

Recording Beauty

Zaria Forman's newest drawings of Antarctica will be on view at Winston Wächter Fine Art in Seattle this September.

BY JOHN O'HERN





Scan for
VIDEO

icebergs, she worked with the maker of her pastels, Unison Colour in England, to develop new colors. "In the Arctic, Greenland and Newfoundland," she says, "the ice cracks and water fills the cracks between with bright blue aqua strips. In Antarctica, the towering ice radiated a sapphire blue that took my breath away."

Her Arctic drawings caught the attention of Sven-Olof Lindblad whose Lindblad Expeditions has teamed with the National Geographic in an alliance "Inspiring people to explore and care about the planet." In 2015 he invited her aboard the National Geographic Explorer for a four-week residency on his Antarctica expeditions.

"On each trip," she explains with preparation and sailing to and from Ushuaia at the tip of South America, "allows about five days in Antarctica. That's a short time to get a feel for the light and the landscape, so I did two back-to-back trips and took thousands of photographs."

Back in her studio, she selects the images she wants to use, sometimes taking elements from several viewpoints. "I work mostly from my memory of the experience," she says. Although she strives to represent accurately what she has seen, her compositions add to her drawings' impact. She lays out a grid on her paper and does a quick outline of the subject and the horizon, "and then I jump in." She layers her pastels and breaks some of them into sharp shards to render the detail that is so important in creating their impact.

"I make the drawings large to make people feel transported, so they can feel a moment of that experience," Forman says. "The large scale can re-create the wonder. I can put in precise detail to portray exactly what I saw at the time. I want people to have an opportunity to experience these places that are so remote that most can't get there physically."

"I can't describe the experience of Antarctica in words," she comments. "Words don't do it justice. It's epic, vast, awe-inspiring. I'm so grateful for the trip. Every second of the trip I was in utter awe."

In March 2000, an iceberg calved from the Ross Ice Shelf along pre-existing cracks in the shelf. With a surface area of 4,200 square miles, it was the world's largest iceberg. It was named B-15. Over time, it began to split up. Some chunks floated into warmer waters and melted, others stayed close to the shelf



and are there today. Each of its chunks has a name as well. Forman's drawing *B-15Y Iceberg, Antarctica No. 1* depicts one of them. "We rode along this chunk for 8 nautical miles," she explains. "It rose 100 feet above the waterline. There was another 800 to 1,000 feet below the waterline." Originally, it was almost a half-mile thick.

Calving occurs naturally and, since the ice sheets are already floating in the sea, icebergs don't contribute significantly to sea level rise. Other areas of the continent are melting at an alarming rate, however.

Forman experienced Antarctica from a different vantage point when she was invited by a navigator for NASA's IceBridge Mission to make six 12-hour flights about 1,500 feet above the ground in a DC-8. The mission maps the geography and how it is changing. This year she made four flights over Greenland with IceBridge.

"The experience was entirely different," she says. "You would not know it's the same place. We could see a lot of detail and I gained a whole new understanding of how glaciers relate to the mountain ranges, how ice shelves calve into the sea. There are so many patterns on the surface. It's also hard to comprehend the scale. The navigator told me that the shadow of the plane is the same size as the plane when it is on the ground."

It's likely that a future series of drawings will explore the Arctic and the Antarctic from this different perspective.

"These places are in the forefront of climate change but they're not part of everyday consciousness," Forman explains. "I'm trying to bring them into a viewer's day—bringing one moment of a completely remote abstract place into their consciousness. I want to encourage people to look at what the world has to offer, to remember these places. Sea ice is already becoming a symbol of climate change."

Forman hopes viewers of her work will experience her love for this land. "When you love something you want to protect and preserve it," she says. "Initially when people see the drawings there is a sense of connection and appreciation. That can spur some kind of action."

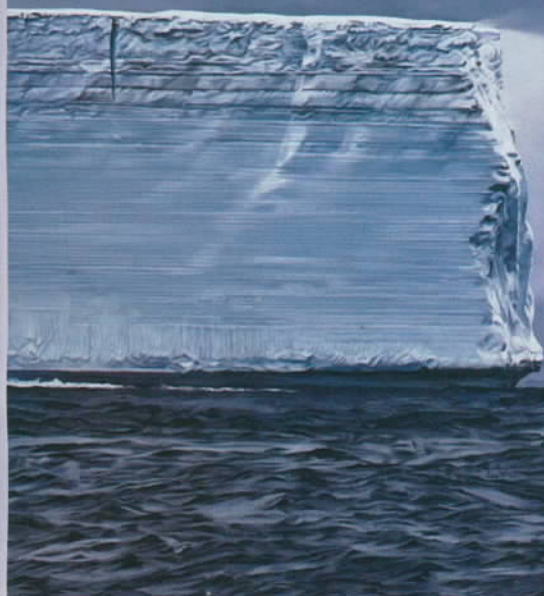
She contributes a percentage of her drawing sales to 350.org and other environmental organizations. Environmentalist Bill McKibben is co-founder of 350.org, an international climate campaign active in 188 countries. ●

ZARIA FORMAN: ANTARCTICA

When: September 9–November 4, 2017

Where: Winston Wächter Fine Art,
203 Dexter Avenue North, Seattle, WA 98109

Information: (206) 652-5855,
www.winstonwachter.com



2

Five years ago, Zaria Forman set out, literally, in the wake of William Bradford (1823-1892) who led the first Arctic expedition devoted to art. She and her mother had been planning their own expedition along the coast of Greenland, following Bradford's route, when her mother died of a brain tumor. Forman continued the plans in honor of her mother and led a group of artists and photographers on the expedition.

For the past few years, she has turned her sights on Antarctica and modern-day explorers aboard the National Geographic Explorer and with NASA's IceBridge Mission, "the largest airborne survey of Earth's polar ice ever flown," according to the agency.

The majesty of the Arctic icebergs and of the vast ice-covered continent of Antarctica are represented in her sometimes 12-foot pastel drawings. Her recent work will be shown in an exhibition, *Zaria Forman, Antarctica*, at Winston Wächter Fine Art, Seattle, from September 9 to November 4.

Forman says Greenland and the Arctic "feels part of me and my story." Her childhood was spent traveling with her family to some of the earth's most remote places, but the draw of the Arctic remains strongest.

"I felt more like a visitor in Antarctica," she says. "It's less inhabitable. People live with the land in Greenland. In Antarctica there are just research stations."

When she encountered the many blues of the Arctic

1
Zaria Forman takes
photos in Greenland.
Photo by Drew Denny.

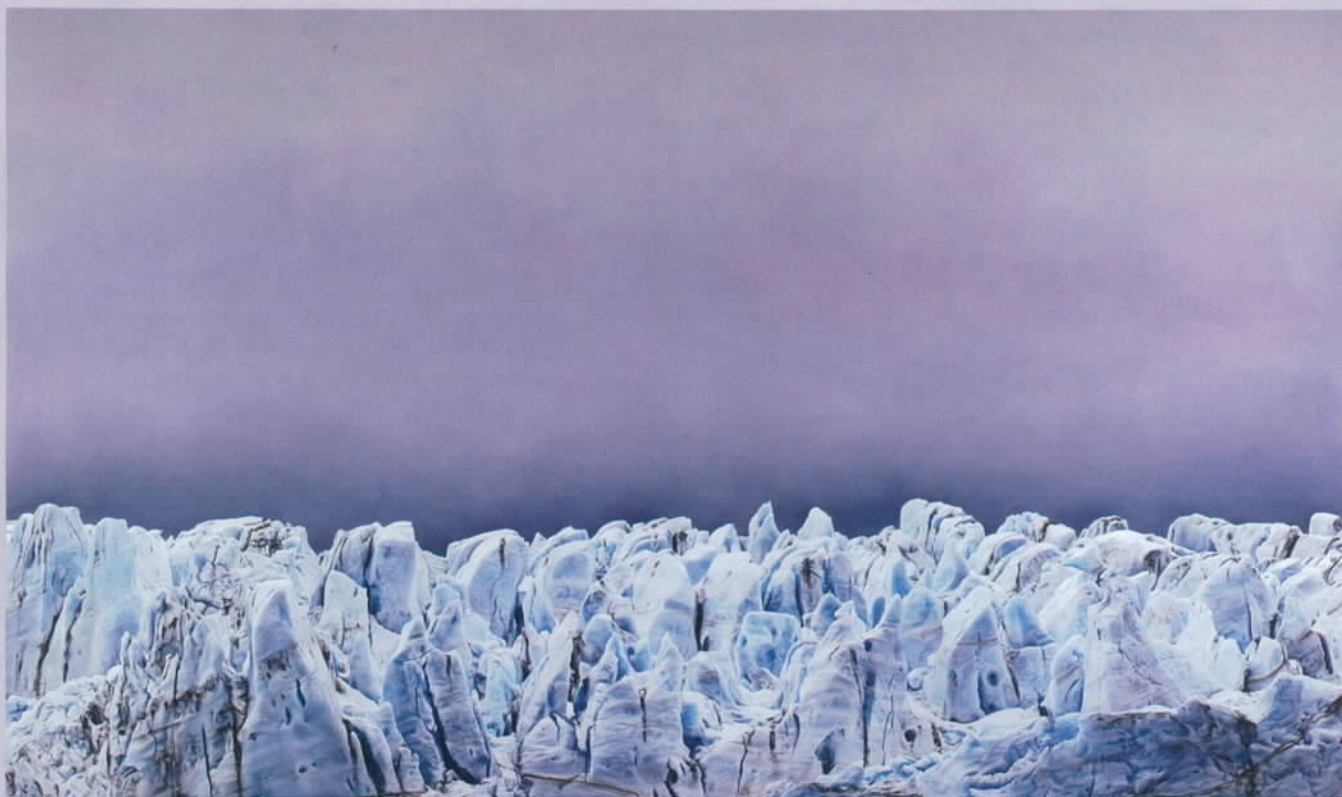
2
B-15Y Iceberg, Antarctica
No. 1, pastel on paper,
72 x 72"







4



5