

ENVIRONMENT

A Beautiful Melting World is Captured in Hyperrealistic Detail (PHOTOS)

By James Crugnale · May 04 2016 12:00 AM EDT · weather.com



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Greenland no.62, 47"x70", Soft pastel on paper, 2013 (Zaria Forman)

With global temperatures rising precipitously, which the vast majority of climate scientists attribute to the buildup of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, researchers have found that the world's glaciers are melting faster than ever before.

In 2015, the World Glacier Monitoring Service conducted a comprehensive study of global glacier changes — published in the *Journal of Glaciology* — and found that "the rates of early 21st century [glacial] mass loss are without precedent on a global scale, at least for the time period observed and probably also for recorded history."

As the clock ticks on the world's ice caps, Brooklyn artist Zaria Forman has taken it upon herself to commemorate the gelid majesty of these threatened natural wonders through hyper photo-realistic drawings.

Forman's mother was fascinated with the work of American painter William Bradford who embarked on the very first Arctic art expedition and Zaria decided to pay tribute by leading her own excursion up the northwest coast of Greenland, in a voyage called "Chasing the Light."

Forman spoke to weather.com about her glacier art project and the motivation she had for memorializing a fast disappearing part of the planet.

(MORE: Melting Greenland Glacier Will Increase Sea-Level Rise, Study Says)

"Fulfilling my mother's dream to follow Bradford's voyage in Greenland was one of the most meaningful gifts my mother gave me," Forman explained in an email. "Her sickness and passing was by far the most challenging experience of my life. I had never before faced such a tremendous loss. The mourning process I went through (and continue to go through) shaped and paralleled the concept of the trip to Greenland, which in turn had significant effects on my art."

She said her mother's pictures tended to "underscore the symbiosis between human life and the natural environment."

While up in the north, she took thousands of photographs, making small sketches on-site to get a feel for the landscape.

"Once I return to the studio, I draw from my memory of the experience, as well as from the photographs, to create large-scale compositions," she said. "Occasionally I will re-invent the water or sky, alter the shape of the ice, or mix and match a few different images to create the composition I envision."

(MORE: World's Glaciers Are Melting Faster Today Than Any Time in History)

Forman observed that artists play a critical role in communicating climate change, which she called "arguably the most important challenge we face as a global community."

"In Greenland, I felt both the power and the fragility of the landscape," Forman said. "The sheer size and majesty of the icebergs is humbling. The ice fjords are alive with movement and thunderous cracking – reminders of their destructive capabilities. Yet while their threatening potential is evident, so is their vulnerability: I could see the ice melting under the unseasonably warm sun. I hope my drawings can facilitate a deeper understanding of the climate crisis, helping us find meaning and optimism in shifting landscapes."

She hoped her drawings would be able to serve as "records of landscapes in flux, documenting the transition, and inspiring our global community to take action for the future."

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