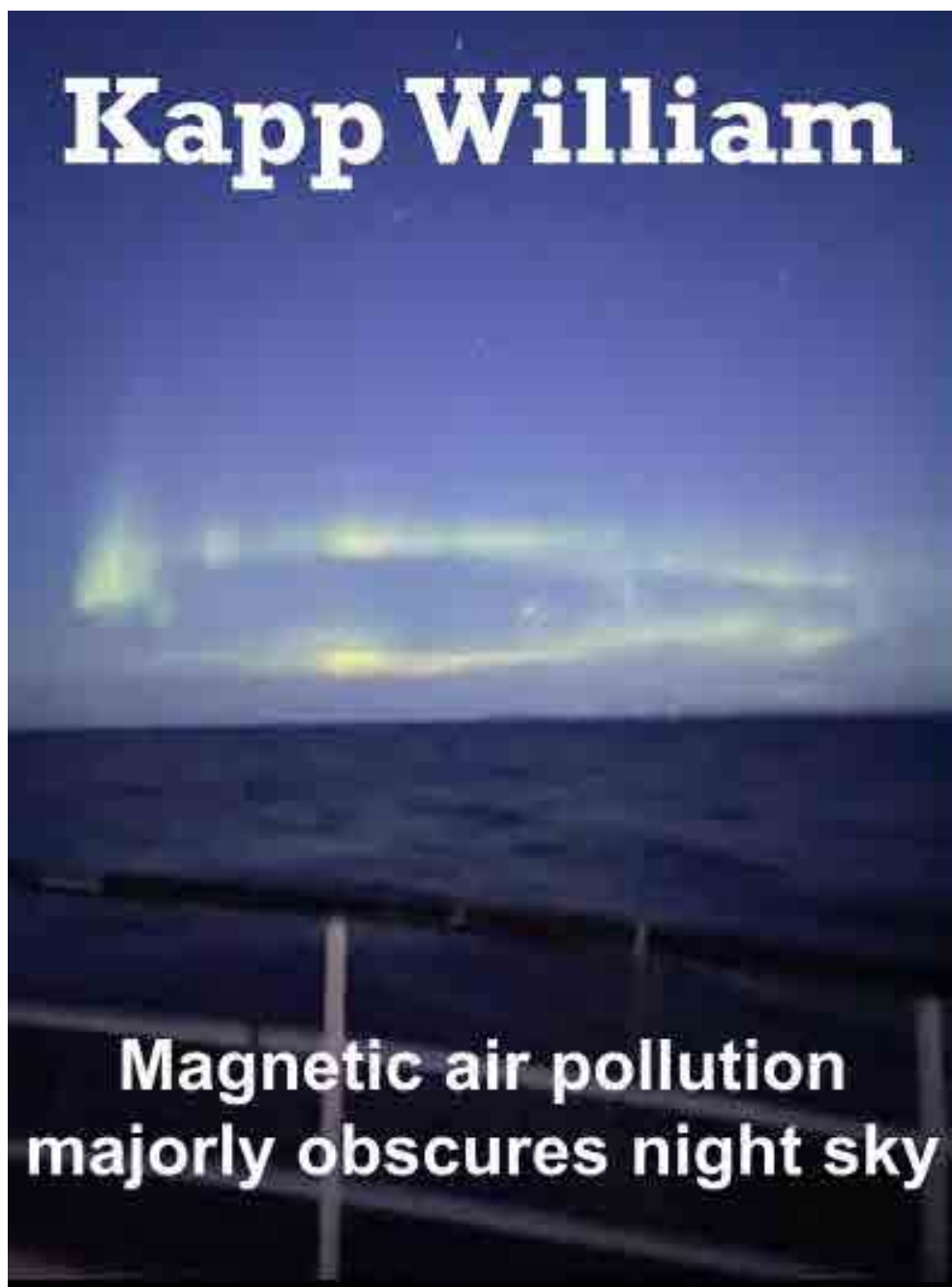
This film, like Hurley's a century earlier, was hand-developed onboard our tall ship in a makeshift darkroom.

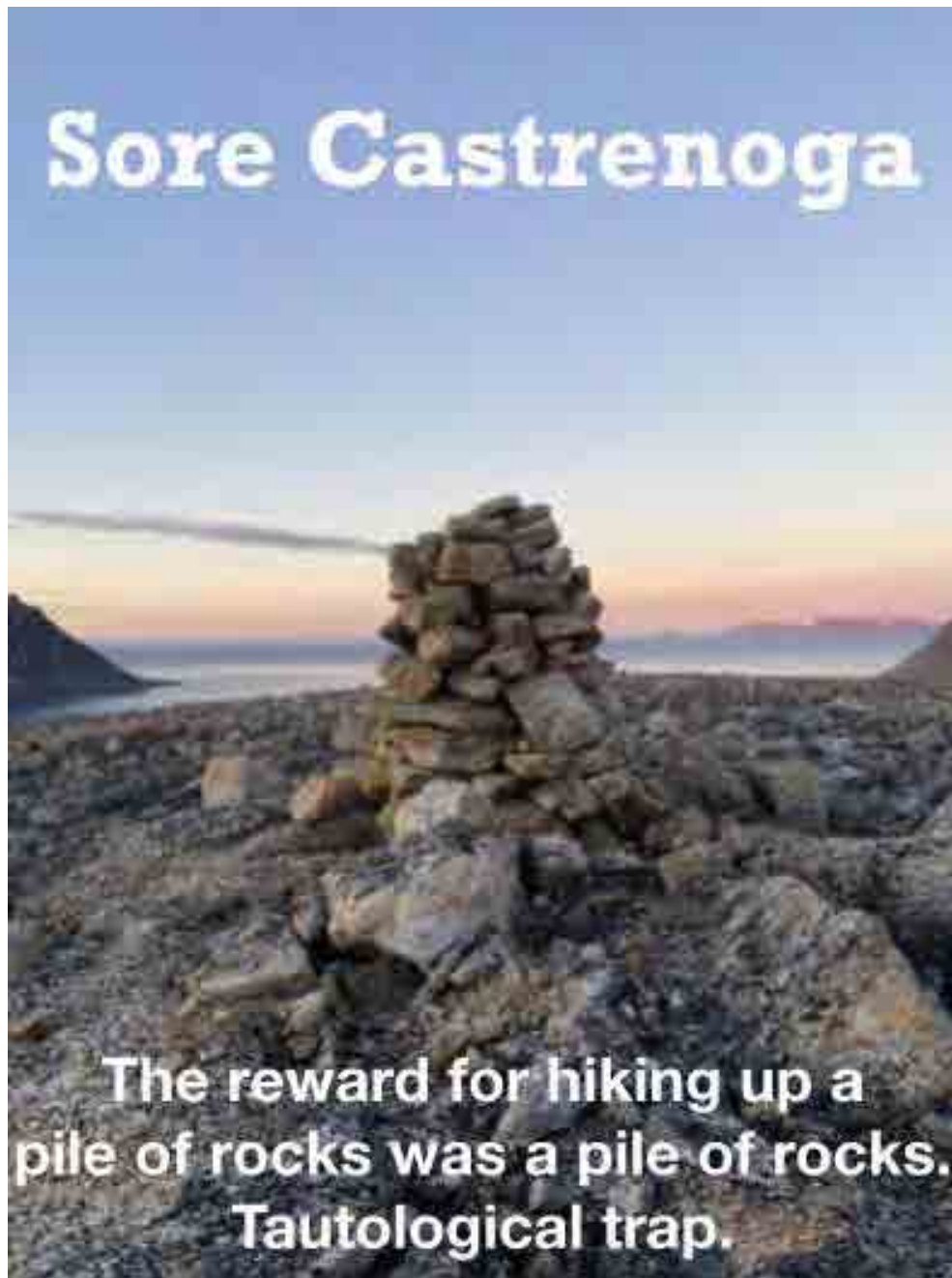


Frank Hurley (1885–1962) – National Library of Australia – *Tom Crean rears an Antarctic family*, Public Domain.

The author declares they have no competing interests.

Blah Arctic  
Jessica Creane





# Sore Castrenoga

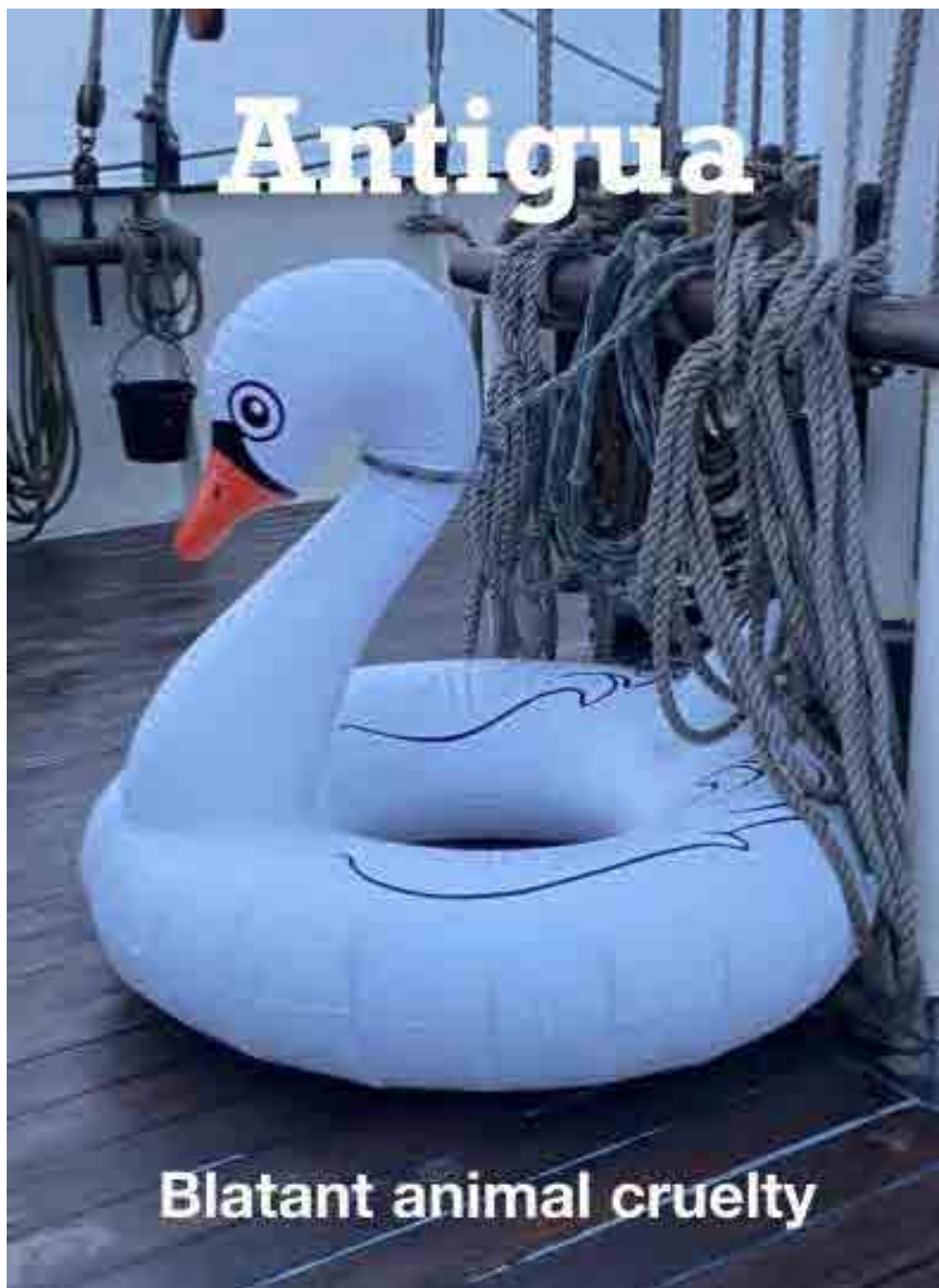
The reward for hiking up a pile of rocks was a pile of rocks.  
Tautological trap.





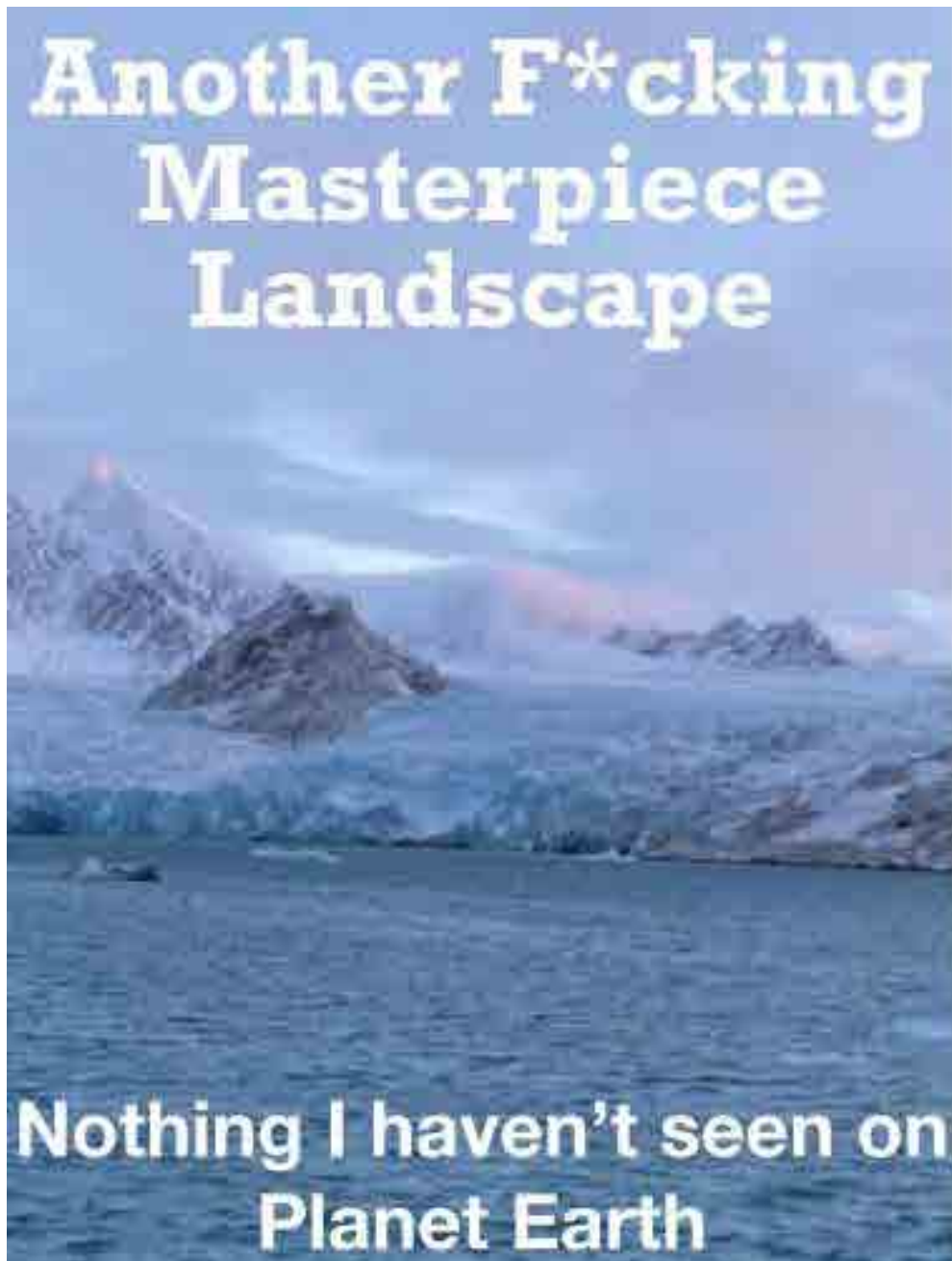
# The Open Sea

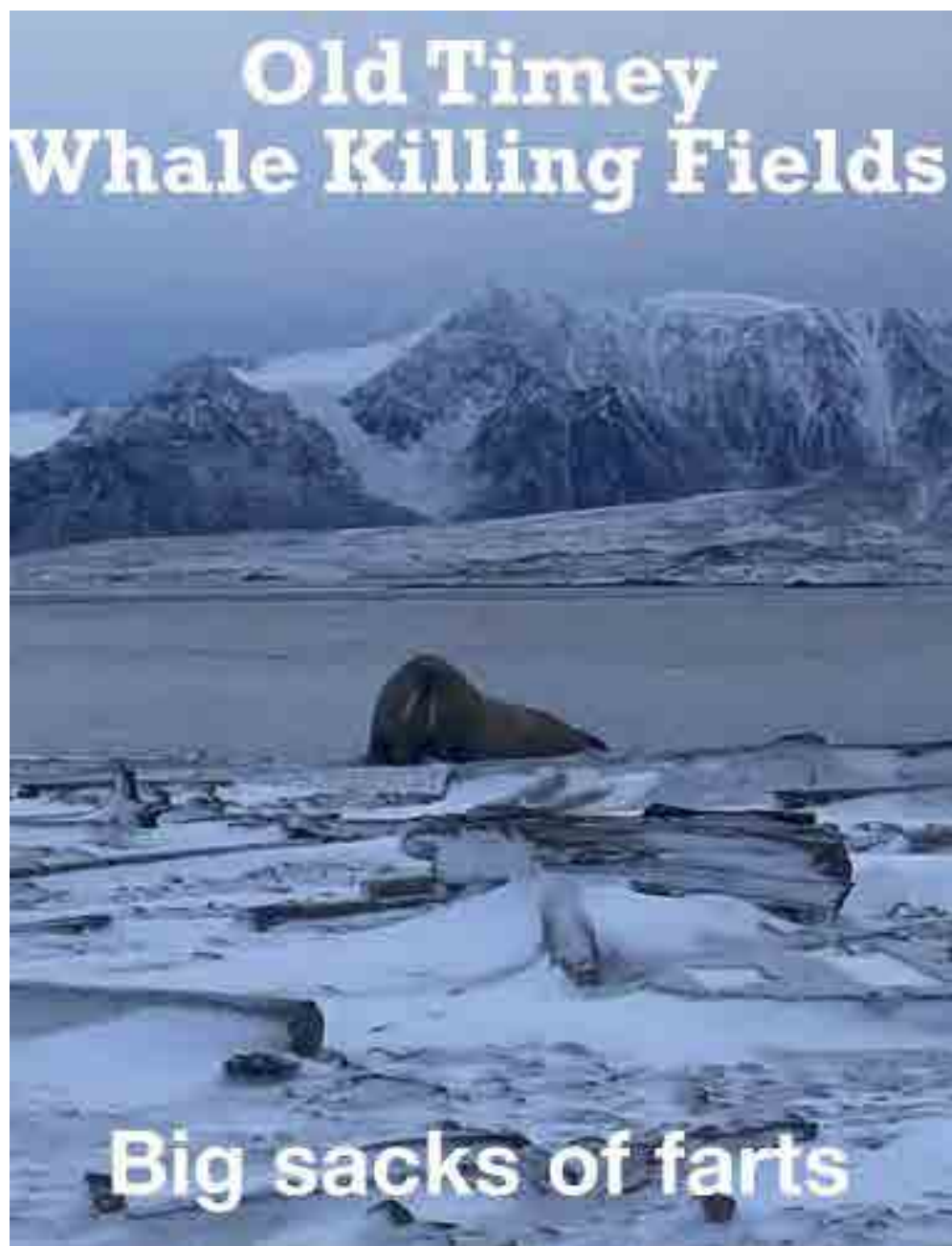
Captain shaved mustache  
mid-way through journey.  
WTF.

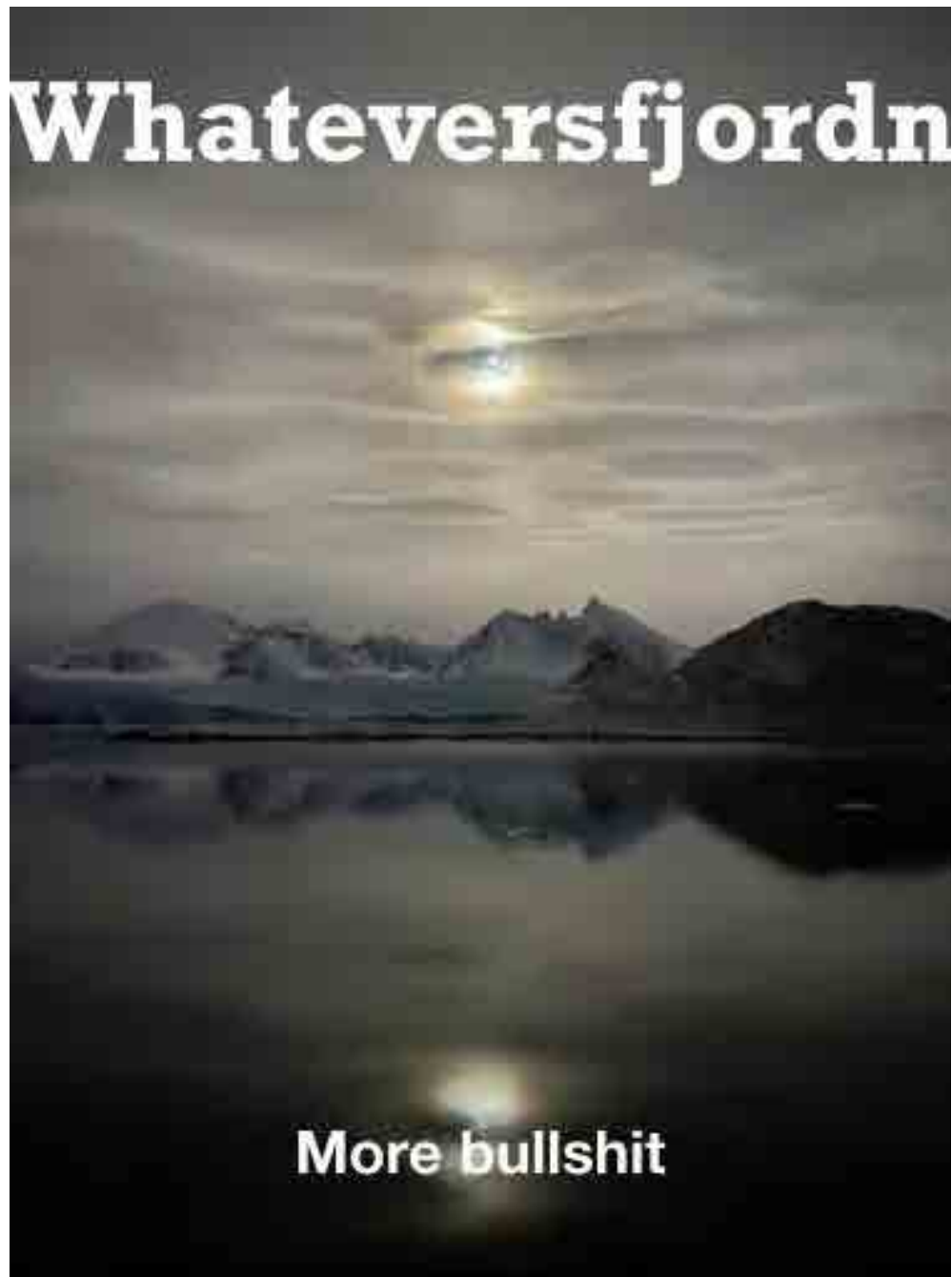


**Antigua**

**Blatant animal cruelty**











*Blah Arctic*, Slide presentation originally shown onboard *Antigua*  
October, 2022. ©2022, Jessica Creane. All Rights Reserved.

The author declares they have no competing interests.

Captain Jonathan de Rooij

Harley Cowan



*Captain Jonathan de Rooij*, Silver gelatin print, 2022.

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**Estée Turk, Sailor**

Harley Cowan



*Estée Turk, Sailor*, Silver gelatin print, 2022.

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**Matu O'Flaherty, First Mate**

Harley Cowan



*Matu O'Flaherty, First Mate*, Silver gelatin print, 2022.

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**Sarah Gerats, Expedition Leader**  
Harley Cowan

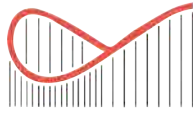


*Sarah Gerats, Expedition Leader, Silver gelatin print, 2022.*

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The author declares they have no competing interests.





**REGENERATION:**  
Environment, Art, Culture

Chernikov, Sergei, Dianne Chisholm, and Felicia LeRoy. "Research." *Regeneration: Environment, Art, Culture* 2, no. 1-2 (2026): pp. 1-13. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.16995/regeneration.20275>

# OH Open Library of Humanities

## Research

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A multimodal collaboration between artists, writers, and scholars. This piece emerged from an expedition to the Arctic archipelago as part of the Arctic Circle Residency in Autumn 2022.

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OPEN ACCESS



**Heartbeat. Port LYR**

Sergei Chernikov

I'm a visual person, and working with vessel operations, I need to have the ship-calls schedule printed out in front of me. I cross the days as they pass by for a fast and easy overview. Crossing the days in opposite directions made me see a symbolized cardiogram.

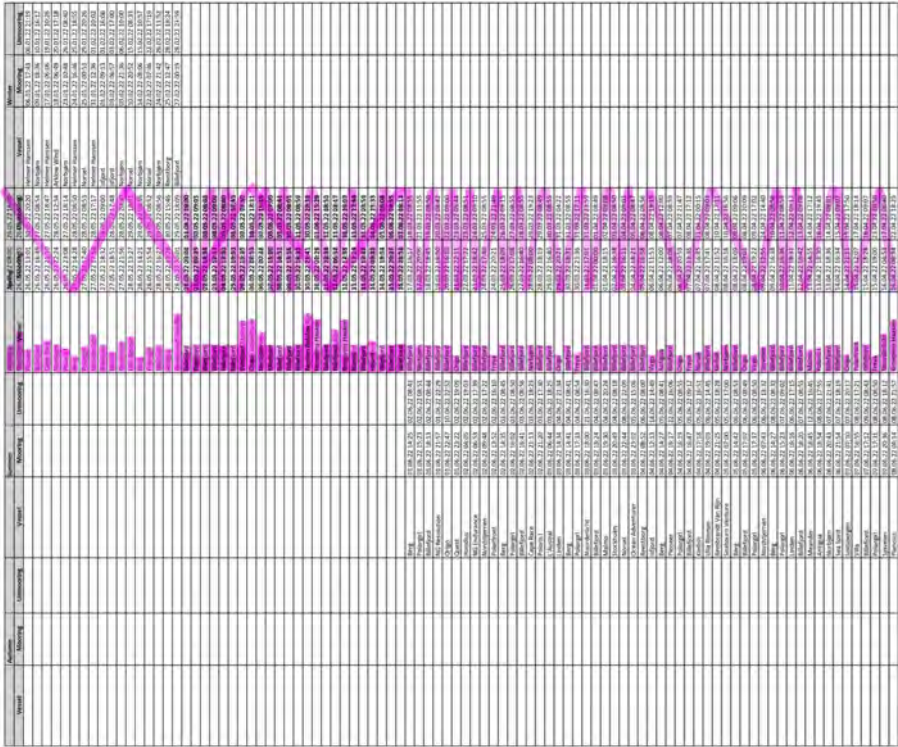
I found the idea of a place having a heartbeat beautiful. As in some religions and traditions, nature and its attributes are alive, and just the same happens here but just with a place and data.

For a person who spends a good amount of time in the office with spreadsheets, it was also thrilling to see them from a different angle – not as a business tool, but as a beautiful thing that represents the vitality of the place.

Each Heartbeat from the project consists of all the ship calls for the season months layered one on another.

Photos from the camera above the port office give more insight into the changes within the seasons and add a spicy hint of PowerPoint.

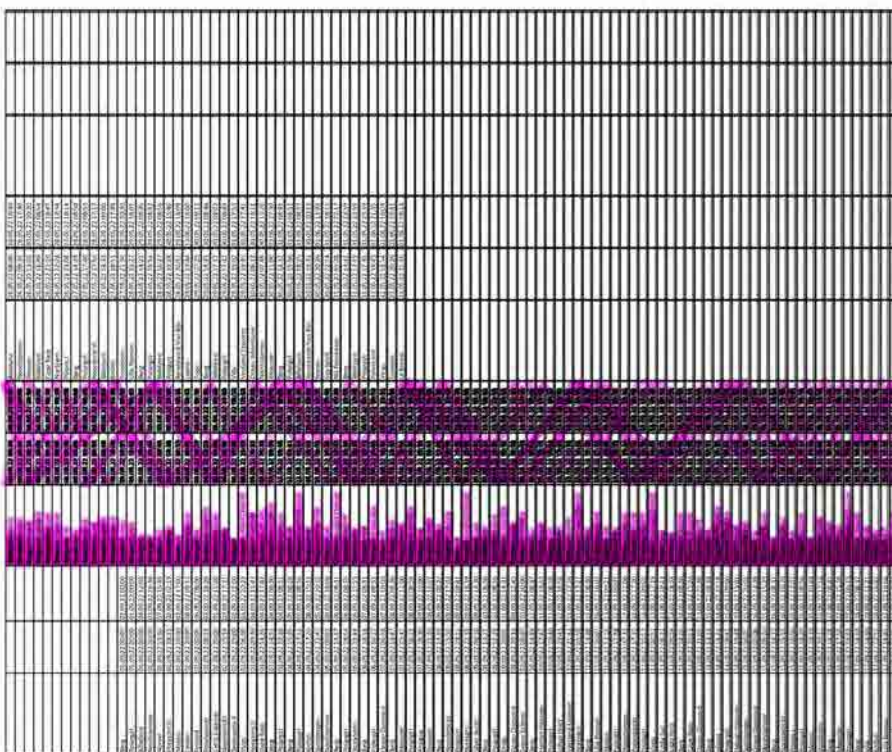




# PORT LONGYEAR SPRING 2022

March  
April  
May

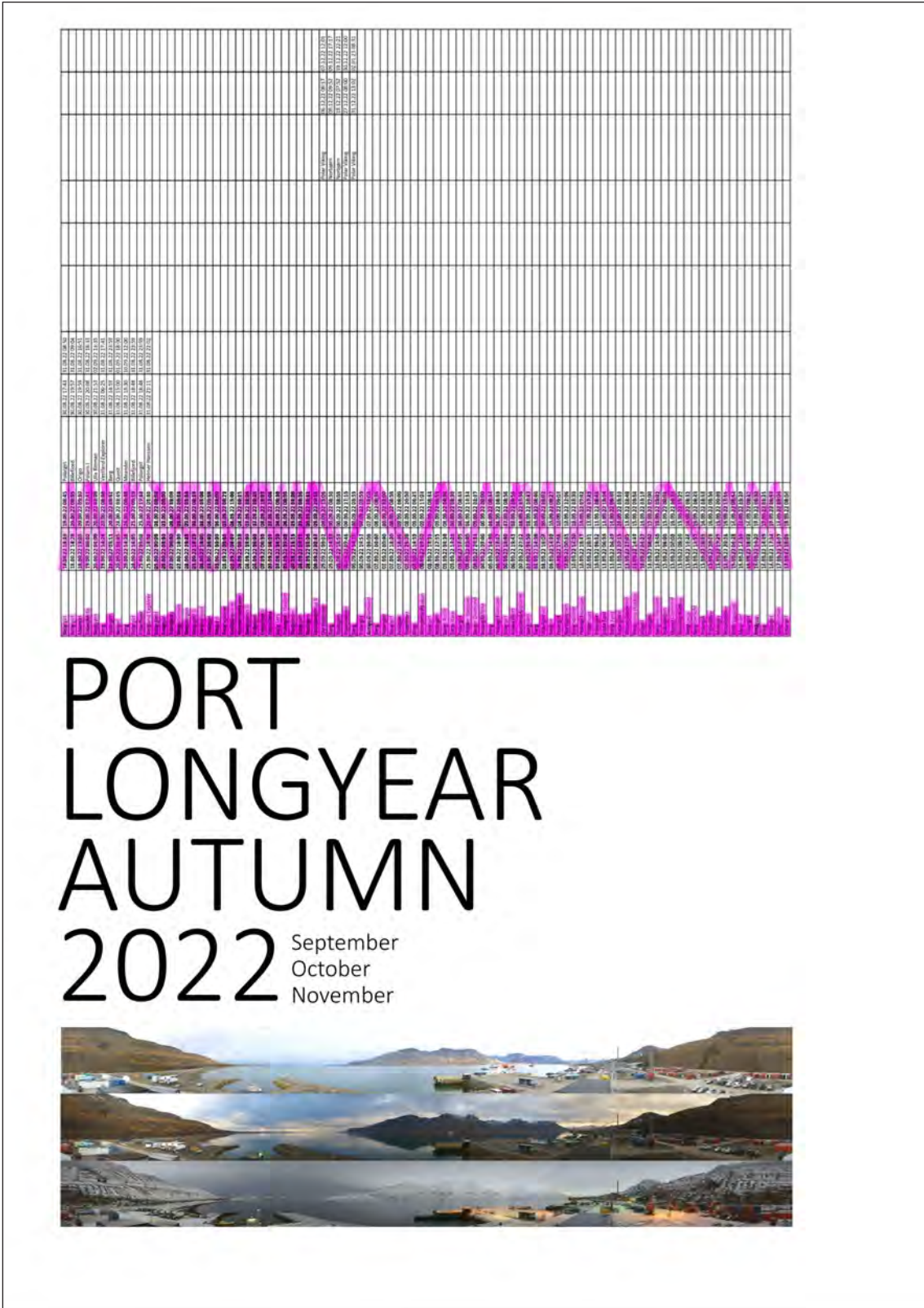




# PORT LONGYEAR SUMMER 2022

June  
July  
August





Heartbeat. Port LYR. Digital collages of PowerPoint, spreadsheet and photos from port office camera, 2022. ©2022, Sergei Chernikov. All Rights Reserved.

The author declares they have no competing interests.

## What Remains

Dianne Chisholm

Many choose to call it refuse. . . . Others take more time and begin to see the pattern of the way things fit together.

– Hein B. Bjerck and Leif Johnny Johannessen

board bits, nails, bolts,  
 rusted wire, felt scraps  
 empty trench  
 piles of rusted iron filings  
 rotted planks  
 stone heaps  
 iron cylinders, bolts,  
 pipe fragments,  
 rusted iron rings, lion paws  
 earthenware, porcelain bits  
 tin cans, pork chop bones  
 plum pits

graves  
 scurvy skeletons,  
 tobacco stained teeth  
 yellow bricks  
 cemented blubber rings

fuel tanks, beams, pipes  
 canvas fragments  
 scrap iron, iron filings,  
 pipes, broken barrels,  
 traces of sulphuric acid,  
 oil, gasoline

Andrée balloon hangar

gas piping  
 gas-making equipment  
 framework construction

building foundation  
 technical machinery

cook stove  
 platters, mugs  
 dinner  
 dessert

whaling station

whalers

blubber ovens  
 copper boilers

Wellman dirigible hangar

dirigible  
 hydrogen plant

polar machinations  
 scientific zealotry  
 bourgeois vanity  
 nationalist pride  
 heroic hubris  
 death drive

extraction regime  
 species extinction  
 sacrifice zone

toxic masculinity  
 capitalist technomania  
 entrepreneurial hot air

Wellmankollen	high crag on Danskøya	dead white men's
Örnenøya	small island near Danskøya	aggrandizing
Lachambrebeen	small glacier on Danskøya	entitlement
Annabreen	small glacier on Amsterdamøya	
Strindbergfjellet	mountain in Smeerenburgfjorden	
Andréeland	land between Wijdefjorden and Woodfjorden	
Nansenbassenget	sea north of Svalbard to Nansenbassenget	
Amundsenbassenget	sea north of Nansenbassenget to North Pole	

### Note

Epigraph from *Virgohamna* by Hein B. Bjerck and Leif Johnny Johannessen and published by the Governor of Svalbard, 1999. Left and middle columns draw from Bjerck and Johannessen's pamphlet. Dutch "whaling station," Harlinger kokeriq, was founded in 1636. Örnenøya, after Andréé's balloon, Örne (Eagle); Lachambrebeen, after Andréé's French balloon manufacturer; Annabreen, after Anna Charlier, Nils Strindberg's fiancée. The greater the explorer's largesse, the larger the land awarded his name.

The author declares that they have no competing interests.

## Flotsam and Jetsam, Nordkappbukta

Dianne Chisholm

on conveyer belt of ocean currents, garbage gyres far  
north from southern dumping grounds—our problem  
to puzzle over

black wool glove	sunk in time-rippled sand, thumb folded under remnant four fingers reaching for nothing
turquoise nylon twine	entwined in tangled heaps of hemp rope ice-bound purpose-loose
yellow plastic mooring ball-float	a-bob surf-froth, unmoored, comical-tragical thought-bubble
rusted metal mooring ball-float	washed up, dry-docked, ready-to-roll, arctic erratic
plastic shards, bits n' bobs	beguile beach-combers, treasure-hunters, archeologists
blanched seaweed grasses	whisper dry thoughts, underwater, iced over, drowned and refrigerated heads of hair
driftwood	scraggy-limbed, salt-bleached, sea-changed gnarly-old Anthropocene man
sundry timbers	frozen in lagoon-ice, tense and grim as swamp- stalking crocodiles, invasive polar mutants
feathers	stemmed in ice, winging nowhere, last migration souvenirs
transparent plastic packing-wrap	twisted, sand-cemented, meters-long, Christo catastrophe, Spiral Jetty—jettisoned

thick triple-coiled rope band

unmanned, sand-marshaled barricade  
against polar ecology, signature handiwork of  
anonymous forces

M concludes our contemplative salvaging with crescendos  
of ice-smashing. Hurls boulders at lagoon's latticework  
of surface harmonics, frozen water music. His impressive, impromptu  
*art brute*. Discomposes, breaks us up.

**Note**

Nordkappbukta is the bay off Chermiside Island's north cape.

The author declares that they have no competing interests.

## Drift

Felicia LeRoy

Drift is a way of looking at fluid motion where the observer follows an individual fluid parcel as it moves through space and time. Plotting the position of an individual parcel through time gives the pathline of the parcel. This nonlinear phenomenon can be visualized to show the spacial relationships between fluid bodies: human, glacial, and the sea. The segment depicted measures the outflow of the Monaco glacier, a vast wall of ice that you can hear groaning and cracking as it slowly slides into the sea. Since 1999 this glacier has receded over 2200 meters.

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Latitude: 7937.18N Longitude: 1051.70E Speed (knots): 7.68 Altitude: 6.10 Angle: 207.26
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Latitude: 7937.10N Longitude: 1051.50E Speed (knots): 7.59 Altitude: 10.20 Angle: 205.57
Latitude: 7937.10N Longitude: 1051.49E Speed (kn_

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<https://player.vimeo.com/video/1111203908>

*Datalog; Svalbard & Jan Mayen, NO, Datalog Readout, Raspberry Pi, Arduino, Deployed buoy, 2022.*

This Datalog readout shows mapping of drift pattern near glaciers and in the fjords surrounding Svalbard & Jan Mayen, NO. The data was captured in 2022 with an Arduino device equipped with an altimeter, accelerometer, and GPS. The device was deployed on a hand build drifter buoy, modeled after NOAA Global Drifter Array buoys and the LDL (Lagrangian Drifter Laboratory) buoys, and collected data on drift patterns near glaciers and in the fjords surrounding Svalbard & Jan Mayen, NO. The data was captured in areas where there is a gap in drifter data specifically around tide-water glaciers deep within fjords as well as in the open ocean along the NW and N coasts of Svalbard and inside the Arctic Circle. Copyright Felicia LeRoy 2022. Reproduced with the kind permission of the author(s)

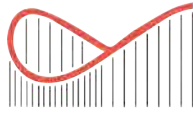
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Latitude: 7937.13N Longitude: 1051.58E Speed (knots): _
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The author declares they have no competing interests.





**REGENERATION:**  
Environment, Art, Culture

Russell, Jacinda, Laurie Glover, Joan Albaugh, and Harley Cowan. "Found Objects." *Regeneration: Environment, Art, Culture* 2, no. 1-2 (2026): pp. 1-24. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.16995/regeneration.20276>

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## Found Objects

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A multimodal collaboration between artists, writers, and scholars. This piece emerged from an expedition to the Arctic archipelago as part of the Arctic Circle Residency in Autumn 2022.

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## One Rock

Jacinda Russell



"One" Rocks

One per day?  
One per beach?  
One per landing?  
One for every artist I know  
who wants one back home?

My specimen rests on a window sill as out of place as a glacial erratic. Like the receding ice, we picked up the stones and deposited them far from their origin. Erratics tell the story of a glacier's path, and each of these rocks reveals some thing about our art.



One Rock, Archival pigment print, 34" × 24", 2023–2024

Granite from the Precambrian Era, splintered shale, and fractured gneiss dominated the Svalbardian landscape. The melting permafrost forced them above ground where they gathered in distinctive gray piles among the yellow moss. We were allowed to take one rock and there were countless interpretations of what that meant.

One per day?

One per beach?

One per landing?

One for everyone we know who might want one back home?

While on the Arctic Circle Residency, I searched for rocks that resembled icebergs to 3D scan and mold into ice. Upon my return, I wondered what others brought back with them and why. After asking a handful of my shipmates to mail me “one” they could part with for a few weeks, I photographed them in a lighting studio, monumentalized against a white background.

Hannah’s diptych embodies fragility, violent erosion ... a mandoline splice. Candace found ochre to grind into pigment and gave me permission to draw with it, but a year later, it was so hard, it nearly tore the paper. The gneissic banding on Hester’s trapezoid resembles aerial views of roads paved onto volcanic ash. Paula truly took only one, presenting it to me on the last day of the voyage. This unforgettable specimen rests on my windowsill, as out of place as a glacial erratic. Like the melting ice, we picked up the stones and deposited them far from their origin. Erratics tell the story of a glacier’s path, and each one of these rocks reveals something about ours.

**Untitled**

Jacinda Russell



*Untitled* from the series *Metaphorical Antipodes: Svalbard 80° N, Freezer, Ice, Butterfly Pea Flower Powder*, 6" x 7" x 3", 2022 - 2023.

I am drawn to the transitory nature of ice, how it is preserved naturally and when humans intervene. In *Metaphorical Antipodes: Svalbard 80° N*, I shift my attention to permafrost, witnessing how its premature loss modifies geography and impacts cultural heritage. I created 3D prints from rocks collected by my shipmates on the Arctic Circle Residency in October 2022. In their enlarged and monochromatic state, they resemble icebergs which I then form into silicone molds, and cast the plastic filament into ice. They are displayed in a glass-front mini freezer reflecting upon the impermanence of the ice-covered landscape, the inability and great environmental cost to save what we are losing, and the transient nature of the artwork itself.

The author declares they have no competing interests.



## 2

The Chukchi people say the world  
 was formed from Raven's droppings  
 falling from him as he flew.  
 Liquids the oceans.  
 The land the solid stuff.

The *Jeannette* foundered  
 north of the Anzhu islands  
 off the Siberian coast

A number of articles from her  
 appeared later  
 in the neighborhood of Julianehab  
 now Qarqortaq

Ice had carried her westward  
 nearly twenty degrees

bearing indubitable marks

Two cutters carried  
 the survivors to the Lena delta  
 where those who died  
 were wrapped in canvas

Large quantities of driftwood  
 carried by the polar current  
 come every year to Greenland

Norwegian fir  
 two kinds of alder  
 Siberian larch

placed in coffins improvised  
 from drift-timber  
 a stone cairn above them raised

A throwing-stick such as those  
used for hurling bird-darts in Alaska  
was found at Godthab  
now Nuuk  
ornamented by its maker  
with glass beads bartered from Asia

A New York Herald reporter  
in his zeal for a story  
opened the tomb  
to search for journals or other papers.  
This was called desecration.

The mortuary people call  
the brass box full of ashes 'her'

## 3

The damp lower portion of the wild north wind  
has given birth to white ice crystals  
on the sides of boulders

A staunch revenue steamer  
made of Oregon fir fastened  
with copper, iron, and locust-tree nails

Mr. Nelson, a naturalist  
and Smithsonian zealot

The *Corwin* in search of lost ships  
whalers *Mt. Wollaston* and *Vigilant*  
US Arctic Expedition *Jeannette*

another of the village cemeteries  
on a very rough slope of weathered granite  
bodies simply laid upon the surface

in pursuit of a bird  
he finds better game

whole skeletons or single bones  
wedged into chance positions  
mixed in with whatever effects  
had been laid beside them

ivory spears, arrows  
dishes of various kinds  
ghastlier spoils  
This is called collection.

Three local men, seal hunting,  
boarded a big ship they found  
caught in the pack, masts chopped down,  
the hold so full of water they couldn't go in,  
didn't disturb four men, dead a long time,  
found in the cabin

to keep them from rolling down  
 a row of big stones had also been laid  
 next to some along the lower side

From the galley they bore away all  
 that could conveniently be carried:  
 colander, knives, ladle, stew pan,  
 a meat-saw, a hand-lamp, an adze  
  
 a square tin lantern painted green  
 a bottle of some sort of medicine

Four of these objects ship's officer  
 Herring purchased by barter

The imbricate ice resembles owl feathers  
 indicating by their curves  
 the varying direction  
 pursued by the interrupted wind

## 4

A walrus colony inhabits where kilns once rendered	the far end of a flat strand whales into oil
Artifacts from humans also dead harpoon (whale), barrel handle (oil)	removed, displayed in cases knife (to cut), pulley (to hoist up)
head of a bolt fragment of a door hinge	(to hold together a hut) (to keep the wind out)
nearly unraveled knitted stockings	striped wool hats one still gartered at the knee
blue jacket of coarse-woven wool twenty close-placed button holes	double inner lining spilling sewed by left-behind wives
Photographers using various small rectangles	array themselves in a line comprised of plastic and rare metals
to capture the beasts or in one case	in zeros and ones on cellulose treated with chemicals

## 5

Before the change, earth and sky were different.  
 Earth made of perishable stuff.  
 Sky serene and unchanging.

After the change, sky became like earth  
 Shaped by processes dynamic and violent.

One shop on the main street sells  
 sealskins, piled flat or shaped  
 into boots and moccasins.

Andrea says she can't even enter  
 but I want to visit the narwhal horn  
 wired to the wall,  
 thin as shell, calcium colored.

Lushly soft, those furs  
 grey, speckled, ovoid  
 slitted on each side  
 where the seal's flippers were.

Cosmic rays that fill  
 the vast volume of space,  
 that barrage of fragmented atoms, must  
 be the result of violence on a grand scale.

Also for sale: hunting knives  
 hafted with reindeer horn

Out in the fjords  
 hunters' huts preserved  
 as historical sites  
 are shredded by polar bears  
 lacking ice on which to hunt seals.

Along the adjacent street  
 paper snowflakes are taped up  
 inside windows of red-and-white houses  
 like Santa's, from whose eaves, above  
 children's bicycles, shot birds hang.

The morphological thinker focuses on one phenomenon at a time, makes a list of all possible explanations and all devices by which to gather information.

Only after the list is complete is a single explanation chosen.

The problem is the completion of the list and with which phenomena to start.

## 6

Arctic Pro Muck Boots  
six pairs of wool socks

thermals, double-fleece pullover  
hooded wool sweater, neck gaiter

Also four white cotton hankies  
one with lower case 'carol' in white thread

Red ThermoBall jacket  
front pocket for pencil and notebook

gloves with half-mittens that flip  
exposing fingers to write with

Notebook folded backwards  
handkerchief damp, then gone.

Thinking I must have dropped it  
I retrace my steps  
look for familiar objects  
that will tell me where I've been

A photographer shouts,  
"You're in my frame!"

pair of bird wings intact  
small puddle frozen in granite palm

The first Zodiac arrives  
to take us back to the ship

Shards of white quartz  
raise false hopes

Someone drops a boulder  
onto the stream ice  
to hear the boom perhaps  
or to watch the extent of the break

She was ready to leave. I don't want  
to say goodbye to the small scrap of what's left

## 7

The point of origin is an area  
of sea-to-air transfer

To avoid burning up  
the earth must constantly lose  
energy to space

near-surface currents (warm)

move north  
cool

cooler waters (dense)

sink

prevailing westerly winds  
carry water vapor away

Something is always being lost

Concentrate

Increases in density

cold  
salt

sinking into the abyss

slide south  
loop

Rise

At Havhestbreen at dawn  
 the sun showed itself under  
 a briefly lifted lid of banded cloud

those looking shoreward saw  
 the glacier awash with red

For the rest of the day  
 above dark mountains seamed  
 white along erosion lines  
 the waning half-moon floats  
 sideways across the sky, never sets

calving big as building collapse

When the tide turns  
 the slurry of ice at the glacier's base  
 begins to move toward us,  
 murmurs, mutters, encloses

pieces come from behind, push past,  
 slide over, gyre

Parts of the whole will always detach  
 belying the illusion that the body is one.  
 We are so much less intact  
 than we would have the world believe,  
 riven, crevassed.

## 9

In all the summaries  
of polar expeditions  
there is a want of clearness

Entire crews of two vessels  
found frozen stark by Russians

Dogs in the same  
bizarre and lifelike positions  
as the men

*by terrible whirlwinds constrained  
from gaining entrance*

*by thicknesses of mists  
unable to keep each other in sight*

*the land lay not  
as the Globe made mention*

*the shallop could not come to land  
the water was so shoale*

Mounted on the flats  
by the shore were crosses  
and other signs  
primitively made  
of stones

*no similitude of habitation*

In a closed system  
burning sea-coal  
would be lethal

## 10

The Tlingit say that Raven  
 entered the body of Woman  
 and was birthed by her into the tent  
 of the old man who hoarded the Sun

When we are farthest north  
 we're in what geologists call  
 the Pre-Devonian basement

grasses, ferns and horsetail  
 created stable ground

Isfjord, where we departed  
 is much younger, the attic

the giant trees had fallen

humans hadn't yet come into being

pantodonts could walk  
 from Greenland  
 or even Baffin Island

by the time humans were  
 the ice had come

We live on the roof  
 break into the house

They needed light

oil from the bodies of their kin

Still burn

compressed plant remains

We make the least of us  
 descend into excavated caverns

They see

imprints of leaves in ceilings  
 of room-and-pillar mines

now decommissioned

The settlement razed

in the tunnels unfilled  
evidence of earlier lives lie  
footprints of large land mammals  
walking together

shops, cinema, bowling alley,  
as if they'd all never been

During their time off  
the mitigators built  
driftwood sculptures

also burned

released

not re-bound

## 11

We do not ask whether

the rock is to be thought of  
as a real object

One could say we saw only  
the surface of things

a great sage in the wilderness  
hears the sad song of a woman  
who lives inside

The inflatable nosing

the story says her husband  
made her up  
he never touched her

afloat then aground

she showed the sage  
how to follow her in

toeing out calf deep  
until contact

to move past the rough surface

broken stone underfoot  
ice boulders separate and stranded

deep spaces

worlds

unlike themselves  
one minute to the next

fold

as the sun intermittent  
exposes interior facets

worlds

felt

Svalbard, Norway, October 2022  
and  
Sonoma, California, USA  
February 2023

The author declares they have no competing interests.

Fragments appear from the following sources

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**Let's Make a Deal**

Joan Albaugh



*Let's Make a Deal*, Oil on canvas, 40" x 40", 2023

**Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?**

Joan Albaugh



*Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?* Oil on canvas, 30" x 30", 2023.

The author declares they have no competing interests.

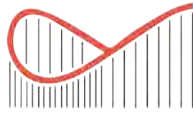
**Whale Bone**  
Harley Cowan



*Whale Bone*, Silver gelatin print, 2022.  
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The author declares they have no competing interests.





**REGENERATION:**  
Environment, Art, Culture

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# Open Library of Humanities

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A multimodal collaboration between artists, writers, and scholars. This piece emerged from an expedition to the Arctic archipelago as part of the Arctic Circle Residency in Autumn 2022.

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 OPEN ACCESS



## Whale Bone

Alexandra Lockhart

Convinced I was placed in a world of illusion, bone grounded me, spirit aloft. The Whale, the one guided by magnetism, an innate sense of direction I yearn for. From under the surface, with knowledge of depth, you pin my naivety. To happen upon, I saw the beach you were slaughtered on. Atrocity of Sapien's greed. A beach colorfully swept with algae, life gifted from nutrients of your ancient spilled blood, and an ocean now deprived of you. Without seeking revenge or holding a grudge, you offer yourself to cyclicity.



Self portrait. Svalbard, Norway.

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The author declares they have no competing interests.

## Supporting Love

Leonor Anthony



*Supporting Love*, assemblage photographed in situ, Svalbard, 2022.

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“Supporting Love” revolves around creating a global “human chain” of women by collecting bras from women around the world. The inspiration behind this initiative lies in the powerful symbolism of a human chain, where physical connection serves as a demonstration of solidarity or protest.

This project was conceived in 2019, inspired by the remarkable sight of a 385-mile-long human chain in India by women of all ages and stature in life. Witnessing the powerful display of unity as women held each other’s hands in peaceful protest left an indelible mark on me. The project takes shape by collecting donated bras from women around the globe, symbolizing the diverse backgrounds and stories of the women contributing to this unique endeavor.

All the garments in the project have been donated and worn, and this is very important. A bra is more than a mere undergarment, it cradles not only the physical contours of a woman’s body but encapsulates the intricate tapestry of her experiences, emotions, and resilience. Beyond the realm of supporting the mammary glands and breasts, a bra becomes an intimate vessel that holds the very heart of a woman. Woven into its

fabric are stories of growth, love, strength, and vulnerability. It is a silent witness to the metamorphosis of a woman through the various stages of life – from the tentative steps of adolescence to the confident strides of adulthood. In its snug embrace, a bra embodies the dual nature of femininity – the delicate and the resilient.

It cradles the heart, not just as a physical organ but as the epicenter of passion, courage, and compassion. It stands as a symbol of the woman's ability to carry the burdens of the world on her shoulders while maintaining grace and poise.

During the Arctic Circle Artist residency, the bras I brought took on a poignant and symbolic journey. Spread across various locations throughout the residency, the interconnected bras reached a culmination on our last day at sea when a fiercely independent and fearless woman (our leader Sarah) hung them from the high mast; I could not have ever done that by myself. Once again, women helping women.

Against the backdrop of a breathtaking pink sky, as our journey concluded, this powerful act held a dual significance. It not only represented the unity and solidarity fostered by the "Supporting Love" project but also served as a gesture in support of the courageous women of Iran.

In that moment, thousands of miles south, women in Iran were risking life and limb for the fundamental freedom of one another. Witnessing this display of strength and defiance resonated deeply, evoking a flood of emotions that brought tears to my eyes.

The sight was unforgettable, etching itself into my memory as a poignant reminder of the very essence and purpose of the project – to stand in solidarity, promote unity, and amplify the voices of women globally, especially those facing formidable challenges in their pursuit of freedom and empowerment.



*Supporting Love*, assemblage photographed in situ, Svalbard, 2022.

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The author declares they have no competing interests.

**Sergei Chernikov with Yeti Mask**

Harley Cowan



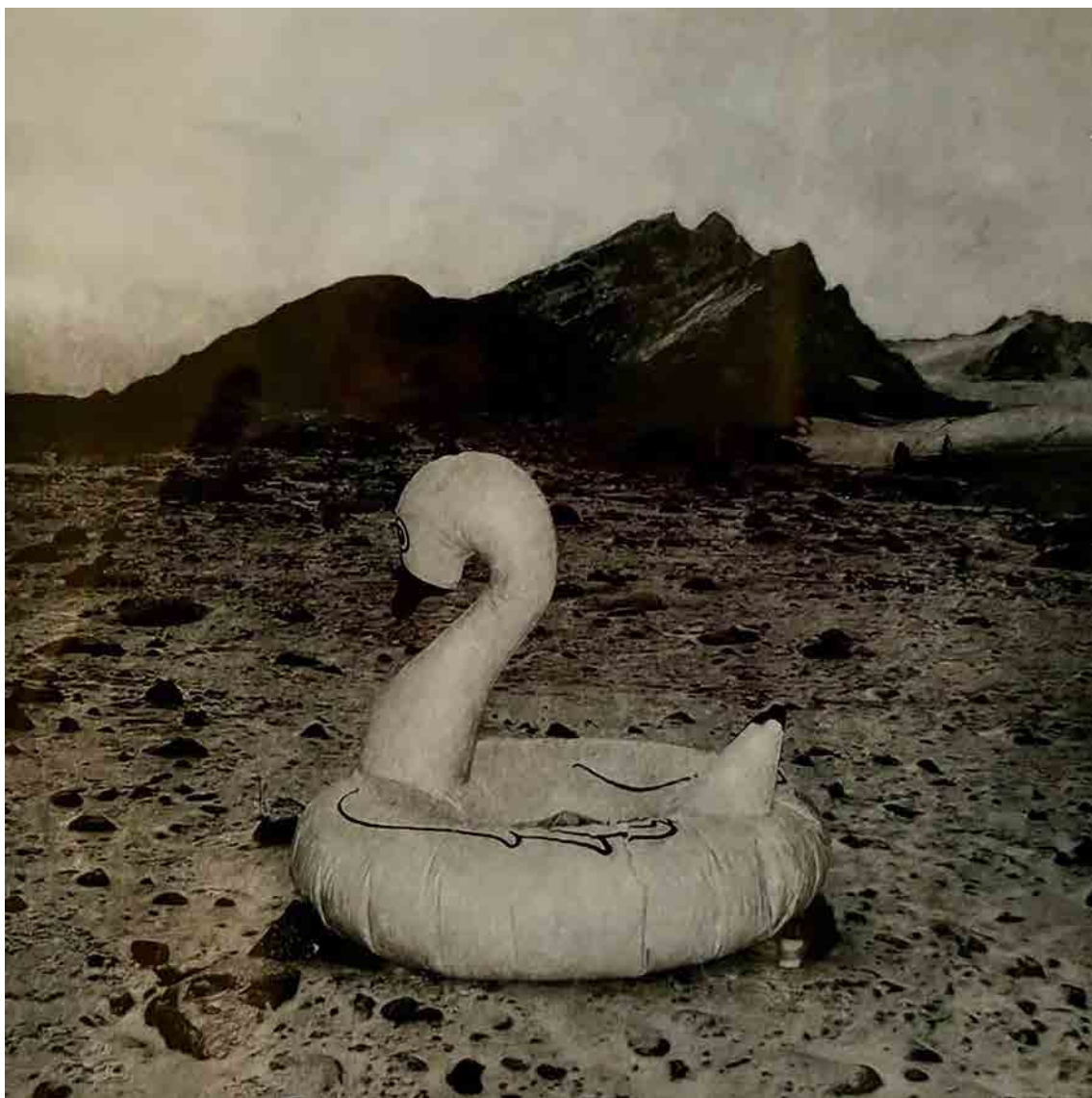
*Sergei Chernikov with Yeti Mask*, Silver gelatin print, 2022.

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The author declares that they have no competing interests.

## The Things We Bring

Joan Albaugh



*The Things We Bring*, Photogravure, 2023.

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The author declares they have no competing interests.

## **The Cuban Flag**

Leonor Anthony

Placing a Cuban flag in Sally Hamna's hut near the North Pole held a profound significance for me. As a Cuban native and political refugee since the age of five, displacement has been my constant companion. This act became a symbol of triumph over adversity, a testament to the indomitable spirit that persists despite the challenges faced by those forced to flee their homeland.

The journey from the warmth of Cuba and Miami to the frigid expanse of the North Pole mirrors the arduous path that most individuals like myself have treaded in life, marked by resilience, perseverance, and an unyielding commitment to freedom.

In the midst of the ice and snow, where the cold winds whisper tales of struggle, the Cuban flag became a symbol, a beacon of hope and unity.

It is a declaration that, despite geographical distances and cultural differences, the human race shares a common thread of perseverance and the pursuit of a better life.

The flag serves as a reminder that no matter where one finds themselves on the globe, the spirit of solidarity transcends borders, bringing people together under the banner of shared humanity.

This symbolic gesture was not just for personal triumph but a celebration of the collective strength that binds all those who have faced displacement and adversity. It echoes the sentiment that, despite the challenges that life may present, the human spirit can endure, adapt, and even thrive in the most unlikely of places.

Placing the Cuban flag near the North Pole was a statement of resilience, an ode to the unwavering spirit of those who carry the weight of their homeland in their hearts while forging new connections and creating a sense of unity amidst the vast and diverse landscapes of the world.



*The Cuban Flag*, photograph, 2022.

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The author declares they have no competing interests.

## **Anchorage at Sallyhamna**

Harley Cowan

We were anchored at Sallyhamna in Fairhaven in the far northwest of Spitsbergen. We had tremendously favorable winds that swept us up Spitsbergen's west coast overnight.

This cabin belonged to Waldermar and Sally Kraemer (after whom the harbor is named). It was built in 1937 over an older whaler's blubber oven. Other blubber ovens dot the landscape out of frame to the right.

This was one of the few sites we visited with a healthy growth of moss and lichen. This is because centuries-old oils and blood from whales still provide enough organic nutrients to support their growth. These lichens are protected, as are the remnants of structures. Visitors are not allowed to walk on them.



*Anchorage at Sallyhamna*, Silver gelatin print, 2022.

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## Svalbard Global Seed Vault

Harley Cowan



*Svalbard Global Seed Vault*, Silver gelatin print, 2022.

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## Jäderin Expedition Landing Marker, 1898

Harley Cowan

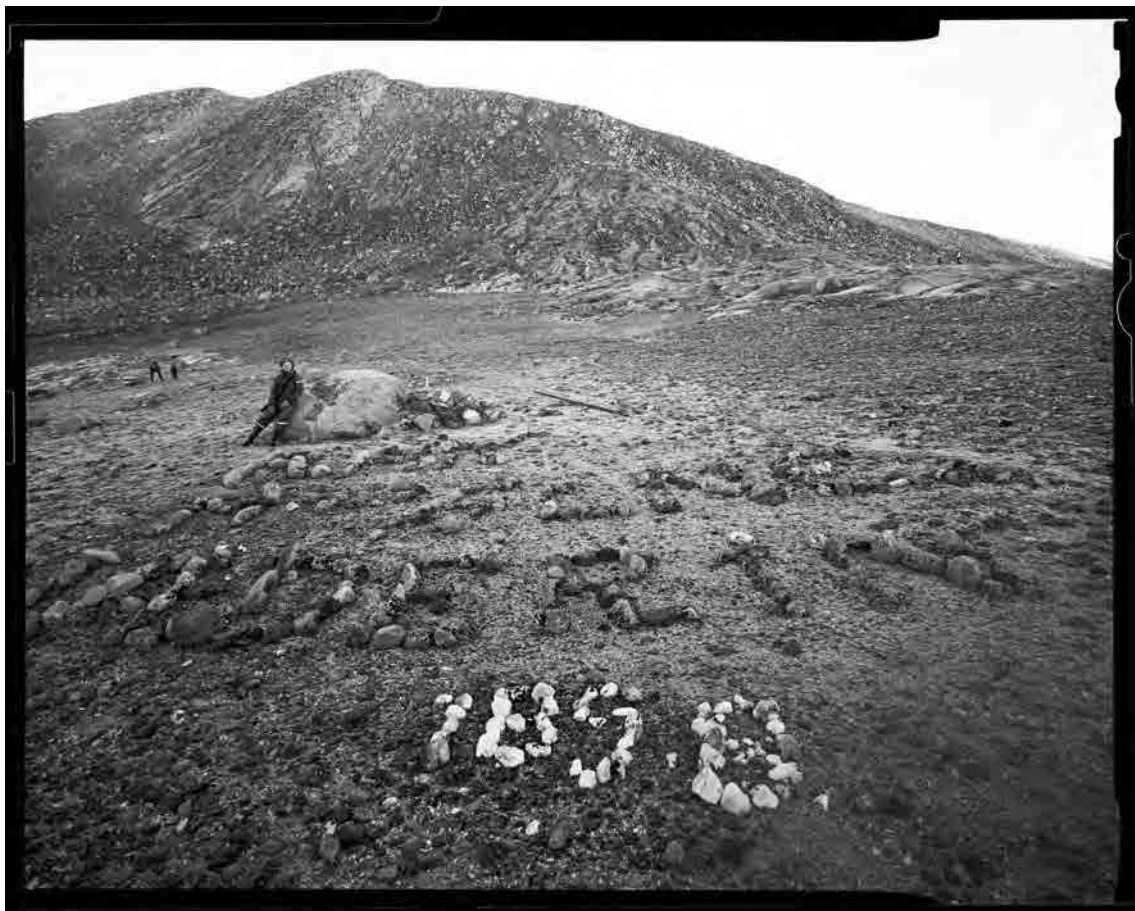
Stones arranged on a beach spell out the name of the Jäderin Expedition that landed here in 1898.

Our expedition leader, Sarah, leans against a large boulder at the top of the marker. Rocks piled against the other end of the boulder look similar to a whaler's grave; however, we suspect they once held up the wooden pole now lying on the ground. The marker is difficult to see from a distance and a flag would have been helpful to future visitors looking for the landing site.

We began our voyage without a set itinerary; our tall ship would sail where the winds took us. Departing Longyearbyen, we had not dreamed that four days later we would have crossed north of the 80th parallel and breezed past Møffen Island to stand on the north coast of Nordaustlandet. Finding ourselves in this loneliest of places, Sarah Gerats recalled a story about Swedish explorer Edvard Jäderin.

In the late 1800s, the Swedish and Russian governments planned a joint scientific expedition called "Arc-of-the-Meridian" which would take place between 1899 and 1902. The goal was to make triangulated measurements, north to south, across Svalbard to determine whether the earth was spherical or if its curvature flattened near the pole as predicted by Newton. Russians were responsible for the south and the Swedes for the north. In 1898, Edvard Jäderin led a preparatory expedition to scout Nordaustlandet.

There was rumored to be a beach where Jäderin's crew landed and laid out stones spelling their name and date. While there were some vague clues to its location, neither Sarah nor our other crew had ever seen it. Until now. Hands down, one of the greatest days on our voyage was discovering these stones laid down 125 years earlier and left undisturbed ever since.



*Jäderin Expedition Landing Marker, 1898, Silver gelatin print, 2022.*

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The author declares they have no competing interests.

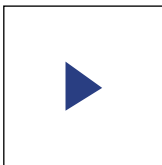
*Macrophones*

Brian House



Expedition leader Sarah Gerats listens to infrasound via House's Macrophone near Esmarkbreen (glacier), Svalbard. Photo.

©2022, Brian House. All Rights Reserved.



**Link to Performative Actions Article for Audio:**  
<https://www.regeneration-journal.org/article/id/20309/>

Infrasound audio recording captured near Smeerenburgbreen (glacier), Svalbard. 1:80 ratio of recorded time to playback time; frequencies are heard  $\sim 6 \frac{1}{3}$  octaves higher than originally sounded. 2023. Recording and production: Brian House.

The author declares they have no competing interests.

## Body of Air: On Infrasound and Sensing Crisis

Brian House

The term “ground truth” first appears in poetry—Henry Ellison’s “The Siberian Exile’s Tale” from 1833. Today it’s more often used in the context of remote sensing. That is, if much of what we know of the world at a distance is mediated by technological systems, ground truth is what we experience up close. I’m here in Svalbard ground-truthing; back home half a world away, with the help of machines, I heard something, and now I’m standing at the foot of a glacier that, perhaps, was the source. But for me, it’s not only about a sound, but a question of the climate crisis and even one of love. I’ll explain.

### Waves

When I speak to you, the ebb and flow of air from my mouth makes a wave about ten feet across, interrupted at some point by your ear. That’s a bigger wave than you might expect. Contemporary information theory suggests that communication consists of a transmission from point A to point B through some inert medium; I send the words, and you receive them. But the reality is that my voice envelopes you; it’s an embrace of your whole body in a vibrating, lively atmosphere.

We’re awash in a world of waves. It’s just those that happen to fall within the personal physiological limits of our ears that register as audible; as an artist, I’ve recently been exploring those that do not. It turns out that there can be “sound”—if we can still call it that—with waves measuring miles across, frequencies so low that not only are they beneath any human’s capacity to hear, but they’re below our ability to feel, even as they flow through us every day. We call this “atmospheric infrasound,” the anthropocentric “infra” denoting only that humans can’t hear it.

But there’s something even more special about infrasound. Due to a quirk of atmospheric physics, low-frequency waves aren’t attenuated by the air in the same way that normal ones are. If I keep talking as I walk down the street, before long you’ll no longer hear my voice. But infrasound *travels*—a hundred miles, a thousand miles, maybe even around the globe. This planet has one atmosphere, and infrasound bounces all around it, collapsing distant locations into one resonant whole.

Which begs the question: what could we listen to, if we could hear infrasound? What is the source of these inaudible waves within which we live our lives? I asked this question of the scientific literature, and among the answers I received are calving glaciers, power plants, wildfires, shifting ocean currents, superstorms, and even the most massive of

HVAC systems, such as those at data centers. Perhaps it should be no surprise that these are the sounds of the atmosphere in a time of climate crisis.

### **Movement**

Knowing that, I can't bear the curiosity; I want to listen. If I could, I'd make myself big enough to hear these sounds, ballooning larger than a whale until my skin vibrates slowly enough to move with atmospheric waves. Instead, I make a machine. If a microphone captures small sounds and makes them bigger, what I call a "macrophone" can capture really big sounds and make them smaller. But the guides on this expedition call it my "spider"—a network of tubes capped with fuzzy windscreens that stretch across 80 feet of the Arctic landscape, sampling and averaging the air flow to isolate the infrasonic signal, speeding it up and raising its pitch into something audible.

The spiders don't actually live up here; they're better suited to the woods back in Western Massachusetts. Because infrasound travels thousands of miles, in theory I'm hearing some of these same Arctic sounds when I listen from home. But though I may suspect that a sound comprises the vast waves released by a glacier as it flows into the sea, I have an epistemological problem. Which is that even if I am hearing it, I don't know for certain that this is what glacial infrasound sounds like. So here I am, at the top of the world, attempting to listen to a moving glacier up close. Ground-truthing.

In some ways I'm ambivalent about the endeavor. There are colonial overtones to any "expedition," the Arctic Circle Residency included; let's be clear that travel to a distant locale in search of aesthetics signals privilege rather than sophistication. What is in front of me is everything and more of the polar imaginary in which I'm already subconsciously versed, and though I'm here for sound, I can't help but reach for my camera to recreate images like those I've seen of jagged peaks, impossible sculptures of ice, walrus comedies, and the undeniable romanticism of a masted ship cutting into a frozen bay.

Yet the actual shock of any wilderness burdened by Western dreams is that it is as concrete as anywhere else. It's made so by the prosaic efforts of the body—hungry, sanguine, seasick, bored—that bring us into contact with where we are, whether it's for a day or for the better part of a lifetime. Here, I know myself by the frozen ground penetrating my rubber boots, the pantomime of seals tracking our progress down the shore, the COVID-19 spreading among my shipmates. The body is ground truth, and it's never alone.

## Breath

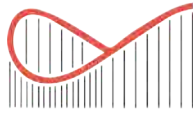
For all that, what do I hear of an Arctic glacier? Sped up by a factor of eighty, a minutes-long groan becomes an exclamation; what was so deep as to be an imperceptible part of the background becomes a melody. Bursts, pops, tones, and whistles—anything but silence. What's lost in majesty is gained in cautious familiarity; the wall of ice before me is rendered as an ice cube in my hand.

I'll play you this recording, and I think there is some poetry in it. True, it might be a document of a glacier melting before its time. If so, this is not new information, and I do not mean to aestheticize the dying; in a world out of balance, we don't need to dramatize a reality in which we're already immersed. But that, in fact, is what I take from these sounds. That even if I recorded them in Svalbard, I might have heard them in Massachusetts. That there is but one atmosphere, filled with infrasound from melting glaciers, breathed everywhere, and I now know it to be true.

On a distant and warmer shore, my son has a grip on my hand. Too small to swim, he runs in circles at the water's edge, pulling me along with toddler vitality until I'm stumbling for my breath. Glaciers and power plants embrace us both, unheard but not silent. Perhaps it's "air truth" I'm straining to hear; nothing so solid to stand on, but the shape of the world becoming.

The author declares they have no competing interests.





**REGENERATION:**  
Environment, Art, Culture

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## Objectice

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A multimodal collaboration between artists, writers, and scholars. This piece emerged from an expedition to the Arctic archipelago as part of the Arctic Circle Residency in Autumn 2022.

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**Brash Ice, Spitsbergen (I & II)**

Felicia LeRoy



Cameo engravings from photographs of brash ice, an accumulation of floating ice made up of fragments not more than 2 m across, taken from aboard S/V Antigua in Spitsbergen, Oct 2022.

*Brash Ice, Spitsbergen (I & II)*, Glass Cameo Engraving, 9" × 7.5", 2023

## Ablation

Felicia LeRoy

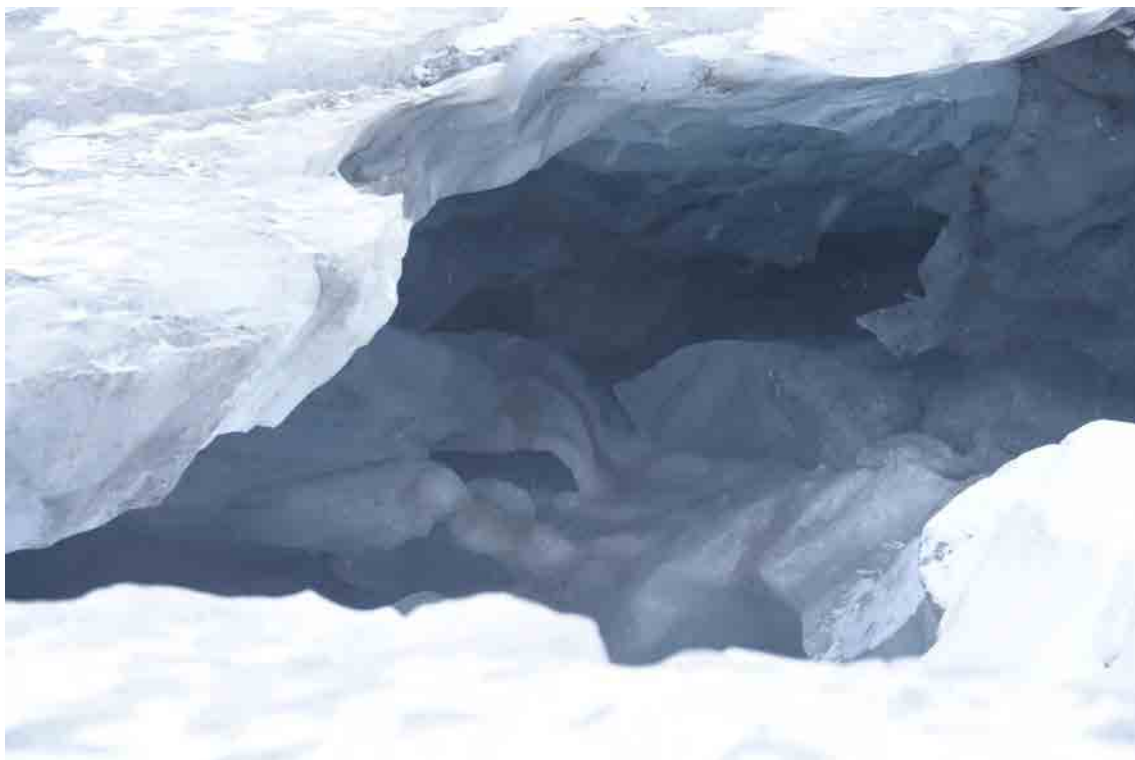


The loss of ice and snow from a glacier system as seen from 2022 Landsat data.  
*Ablation*, Glass Cameo Engraving, 5.5" × 7", 2023.

The author declares they have no competing interests.

**Aglarond, Esmarkbreen 78° 17.9' N 013° 56.1' E**

Paula Sćiuk



October 14, 2022, 4:15pm,  $-5^{\circ}\text{C}$ , clear, calm, cold, day length: 6:52:51

Afternoon landing, shallow bay, low tide, ice cave back lit at terminus

Observed locks of reindeer fur, feathers, whale jawbone, sand tornados.

*Aglarond, Esmarkbreen 78° 17.9' N 013° 56.1' E, Ultrachrome ink on polycarbonate, 2022.*

Etele, Forelandsundet 78° 33.1' N 011° 16.7' E

Paula Sćiuk



October 13, 2022, 8:52am,  $-2^{\circ}$  C, some snow, partly cloudy, day length: 7:11:06

Antigua enveloped by mountains bathed in late afternoon luminous glow

Wake of snow skipping across water surface, carried by brisk wind current.

*Etele, Forelandsundet 78° 33.1' N 011° 16.7' E, Ultrachrome ink on polycarbonate, 2022.*

**Ichorous, Sóre Castrénoya 80° 32.7' N 019° 59.4' E**

Paula Súiuk



October 5, 2022, 6:36pm, 4° C, sunny, clear, day length: 9:24:27

Anchor up, Northernmost point of voyage sailing toward southern tip

Dark waters conceal softball size, lions mane jellyfish, whale sighting.

*Ichorous, Sóre Castrénoya 80° 32.7' N 019° 59.4' E, Ultrachrome ink on polycarbonate, 2022.*

Lún, Monacobreen 79° 30.0' N 012° 33.0' E

Paula Sçiuk



October 10, 2022, 3:16pm, 0°C, windy, overcast, day length: 8:03:18

Tidewater, surge type glacier, rapid retreat, over 2 miles within the past 50 years

Curious kittiwakes circling overhead, bearded seal sighted, Nansen's birthday.

*Lún, Monacobreen 79° 30.0' N 012° 33.0' E, Ultrachrome ink on polycarbonate, 2022.*

Sérac, Selvågen 78° 33.1' N 011° 16.7' E

Paula Sçiuk



October 13, 2022, 4:02pm,  $-2^{\circ}\text{C}$ , sunny, steady wind, day length: 7:11:06

Beach landing, ringed with colorful seaweed, kelp, algae, short walk over hillocks

Unique ice structures, resounding glass shattering when broken, moon visible.

*Sérac, Selvågen 78° 33.1' N 011° 16.7' E, Ultrachrome ink on polycarbonate, 2022.*

**Thú, Bjónesskága 78° 34.3' N 012° 24.4' E**

Paula Sçiuk



October 3, 2022, 8:53am, 3° C, low cloud base, day length: 9:55:35

Anchored next to Dahlbreen glacier, ringed seal sighted, polar bear spotted

Sea haze obscures pinnacles, nearby glacier calving echoes thunderously off cliffs.

*Thú, Bjónesskága 78° 34.3' N 012° 24.4' E, Ultrachrome ink on polycarbonate, 2022.*

Vesicle, Nordkappbukta 80° 30.9' N 019° 54.9' E

Paula Sçiuk



October 5, 2022, 11:08am, 4° C, sunny, clear, day length: 9:24:27

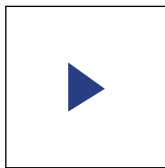
Morning landing, small bay, oldest rocks in the known world, 411 million years and older  
7 islands of Sjuøyane viewable at sunrise, visible ice: frazil, grease, bubbles, frozen foam.

*Vesicle, Nordkappbukta 80° 30.9' N 019° 54.9' E, Ultrachrome ink on polycarbonate, 2022.*

**Bergy Seltzer**

Felicia LeRoy

Tiny air bubbles formed at many atmospheres of pressure are compressed deep within glacier ice. As the glacier melts, these ancient air pockets are released. The air trapped being released from these specific glaciers dates from the end of the Late Pleistocene (12,000 yrs. before present) to the end of the Little Ice Age (c.1920 AD).



*Link to Objectice Article for Audio:*  
<https://www.regeneration-journal.org/article/id/20310/>



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The author declares they have no competing interests.

**A Thousand Words for Ice, Dahlbrebukta**

Osceola Refetoff



*A Thousand Words for Ice, Multispectral Exposure, Dahlbrebukta, 2022.*

## Moon Under Virgo Bay, Danskøya

Osceola Refetoff



*Moon Under Virgo Bay, Danskøya, 2022.*

NOTE: Multispectral exposures are made with photographic equipment that is sensitive to both visual and infrared spectrums, creating vivid and otherworldly color combinations in camera using various archaic filters in front of the lens.

The author declares they have no competing interests.

## Dahlbreen Glacier

Dianne Chisholm

Now, light begins  
to frisk the glacier,  
touching the calving face and pawing it.

Light asking what do you have in your pockets?  
Crevasses answering wordlessly, in navy blue.

–Helen Mort

### i

Dahlbreen is our first. Our glacier premiere. Act I: night-hooded headlands blaze ochre-russet-rust. Act II: *the glacier* glows white-hot incandescence. Act III: *the glacier* eclipses the sun.

We anchor in darkness, where Dahlbreen is on the rise. Dawn-drawn on deck we drink in the vision with morning coffee. Learn Norwegian “*en bre*” means *a glacier*, whereas “*breen*” is definite. Who is Dahl, we neglect to ask. *The glacier*, we marvel, is all that matters.

The glacier mouths a sea pitted with island moraines. Its tongue, forked and snaky, is pierced by *nunataks* and bitted by steep black ridges. Into the bay it debouches toothy pillars, riddled with cavities of deepening blue. Tongue is a toe is a snout with a face—that aspect of glacial anatomy we greet at sea level. Mouth is a pelvis that squats on the water, splays hips valley-wide, births icy cascades.

### ii

From zodiacs, we land on tiny face-facing island. Disperse across the rocks with our various art-making media, colonize best prospects. I settle on photographing lapping, pooling, swamping shore with the glacier, hanging static, in the distance. Slow my exposure to capture, still-motion, the heart-stopping pulse of waves, wakes of calving.

A bearded seal swims by. Sees us seeing it. Eyeball to eyeball, I-Thou.

I last saw a bearded seal in Isortoq. Buried in ice beside a hunter’s house. Ripe for butchering all winter long. Flippers and entrails for the dogs; ribs, steaks, sweetmeats for us. Eyes long gone, swallowed fresh at kill site. No one but me sees this seal, and hungers.

iii

In zodiacs we tour the face. It surprises S, our driver, to find so much bedrock bared since her last visit. Close to the calving, we surf small tsunamis. S cuts the motor. Ears wide-open, we hear, all around, ice-age ice melt–

snap crackle pop

no, not so, listen again–

shiiisshh shintzell sshlopp

hear *the glacier drown*.

Note

Epigraph from *The Singing Glacier* by Helen Mort, London: Hercules Editions, 2018, p.14. Dahlbreen, after Norwegian whaler, wholesaler and benefactor, Thor D. (1862–1920). *Nunataks* are mountains protruding from glacier ice. Isortoq is a tiny settlement in southeast Greenland.

The author declares they have no competing interests.

## **Esmarkbreen Glacier**

Harley Cowan

Esmarkbreen was one of the few glaciers we could walk up to. This spectacularly twisted ice form leaned perilously over but had so far refused to succumb to gravity.

To stand dwarfed at the foot of an ancient glacier is to experience those primordial beginnings of our world. Some glaciers are alive with grinding, crashing, even thundering noise and it can be difficult to tell exactly where the sound is coming from. Some calve dramatically into the sea. Esmarkbreen was quieter than others and invited us to come close, which made it all the more impressive.

We had several hours to work on the moraine on this particularly cold afternoon. Days were getting shorter by nearly twenty minutes per day and the moon was up all hours. As we worked, the sky dimmed, the moon got brighter, and cold air washed down on us from above.



*Esmarkbreen Glacier*, Silver gelatin print, 2022.

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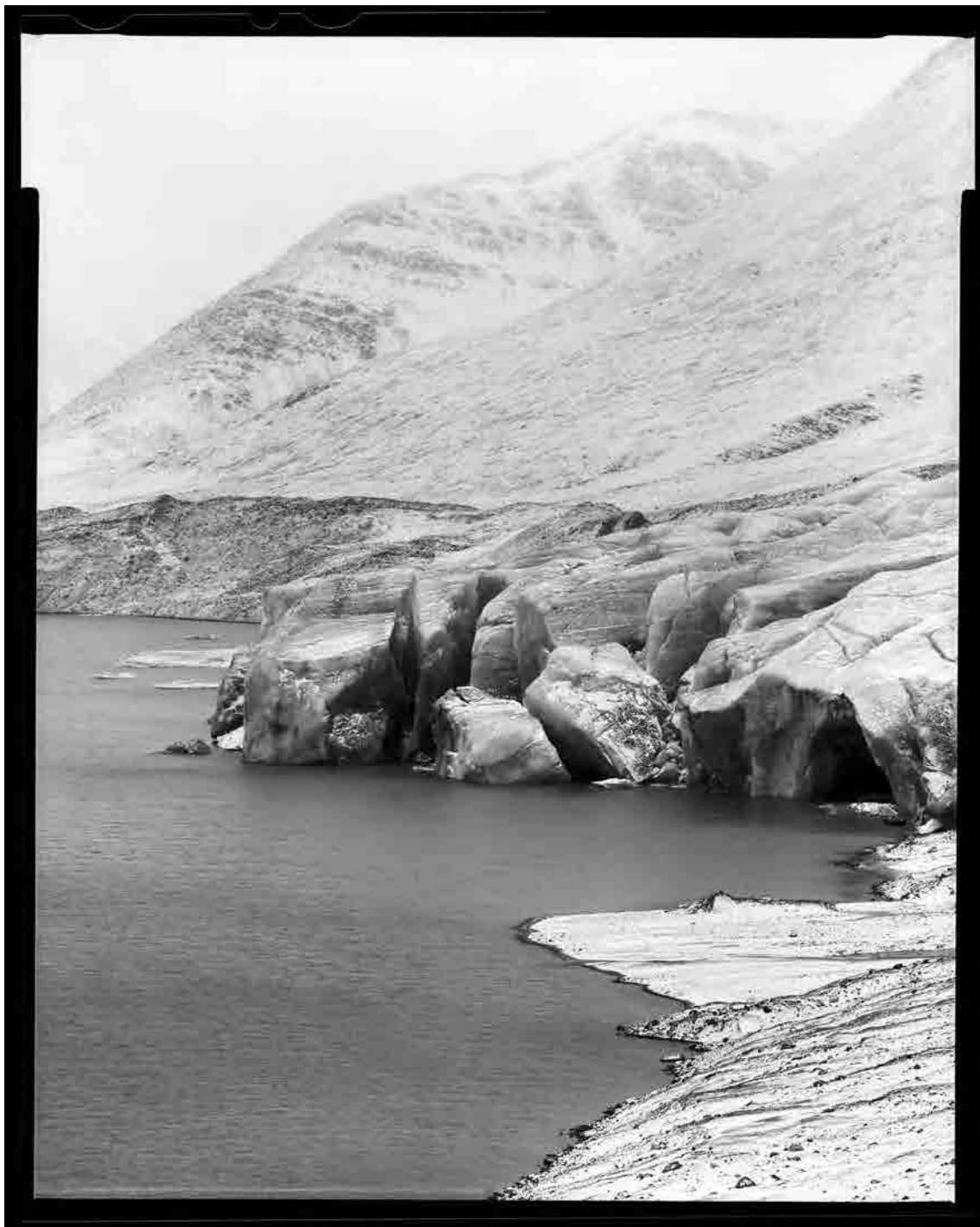
## **Erikbreen Glacier**

Harley Cowan

Over the ridge from our anchorage at Hornbækpollen was this view down to Erikbreen Glacier and its massive freshwater lake. Sediment colored the water dark and brown. Fresh snow from the evening before gave texture to the landscape.

It was a very windy day that more than once threatened to sweep my camera from the heights but I found some shelter in a nook in the rocks.

Glaciers make grinding, crashing, even thundering sounds and one never knows exactly where it is coming from. This glacier was actively making noise but only once did we see the falling ice that produced it.

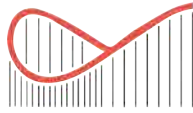


*Erikbreen Glacier*, Silver gelatin print, 2022.

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The author declares they have no competing interests.





**REGENERATION:**  
Environment, Art, Culture

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## **Walri**

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A multimodal collaboration between artists, writers, and scholars. This piece emerged from an expedition to the Arctic archipelago as part of the Arctic Circle Residency in Autumn 2022.

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## Walrus at Smeerenburg

Hannah Larrabee

I was afraid of them but that's gone now.  
One turned and stared at me with a patch  
of snow stuck to its whiskers. Male or female  
was irrelevant. All that mattered was whether  
you were standing downwind. My father  
used to bring back truckloads of cow manure  
for the garden, but that didn't come close.  
Cows are debutantes, comparatively.

I'm not usually afraid and can't explain why  
I was before seeing them, but when I did  
see them, congregated on the killing fields  
of Smeerenberg, I fell into a historical sadness.

The whale blubber boiling pits were still visible.  
Walrus were part of the slow, innumerable deaths.

Now they watch us with only an occasional bout  
of curiosity. They are among themselves so beautifully.

When I got tired of the clicking cameras, I walked  
away to observe the vista, the distant glaciers.

What happened here echoes still in the bowhead-less  
ocean. To be without something is the surest sign  
of human harm. The mountains here forgot us willingly  
and they still call out to the whales whenever the moon  
dips below the horizon.

*October 11, 2022*

The author declares they have no competing interests.

## Walruses of Smeerenburg

Harley Cowan



*Walruses of Smeerenburg*, Silver gelatin print, 2022.

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Several walruses of a larger colony lie resting in a group on a snowy beach at Smeerenburg on Amsterdamøya (Amsterdam Island). The mountainous coastline of Spitsbergen is visible in the distance.

We took our time approaching this colony of about fifty. They knew we were there and it raised some initial curiosity but we kept our distance and, after a time, they did not mind our presence. The photograph suggests a more placid scene than it was. They were noisy, restless bedfellows perpetually complaining and poking at one another. Some left their immediate group to try another. A handful of animals hauled out or back into the sea while others bathed in the shallows. We were generally upwind but occasionally the breeze would shift and we received a nostril-full of something between cow pasture and low tide.

This day was incredible. It was a joy to see these animals thriving in their natural habitat. We spent nearly an hour watching and, although I shot all dozen of my sheets of film, it was tough to pack up and hike back down the coast to our zodiac, straining to hear their grunts and groans as they faded away into the silence.

Three centuries of commercial hunting brought Svalbard walruses to near extinction. In 1952, a hunting ban was passed to protect the hundred or so remaining. Today, the population has rebounded and approximately six thousand live in the archipelago. Terrestrial haul-out sites like the broad, shallow beaches at Smeerenburg are vital to walruses, especially as populations rebound and pack ice retreats and shrinks.

The author declares they have no competing interests.

**80° North**

Hannah Larrabee

I ask that the God  
of my body

rise with the distinct  
tongue of a glacier

I have traveled  
all the way to

Spitsbergen  
and submerged

myself in water  
so cold my breath

took a shape  
that longer fit

inside my lungs  
it seems extreme

to look for me here  
but I have looked

everywhere else  
80° latitude and

the Northern Lights  
lost their name

when we looked  
south to watch them

be so bold  
as to withhold

their best colors  
from us

without a lens  
I didn't care

I am familiar with  
my own shy colors

that's why I am  
noting the light

under each iceberg  
on each glacial peak

I am out looking  
for the person

you love and when  
the north wind

asked why I was here  
I answered.

*October 6, 2022*

The author declares they have no competing interests.

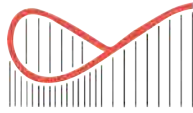
**Walrus Voyeur**  
Candace Jensen



The photo of the walrus snuggling was taken with an iPhone and a pair of borrowed binoculars held up to the lens, from a safe distance at Smeerenburgreen. ©2022, Candace Jensen. All Rights Reserved.

The author declares that they have no competing interests.





**REGENERATION:**  
Environment, Art, Culture

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# OH Open Library of Humanities

## Reading the Landscape

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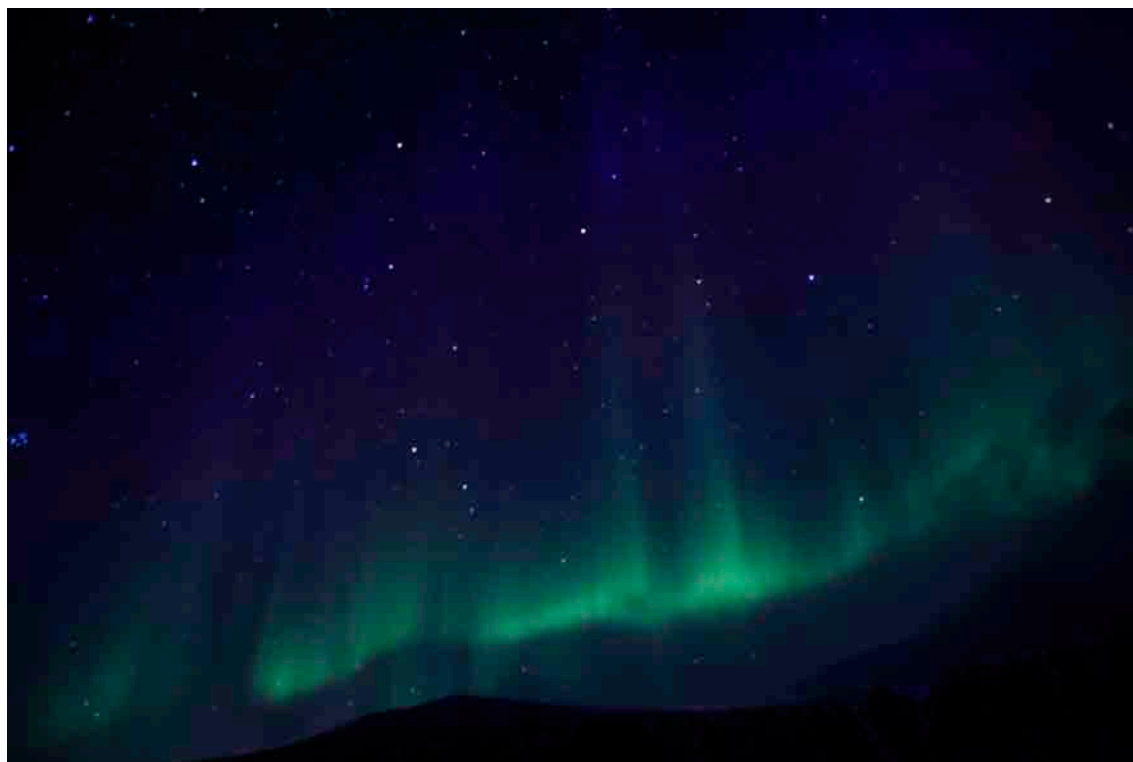
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OPEN ACCESS



Mirari, Chermsideøya 80° 28.2' N 019° 54.8' E

Paula Súiuk



October 5, 2022, 11:58pm, 4° C, clear, day length: 9:24:27

Aurora Borealis, Venus, bright, low on horizon amid shooting stars, Milky Way

Antigua's gentle sway, scent of brine, cloud like breath at fore of ship.

*Mirari*, Ultrachrome ink on polycarbonate, 2022.

The author declares that they have no competing interests.

## “The World Is Here Too”: Out of Place in Svalbard

Hester Blum

On the evening of our third day the tall ship *Antigua* reached its farthest north, sailing beyond 80° N latitude—less than ten degrees from the North Pole. We were artists and writers on an expeditionary residency to the high Arctic archipelago of Svalbard, and we thrilled to the idea of voyaging that far north. Even so, before we had embarked in the small city of Longyearbyen (already so far north at 78° N), the expedition guide, Sarah Gerats, had tried to temper our desire to reach 80°. “Sixty-six point thirty-three degrees means something,” she said, referring to the Arctic Circle, the latitudinal line that marks the geodetic point beyond which the sun does not rise or does not set for at least one day per year. The eightieth parallel, on the other hand, does not itself “mean” anything beyond its navigational utility. “It is what we make of it,” Sarah told us, shrugging at our arbitrary ambitions. We nevertheless made a lot of it that night: just as the ship crossed the parallel, under sail, we saw the Aurora Borealis for the first time on the expedition. The ship was so far north that the Northern Lights were to the *south* of us. We turned our faces to the sky and gaped at the greens and blues and reds of the Northern Lights. The colors flared and spiked like an irregular heartbeat on a monitor.

The next morning we prepared for a landing, which we did twice daily to set up our artistic project equipment or otherwise wander as far as the armed polar bear guides would safely permit. The initial landings in those first few days of The Arctic Circle expedition were in impossibly spectacular spots: on narrow moraines at the restless, calving mouths of glaciers, or in dramatic bays that had been basecamps for hunters and whalers and were now protected sites of “cultural heritage,” a designation applied to human traces that predate 1946, per Svalbard environmental law. (Svalbard has no Indigenous human population but has been intermittently visited or inhabited by resource-extracting Europeans and Americans since the late sixteenth century.) From the prospect of the ship in the afterglow of the Northern Lights, the small northern island Chermsideøya was underwhelming. It presented no outsized landscape features, no visible glaciers or geological marvels, and the scree on the beach looked flat and dull in the cold and wind. But when we climbed out of the Zodiac boats that ferried us to shore, the beach disclosed a two-fold surprise. Nordkappbukta (“north cape bay”) was beautiful in ways that weren’t apparent from the vantage point of the *Antigua*. We had arrived at a low spit with frozen-over braided streams and the improbably striped and elaborately folded rocks that are characteristic of Svalbard’s geological singularity. The archipelago appears as if in the immediate aftermath of an Ice Age, with Mesozoic to Archean formations—including the coal seam that drove the settlement of

Svalbard—clearly visible in the unvegetated landscape. Everyone who visits Svalbard becomes an amateur geologist, so outsized is this weirdness.

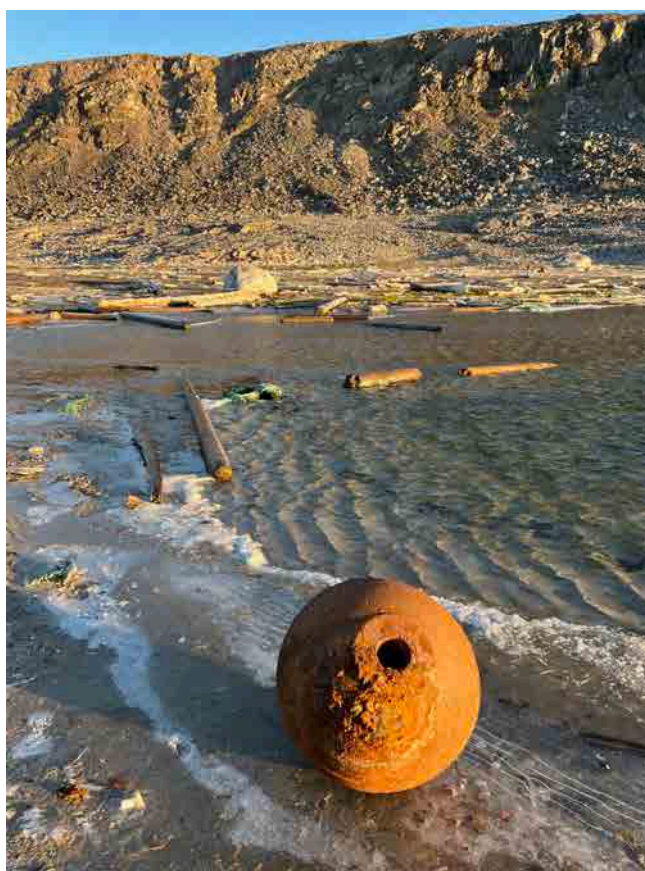


Improbably striped rock on the shore of Chermisideøya, Svalbard. Photograph by Hester Blum.

Yet even more vivid than the particolored rocks was the other disclosure on the beach: great, garish heaps of plastic trash, driftwood, fishing nets, metal scraps, and discarded ballast blanketing the shoreline. It was as if we had washed up on a blighted slip in an active industrial port. Jettisoned ship floats, huge spheres of rusting metal, were strung out along the tide line; one artist kicked a smaller yellow plastic float along the sand like a toddler with a ball. Fishing nets of every size and thickness and color were entangled with frozen sand, buried or snagged on other trash and difficult to extract. They made manifest the stock cartoon image of an angler's bum catch of a tin can or an odd boot. If our expeditionary collective had determined that 80° N meant something to us, what, then, was the meaning of this volume of human garbage this far north, a thousand miles beyond the Arctic Circle? Was the macroplastic any more out of place in Svalbard than we were—and what would “we make of it,” in guide Sarah's formulation?

Plastic is not Svalbardian cultural heritage. The crew, no strangers to this bay, had packed the Zodiacs with a number of huge nautical-grade trash bags, and told us that if our project needs permitted, we might clear the beach of much plastic as we could. The Svalbard Environmental Protection Act identifies “cultural heritage” as “all

traces of human activity in the physical environment, including localities associated with historical events,” and automatically protects “1. structures and sites dating from before 1946; 2. movable historical objects dating from before 1946 or earlier that come to light by chance or through investigations, excavation or in any other way.”<sup>1</sup> I filled a bag up to my armpits with postwar nets, bottles, bins, and one orange safety cone, still neon bright. My enormous trash bag was too heavy for me to carry without help; even in pieces, commercial fishing nets are gargantuan and surprisingly heavy, clogged with sand not readily shaken free. I was far from the only one spending the landing time harvesting plastic detritus, yet there was no visible diminution of plastic.



Marine industrial trash and driftwood at Nordkappbukta, Chermisideøya, Svalbard. Photograph by Hester Blum.

On the beach that day my first feeling was shock and deflation. After the sublimity of the Aurora Borealis, the greens and blues and reds of the plastic garbage were grotesque, and my looping inner monologue was a muttered *et in Arcadia ego*. The beach cleanup effort helped channel the horror into virtuousness, temporarily, but the

scale of the problem kept me from sustaining such cheaply-purchased self-approval.<sup>2</sup> The trash and logs (Svalbard is treeless) had mostly floated from the north or Siberia—that is, over the Arctic Ocean via the transpolar current—and not from the south or industrial western Europe, as I had presumed. There were some pieces that had Cyrillic writing only semi-effaced, including a blue cap from a Russian water bottle. It was midday but the sun was barely above the horizon; at 80° N in mid-October, the sun circles the horizon but does not rise, which gave the impression that we were the pre-Copernican nuclei of our frozen world. The slant light was golden, a day-long magic hour or permanent sunset. Several artists on the beach clustered around a woman's wedge sandal, largely intact. Before the shoe was consigned to a trash bag, everyone took a turn photographing it on the patches of ice on the spit. One artist said, "it's a carbon footprint."

That awful volume of human-generated inorganic garbage was unsettling, an interruption of the Arctic sublime we had been documenting in the first few days of the trip. But to feel horrified by the spectacle of so much macroplastic in northernmost part of Svalbard, a spot closer to the North Pole than to the Arctic Circle, is to participate in a fantasy of the Arctic as cut off from the rest of the world. "You can't run away to Svalbard," Sarah told us; "the world is here too." She had been talking about Norway's tightening nationalist management of Svalbard, but I heard her words anew on the junked strand. The world was still with us on the other end of Chermsideøya the following day, where we visited geoglyphs left over the past 125 years by a sequence of scientific and North Pole rescue expeditions. In small white rocks now covered with lichen, members of the Swedish half of the Swedish-Russian Arc de Meridian topographic expedition left their name and the date 1898; the Russian icebreaker that rescued the North Pole-seeking crew of Umberto Nobile's crashed airship likewise left its mark in Cyrillic and Roman lettering, with a dateline of 1928. From the uninterrupted signs of weathering, these geoglyphs seem to have been undisturbed in the intervening years.

A swastika, too, is visible on that Chermsideøya beach. Left by Nazis who maintained a wartime weather outpost on Svalbard—the last Germans to surrender to Allied forces in 1945—the swastika, formed of white rocks, looks far fresher. Nazi Germany destroyed Longyearbyen during the war; a bombed coal mine, bridging the periodic divide between cultural heritage and human trash, continued to burn for twenty years. The swastika on the northern tip of Svalbard has been dismantled and reformed at various points over the intervening years by those who would either wish to kick it free of protection within Svalbardian cultural memory, or to preserve—as historical caution, as limit case—the violence of its particular brand of heritage.

Even if we weren't looking for symbols they found us. I turned my back to the geoglyphs and instead walked back and forth among the wildly variable composite rocks that comprised the landing site. There were stripes of quartz that ran through many of the rocks, forming elusive glyphs of their own. In one eye-catching curiosity, the white geological bands in one large grey boulder formed a circle with a diagonal line through it, the symbol of something verboten. I dictated "I want a language that can read the lines in these rocks" to the Notes app on my phone, my fingers too cold to thumb out the words. Before the Zodiacs returned us to the ship I took off my parka and woolen layers and muck boots and did an Arctic Ocean plunge in water so cold it was nearly physically and cognitively incapacitating. I have a memory of body confusion about how to stand up after I dove in, confusion about whether leaving the water was something I should—or even could—do.



Shoreline of Chermsideøya, Svalbard. Photograph by Hester Blum.

The Northern Lights to the south of us, marine industrial trash rafted over the North Pole, a swastika on the strand, my shocked, stripped body in the water: in each instance

in that charged 36-hour period in Svalbard I thought *this does not belong here*. All were out of place. It was hard to situate my feeling of out-of-placeness in the Far North—whether I was understanding myself as a writer, a humanities researcher, a tourist—within the broader context of climate displacement. Humans are dislocated from their homes by the climate disasters (both swift and slow-onset) of an industrialized, rapidly warming earth; the catastrophic retreat of Arctic and Antarctic ice transforms coastlines and coastal communities and has global effects on everything from temperature and albedo to food and shipping networks. I was contemplating, too, how place and time shape what we understand as cultural heritage, whether in Svalbard (which has no premodern human history) or in the broader Arctic (a site of pan-Inuit Indigenous survivance for millennia).

As both a geophysical and an intellectual metric, out-of-placeness bears a history. The visibly out-of-place rocks left behind by retreating glaciers, rocks known in geology as “glacial erratics,” led to the human recognition of past planetary ice ages and thus an understanding of deep or geological time. Erratics are the rocks gathered up by glaciers on the move; when a glacier shrinks or moves on, rocks and other debris are left behind in areas where their appearance and constitution is incommensurate with the region’s native stones. In the early nineteenth century, James Hutton, Louis Agassiz, and Charles Lyell were among the scientists who determined that the anomalous rocks they saw in Alpine valleys and Scottish dales were not borne by an ancient flood, as earlier theories had proposed, but by vast, mobile ice fields. Coming to an understanding of the place and time of glacial erratics allowed humans to apprehend and tell stories about historical climate changes beyond the scales of normal human observation. And there is a long, toxic history of white Western travelers seeking experiences of out-of-placeness for their (our, my) aesthetic consumption and production.

When I stood on the tundra and scree of Svalbard’s marginal land, out of place, I felt an identificatory affinity with erratics—both lithic glacial erratics and the erratic cultural heritage remnants among which we threaded our way. Wandering, variable, uneven, eccentric relative to my geographical and cultural home, I considered a figuration of the “polar erratic”: the cultural forms (ideas, affinities, human and nonhuman life, waste, resources) that are out of place because they have been moved by large-scale environmental change. These displaced things, like the rocks made erratic by the propulsive movement of glaciers, must nevertheless be accounted for in the new landscape formed in the wake of climate disruption. In a moment when contingency, precarity, and errancy are continual states of being, out-of-placeness may be the state of the Arctic, the state of the human in the world now.

\*\*\*\*\*

Before we boarded the ship one artist asked guide Sarah about a photo in Longyearbyen's North Pole Expedition Museum that showed garbage all over one shoreline. "That is not garbage," Sarah smiled, "that is our cultural heritage." The effect of Svalbard's Environmental Protection Act, Sarah told us to dramatic rhetorical effect, is that "history does not exist after 1946...we cannot create history anymore." The clarity of the dateline defining what detritus of culture should be preserved in Svalbard nevertheless does not neatly resolve the muddle of what constitutes trash and what constitutes cultural heritage, whether in the Norwegian Arctic archipelago or elsewhere—the muddle, that is, of what is out of place, what belongs, what is assimilated into the environment.

The first site of cultural heritage at which our Arctic Circle expedition stopped was Sallyhamna in Holmiabukta, where the remnants of a seventeenth-century Dutch whaling station are visible next to a twentieth-century hut established by Norwegian trappers. Crumbling remainders of the yellow bricks used by Dutch whalers to build blubber ovens are scattered around the harbor and surround the modest hut that the Norwegians had built in the 1930s, into which we peeked (it currently contains a cot, a hotplate, a corner chimney, a desk, some maps, a few nautilus shells, a wooden shoe mold, and a fire extinguisher). Near the water's edge, one of the Dutch try-pots for rendering whale blubber had been appropriated as a human grave. The restless permafrost, however, eventually heaves what is buried to the surface, a polar erratic *in situ*. We could plainly see mossy human bones, including a tibia and fibula, beside the boards of a wooden coffin that lay on the tundra that brimmed the blubber oven. We were enjoined to be particularly careful with our steps at this site in order not to trod on the bricks, bolt-studded boards, and other infrastructural remains of hunting practices. One of our guides, the deadpan Finnish artist Terhi Nieminen, said "in the Arctic cultural heritage is a jumbled mess, not temples or pyramids."<sup>3</sup> (This line was only slightly less memorable than her equally laconic observation that when in the water, "walruses look like swimming dicks. Old ones.") When the guides shared their own art with us late in the expedition, Terhi showed us part of her short film *Grenada*, which documents her attempt to sell a non-running 1970s Ford Grenada in Finland. In the film, Terhi's mother tells her to unload the car at a junkyard; Terhi responds "it's in the world now, but if I scrap it it's just gone."

The glaciers of Svalbard ("like Switzerland with the sea," said nineteenth-century British explorer Benjamin Leigh Smith<sup>4</sup>) shaped and crowded both the landscape and our awareness. We were hailed by glaciers that spoke to us insistently and resoundingly, cracking and popping and groaning in the vibrancy of their matter. Most were restlessly

calving, fracturing at their termini with thunderous, textured rumbles that sounded like urban garbage trucks making the rounds. Descriptive superlatives were wan and limp in the face of the extravagant sublimity of the glaciers. As a shorthand for the insufficiencies of language we subverted our responses (“urban garbage truck”), standing on deck flourishing our middle fingers at sunrises and sunsets that lasted for hours in the high-latitude low-hanging sun. “This is stupid” we would say as an otherworldly lunar halo or moon dog would appear over a berg-filled bay. “More bullshit” we would say while standing twenty meters from 100 heaped walruses mildly snuffling in front of an impossible horizon of glacial tongues. I tried out this line on Sarah, who raised an eyebrow; perhaps she pitied the impoverishment or cynicism of our expression. Henry Chermiside, a British member of an 1873 expedition to Svalbard (and the namesake of Chermisideøya), wrote of a similar affective shift in aesthetic perception: “it is almost with a feeling of awe that one turns away from the outmost (or inmost) threshold of the dread unapproachable tract of frozen ocean”; yet the epic sublimity of the scene soon resolved for Chermiside into a sense of the “ordinary.”<sup>5</sup>

Glaciers moved in my ears and behind my eyelids, and when I was not conceding linguistic expressivity to Svalbard’s visual outlandishness I recurred to two words to describe the vast deltas of ice: “encompassing” and “insistent.” I recurred, as well, to a line in *Moby-Dick* that my mind also subverted. In the moment when cabin boy Pip is abandoned to the sea, his “finite body” is “jeeringly” preserved by a sea that drowns “the infinite of his soul.” Melville writes that Pip experiences an “intense concentration of self” as his “ringed horizon began to expand around him miserably.” In Svalbard, I felt my ringed horizon expanding around me, but my sublime encounter felt more rapturous than miserable. When Pip situationally drowns in *Moby-Dick*, he glimpses the “multitudinous, God-omnipresent, coral insects, that out of the firmament of waters heaved the colossal orbs.”<sup>6</sup> In this baroque phrase Melville is suggesting that Pip has witnessed continent formation, according to a nineteenth-century theory that the “colossal orbs” were formed of coral. In other words, Pip has seen deep time in the ocean’s depths. His vision of extra-human planetary timescales registers as madness to the superficial world, however; he cannot communicate what he has seen. I did not need to drown to glimpse the geologic record of deep time in Svalbard, which feels more visible in its scantily vegetated, treeless rockscape than in any other place in the world. Nevertheless like Pip I find, still, that trying to “speak” what I have seen does not translate as sense to my temperate-zone listeners, perhaps a result of the inevitable dilution of my own concentration of self. I had wished for a language to read the lines in the runic banded rocks of expeditionary landing on Chermisideøya. The language to speak Svalbard is more erratic, more fugitive still.

I am usually thinking about *Moby-Dick*, to be fair, and Melville makes several references to the long history of Arctic whaling in Svalbard, which he knew by the name Spitzbergen. Svalbard (Norwegian for “cold edge”) was called Spitsbergen (Dutch for “pointed mountains”; Spitzbergen in the German spelling) by the original sixteenth-century Dutch voyagers and throughout most of the twentieth century until Norway claimed the archipelago; the largest island in the group is still known as Spitsbergen. In *Moby-Dick*’s chapter on ambergris, which immediately precedes Pip’s metaphysical drowning, Melville writes about the Dutch whaling outpost Smeerenberg, which becomes an occasion for him to defend whalers against the charge of being smelly:

I partly surmise also, that this wicked charge against whalers may be likewise imputed to the existence on the coast of Greenland [where Spitsbergen/Svalbard was mistakenly located on early maps], in former times, of a Dutch village called Schmerenburgh or Smeerenberg, which latter name is the one used by the learned Fogo Von Slack, in his great work on Smells, a text-book on that subject. As its name imports (smeer, fat; berg, to put up), this village was founded in order to afford a place for the blubber of the Dutch whale fleet to be tried out, without being taken home to Holland for that purpose. It was a collection of furnaces, fat-kettles, and oil sheds; and when the works were in full operation certainly gave forth no very pleasant savor.<sup>7</sup>

I brought all my Melvillean whaling knowledge to bear during our shore landing at Smeerenburg or “Blubber Town,” established in 1619 on Amsterdam Island as a Dutch whaling station. Consider the next paragraph or two my contribution to a *Moby-Dickish* tradition of historical invocation, allusion, and erratic intertextual promiscuity. In the 1620s and 30s Smeerenburg was occupied by up to 200 whalers representing the Dutch Noordsche Company, a whaling cartel, as well as by rival Danish whalers. Basque whalers operated in Svalbard, too, both as whaling masters hired by the Dutch and Danes and as commanders of their own whaleships. Smeerenburg was a site of shore-based whaling, and the remains of seventeenth-century Dutch blubber ovens or try pots are visible across the plain, their crumbling oven walls still studded with the yellow bricks of contemporary Dutch architecture. There were enough whalers in residence that a brothel may have been established in Blubber Town; today, 100 graves have been identified onsite. When we were there we saw, by contrast, a huddle of 100 walruses, sleek and fat, evocative of Terhi’s swimming dicks. Seventeenth-century reports claimed that Smeerenburg was a settlement of up to 20,000 people, a hundred times the figure estimated by archaeologists and other historians. The settlement was

on a broad, flat moraine called Amsterdamøya, a planar difference from the mountains and glaciers that ring the island. A steep hill rises abruptly that once nurtured abundant scurvy grass, so the Dutch called it Søre Salatberget — South Salad Hill. The scurvy grass was not sufficient to have prevented the deaths of seven Dutch whalers who died of the vitamin C deficiency disease during one of the first years of human overwintering in Svalbard.

The year that Blubber Town was established, 1619, is also the year that a ship bearing a Dutch letter of marque, the *White Lion*, transported the first Africans enslaved in North America. Whether in 1619 or in 2025, it's hard to disentangle slaughter and cultural heritage, the movement of humans and of human detritus, the preservation or annihilation of what is valued or not valued. This slaughter, too, is cultural heritage. In Svalbard we had to keep off the lushly beautiful tundra, and not only to preserve its fragile growth: the tundra's richness had been nourished over the centuries by the blood of harvested whales by the thousands of gallons, and thus the blood-fed tundra, too, was cultural heritage. If everything is out of place all the time—if the world, its human and nonhuman life, its inorganic materials, are all displaced by extreme environmental processes—then we need a new way to orient ourselves in relation to everything from macroplastics on a beach to the timelines of ongoing colonial/carbon effects.

The fragmentary, ephemeral, occasional, unstable, out-of-placeness and out-of-timeness of these stories is a story of displacement and re-emplacement by climate processes and temporal distortions driven by extraction logics. But as Jen Rose Smith, Kyle Whyte, Zoe Todd, and other Indigenous scholars have shown, what the white Western world experiences as present climate emergency is only the most present iteration in 1000 years of colonialism and genocide.<sup>8</sup> To lament the contamination of the Arctic is to indulge in a form of ecomelancholia that, like photographic ruin porn of blighted urban structures, fetishizes extinction and renders it both inevitable and abstracted. When I traveled to Antarctica as a lecturer, for example, the cruise passengers all said that they wanted to see the ice “before it was gone,” a form of witnessing (if not extinction fetish) that remained aloof from the impact of our carbon footprint and other forms of causality. The prosaic industrial trash that carpeted the sand at 80° N was not autochthonous to Svalbard, of course, but an Arcadian Arctic is no more available to the world than Arcadia; the concept of a “pristine” Arctic annihilates its longstanding human histories. *Et in Arktikos ego*, even in the Arctic, I am there, plastic and other human garbage says again and again. The sites of cultural heritage we visited on Svalbard were all part of the history of extractive energy industries: the Dutch and Russian Pomory hunters, trappers, and whalers of the late sixteenth through early twentieth centuries were succeeded

by American, Norwegian, and Russian coal miners in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries; Longyearbyen was named by John Munro Longyear, the American founder of the Arctic Coal Company. For the experience of being there, of being in Svalbard (as it has been for me in Nunavut, in Sápmi, in Antarctica, in Greenland), was not an experience of remoteness or geophysical extremity but instead a sense of a reorienting assimilation into an already-disturbed environment.

In reckoning with what can be assimilated into the world versus what continues to stick up, to disturb the environment, the figure of the polar erratic has stuck with me. When I stood on tundra and scree, amid the infrastructural debris of a so-called pristine Arctic environment, I was reluctant to fetishize some former “untouched” natural wild, a state of nature historically weaponized to excuse or disguise imperialism and settler colonialism. Nor did I want to engage in cynical dismissal of this corruption as always already in place, Siberian plastic at my feet notwithstanding. I have been listening for a language that could account for these misapprehensions, while also having explanatory power for our present moment. I found that language in the rocks of Svalbard, or rather, those rocks formed part of the signs and signifiers that my polar travels have thrust insistently upon me. Polar erratics throw into relief the protracted and changeable temporalities and place-specific knowledges of the polar zones. Polar erratics disturb extinction rhetoric about the circumpolar regions and provide a different register for marking temporal acceleration and dilation, as well as for thinking about Indigenous presence and futurity. Polar erratics might include Arctic cultural heritage sites, ecotourist routes, and the nonlinear timelines of Indigenous climate knowledge. Polar erratics include scholars like me. I am a white settler from the continental US; in my erratic polar travels (and in their heavy carbon footprint) I remain in and out of place, from an academic disciplinary research perspective as well as in my increasing discomfort with the academic imperative to extract and stitch together rough bits of knowledge into a smooth, coherent narrative. In Svalbard, and still today, I wonder what it means to leave those erratics in their very out-of- placeness and organize the world around the new—if already-littered or noisy—environment they create.

The author declares that they have no competing interests.

**Anchorage at Gipsvika**

Harley Cowan



*Anchorage at Gipsvika*, Silver gelatin print, 2022.  
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## Havhestbreen Glacier

Harley Cowan



*Havhestbreen Glacier*, Silver gelatin print, 2022.  
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**Andrée's Launch Site, Vizrgohamna**

Harley Cowan

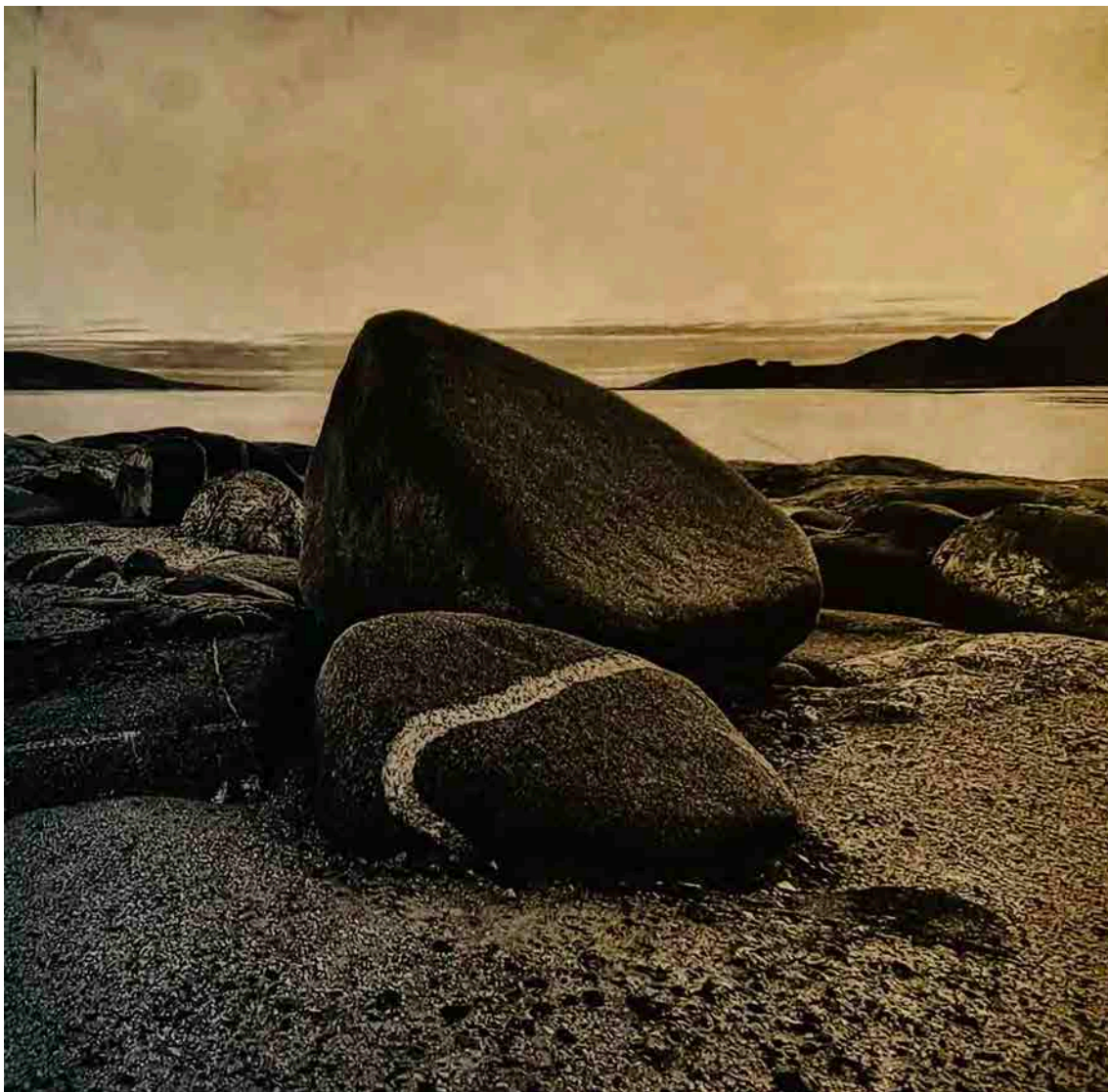


*Andrée's Launch Site, Virgohamna, Silver gelatin print, 2022.*  
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The author declares that they have no competing interests.

## Resting Place

Joan Albaugh



*Resting Place*, Photogravure, 2023.  
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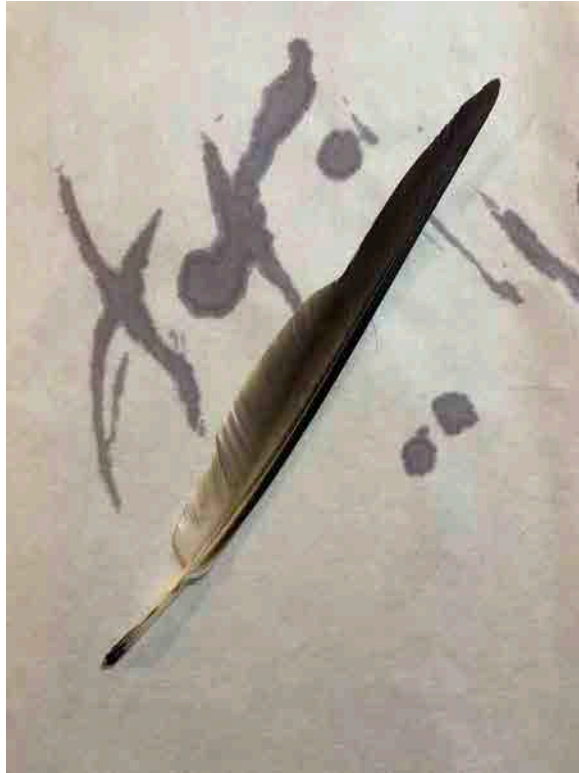
The author declares that they have no competing interests.

## **Vox Populi Vox Dei**

Candace Jensen

Poemessays / lyric essays are my favorite form of composition, and a monstrous one which feels well-suited to approaching the “topic” of Svalbard. This contribution barely hints at the abundant complexity and cosmic-scale of the lexical, material and mythological significance of Svalbard. I have made a brave, spirited effort to encapsulate it and know that I have failed— the friction of inadequacy of any art or science to contain Svalbard is part of the point. Svalbard here also functions as “any place” which could be made subject to this treatment of expansive meaning. I’m attempting to ask, “Is everything a speculative fiction— us literally wrestling some sort of narrative logic from the immensity of the sublime, material world?” and “What meaning can be derived by an itinerant explorer, a temporary visitor, and will that meaning supply necessary tools for any kind of meaningful dialogue with land, water, flora, fauna and else?”

This poemessay is specifically a chimæra of a curated, purposefully recursive, repetitive selection of unedited journal entries from my voyage with the Arctic Circle Residency Autumn 2022 expedition in and around the Svalbard archipelago, as well as adapted, expanded versions of those journal entries, recursive lines from those expanded journal entries worked into essay which took over a year to approach after digesting and assimilating my rich experience on Svalbard, my original poetry as well as found/erasure poetry, and references to literature and mythology which are seminal to my work as well as prescient to my experiences on Svalbard in October, 2022.



*Found gull feather and ink markings on mulberry paper, studio image.  
Photograph by Candace Jensen, 2024.*

Vox Populi Vox Dei  
*speculative fictions built on observed materialities*

///

"Sunday 10/9/22

*Near the Reindeer Plain – Hornbaeckpollan (head) in/near Liefdefjorden (Fjord of love)*

In the Northernmost bits of the landmasses of Svalbard,  
the soft chunk of maroon leaving mauve pigment against quartzite and granites, agate or  
carnelian littered pink amongst and around

The water is wildest under its surface, tranquil and mirroring above

The cold is the kind of cold that is plain and honest. It does not seep into your bones, or  
appear blameless at first only to knife you in the back, or sneak into the cuffs of your crinkle  
sounded coat. It is simply cold, even smilingly so. And so you wear two fully woolen pairs of  
socks right over each other, and your shoulders are decked in three layers themselves. The  
shadows of noon are long as dusk. The color of the sunset mingles with the pinks of dawn.

Messages are scrawled in stones from over a hundred years ago, and other messages are embedded in stones from millennia past. Some are legible, some are in [Cyrillic] Russian, some are swastikas with soft edges, which perhaps could [should] be dispersed. A message from the mountain is like the algiz rune, the ehwaz rune, the Gebo rune. And the cold and quiet place is a choral arrangement of infinite complexity and absurdity— who could speak all of these languages well enough to know what they say, much less reply to them in kind? Huddling in against the wind which is passing by in shhhushes and whispers, toeing around bits of algae-green plastic ropes and twines caught under sand frozen solid with a message from the fox “I was here, but now I am not. I jumped toes together and then scampered toes in a neat line.” Where are we hunting and what can we eat? How are the[...]

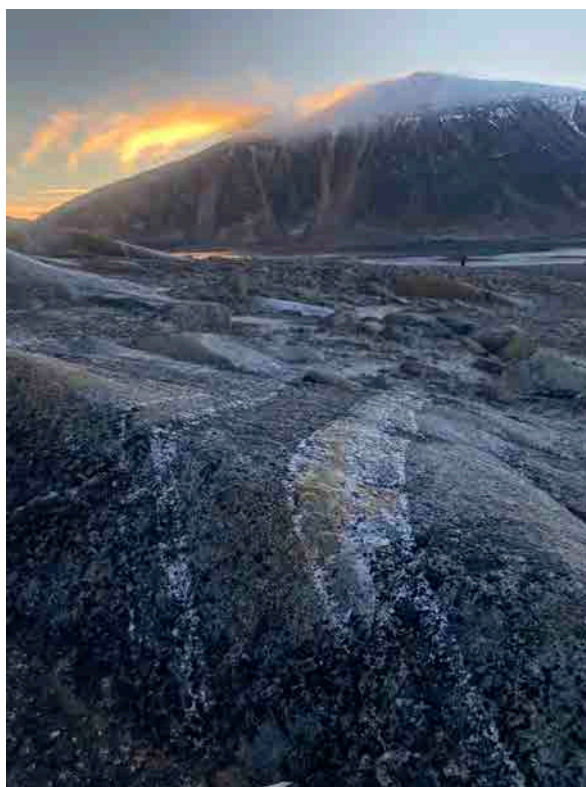
from a mostly unedited journal entry, recorded on Sunday October 9th, 2022

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All communication is about relationship. Some speaking happens with a long wait before the sound, or its echo is able to be interpreted— messages across epochs. Language of the land is climatic, geologic, lithic. In Svalbard, it is also the cry of the pre-migratory kittiwakes, terns and gulls, and the rest.<sup>9</sup>

The churn of bear paw. The waltz of ice flowing out of the sky and water twirling up the black and blue walls of the fjords. Almost all of what was being said in Svalbard was unintelligible to us, elemental, atmospheric, epochal languages that they were. And yet each moment we felt the weight of having “received a message.” Not like the world was speaking in tongues to us, dumb as we are. The glossolalia was in the breaths we took—tasting the undercurrent of rot in the water on the day of the polar plunge. The briny sweat of fishing ropes yanked through detritus after being yanked bodily from Norwegian offshore wells. [I thought numerous times— couldn’t we have kept using ye olde fibers? Let the seals gnaw them, as if they were dragons in the deepest well of the world, and the fibred lines were indeed rooting us?]

Language failed us at every turn. Whether to describe what we saw, or communicate how we felt, we tyvekked and woolen-clad numbskulls fell into awkward and frustrated lexical gaps in the face of Svalbard and of our enormous privilege and luck to visit the place, especially under the particular conditions we found ourselves; artists, writers, researchers all playing polar explorer and enjoying our afternoon tea and dessert promptly at 16:00 daily. Witnessing the sublime became chore-like, and even painful. We flipped-off the sunsets and the mysterious *fata morgana* staring past us at Templehofjorden, we fell mute or became derisive at *yet another glacial mass*. A cute-aggression of the sublime.<sup>10</sup>



*Snapshots of apparent glyphs taken by the author during landings on Svalbard's Northwest coasts and islands, October 2022.*

The stark desire to connect, and to understand, kept us ambling. Even in our incomprehension, the mirage of the recognizable hovered in the arctic air. Lithoglyphs resembling stark rune letters jutted from the beach equal parts sand, ice, and pebble. Plastic too. Messages are scrawled in stones from over a hundred years ago, and other messages are embedded in stones from millennia past. Some were legible, Cyrillic or Latin letters, some were swastikas with soft edges. There are love notes, surely, and warning signs. A message from the mountain across the water away from the beach looks like the algiz rune [ʏ], or the complex promises of the torch [<]. But right in front of us, the lithoglyphs resembling runes spell out something hard to discern with the logic-driven reading brain, on its own; the ehwaz [M] or perhaps Mannaz rune [M], the Gebo rune [X] and Issaz [I] time after time in the rocks strewn about by the sleeping Jotun of ice.

˘ [ʏ]elk [Maðr is the extension of the soil, great is the claw of the hawk.]<sup>11</sup>  
 [M] human being / humankind  
 [X] gift [debt]      [I I I I I I I I] ice ice ice ice ice [baby]

Even if the letters stared at me in clear, stark lines, their meaning— their narrative— eluded me.

The runes aren't native to this Cold Coast but it's a proximal system of writing for 'reading' the Svalbardian landscape— an endemic glyph alphabet to the pre-Christian, Nordic region, a native script of the lands closest to the archipelago [which aren't exactly close— 580 miles separate Tromsø from the Southern tip of Svalbard]. Svalbard is riddled with Norse toponyms, approximate nomenclatures from another place of ice, rock and sea. And stuck as we are in the logos of letters, unable to interpret the alphabets of messages scrawled in the elements, by the elements, it's at least something. And something recognizable in a sublime seascape that constantly threatens to overwhelm the meager processing power of the 3 pounds of meat in my skull, well that's something. And everything else is something else.

Heimdall gave man the runes, according to the Eddas, but Oðin suffered for them first. And neither of the deities invented them in their mythologies— the runes were revealed. Through trial and suffering, they were earned. The speaking of the great waves of the world couldn't be heard or recorded without the sacrifice of a life lived in the ridges and patterns of the sky, the sea, the tree, and the dark places of the roots.

There are no trees in Svalbard. No Yggsdrasil. And long before the runes were written in what is now Norway or Denmark, hundreds of miles to the South of the arctic archipelago, we [M] were further South, climbing trees and solving social challenges orgiastically. How incredible to find ourselves in this place with no trees, a place so inhospitable to unblubbered life? The sheer ingenuity of our survival there matters, whether 500 years ago on the whaling boats, or yesterday, tucked into the wintering

huts whittling walruses [walrei]. We may not belong, but who is to say we cannot learn? Who is to say whether we could approximate belonging in such a place. Given time.

The pudgy reindeer swam across the strait or walked across the ice bridge of a time long lost, and their short little legs and furry clover-shaped noses and cheerful stupidity let them thrive on the lichen-blessed rocks and salt-licked pebbles. Their taller kin knock-kneed and expired upon entry, brought over by desperate unblubbered types as they were. The merry corgis of the reindeer world munch on, idle away. Unbothered. Belonging.

And the land itself, the substrate a medley of rocks without soil, the mold-like lichens and small mycoplants squishing, isn't a place that supports putting down roots. Politically speaking, due to the administration of somewhat-dictatorial Norway, Svalbard is a place that one cannot die. [*Ahem, one could definitely DIE in Svalbard, and many have. Taken by cold, by backfiring shotguns, exposure, by the ever-present bears. But legally, death and burial are anathema to the 78th parallel.*] More keenly, within the 'land' composed of ice and wet, black rock, there are no wriggling roots nor Níðhöggr gnawing upon them. Grasping, fleshy folds of green and orange tell a story of clinging, of mutually assured survival if the growth is low, slow and soft. One builds not cities but connections. The reindeer nibble at the taxonomical rainbows of this Critical Zone<sup>12</sup>, where all of life's dramas happen and miracles are observed, ignored and oft taken for granted.



Snapshots taken by the author during landings on Svalbard's Northwest coasts and islands, October 2022.

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“Watching the sky go all cotton candy.”

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My challenge: bring the complexity of the relationship between sea, sky, light and water to mere pen and paper. Words, making marks, drawing what I see, letting the land and elements talk to me in a way. Drawing out the narrative of the place in the languages being spoken, whether I can understand them or not (mostly not).

As human beings stepping muck-booted feet in the hallowed places of bear, ice, tern and ptarmigan, it falls to us to do this narration, if only to keep ourselves from going insane without the story of our belonging. We don't belong there. But I don't mean that in the way it comes across— like everyone should pack-it-out and disassemble the shanties and dog-kennels, art installations and kindergartens, abandon the mines<sup>13</sup> [okay well maybe we can abandon the mines, keep it in the ground and all]. I mean it takes generations to develop the knack of belonging, to breathe within the thing and respond with the syllables of indigeneity.

It bears stating that, even if over-simplistic, the 'Cultural Heritage' standards on Svalbard demand exactly the eradication of signs of culture and life, if made after the world war era. Cultural heritage is the crumbling junk of whaling sites, oil barrels, metal garbage from ships, patient wintering huts for the fur-trade— signs of industry, evidence of extraction, the ephemera of exploitation over the last 500 years. It isn't, remarkably, the signs of culture that continue to this day, whether rooted in creative work, education, science, or worship. All garbage from the early 20th century and prior is protected. Aghast as this policy made me feel, I was relieved to learn that all types of plastic were blessedly modern enough to not count as cultural heritage, and we could laboriously glean the sands of polymers anywhere we pleased. So, we erased the history of plastic as much as we could during our visit. And yet the coasts of the archipelago still gleam with green and blue fishing ropes, bits of detergent caps, broken brackets, and the occasional seashore toy pail, little yellow flowers blossoming in the moonlight eternally.

The language of color might be one of the strongest cases for our [humankind's] prolonged witness and involvement in the land of Svalbard. Bifrost<sup>14</sup> after bifrost radiates up from the shifting basalt and ice— little rainbow bridges to tiny halls of the Gods, in each footprint and windmark. Color called to us as we did our shore clean-ups,

color sang to us as we marveled at small rocks, the soft chunk of maroon leaving mauve pigment against quartzite and granites, agate or carnelian-esque pebbles littered pink amongst and around ever tinier grains of sand. We were seeing these things as if minerals and ice never existed until we crossed 80°. The context, so new, casting the light of novelty and discovery on all mundane elements. And their colors are communicating, presenting story, vibrating narratives. We catch one or two words and fail to hear the rest. We couldn't repeat the story later over beers if we tried.

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The cold and quiet places in Svalbard are choral arrangements of infinite complexity and absurdity— who could speak all of these languages well enough to know what they say, much less reply to them in kind? Huddling in against the wind which is passing by in shhhushes and whispers, toeing around bits of algae-green plastic ropes and twines caught under pale gray sand frozen solid with a message from the fox “I was here, but now I am not. I jumped toes together and then scampered toes in a neat line.” Speak fox! Hear, fox. The white puff of canid shimmers over crowns of black rock as if hovering. Her movement and her silence, a tongue.

The remnants of anemone, sand-dollar, spiny urchins scuttled and strewn, the wind papering them a bit. The munch, the goo. Rich lipids coalescing and freezing in the hot blue light of the autumn sun burnishing the waves.

“Where are we hunting and what can we eat?” How are the winds changed today from yesterday, from moments ago? The light fades and softens, and darkness grows each day more into night, and the surplus of information is both meaningless and pregnant with meaning, awaiting interpretation. All the aseptic writing of the wind and stone and water fueling a heat in the space between my eyebrows, the cavernous zone of my heart.

One day, nearby to Smeerenburgreen, Hildoggo<sup>15</sup> and the ringed seal spoke with their eyes and with their urgent, padded shoreline tracking— staring at each other, murmuring. Dog of the sea, seal of the land. Genetic echoes bubbling into the desire to play— or ravage— piqued curiosity, inspired amiable cousinship. “Hello! What hunting do you have? Friend or food?” These are the things that matter. And surely in the spaces between, the rich inner worlds of their lowing gave depth impressions, quotes to be uttered months later, inspiration fodder. The two-leggers, blubberless and nose-handicapped as we are, took snapshots of the reunion across evolutionary epochs, and mused about their conversation— “cute!” This is no diminution— aware of our blindspots to their dialogue, we appreciated what we could.

And these all just the snippets from *canidae* and their cousins, washing over our dumbness. What a relief to not know what is going on, to be relieved of responsibility. But all communication is about relationship. Our dispossession and inability to translate any of it doubles-down on our unbelonging, but cannot completely do away with our complicated longing to be there, and be long there, to relate, and let belonging unspool along with the time, which behaves so strangely so near to the pole, and in such fit states of wonder.

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“Woke to full moon and dawn sitting across from each other over the ship.”

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Astral bodies in their revolutions, us stamping our feet and staring at the tides awestruck, as if they weren't moon-beckoned, feeling the swishing and ebbing within us. Hard not to love the moon, when you see her. Hati and Sköll slowing down, wolf-pawing their predators' way confidently, closing in on Máni [moon] and Sól [sun] at the shoreline. Tea time (a spongy cake, today). Pleasure cruise. Ragnarok. The end of the world.

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All communication is about relationship. Some speaking happens with a long wait before its interpretation can be had— messages telegraphed across epochs. Language of the land is climatic, geologic and lithic, and also the cry of the pre-migratory kittiwakes, terns and gulls. The rich rings of golden orange lichens and spongy flora blossoming on the centuries-old killing fields' fat-soaked bricks. Almost all of what was being said in Svalbard was unintelligible to us. But the animist glossolalia of all things filled our ears and eyes, noses and mouths. Our skin tingled against the sentience of the place, knowing our unknowing. Aware, dumbstruck, our puny language failed us at every turn. Lexical gaps erupted from *yet another gorgeous sunset*. Witnessing the sublime became chore-like, and even painful. Until a bear sighting, however far away, binoculars straining, ripped us through yet another ceiling of wonder. Cute-aggression and the cynicism of exhaustion from beauty would fall away as the first snowflakes drifted down from a familiar white-out of the sky, as the fabulously timeless good-ship *Antigua* smoothly swan-ed into the cove under full sail. This oscillation of total lack of understanding and complete knowing, what comfort that it never idles.

The frozen rivers of time and compacted snow nestled on rock faces like even more sleeping dragons.



Svalbard is no more special than another place, this whole world a whorl of clustered gems in blues, greens and reds in a swirling Black Mass of space. But the sublime is evident there, in Svalbard, precisely because we could not be inured to its features, its speaking. Novelty— and strangeness, became a deified dyad that also braided with the mythologized expectations and stories we brought with us— whether from family histories, academic specialties, the accounts of Nansen & Scott, the histories of extraction, or in my case, the deep love I felt for Philip Pullman’s *The Golden Compass*, and its careful magical-alternative-historical treatment of the polar North, the magic of the northern lights, and the icy isles of the armored bears.

Each padded step I took on ice or stone my heart begged the secret effluences of the world to reveal a *panserbjørn*, even as I knew in my head that I would never want Sergei or Terhi, our undaunted and jovially over-serious expedition guards, to be put in the position to evacuate us. And even though the reality of Svalbard in the autumn of 2022, a plague year by any measure, buttoned up in musher’s gear and wearing three pairs of socks, was more colorful and joyous in appearance than Pullman made it out to be, I felt silver-tongued and dæmonified even when tongue-tied.

They say the sounds Gods make would be unintelligible and shattering to a human ear, that even angels unmuffled would bring you to your knees... whose sides are the angels on, anyway? I revisited *The Golden Compass* for maybe the twentieth time, thousands of nautical miles and dozens of latitudinal lines away from the Cold Coast, and felt the prickles of communication happening across time, out of order. When did I visit Svalbard? What is this *deja vu* of poetry? Prescience of the traveler’s sensations some 20+ years on were embedded in the story written out and published in pulp and ink back in 1995, gobbled up by a 13-year-old as much as the 13-year-olds in the story were gobbled up by the Gobblers...



...the moon was high in the sky, and everything in sight was silver-plated,  
from the roiling surface of the clouds below to the frost spears and  
icicles on the rigging.

They're strange, en't they, bears?

You think they're like a person, and then suddenly they do something so strange or ferocious you think you'll never understand them.

I'll probably freeze. I been cold down on the ground, but I never been this cold. I think I might die if I get any colder... Yeah, I will. If I was going to die, I'd rather die up here than down there, any day.

Slipping and sliding on the rough rocks, away from the waves and up the beach a little, and found nothing but rock and snow, heard a noise, something scraping on a rock, and turned to see what it was.

It was a strange bear, clad in polished armor with the dew on it frozen into frost. Out of the fog came another bear, and another. Stood still... clenching... little human fists.

Stumble over the harsh and slippery rocks, following the bear Every projection and ledge on the deeply sculpted facade was occupied by gannets and skuas, which cawed and shrieked and wheeled constantly around overhead, and whose droppings coated with thick smears of dirty white. The bears seemed not to see the mess, however.. over the icy ground.

As the temperature rose... so did something else.

The smell was repulsive: rancid seal fat, dung, blood, refuse of every sort.

Bears! I know too much about them, and they daren't kill me.

They daren't do it, much as they'd like to I know, you see.

I have friends. Yes! Powerful friends.

Fights between bears were common, and the subject of much ritual.

For a bear to kill another was rare, though, and when that happened it was usually by accident, or when one bear mistook the signals from another...

Tested the sharpness of his claws on a fresh-killed walrus, slicing its skin open like paper, and the power of his crashing blows on the walrus's skull (two blows, and it was cracked like an egg).

Tears that froze almost as soon as they formed... Bears, who didn't cry, couldn't understand what was happening to her; it was some human process, meaningless.

Leaving her little footprints in the snow.  
 A bounding and a heavy clank of metal, and in a flurry of snow...  
 What terrible thing?

Bears clustered... white faces filled every window, and their  
 heavy forms stood like a dense wall of misty white ahead,  
 marked with the black dots of eyes and noses.

At last he found what he wanted: a firm rock deep-anchored in the permafrost.  
 Narrow white and red ribs like the timbers of an upturned boat.  
 A roar like that of all the sea-smooth pebbles in the world in an ocean-batter-  
 ing storm.

The way was long and hard. The interior of Svalbard was mountainous, with  
 jumbled peaks  
 and sharp ridges deeply cut by ravines and steep-sided valleys, and the cold  
 was intense...

The air here was more penetratingly chill than any she had experienced before;

Fireplaces that burned great blocks of coal, mined and hauled  
 A wide broken slope of tumbled rocks and ice, where a track had been  
 laboriously cleared, led up to a crag outline against the sky.

There was no Aurora, but the stars were brilliant. The crag stood  
 black and gaunt, but at its summit was a spacious building  
 from which light spilled lavishly in all directions.

She made for the door, and felt the cold strike  
 her throat like a sword and freeze the  
 tears at once on her cheeks.

The way was clear, for the moon was high and the light  
 it cast over the snowbound world was as bright as it had been...  
 the world of bright silver and profound black.

Out of nowhere a veil of radiance had fallen to hang shimmering  
 in the northern sky. All those unseen billions and trillions of charged particles,  
 conjured a radiating glow out of the upper atmosphere.

*-found/erasure poem from the pages of Philip Pullman, The Golden Compass [Northern Lights]  
 (New York: Knopf, 1995).*

//

Walruses! Glaciers! Whale boiling circles and bricks from the mud of rivers in Holland. An old slaughtering ground covered in 60 +- walruses (walrei) lounging and rolling. Smelly downwind. Grief caught me about [at] the whaling site.

//

\*

I found a lump of ochre, maybe, near a land-accessible glacier named Ymerbukta. A simple scratch test of the rock on a more slate-like stone produced promising results— a mark like a brilliant hand-made pastel. I took it with me, my one rock of the day, coveted and harvested. A witch likes a rock in her pocket. And it had waited there on the pebbled beach so long— the glacial mass had finally yielded it, and as my colleagues cheekily lapped at the glacier’s face and made tasting notes, I recalled a story, but very badly:

In the Poetic Edda, perhaps, Ymir the giant is frozen in ice, but a cosmic, primeval cow— Auðumbla— licked the salty ice to reveal the life within. His body, thawed, eventually produced offspring? The [Norse] Gods? Perhaps they killed him, and his limbs and torso and genitals became the land and the soil and the mountains? His blood caused an enormous, ferrous flood. He was the first life but also the terrain for life yet to be

There seemed to be so much more to the story, that I couldn’t recall, that I couldn’t google, pull open a book and refresh the old remember. The story had to take root in what I saw, and express itself as best my poor memory could chance. No Norwegian Fir myth, but a Charlie Brown tree of a story, which sufficed. Was my mind losing its acuity



Snapshot taken by the author near Ymerbukta, Svalbard, October 2022. Photograph by Candace Jensen.



Snapshot taken by the author near Ymerbukta, Svalbard, October 2022. Photograph by Candace Jensen.

for literature out here in the sub-freezing temperatures, four pairs of socks wrapped over my chilled toes and my mittened writing hand stiff, lungs whimpering a bit [the rest of me was perfectly fine, toasty and warm, full of hot tea and wrapped in woolens and Gore-Tex]?

But that Ymir had lived, and lived outside of context in the chasm of Ginnungagap, and had been released by the compassionate thirst of a primeval cow, and eventually fallen to his heirs—that felt solid enough to share over beers that evening on the ship, circulation to toes restored. I tried to explain the story, the importance of recollecting it on Ymerbukta, what with the revealed ochre, a pigment of long human relationship<sup>16</sup> sitting there on the beach like a giant nestled in a void. And next to the ochre, again the Gebo rune [X], an offering of plenty but also a pact of debt.



Snapshot taken by the author near Chermideøya, Svalbard, October 2022. Photograph by Candace Jensen.

*“There was in times of old, where Ymir dwelt,  
nor sand nor sea, nor gelid waves;  
earth existed not, nor heaven above,  
’twas a chaotic chasm, and grass nowhere.”*

*–from Völuspá, in the Poetic Edda<sup>17</sup>*



“Language(s) must then begin to reentangle themselves<sup>18</sup>; with each other and with the vast terroir of the senses... whose portals, fecund orifices we may borrow, mimic, to alchemically transform what has stiffened into barriers (perceptual and literal, figurative and physical), back to a state of fluidity and, yes permeability. Any perceptual boundary constituted by a language may be[come] exceedingly porous and permeable— barriers no longer, [then] thresholds and paths of ingress and routes of egress, a veritable gift economy cycling not only information but also meaning, animating the liminal spaces that were previously so concrete... Language(s) may then become animistic, an agent unto itself, Alive. What then? Living sound a compatriot, [an] antagonist, deity or demon? We remember the wind. Directional consciousness, not inert, that rides each swirl and eddy and breeze... Citizenship and solitude are called into question. Bodies never end or begin, but are rather shared and expanded...”<sup>19</sup>

Belonging blossoms like a season, and fades, but has the recursive ability to appear again, steadfast like the stones and ice. The speculative fiction of language, sound or script, is an important fantasy borne on the dragonwings of observed, material realities [materialities]. The ontologies of things are numerous, folded possibilities and their numinous languages are echoing parallel, occupying the same spaces in unique spacetimes. My mind, my memory, is full of Svalbard. And when on Svalbard, my ears and tongue and eyes were awash in the polylingual, elemental meanings of the material world I flitted through, but simultaneously I emanated the stories and romanticizations of my homes, my former selves, the novels and songs carrying fortune’s tales and dirges of what may never come to pass, recursive. I was never there. I will always be there. The fox read my footprints, the ocean drank my spit, stories were swapped. A Godless place where Gods walk the earth, and all things are meaning and all languages are spoken but none are understood, but no matter— a Babel archipelago. An aurora’d kingdom with no kings, only bears.

*Vox Populi Vox Dei.* Begin again.

The author declares that they have no competing interests.

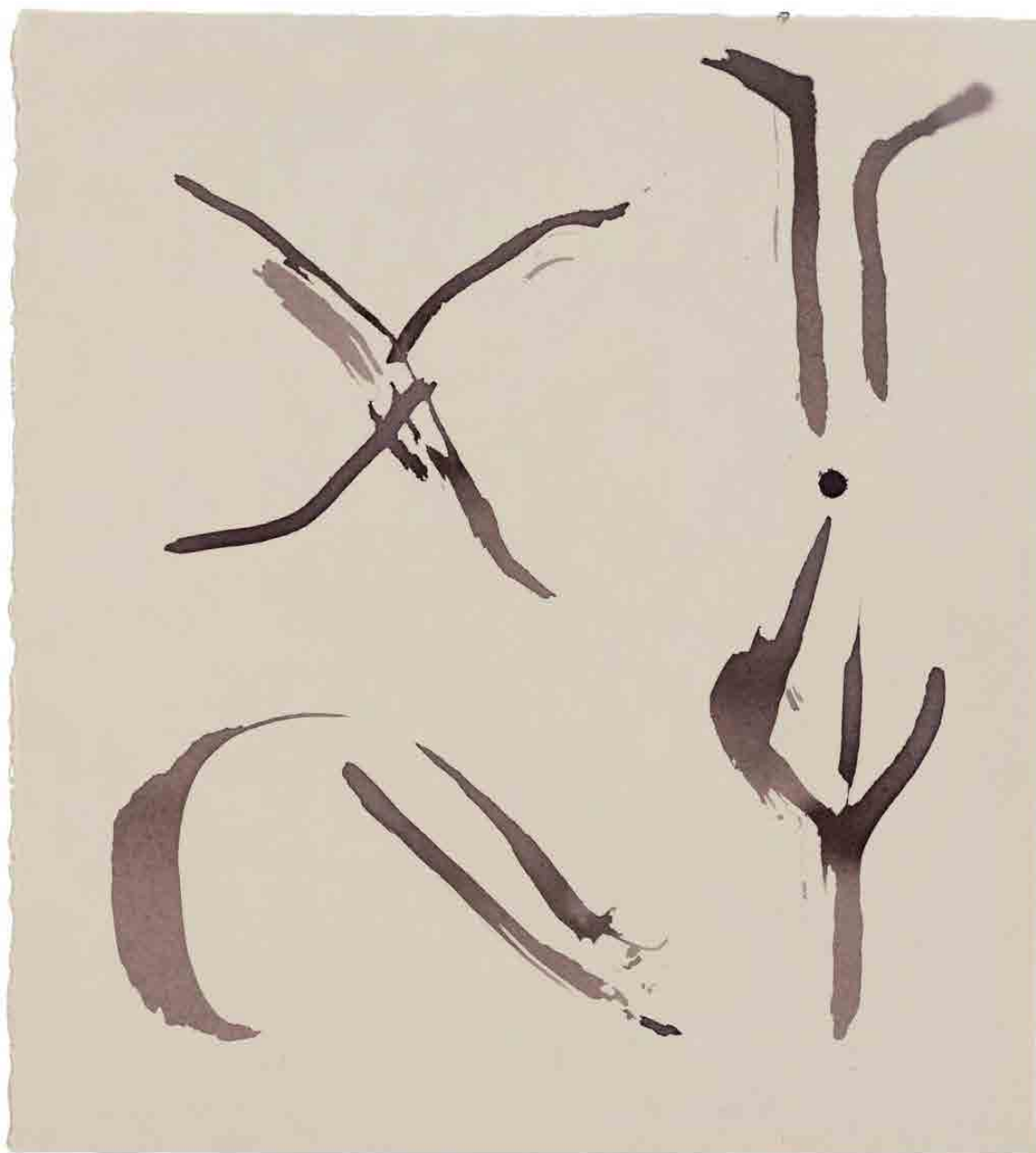
## **Asemic Land Alphabet**

Candace Jensen

*The Asemic Land Alphabet & Asemic Glyphs for Svalbard* are an experiment in responding to glyphs and gestures in the landscape, and creating a collection of possible letters for a written language for, of and about Svalbard. The gestures came from observing landmasses, elemental chemistry in the land, shapes found in rocks and ice, and from evidence of organic life on the archipelago. The alphabet isn't proscriptive or presumptive, merely playful. No meaning or specific sound is yet attached to the glyphs— any artist would need years or lifetimes there before such depth could be chanced. These drawings were made with stylus and brush made by the artist using materials gathered on landings in Svalbard; a quill made from a pinion feather from an unknown species of gull, and a brush made with found reindeer bristle fur.



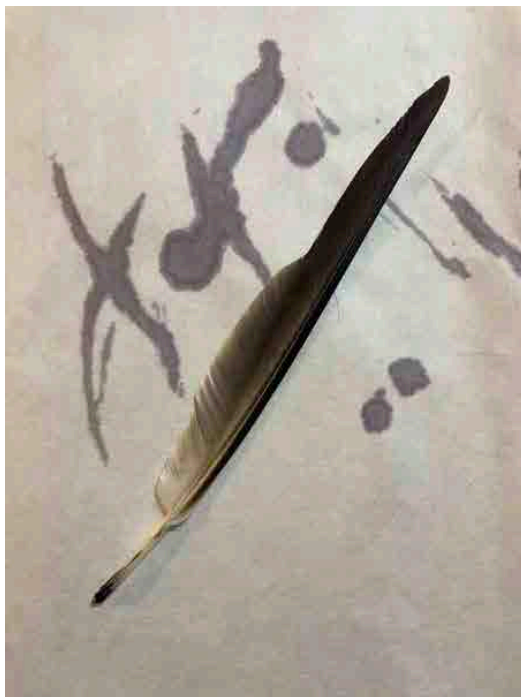
*Asemic Land Alphabet, Exemplar.* Sumi ink and water on suminagashi marbled watercolor paper, marks made with found Arctic gull quill and brush made with found Svalbard reindeer-fur, Approximately 20" x 30", 2023-24



*Asemic Glyphs for Svalbard (A Land without Letters)*, Ink on toned paper, marks made with found Arctic gull quill and brush made with found Svalbard reindeer-fur, Approximately 13 × 12 (diptych, 1 of 2), 2023



*Asemic Glyphs for Svalbard (A Land without Letters)*, Ink on toned paper, marks made with found Arctic gull quill and brush made with found Svalbard reindeer-fur, Approximately 13 × 12 (diptych, 2 of 2), 2023



Found Arctic gull quill used to make Asemic Glyphs for Svalbard, 2023.  
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Slapdash reindeer fur bristle brush made with found fur and repurposed chopstick, used to make some marks in Asemic Glyphs for Svalbard, 2023.  
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The author declares that they have no competing interests.

**Moonrise, Esmarkbreen**

Harley Cowan.



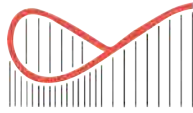
*Moonrise, Esmarkbreen*, Silver gelatin print, 2022.  
©2022, Harley Cowan. All Rights Reserved.

The author declares that they have no competing interests.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Svalbard Environmental Protection Act, 15 June 2001, <https://www.regjeringen.no/en/dokumenter/svalbard-environmental-protection-act/id173945/>.
- <sup>2</sup> I borrow the final words in this sentence from the lawyer-narrator of Herman Melville's "Bartleby, the Scrivener: A Story of Wall Street" in justifying his baffled response to Bartleby's preference not to perform labor. The lawyer-narrator delusionally chooses to "cheaply purchase" a "delicious self-approval" through his passive management of Bartleby in the face of capitalism's silent violences, and in my initial sense of virtue I was similarly self-deluded. Melville, "Bartleby, the Scrivener," *The Piazza Tales* (New York: Dix & Edwards, 1856), 56.
- <sup>3</sup> In writing about the seasons she lived in Greenland, Gretel Ehrlich describes the sight of such infrastructural remnants as the usual "Arctic clutter." Ehrlich, *This Cold Heaven: Seven Seasons in Greenland* (New York: Vintage, 2002), 21.
- <sup>4</sup> Quoted in P. J. Capelotti, *Shipwreck at Cape Flora: The Expeditions of Benjamin Leigh Smith, Britain's Forgotten Arctic Explorer* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2016), 116.
- <sup>5</sup> Quoted in Capelotti, *Shipwreck at Cape Flora*, 109-110.
- <sup>6</sup> Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick; Or, The Whale*, ed. Hester Blum (Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 2022), 387.
- <sup>7</sup> Melville, *Moby-Dick*, 383. "Fogo Von Slack" is one of Melville's sarcastic names for William Scoresby, whose writing about Arctic whaling in *An Account of the Arctic Regions* was a source for Melville. Of Svalbard's icebergs, Scoresby wrote: "It is not easy to form an adequate conception of these truly wonderful productions of nature....There is, indeed, a kind of majesty, not to be conveyed in words, in these extraordinary accumulations of snow and ice in the valleys, and in the rocks above rocks, and peaks above peaks, in the mountain groups, seen rising above the ordinary elevation of the clouds, and terminating occasionally in crests of everlasting snow." Scoresby, *An Account of the Arctic Regions with a History and Description of the Northern Whale-Fishery* (Edinburgh: A. Constable, 1820), 103, 110.
- <sup>8</sup> See, for example, Jen Rose Smith, *Ice Geographies: The Colonial Politics of Race and Indigeneity in the Arctic* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2025); Samantha Chisholm Hatfield, Elizabeth Marino, Kyle Powhys Whyte, Kathie D. Dello and Philip W. Mote, "Indian Time: Time, Seasonality, and Culture in Traditional Ecological Knowledge of Climate Change," *Ecological Processes* 7 (2018): 1-11; Kyle Whyte, "Indigenous Climate Change Studies: Indigenizing Futures, Decolonizing the Anthropocene," *English Language Notes* 55:1-2 (Fall 2017): 153-162; and Zoe Todd, "An Indigenous Feminist's Take on the Ontological Turn: 'Ontology' Is Just Another Word for Colonialism," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 29:1 (March 2016): 4-22.
- <sup>9</sup> Bird Species in Svalbard, <http://www.svalbardbirds.com/species.html>.
- <sup>10</sup> "[C]ute aggression' may serve as a bottom-up mechanism for regulating overwhelming positive emotions. In support of this hypothesis, Aragón et al. (2015) found that the relationship between ratings of how cute something is, and cute aggression was mediated by the experience of being overwhelmed by positive feelings. The authors posited that evolutionarily, it would not have been adaptive to become incapacitated by positive feelings." Katherine K. M. Stavropoulos and Laura A. Alba, "'It's so Cute I Could Crush It!': Understanding Neural Mechanisms of Cute Aggression," *Frontiers in Behavioral Neuroscience* 12:300 (4 Dec. 2018).
- <sup>11</sup> *The Danish and Norwegian Rune Poems*, translated by Mathias Nordvig (Olympia, WA: Hyldyr Press, 2023).
- <sup>12</sup> See *Critical Zones: The Science and Politics of Landing on Earth*, edited by Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2020).
- <sup>13</sup> Svalbard Environmental Protection Act, 15 June 2001, <https://www.regjeringen.no/en/dokumenter/svalbard-environmental-protection-act/id173945/>.
- <sup>14</sup> See Bifrost, <https://mythopedia.com/topics/bifrost>.
- <sup>15</sup> The expedition's resident 4-legged companion, a small male husky.
- <sup>16</sup> With thanks to Heidi Gustafson's immense labor of love for ochres (<https://earlyfutures.com/book-of-earth/>).
- <sup>17</sup> *The Elder Edda of Saemund Sigfusson*, translated by Benjamin Thorpe (Norrœna Society, 1866).
- <sup>18</sup> See David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World* (New York: Penguin Random House, 1997). In deep gratitude.
- <sup>19</sup> My language here is drawn from my work *The Proposition for the Permeability of Language*, a visual artwork and poemessay incorporating lines directly from David Abram's *Spell of the Sensuous* as well as my poetic cliff notes on the book, an expounding vessel for their synergy. The point at which the tirades about interconnectedness and Gaia become ceaseless, pouring questions and fascinated aphorisms is the point where I feel like I have "won" at my game of word-art. I have succeeded in opening up my own inspiration to a point where I have no ideas and nothing to prove or teach, only infinite curiosity about my subject, and my own subjectivity.





**REGENERATION:**  
Environment, Art, Culture

Larrabee, Hannah, Alma Noor, Jia-Jen Lin, Zoriča Markovich, Dianne Chisholm, and Alexandra Lockhart. "Intimacy." *Regeneration: Environment, Art, Culture* 2, no. 1–2 (2026): pp. 1–13. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.16995/regeneration.20313>

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## Intimacy

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A multimodal collaboration between artists, writers, and scholars. This piece emerged from an expedition to the Arctic archipelago as part of the Arctic Circle Residency in Autumn 2022.

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**Arctic: Intimacy**

Hannah Larrabee

When I came back from Svalbard, my eighteen-year-old cat had moved into the bathroom like it was a condo in Florida. He chose a spot in front of the tub, so I stacked the cat beds three deep to keep him warm. He sleeps so hard now he leaps when I touch him, like he is thrust toward something he was dreaming about. I place my finger in his paw and he tightens around it just as he always has. I brought the sunlamp into the bathroom, can you even call it a bathroom? I don't know what it is now but it will ever be what it was before. Love isn't anything if it isn't listening. I hold a fractured Arctic stone together with a rubber band and mail it out to another artist from the trip. She takes a series of photographs so beautiful they are portraits of the stone. That's what it takes, I think. Intimacy in the hands of someone who knows what to do with it.

*February 8, 2023*

The author declares that they have no competing interests.

## Reclining Nude #Erikbreen

Alma Noor



*Reclining Nude #Erikbreen*, Archival pigment print.

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*Reclining Nude #274*, Archival pigment print.

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The author declares they have no competing interests.

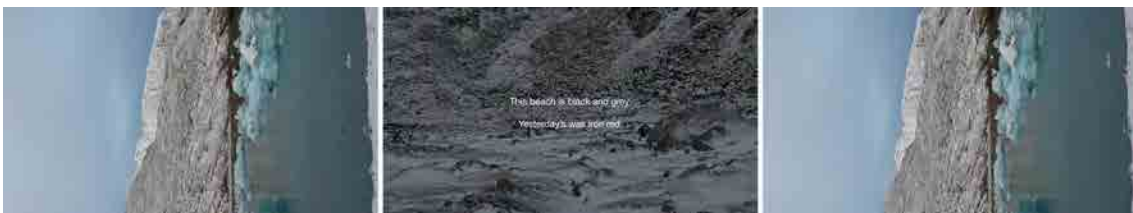
## Collapsing Landscape: No One Surface the Same as Any Other

Jia-Jen Lin

This series of works contemplate human conditions under progressive catastrophes resulting from social issues and climate change. By employing the concept of “landscape” as traces of human history, visualized as a battleground and extension of the human body, Lin explores the conception of a “post-landscape” where nature, human activities, digital media, and materiality intersect, along with the circumstances in which human beings are forced to constantly adapt and respond to the changing environment.

This three-channel video, titled *Collapsing Landscape: No One Surface the Same as Any Other*, employs video, sound, generative visual, and text to reimagine where we, as humans, stand amid our changing land. The major footage and sound of calving glaciers were recorded during Lin’s field research with the Arctic Circle expedition around the Svalbard archipelago, Norway, in 2022. Lin explores the notions of and interactions among natural disasters, collapsed landscapes, deformed structures, social violence, trauma, memories of loss, reconstructions, and fragments and transmutes the abstract concept into a perceivable audio-visual built environment.

The work also probes the interrelation among video, music compositions, and text excerpts recomposed from poetry by Laurie Glover, an American writer who wrote poems during their expedition in the High Arctic region. Part of the video composition is inspired by Glover’s concept of “layered fragments” and the inconstant phenomena captured in her poems. While we try to understand the landscape, history, and climate change through our observations and research on glaciers, ice, and the objects we encountered, the ice continues to break up, move, and recombine.





*Collapsing Landscape: No One Surface the Same as Any Other*, Image Stills from Three-channel video. 2023. Images courtesy of the artist. Text from poems by Laurie Glover.

The author declares they have no competing interests.

**Arctic: Lover**

Hannah Larrabee

and now she's all I think about:  
coat soaked through to sweater  
storied travel of bare trees  
green sandal entangled in fishing line  
frozen jellyfish, a penumbra  
whale bones white as wings  
a cabin ransacked  
stones ice-shattered  
no, really, sliced like a hardboiled eggs  
all the things we couldn't touch  
all the places we shouldn't step  
I sought a spot to watch the moon  
move horizontally across the sky  
and when someone came by to say hello  
it startled me.

*December 15, 2022*

The author declares that they have no competing interests.

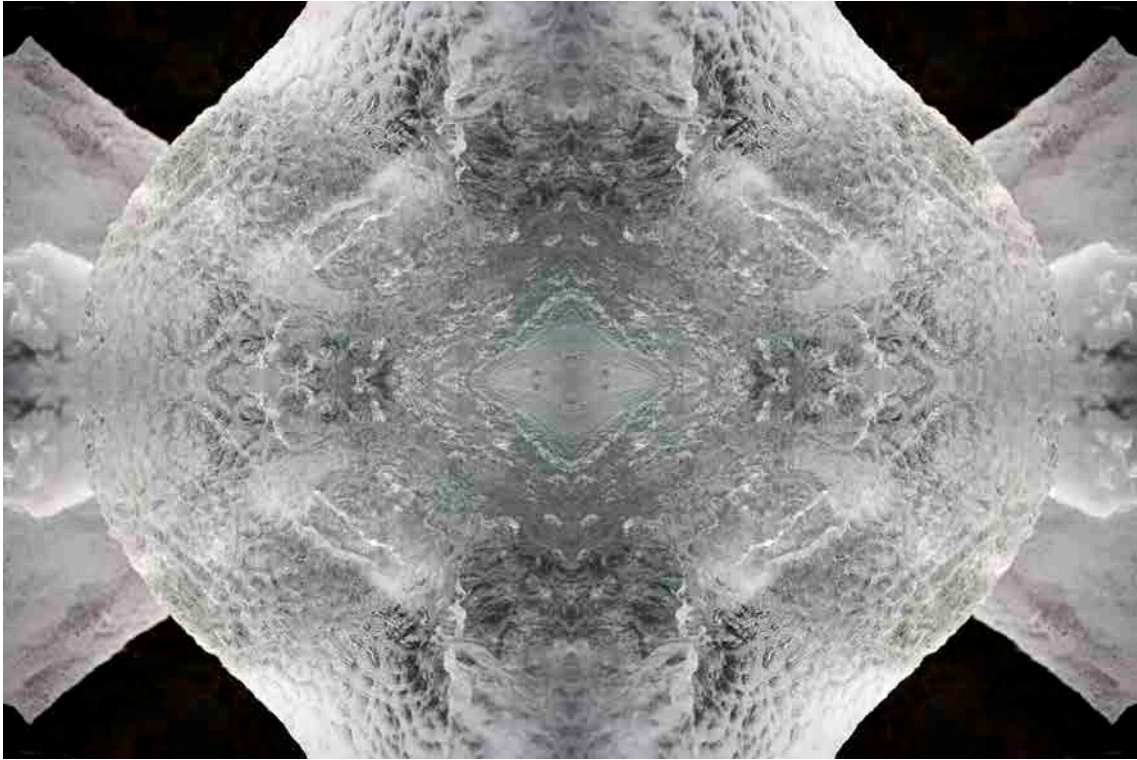
**Zombie Ice: Ancient Ice Sample #01**

Zoriça Markovich



*Zombie Ice: Ancient Ice Sample #01*, Photography, 2023.

©2023, Zoriça Markovich. Photography. Image courtesy of the artist.



*Zombie Ice: Ancient Ice Sample #01*, Photography, 2023.

©2023, Zoriča Markovich. Photography. Image courtesy of the artist.

The author declares they have no competing interests.

## Isbjørn, Stubendorffbreen

Dianne Chisholm

### i

*Antigua* ventures deep into Austfjorden shallows. Almost too shallow for *Antigua*'s shallow keel. Drops anchor near shoals off Stubendorffbreen. Rides out high winds, huge swells.

S spots bear in Snaddbukta! Swimming towards Finnekroken's moraine jetty. All eyes on deck, cameras in tow. Zoom in . . . *where bear?* . . . zoom out. Try tracking animal in such cosmic commotion! *There!* Tiny, yet unmistakably. Yellower than ice. Exits water, stalks shallows, paws shoreline. Focuses us, distracts our seasickness.

### ii

In 1594 Barents and crew blundered upon their first polar bear. A sea-swimming bear, so they named it *Ursus maritimus*. Lassoed it, wrangled it aboard and, failing to tame it, killed it. Then slaughtered every bear encountered ever after. We decry Barents' barbarism, be it brute instinct, imperial caprice or sadistic machismo. Our ethos lionizes this icon of anthropogenic extinction, which we too shoot like fiends *Click! Click! ClickclickclickclickclickclickClick!*

### iii

I sighted my first polar bear from a day-tour boat. The bear was not swimming but bounding up Nordenskjöld glacier. So we detoured from Pyramiden, across Billefjorden, to go bear-watching. The closer we approached, the higher climbed the bear. Did we scare it aloft? Or was it exploring the steep bare ice, undeterred by our presence? What did we—visiting, prestigious, circumpolar scholars—know about ice bears?

My last polar bear encounter was with a dead bear. In a tiny settlement of hunters huddled on an island under Greenland's ice sheet. Where I witnessed a family of women clean the hide of their hunter-husband-father-son-in-law's recent harvest. From behind my camera I sensed those eyes. Glaring lidlessly from the skinned, decapitated head the women had carefully placed aside.

From *Antigua*'s deck, we see only the animal.

Not the animus.

**Note**

Austfjorden, East Fjord, is the lower branch of Wijdefjorden. *Icebound* (2021), a history of Barents' 1594-1597 expeditions by former Arctic Circle resident Andrea Pitzer, highlights the gruesome massacre of polar bears by Barents' crew. Pyramiden is a Russian coal-mining ghost-town in Billefjorden, is the easternmost branch of Spitsbergen's Isfjord, Ice Fjord.

The author declares they have no competing interests.

## Svalbard Series: Movement Vignettes

Alexandra Lockhart



ØY

4:36 minutes

<https://vimeo.com/1018732460>

Subfreezing air, my skin met your breath, the numbness overtaken by awe and overwhelm. Whisked away by your whispers of the wind, both away from my body and deeper in. At this altar, a desire to offer myself, in an unknown way, profess my love, and ask for forgiveness as I witnessed and felt our destruction. Me, a micron, engulfed by you, aching to be with, not on or beside. A blurred sense of edge, boundary, or limit, just expanse and spirit, until I had to come back- a painful and forced extraction to come back to this other side.

Created by dancer and choreographer: Alexandra Lockhart

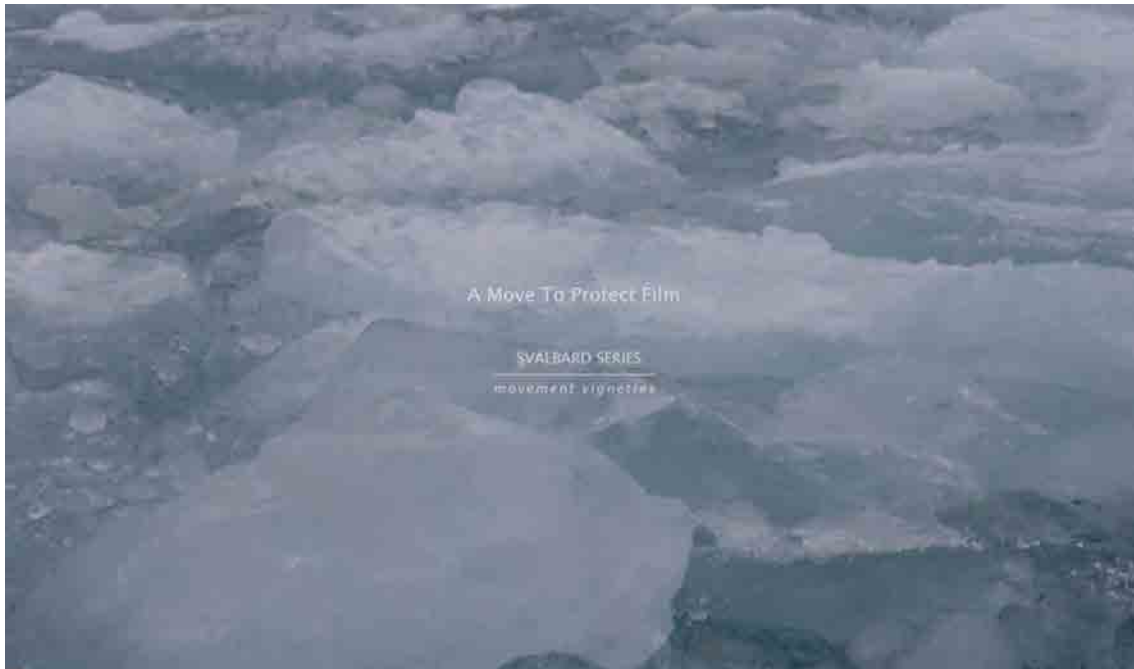
Filmed by: Ashlin Aronin

Zodiac maneuvering: Sarah Gerats

Original music composition by: Nathan Wheeler

Violinist: Chris Jusell

Filmed in Svalbard, Norway. © 2023, Alexandra Lockhart. All Rights Reserved.



*Ice of Breen*

4:09 minutes

<https://vimeo.com/1018715524>

A movement exploration of the audible interaction of calved glacial ice, sea, and air, *Ice of Breen* showcases the nuanced popping, crackling and complex composition of the ice and sea. Themes of erratic and randomness within a continuous flow are embodied and expressed through the movement and editing. The music composition is comprised of sound picked up from the camera during the filming process, overlaid with a simple composed musical score.

The sudden movement of a mini-iceberg next to me as I waded through the glacial ice sculpture garden caught me pleasantly by surprise and further informed my movement. After unmeasurable moments of wondrous engagement, I took a step that sent me off balance, causing full submersion into the underworld of the icy blue giants. This marked the end of our conversation as a zodiac ride back to the ship for a hot cup of tea and dry clothing was in order, however dancing through the sea amongst these ancient glacial carvings frequents my dreams.

Created by dancer and choreographer: Alexandra Lockhart

Original music composition by: Paul DeHaven

Filmed in Svalbard, Norway. © 2023, Alexandra Lockhart. All Rights Reserved.



*Felt Essence Of:*

4:27 minutes

<https://vimeo.com/1018719230>

While focusing on the theme of *impermanence*, this short film exhibits my exploration and examination of how the body feels the essence of a place and how it portrays animism of this specific location. This piece was inspired by the musical unseen water flows within the glacier, the curvature and movement of the glacial pathway above me, as well as the soft and quiet snow that began to fall halfway through my improvisation.

While we are impermanent, our actions aren't. This environment will outlive us- to be generous to that. To be respectful of the time it has lived, of the experiences it has had, the intensities it has created, felt and shared.

Created by dancer and choreographer: Alexandra Lockhart

Original music composition by: Nathan Wheeler

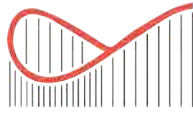
Poetry by: Hannah Larrabee

Narration by: Alison Bagli

Filmed in Svalbard, Norway. © 2023, Alexandra Lockhart. All Rights Reserved.

The author declares they have no competing interests.





**REGENERATION:**  
Environment, Art, Culture

Russell, Jacinda, Osceola Refetoff, Terhi Nieminen, Paula Ściuk, and Harley Cowan. "Frames & Infrastructure." *Regeneration: Environment, Art, Culture* 2, no. 1–2 (2026): pp. 1–12. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.16995/regeneration.20335>

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## Frames & Infrastructure

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A multimodal collaboration between artists, writers, and scholars. This piece emerged from an expedition to the Arctic archipelago as part of the Arctic Circle Residency in Autumn 2022.

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**Salt. Water. Obstruction.**

Jacinda Russell

I was diagnosed with COVID-19 five hours after setting sail on an expedition boat in the Svalbard Archipelago in May 2022. I was immediately sentenced to quarantine in a 10' × 20' cabin for seven nights. Sick and at a loss, I stared out the window for hours watching polar bear footprints recede into the horizon, a walrus emerge in the wake, and geography lacking name or direction unveil itself before me.

In October 2022, I returned as an Arctic Circle Artist in Residence, spending two weeks on a barquentine sailing vessel breathing the outside air that I was denied five months earlier. I quickly realized the ladder to reach the zodiacs was outside my cabin porthole and I photographed my shipmates as they descended, paused and departed for land.

By focusing on the salty and icy glass, I intentionally referenced the deteriorating negatives from 19<sup>th</sup> century polar expeditions, those where the elements marred the film before development or the slow exposures blurred the subjects. This obstruction does not hide the frustration nor the anticipation of pandemic and environmental loss, marking every nautical mile traveled.



*Salt. Water. Obstruction. (Greg)*, Archival pigment print, 14" x 12", 2022.



*Salt. Water. Obstruction.* (Harley), Archival pigment print, 14" x 12", 2022.



*Salt. Water. Obstruction. (Jia-Jen), Archival pigment print, 14" x 12", 2022.*



*Salt. Water. Obstruction.*, Archival pigment prints, 42" x 60", 2022.

Archival pigment prints

14" x 12"

2022

The author declares they have no competing interests.

## Cars on Unnamed Road, Adventfjorden

Osceola Refetoff



*Cars on Unnamed Road, Multispectral Exposure, Adventfjorden, 2022.*

NOTE: Multispectral exposures are made with photographic equipment that is sensitive to both visual and infrared spectrums, creating vivid and otherworldly color combinations in camera using various archaic filters in front of the lens.

The author declares they have no competing interests.

## No Easy Way Into Another World

Terhi Nieminen



*No Easy Way Into Another World*, Digital photograph, dimensions variable, 2023.

My model airplane stands on the snow in the boat harbour, against the backdrop of the dark season's landscape. The image appears blurry, for the lack of sunlight can cause near-sightedness. During the winter months I often played alone with the airplane, which doesn't have an engine, and is incapable of flying.

## A Defeat Is Better Than Nothing At All

Terhi Nieminen



*A Defeat Is Better Than Nothing At All*, Digital photograph, dimensions variable, 2023.

Sometimes a vehicle breaks down while crossing the snowy desert, on the way to another frozen resort. Touching the surface of the Lynx with bare hands can cause a burning sensation. Here, the Sun has given up on its attempts to set below the horizon.

The author declares they have no competing interests.

Helke, Hornbækpollen 79° 36.2' N 012° 38.7' E  
Paula Sćiuk



*Helke, Hornbækpollen 79° 36.2' N 012° 38.7' E, Ultrachrome ink on polycarbonate, 2022.*  
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October 9, 2022, 3:27pm, -1° C, foggy, wet, day length: 8:20:01 Sailing through narrow entrance, upper and lower topsail, no engine Snow blankets ships deck and tornado, craggy peaks disappear into milky brume

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The author declares they have no competing interests.

**Running and Standing Rigging, S/V Antigua**  
Harley Cowan

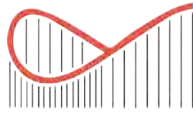


*Running and Standing Rigging, S/V Antigua, Silver gelatin print, 2022.*

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The author declares they have no competing interests.





**REGENERATION:**  
Environment, Art, Culture

Aronin, Ashlin, Zoriča Markovich, Hannah Larrabee and Joan Albaugh. "Subjectice." *Regeneration: Environment, Art, Culture* 2, no. 1–2 (2026): pp. 1–8. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.16995/regeneration.20337>

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## Subjectice

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Joan Albaugh, Artist, [joanpalbaugh@gmail.com](mailto:joanpalbaugh@gmail.com)

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A multimodal collaboration between artists, writers, and scholars. This piece emerged from an expedition to the Arctic archipelago as part of the Arctic Circle Residency in Autumn 2022.

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## Smeerenburgreen

Ashlin Aronin

I come to the end of the world to witness the end of the world.

Vast creatures of ice throw themselves into the sea, to be subsumed in the great body. I stand in the bay fronting Smeerenburgreen, surrounded by these children of the glacier, who babble, bubble, squeal and pop as they thaw.

This isn't what I thought the end of the world would sound like – so alive, so joyous. As I listen, their voices start to ring out like bells, and I become lost in time...



<https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/1111203878>

The piece consists of underwater hydrophone recordings and a video from the same location near Smeerenburgreen, treated with gradually increasing resonant filter and trails effect. Ashlin Aronin, 2023. Reproduced with the kind permission of the author.

*Smeerenburgreen*, Video Still, 2022.

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The author declares they have no competing interests.

## The Polar Silk Road

Zoriça Markovich

Somehow, I've been infected by it all, and it's hard to describe its impact on me. It will take me years to unfold my experience, and yet I am inspired. I am deeply and profoundly moved.

"The Polar Silk Road" delves into the political complexities surrounding the disputed Arctic waterways, weaving a narrative through a series of composite photographic images that mirror the region's icy landscapes. The project consists of 11 images in total, each printed on 1 metre of silk habotai.



Zoriça Markovich, The Polar Silk Road #01, installation view of silk panel, 2023.

© Zoriça Markovich. Image courtesy of the artist.



Zoriča Markovich, The Polar Silk Road #02, installation view of silk panel, 2023.

© Zoriča Markovich. Image courtesy of the artist.

The author declares they have no competing interests.

## **Dying in Dreams**

Hannah Larrabee

When the glacial sound was unearthed, compressed from hours into minutes and played back for us, I listened. It was a knocking in a great hallway, it was language slowed down to the pulse of the earth. We saw a glacier that looked like an icy hand laid flat between mountains, its fingers curved into turquoise caves. I don't know why the deep blue visits the ice. It could be a myth about dying, the melting a kind of death for us but there is such rich food for birds in the calving ice. Then the glacial sound came back in a dream: we were on the tallship, on the deck, when there was a seismic sound as if the hull of the whole earth groaned. Then we rose on a massive swell and the glacier broke into icebergs as far as the eye could see. When they began to pierce the ship there was a ringing in my ears so human the part about dying wasn't needed.

*October 15, 2022*

The author declares they have no competing interests.

**A Road, or So it Seemed**

Joan Albaugh



*A Road, or So it Seemed*, Photogravure, 2022.

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The author declares they have no competing interests.

**Dahlbreen Glacier**

Hannah Larrabee

Straight to the lungs  
if you ask me—ask me  
why the night groans  
with our arrival  
why some things  
leave no trace at all  
entire epochs suffering  
a geologic amnesia  
and here—outside time  
—I draw closer  
to the bright blue  
mouth of the glacier  
at a certain distance  
a kiss is a force  
that cannot be contained  
why not offer the ice  
to my tongue, my tongue  
to its softening dominion  
—the body is all  
that is ever decided  
on this ship we rise  
and fall on the massive  
chest of the ocean—  
the glacier nudges  
the mountains  
with both elbows  
lowers her hips onto  
the lapping waters  
—calving is an intimate  
thunder.

*October 3, 2022*

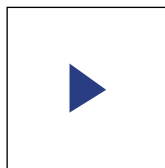
The author declares they have no competing interests.

## Ice Memory

Zoriča Markovich

Movement and sounds are dampened—slow, and subtle. Magnified by my audio equipment the ice crackles and pops. Sounds are not the same above the water as below. Below they are brighter, crisper. There is a hum, like magnets or electricity. It is extraterrestrial. It is hypnotic. The encounter unfolds across the senses even as it resists them. I close my eyes to fully embody the environment. It is exquisite.

“Ice Memory,” a 14-minute immersive audio soundscape, serves as an auditory portal into the sonic tapestry of the Svalbard-Spitsbergen archipelago. This immersive soundscape captures environmental sounds of calving glaciers, fragmented brash ice, and the haunting moans of melting dead ice. Captured with a variety of different microphones and presented in the round, I am inviting an intimate connection with the Arctic’s sonic landscape.



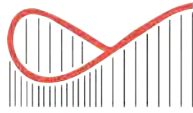
*Link to Subjective Article for Audio:*

*<https://www.regeneration-journal.org/article/id/20337/>*

Zoriča Markovich, Ice Memory, 2023. © Zoriča Markovich. Audio courtesy of the artist.

The author declares they have no competing interests.





**REGENERATION:**  
Environment, Art, Culture

Zlanabitnig, Drea, Dianne Chisholm, Andrea Legge, Hannah Larrabee, and Alexandra Lockhart. "Loss and Reflection." *Regeneration: Environment, Art, Culture* 2, no. 1–2 (2026): pp. 1–11. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.16995/regeneration.20338>

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## Loss and Reflection

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**Dianne Chisholm**, Writer, Professor Emeritus of English at the University of Alberta, [chisholm@ualberta.ca](mailto:chisholm@ualberta.ca)

**Andrea Legge**, Artist, [andreadlegge@gmail.com](mailto:andreadlegge@gmail.com)

**Hannah Larrabee**, Poet – University of New Hampshire, MFA, [hrlarrabee@gmail.com](mailto:hrlarrabee@gmail.com)

**Alexandra Lockhart**, Dancer, Choreographer, [aelock12@gmail.com](mailto:aelock12@gmail.com)

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A multimodal collaboration between artists, writers, and scholars. This piece emerged from an expedition to the Arctic archipelago as part of the Arctic Circle Residency in Autumn 2022.

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**Untitled (Esmarkbreen), 2022**  
Drea Zlanabitnig



*Untitled (Esmarkbreen), 2022*

The artist declares they have no competing interests.

## Farthest North

Dianne Chisholm

i

This far north the nearest ice lies *south*.

ii

Motor all night from Fairhaven in northeastern Spitsbergen to Chermsideøya, an island north of Nordaustlandet, Northeastlands. Two-hundred kilometres as the fulmar flies. We bank on strong westerlies for sailing back. Crossing 80<sup>th</sup> parallel, we sight Sjuøyane, Seven Islands, Svalbard's northernmost islands. S records our farthest north in magic numbers –

80°32'07"N; 19°53'04"E

How near we are to the fabled North Pole! Just two days' sail on ice-free seas.

(That all-too-soon will be.) (But what is *the North* . . . without ice?)

iii

We read of Nansen, Amundsen, Nobile. The Great Race for the Pole. Setting off, coming short, crashing catastrophically off-course in the North's "vast frozen wastes." But our *idea of North* eludes consensus. Like Glenn Gould's northbound voyagers, we voice a polyphony of attitudes towards legendary latitudes. With degrees of irony. H regales us with tales of how manly explorer fraternities endured polar night with frilly cross-dressing follies. D shares her plans to stage "overwintering theatricals" –with clowns for "explorers" set in shipping-container "ships" left "stranded" in Battery Park for public revaluation.

The further north we go the more ideas we shed. Embrace instead the elemental presence of what lies before us: *ice-aged rock*. Billion-year-old gneisses and granites, heaped by Caledonian orogeny into glacier-ground, desert-island mountains. We scabble up Søre Castrøya's lichen-painted, moss-garnished boulders (gnarly going for me, in someone else's too-large boots). Every stone a stepping-stone to summit-vista of rocky elsewhere: Sjuøyane's craggy outcrops, Vestfonna's peak-pocked, mainland icecap on opposite horizon.

**iv**

Our island shingle shores a whale skull. Plus boundless scads of trash. Plastic doll, plastic ball floats, plastic bottles of all sorts, torn sheets of plastic. Plastic multi-colored shards pebble a toxic mosaic. We take up garbage-collecting as our post-heroic mission. Glean *matériel* for artistic reclamation. V renders “Sundry Articles Found” in polyphonic hymns to oceanic gyres, gives minor voice to historic grand monologues. D salvages ball floats to re-function as props in her forthcoming installation-deconstruction of explorer celebrity.

What we make of farthest North:

not a conquerable wasteland but a *refuse assemblage*.

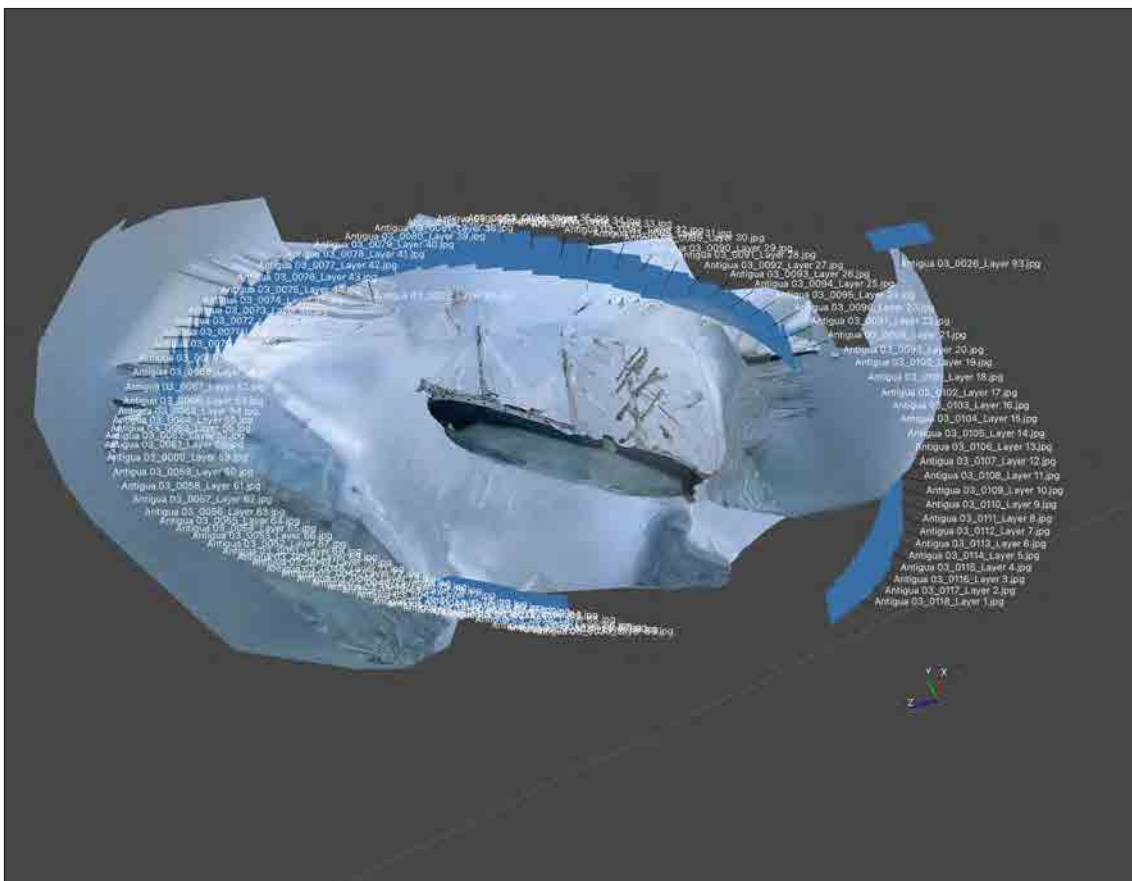
**Note**

Nansen’s memoir, *Farthest North*, 1897, chronicles efforts to reach the farthest north on record (86°13.6’ N). Chermsideøya (Chermside Island), after Herbert C., logkeeper of Leigh Smith’s 1873 expedition. Norway’s Roald Amundsen was first to fly over the North Pole in a race against Italy’s Umberto Nobile, whose zeppelin crashed on sea ice east of Nordaustlandet. Gould’s radio documentary *The Idea of North* experiments with polyphonic travelogue. Søre Castréøya (South Castré Island) is in southeast Nordaustlandet. Vestfonna is Nordaustlandet’s western icecap.

The author declares they have no competing interests.

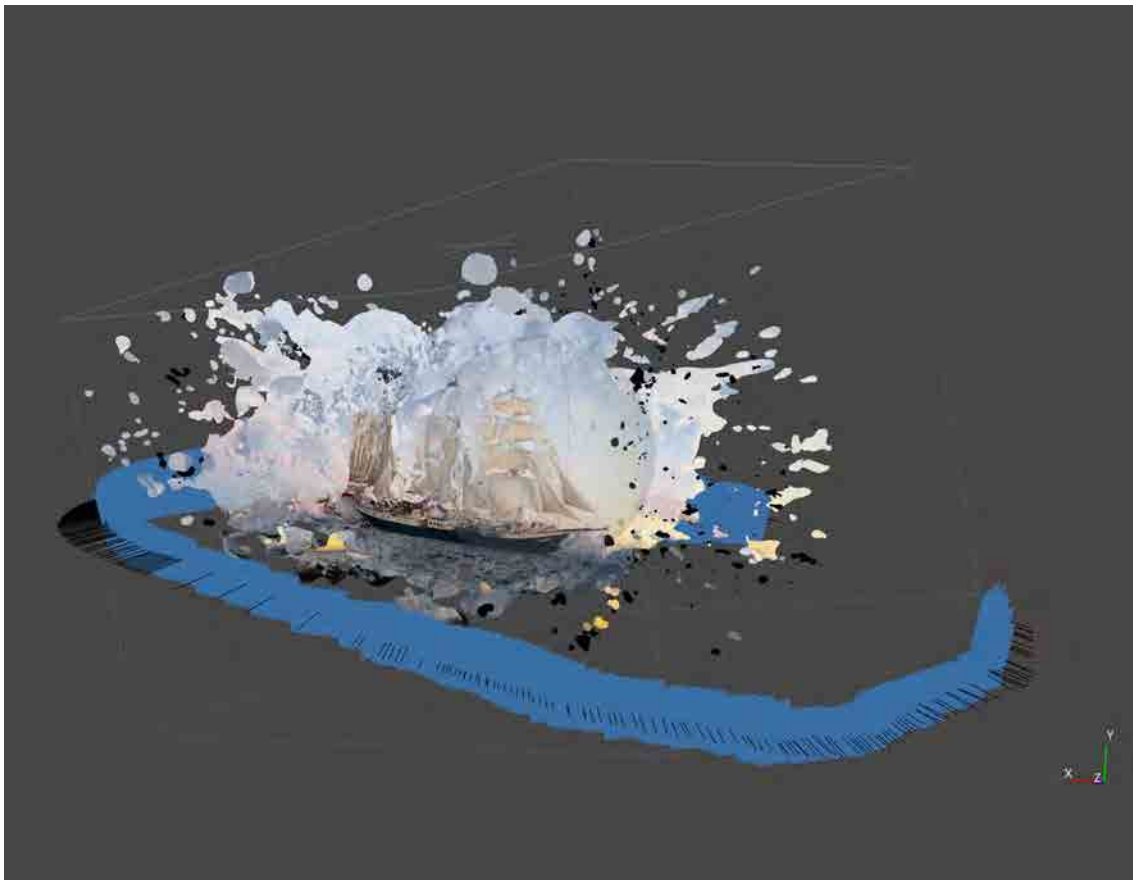
## Subjective Heroism 04, 05, 06

Andrea Legge



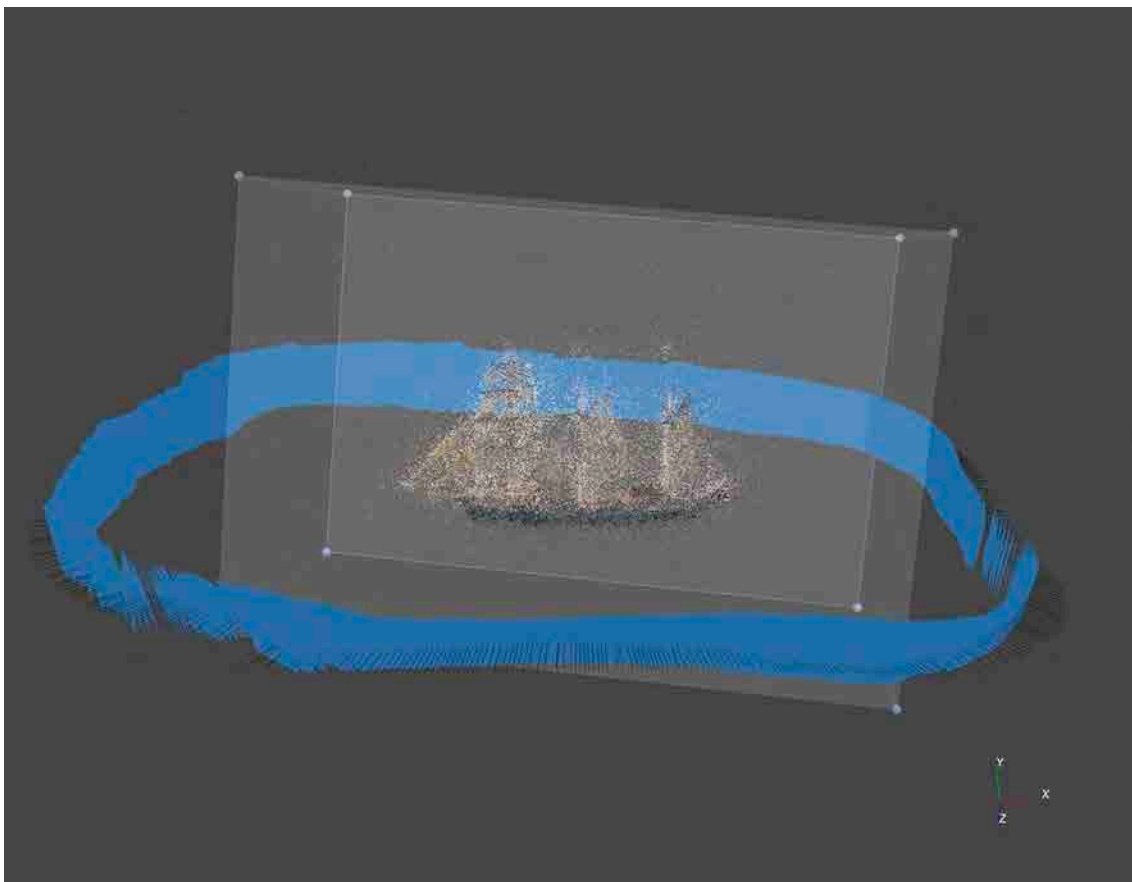
### Subjective Heroism 04. Andrea Legge 2023

Photogrammetric 3D model still of SV Antigua and environment including camera POV data interpreted by handheld iPhone and Agisoft Metashape. Created October 10, 2022, at Liefdefjorden, Hornbaekpollen, Svalbard. Special thanks to The Arctic Circle Residency Program and The Canada Council for the Arts.



Subjective Heroism 05. Andrea Legge 2023

Photogrammetric 3D model still of SV Antigua under sail and environment including camera POV data interpreted by handheld iPhone and Agisoft Metashape. Created October 15, 2022, at Isafjorden, Templefjorden, Svalbard. Special thanks to The Arctic Circle Residency Program and The Canada Council for the Arts.



Subjective Heroism 06. Andrea Legge 2023

Photogrammetric 3D model (point cloud) still of SV Antigua under sail including camera POV data interpreted by handheld iPhone and Agisoft Metashape. Created October 15, 2022, at Isafjorden, Templefjorden, Svalbard. Special thanks to The Arctic Circle Residency Program and The Canada Council for the Arts.

The author declares they have no competing interests.

**Arctic: Chicxulub Asteroid**

Hannah Larrabee

I kept thinking about how I'd set up  
to keep myself alive, except there were  
no trees. Not related, I don't know,  
*maybe* related, but someone really needs  
to tell me what happened when I was  
young and, also, now, having sheared  
off so many memories, a metal planer,  
the little wood curls, my compass  
made of wood. But the driftwood  
in Svalbard travels hundreds of years  
and once it washes ashore it misses  
the sea. This is a land of movement;  
at 80° north the moon seems stuck  
in the sky but it is always orbiting  
in places we can't see. Moss makes  
an eerie kind of music so I'd love  
the conversation, but it is silent here,  
breathing slowly. And this was once  
a lush, tropical place 300 million years  
before Chicxulub came in vantablack.  
Now they are saying there was no tail,  
no sign until it hit the atmosphere  
and that's what I mean: of all the things  
I love, no warning.

*January 5, 2023*

**Widenfjorden**

Hannah Larrabee

What remains  
stays there  
heritage  
a memory that  
starves, lichen  
that takes  
a hundred years  
to grow on grisly  
oils, blubber pits  
graveyards  
not limited to whales,  
and the thing is  
I can't think back  
to what was beautiful  
without stepping  
over what was not,  
and I was ready,  
I really was,  
*to remember—*  
but what came  
forward was not  
the past but some  
unrecognizable future,  
I don't know why  
I was in Svalbard  
but I came back  
and nothing  
was the same,  
I had mistaken it,  
my life, and  
when our ship  
sheltered in  
Widenfjorden,  
I think it was there

between its long  
mountainous fingers  
that I confused  
the horizon  
for a place  
and not a feeling,  
a feeling I couldn't  
set down,  
all I could do  
was sleep  
and count the ice  
knocking  
on the steel hull  
like a code,  
it said I came here  
never to come back,  
within me  
a crack  
that could  
cleave great  
glacial pillars,  
I am afraid  
that what arrived  
was the real  
pain, nautical  
miles of it,  
this place  
like a person  
a heartbreak  
I never saw  
coming.

*September 6, 2023*

The author declares they have no competing interests.

## Impermanence

Alexandra Lockhart

### Permanence of the Impermanent

You are strewn about the land, you're in the birds flying, you've landed  
here.

Microscopic bits of you floating, settling in a place they don't belong.  
This place they don't relate to, only impose upon.

You are on the shorelines, deeply ingrained with the sand.

You've woven yourself around the Reindeer's antlers, entangled.  
Your hopes and dreams are flying here too, in imagined untouched  
space.

You projected your visions dancing wild, in crisp clean air, not near.  
Oh, but oh! remember, much more than your romantic fantasy is here.

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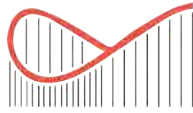


Self portrait. Svalbard, Norway. 2022.

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The author declares they have no competing interests.





**REGENERATION:**  
Environment, Art, Culture

Legge, Andrea, and Refetoff, Osceola. "The Voyage Home." *Regeneration: Environment, Art, Culture* 2, no. 1-2 (2026): pp. 1-6. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.16995/regeneration.20339>

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## The Voyage Home

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Osceola Refetoff, Artist, Courtesy of Von Lintel Gallery, [rx89@mac.com](mailto:rx89@mac.com)

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A multimodal collaboration between artists, writers, and scholars. This piece emerged from an expedition to the Arctic archipelago as part of the Arctic Circle Residency in Autumn 2022.

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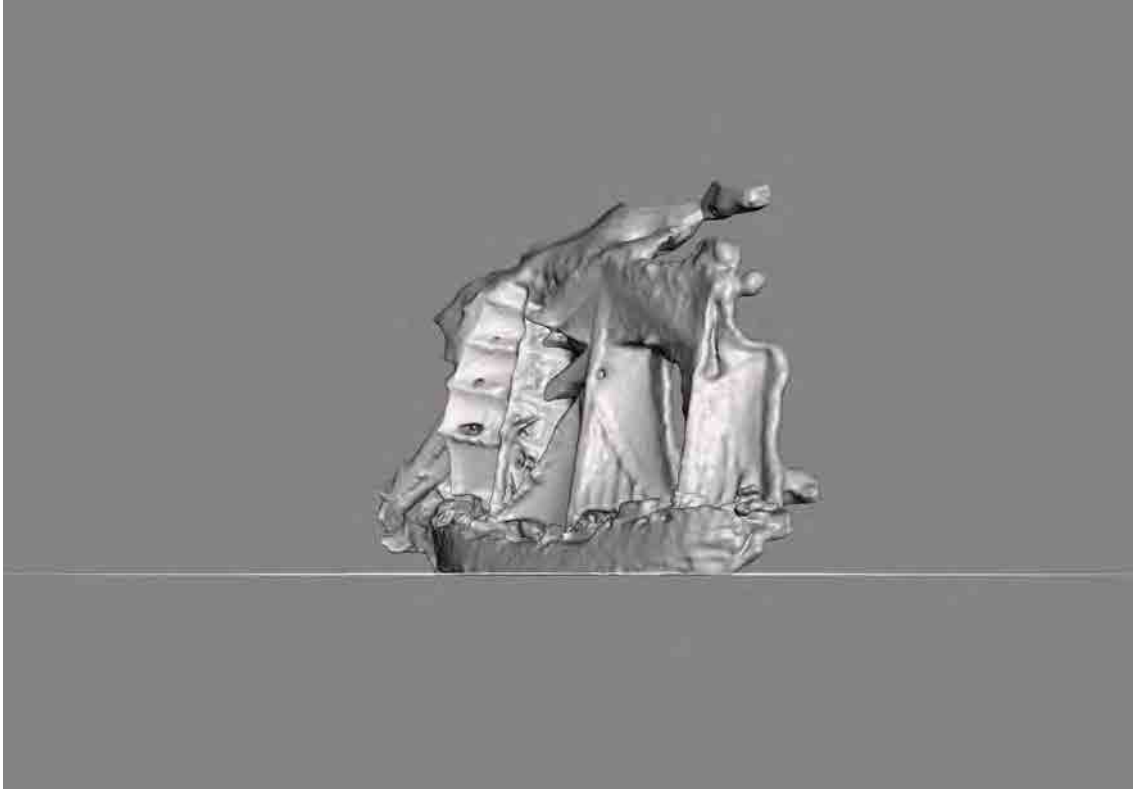
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**Subjective Heroism 07, 08, 09**

Andrea Legge



**Subjective Heroism 07.**

Photogrammetric final 3D model views of SV Antigua under sail interpreted by handheld iPhone and Agisoft Metashape. Created October 15, 2022, at Isafjorden, Templefjorden, Svalbard. Special thanks to The Arctic Circle Residency Program and The Canada Council for the Arts.



Subjective Heroism 08.

Photogrammetric final 3D model views of SV Antigua under sail interpreted by handheld iPhone and Agisoft Metashape. Created October 15, 2022, at Isafjorden, Templefjorden, Svalbard. Special thanks to The Arctic Circle Residency Program and The Canada Council for the Arts.



Subjective Heroism 09.

Photogrammetric final 3D model views of SV Antigua under sail interpreted by handheld iPhone and Agisoft Metashape. Created October 15, 2022, at Isafjorden, Templefjorden, Svalbard. Special thanks to The Arctic Circle Residency Program and The Canada Council for the Arts.

The author declares they have no competing interests.

## Approaching Svalbard

Osceola Refetoff

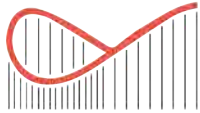


*Approaching Svalbard, Multispectral Exposure, 2022.*

NOTE: Multispectral exposures are made with photographic equipment that is sensitive to both visual and infrared spectrums, creating vivid and otherworldly color combinations in camera using various archaic filters in front of the lens.

The author declares they have no competing interests.





**REGENERATION:**  
Environment, Art, Culture

## Contributor Artist Statements

**Joan Albaugh:** Let's make a deal. My paintings are self-portraits. I paint and photograph about who I am, who we are, our relationships to our environment and to the world at large. Through paint and my chosen image, be it a house, an iceberg, a floatie, or a snorkeler, I search with a soft voice to make sense of our changing world.

Having traveled to the Arctic for years, I've been exploring in my most recent work my feelings towards tourism, where we travel, our fragile landscapes that are so quickly becoming almost playgrounds. I worry about our wake, and our wake of plastics that follow us everywhere. My oil paintings of pool floaties address some of these issues that I wrestle with: my photogravure prints I hope speak to the quiet beauty of the Arctic landscape that I was so fortunate to have experienced aboard the Antigua, The Arctic Circle Residency 2022.

**Leonor Anthony:** At the age of three, barely able to hold a pencil, I began drawing. I never stopped.

My life began in Cuba, the island of my birth, the rhythm of my being and one of the greatest gifts I have ever received. When my family fled the country at five years old, I entered a life of migration, a cycle of impermanence that shaped my soul. As a political refugee, I grew to understand the plight of the displaced, the silenced, and the unseen. This understanding is the foundation of my identity as an activist, using art as a vehicle for activism. My work carries the voices of the unheard, drawing from my own migrant experiences and my passion for inclusivity, empowerment, and the urgent need to preserve our fragile planet.

My work is multifaceted, spanning painting, writing, poetry, music videos, and film. Recently, I've discovered a profound connection to opera and the transformative power of music. While filming Opera's Vanishing Voices, I found myself at the bedside of Luciano Pavarotti in Modena, the place of his passing. In that intimate moment, his gregarious spirit and immense heart left an indelible mark on me, almost like I had met him, awakening a new dimension of my artistic journey. Music, like art, the universal language—a bridge between worlds.

I aim to evoke thought, spark dreams, encourage connection, and most importantly, the incredible gift of imagination, for nothing is impossible to those who dream.

When I work, I'm in the zone, a private haven where time dissolves, and a silent conversation unfolds between myself and the work. I am inspired by the profound mastery of Leonardo, my namesake, the stark intensity of Caravaggio, and the raw truth of Basquiat—artists who, like me, strove to articulate the complexities of the human condition, especially for those of us who feel too much.

Art is the air I breathe. My purpose is to paint with my soul, write with my heart, and capture moments that speak to our shared humanity. Each piece carries a message, an invitation for the viewer to dream, to act, and to see the boundless colors and beauty of this world inside and out. To my last day, I hope to have paint on my hands, vision in my spirit, and a heart full of color. My work is my truth, my voice, and my hope, my contribution to a more inclusive and awakened world.

**Ashlin Aronin:** I come to the end of the world to witness the end of the world.

Vast creatures of ice throw themselves into the sea, to be subsumed in the great body. I stand in the bay fronting Smeerenburgreen, surrounded by these children of the glacier, who babble, bubble, squeal and pop as they thaw.

This isn't what I thought the end of the world would sound like - so alive, so joyous. As I listen, their voices start to ring out like bells, and I become lost in time...

**Hester Blum:** I am a literature professor who has turned from archival exploration in libraries to edge experiences in the Arctic and Antarctica. Over the past six years, I have made a half-dozen expeditionary trips to the polar regions. My previous scholarship was the product of energetic but traditional research. None of my earlier research trips involved traveling to the extreme environments themselves, nor had I attended an artist or writer residency before my participation in The Arctic Circle. Fellowships stipulate a research outcome; residencies, I came to learn from the artists and writers of The Arctic Circle, stipulate time and space for creation. Expansive time and space for intellectual work feels as tenuous as Arctic ecosystems in this moment. In my writing now I am reckoning with the increasing distance between the explanatory structures that customarily order my professional, disciplinary, and cultural homes, and the protracted and changeable timescales of the Arctic epistemologies in which I have been newly immersed.

**Dianne Chisholm:** Her book-length series of lyrical passages, *The Waking Glacier*, combines expedition log, natural history, polar exploration, memoir and prose poetry to create a crystallizing sensorium of arctic allure and the melting crisis. Alternating between meditations on the present and "looking back" on her, and historic, past travels, the series' lyrical "I" discovers glaciers to be an uncanny vehicle for exploring personal and existential susceptibility to climate change. *The Waking Glacier* is forthcoming with the University of Alberta Press.

**Harley Cowan:** I have spent the past decade photographing cultural heritage and places of historical significance. I was an architect, primarily for scientists. As a heritage photographer I employ this fluency in collaboration with historians, conservationists, and explorers in order to elucidate achievements in architecture and engineering, scientific advancement, and the human endeavor to investigate and shape our environment.

The choice to use analog processes is in part technically prescriptive: federal heritage documentation programs like the Historic American Buildings Survey, of which I am a contributing photographer, require photographs to be made on large format, silver gelatin sheet film. Perspective correction must be executed in-camera and film processed by hand for archival stability, ensuring that photographs meet the needs of local, state, or federal archives, up to and including Library of Congress.

The choice to use analog processes is also a personal preference: initially, heritage documentation seemed an appropriate entrée for an architect to exercise artistic self-expression. After all, many photographers of merit can point to practical beginnings in a documentary context. Today, the pace of a view camera feels suitably deliberative for discovery and introspection. And I continue to find joy in the abstraction of black and white—poetic in its subtlety and sublimity, but ever an abstraction that is perceived as truth. In 2022, I participated in The Arctic Circle Residency where I focused on portraiture as a facet of visual storytelling. Sailing on a traditional tall ship in the Svalbard Archipelago, I profiled expedition members while exploring rarely visited places. I developed film onboard in a makeshift darkroom, connecting the craft to the journey as well as the subjects to their predecessors.

**Jessica Creane:** Blah: The Arctic is just so blah, you know? If you've seen one fjord you've seen 'em all. Every mountain is the same pointy cone shaped thing copy and pasted over and over again to the horizon. Why even bother spending three weeks there when you get a full picture of the place from Netflix's infinite stream of nature documentaries?

This series of images is my feedback for the residency organizers who need to know what a waste of time the whole thing is. It was developed while still onboard the ship because honestly, what else was I going to do while sailing into another picturesque fucking inlet? Just to be clear, we had a lot of time onboard the ship and this series is not my only work. My first major project following this residency was a full-length playable theater piece called "Tea Party at the End of the World." It, too, invites us to question what we take for granted. Little things like how we live and how we will someday die, only instead of sarcasm, there is tea. So much tea. Where "Tea Party at the End of the World" is earnest and probing in its interactions with the audience about what it means to live through big and small ends of the world nearly every day of our lives, this series asks us to pretend, for a moment, that the world is static enough for us to take it for granted.

This project is inspired by Amber Share's *Subpar Parks: America's Most Extraordinary National Parks and Their Least Impressed Visitors* (New York: Plume, 2021). To the point of a rip-off. Many thanks to Amber for giving voice to those of us who despise wonder and have no patience for majesty. Ugh. Nature blows. More concrete, please.

**Laurie Glover:** “Sundry Articles Found” tells us the atmospheric history of deep time. Given the nature of the repository, that history is fragmented: the ice breaks up, moves, recombines. Yet, as long as we have it, we have layers to interpret. If we lose the ice, we will have lost history. We won’t know how we came to be. Also fragmentary is the record left by humans. On the few recovered pages of Swedish balloonist August Andrée’s journals, only end-line clusters of words are still legible. And such few written journals as we have capture only a small percentage of the experiences of those who sailed or hunted or settled. Same with the artifact record: some few objects are still to be found on the ground, some few have been gathered into museums. I’m attempting, in my poems, to capture this sense of layered fragments, of history slipping away even as we try to capture it.

**Brian House:** Macrophones is an ongoing artistic research project that explores atmospheric infrasound as a means of listening to the climate crisis. It is supported by Creative Capital, Amherst College, and the Jonathan and Kathleen Altman Foundation. Beyond experimental recording sessions in environments both remote and mundane, it comprises a traveling installation as well as an album, *Everyday Infrasound in an Uncertain World*, released in the fall of 2025 on Gruenrekorder.

**Candace Jensen:** I am a visual artist, writer, calligrapher and “collapse-aware utopian” with a social practice that includes activism and curatorial work. Through my creative practices, I am in dialogue with themes such as erotic ecology, new Terrestrialism (after Bruno Latour), animism and panpsychist consciousness, as well as the nature of language, magic, and the use of letter/alphabets. I am curious about in situ and context-specific, place-based making, culture, color and else— whether newly developed schemata, or traditional, revivalist technologies and aesthetics. These seem fecund modalities for confronting the unfurling polycrisis.

I “brought” all of these ideas and philosophies with me to Svalbard, and experienced my time there through their lenses. In this collection, I have contributed a poemessay/lyric essay, necessarily naive calligraphic glyphs and tools from local materials, and a photograph. Emphatically not a skilled photographer, but a snapshot-taker, I relished opportunities to capture moments of strangeness, beauty, fragility, anachronism, and apparent wildness during my time in the Svalbard Archipelago.

**Hannah Larrabee:** The poems included in this Arctic series were composed during and after the residency, and without any forethought, I began to include the date each poem was written (not finished, if they are ever finished) as a more linear way to recall the residency and my creative process. The theme of memory is somewhat prevalent in my work, as poems become necessary time capsules of experience. They are not arranged chronologically. Instead, the poems are rooted in place—whether in Svalbard or in New England—and the poems are also rooted in emotion, as they converse with real feelings of displacement and sadness given the imminence of climate collapse. Svalbard is such a strange world to set foot in ... my hope is that glimpses of this world emerge in the poems.

**Andrea Legge:** *"If heroism is good, who defines what is good? And how much good is a heroic amount? Moreover, even if a standard of goodness were found and applied, who determines the criteria for judging a heroic level of exceptionality, sacrifice and risk? Advocates of the subjective heroic approach claim that there can exist no absolute standards or criteria for determining a threshold by which sufficient levels of goodness, exceptionality, sacrifice, or risk can merit an [objective] 'heroic' designation."*

—Scott T. Allison, George R. Goethals, and Roderick M. Kramer, editors, *Handbook of Heroism and Heroic Leadership* (London: Routledge, 2017), 6.

*"The greatest peril of wintering in the arctic was not the cold; It was boredom. For eight, sometimes ten months nothing moved. Ships [stuck in ice over the dark polar winter] became prisons. Masts and superstructure were taken down, hatches hermetically sealed, the ships smothered in blankets of insulating snow. Hived together in these wooden cockleshells with little to do, the best-disciplined seamen could break down. Small irritations could be magnified into raging quarrels. Fancied insults could lead to mutinous talk and even mutiny..."*

—Pierre Berton, *The Arctic Grail; The Quest for the Northwest Passage and the North Pole 1818-1909* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1988), 34-35.

I undertook The Arctic Circle residency in 2022 to research *Overwinter*, concept for an interactive public art project concerning nineteenth-century polar explorers stuck over Arctic winters in their icebound ships. These men often resorted to theatre, creative writing and art to amuse themselves and keep from going mad during the long dark winters. I needed to experience an Arctic environment as close to winter as I could get, and experience life aboard a barquentine ship. European hegemony—including colonization, slavery and polar exploration in its heyday—was largely pulled off by white men in barquentine tall ships. Early polar expeditions especially helped to perpetuate the brand of the good and indefatigable white male hero aboard the beloved and sturdy vessel to which he had entrusted his life. These enduring caricatures, images of the barquentine sailing ship and her explorer/conqueror heroes, have taken on entirely different meanings within modern dialogues of decolonization. Using a steel shipping container as a ship set in a public square and disheveled actors presenting vignettes of absurd street theatre, *Overwinter* aligns with these reevaluations and attempts to remodel one of the last bastions of "objective" heroism: polar exploration.

**Felicia LeRoy:** My studio work examines and critiques topics relevant to mind, body/human, ontology and our spatial understanding of self. I expand the idea of forensic methodology through the merging of embodied experience, data collection, sampling, and deep immersion. My practice has evolved to include many phases of both academic and nontraditional inquiry as I develop situations of observation for understanding the body in relation to other bodies, large bodies, non-human bodies.

My latest projects aim to question human/nature relationships and the biological and technological sensorial tools that shape our understanding and interactions within real and analog environments. Through this I seek to look critically at boundaries, between self and other [body, machine, spatiotemporal phenomena] and the transformational structures of connectivity between the two.

How do we navigate, challenge, or question the boundary between self and other when “things” (including the body) are intermingled? Is there a boundary? The methodology for exploring these questions relies on embodied experience, namely intra-action: “Intra-action is a Baradian term used to replace ‘interaction,’ which necessitates pre-established bodies that then participate in action with each other. Intra-action understands agency as not an inherent property of an individual or human to be exercised, but as a dynamism of forces in which all designated ‘things’ are constantly exchanging and diffracting, influencing and working inseparably,” (Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway* [Durham: Duke University Press, 2007: 141]). When the body intra-acts with another body [object, technology, etc.], it does so in a co-constitutive way. In other words the two bodies are entangled and change and adapt according to the processes they are involved in.

For this reason resultant work emerges out of lived experience that deconstructs intra-actions into performative elements, artifacts, and apparatuses. Included with these artifacts are various digital media including sound, video components as well as drawing, prints, photographs, journals, books, scans, glass and sculptural elements. The works are best viewed in an exhibit-style environment, where all components and processes and their intermingled relationships can be investigated alongside the research that preceded their making.

**Jia-Jen Lin:** This series of works contemplates human conditions under progressive catastrophes resulting from social issues and climate change. In this three-channel video, Lin employs video, sound, generative visual, and text to reimagine where we, as humans, stand amid our changing land. She explores the notions of and interactions among natural disasters, collapsed landscapes, deformed structures, social violence, trauma, memories of loss, reconstructions, and fragments, and transmutes the abstract concept into a perceivable audio-visual built environment. Part of the video composition is inspired by the poetry of Laurie Glover, an American writer who wrote poems during their expedition in the High Arctic region.

**Alexandra Lockhart:** My work created in collaboration with Svalbard was instigated by immersing myself within this Arctic archipelago through improvised movement. Understanding how the body responded to and resonated with the diverse environments while in dialogue with textured elements fueled my process. These pieces aim to evoke the unseen essence of each place while the body absorbed, remembered, and reflected. It was crucial to me that my work was created in conversation with the place, not superimposed onto it.

**Terhi Nieminen:** Some evenings, the sunsets in Svalbard are so beautiful that they cause anxiety. How to depict the color of light fading into the atmosphere, the glow of a glacier on the opposite shore, or the cold darkness of the old night of winter?

The polar regions are often romanticized in culture. This depiction gives a suggestion as if they were already gone, something not quite of this world. Yet the north is home to many people, who interact with nature on an everyday level, experiencing its recurrences and changes from an intimate perspective.

The Lapland of my childhood is no longer what it used to be. What happens to the memories of a childhood spent in the arctic, as they grow up to face the challenges of the modern world? In my work on Svalbard, I am contemplating these questions in the form of moving image work, photographs and sketches. I seek to explore and challenge the representation of the polar regions, based on my own experiences of living in the cold climate. I combine elements of autobiographical narrative with a poetic or essayist approach. In my practice I'm exploring outcomes that challenge the limits of camera-work in dark and extreme conditions.

The effects of climate change, which in the polar regions is moving faster than in other parts of the planet, are present in our daily activities in Svalbard. While recording the way of life with its repetitive, small everyday scenes I attempt to make these phenomena visible, while also communicating the specific character of the northern regions.

**Alma Noor:** Alma works with photo, video, performance and rumors. Her visual works are staged situations, recorded by a camera. She usually works alone, using a tripod and a timer.

"The Reclining Nude" is a series of several hundred nude situations photographed on Svalbard. The complete series holds a photo for every single day of the year, highlighting the fast and extreme changes in light and landscape. Through years of exposing her body to the polar landscape, she searches to communicate the Arctic as a lived reality, rather than a distant sublime. Contrary to the classic title, her nudes are never passive. Even if they might rest for a moment, the weather marks experience on their skin. Within the series, the individual performative photographs look for a strong and active female presence witnessing the high North.

**Zoriča Markovich:** I am a multidisciplinary artist who spends most of my creative time in the visual and audio realm. My autopoietic process is one of experimentation, play, and exploration of relationships within networks, embodied sense memory, and shared collective experiences. I travelled to the High Arctic to listen, to feel, and to understand. The experience has forever changed me.

*Polar Silk Road* invites contemplation on the interplay between geopolitics, environmental fragility, and the intricate balance of the Arctic's ecological tapestry.

*Ice Memory* weaves together an auditory backdrop of melting glaciers and shifting ice, that serves as a haunting call.

*Zombie Ice* is a vivid imagining of the ancient bacteria encapsulated within the thawing glaciers.

**Osceola Refetoff:** Svalbard may be the most compelling and beguiling place on the planet. My 15 days aboard the *Antigua* were amongst and most productive of my career, and I am determined to return for an extended period to continue my investigations. Of particular interest are the complex questions that animate the archipelago's current efforts to balance the needs of its residents with environmental restoration and

the preservation of cultural legacy, all within the context of accelerating climate change. I recently completed a summer residency at Building Bridges Art Exchange, creating work in collaboration with Dr. Eric Larour, Manager of NASA's Earth Sciences Division. Focusing on sea level rise, the resulting exhibition features a great deal of imagery from Svalbard, especially in the 8-minute video, *Sea of Change*. Harnessing the persuasive potential of art in direct dialogue with the latest scientific data, the residency's objective is to activate local engagement with the need for personal action and systemic change in response to the climate crisis that lies ahead.

While my photography and filmmaking cover a range of techniques – infrared, pinhole, drone, stop motion, even AI – at the center of my diverse practice is the long-term objective to communicate how environmental events in seemingly distant and remote regions are deeply connected to our own collective wellbeing. Svalbard is uniquely positioned both culturally and geographically to tell this story. There is no place better suited to envisioning our ecological challenges and inspiring the global attention required to meet them.

**Jacinda Russell:** As an artist with a longstanding interest in edges, borders, and topographical extremes, I have explored the impacts of human-accelerated climate change in the polar regions since 2017.

I am drawn to the transitory nature of ice, how it is preserved naturally and when humans intervene. I search for it through an autobiographical lens in both the far-reaching corners of this earth and those close-by.

Photography is the primary tool used to convey my ideas, but it is not my sole medium. I photograph to gather evidence and document what I build, falling squarely in line with conceptual art and the constructed image. I integrate it with sculpture, installation, and (in past projects) performance. It is not always evident in the final result, but it is the first step in the process and the foremost way in which I view the world.

**Paula Sćiuk:** It is preferable to be more intimate with the world, to deeply observe and contemplate what is before me, capturing a vanishing world through my lens based and field sound work. Driven by reverence and wonder, it is solitary and often lonely work, taking great patience, in environments that are mostly unpredictable, sometimes inhospitable and more often, luminous. Nature's resources are not limitless and in exploring liminal space, the order of time is suspended and themes of fragility and impermanence surface. Climate change, protection of marine habitat and wildlife, encompass my eco-based work.

All images were taken during the Autumn Arctic Circle Residency during October 2 - 16, 2022 onboard the wooden Barquentine sailing vessel, the tall ship *Antigua*, while traversing the high arctic. I wish to personally thank The Arctic Circle Residency, Open Bay Centre for Art and Science, my colleagues and crew of the *Antigua*.

This expedition validated the need for eco based art, environmental advocacy, activism, outreach, protection of marine habitat and wildlife, which informed my work during this timeframe.