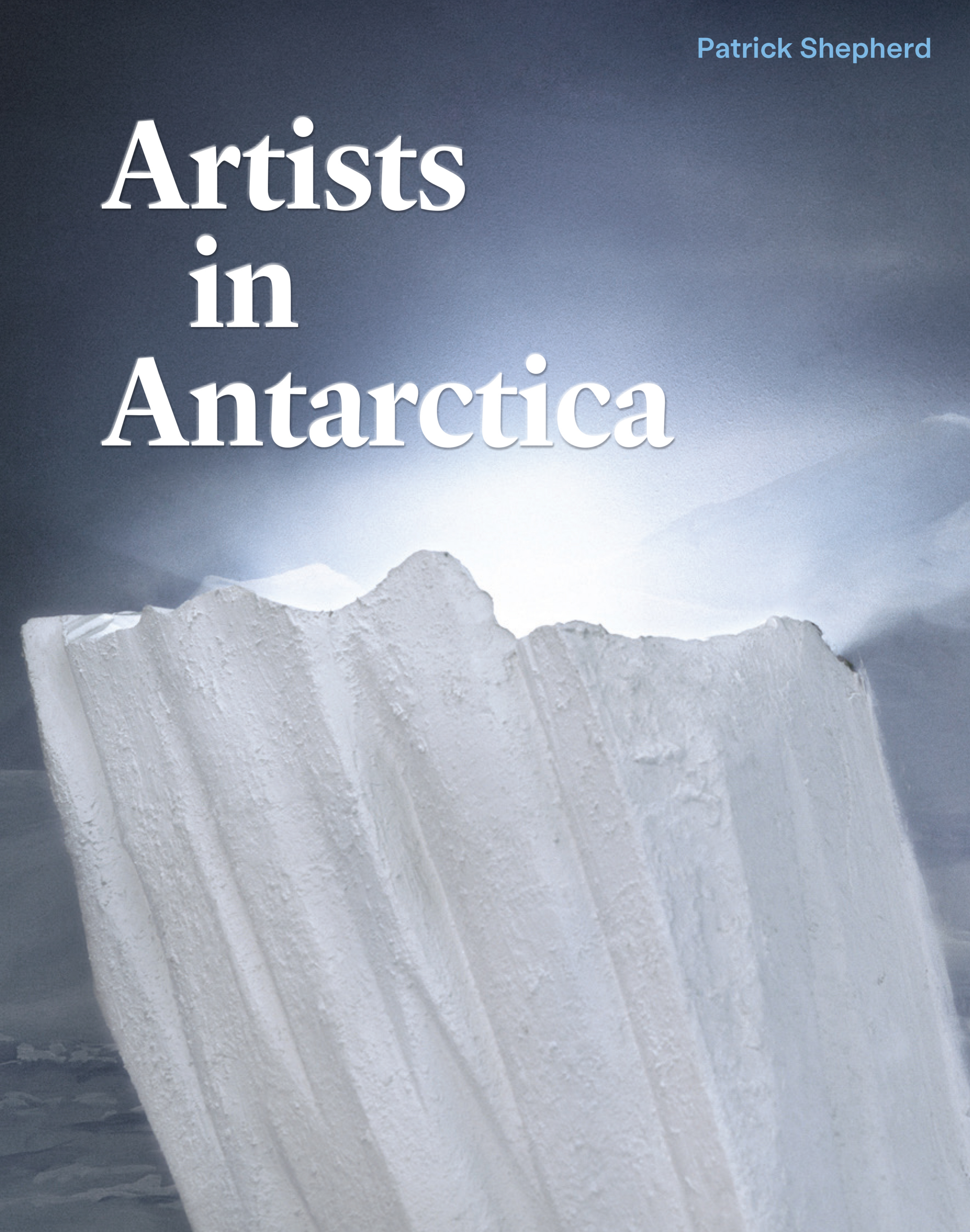


Patrick Shepherd

Artists in Antarctica



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Edited by
Patrick Shepherd



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Foreword

SARAH WILLIAMSON
CEO ANTARCTICA
NEW ZEALAND

Antarctica is the last true wilderness on the planet. Vast, frozen, extreme, hostile and unforgiving, its beauty is unmatched and, while it might not look like it at first glance, it's teeming with life.

The continent holds centuries of secrets in its depths, hidden under kilometres of ice and ocean, and suspended in its permafrost. It holds the key to unlocking what our future has in store for us as the climate changes — and scientists are urgently working to unravel its mysteries.

There are few places left in the world that people can truly marvel at. Antarctica is one of those. To preserve this continent from the footprints of many, most won't get the opportunity to marvel at it in person. They can experience it through art. That's exactly why Antarctica New Zealand's Community Engagement Programme, formerly the Artists to Antarctica and Invited Artists Programme, exists.

Over 100 artists, writers, dancers, creators, educators and journalists have travelled to Scott Base with the programme since 1957, returning home inspired and empowered to tell Antarctica's story. They have since become ambassadors for the continent's environmental protection and preservation.

Their work plays a crucial part in informing and influencing the public's understanding of Antarctica. I'm always amazed at how they capture Antarctica's beauty in all its forms and share the challenges the continent faces with New Zealanders and the world.

Antarctica should remain as a place for peace and science as the Antarctic Treaty intended. We want to share the story of what happens on the continent and why it is so important to retain this wilderness and its equilibriums within Earth's systems. Art resonates with people and tells that story in many ways through different mediums.

Antarctica is not an easy place to live and work in. Capturing the continent's beauty and hostility has its own challenges, no different to the complex logistics of supporting science.

The cold makes it near impossible to paint, as Grahame Sydney, who travelled there in 2003 and 2006, points out. One of his paintings is proudly displayed in the entrance of the Antarctica New Zealand office, as are many other pieces these artists have produced over the years.

Painted in 2006, Sydney's piece depicts Hut Point on Ross Island. It's one of my favourites, capturing Antarctica's infinite expanse of white. On top of Hut Point, Vince's Cross, a memorial for George Vince who slipped to his death during Scott's *Discovery* expedition, is a reminder of just how dangerous this environment can be, and to the right is Discovery Hut, a vestige of the heroic era and exploration. Hut Point is a cold, bitterly windy place, and you are keen not to linger. This feeling is well captured in Sydney's portrayal.

The hut is a far cry from the nearby Scott Base and McMurdo Station we see today, but our commitment to Antarctic discovery remains the same. Our scientists still travel to Antarctica to make discoveries, as do our Community Engagement Programme participants. In partnership these teams go on to inspire others.

These days much of the science Antarctica New Zealand supports looks at how the continent's environment and ecosystems will cope in a warming world. In turn, that will tell us how Aotearoa and the rest of the planet will be impacted so we can all plan, mitigate and adapt.

These artists, writers and creators have built a picture of what a frozen Antarctica has looked like over many decades. But if we don't act soon their work will also document its melting.

Antarctica is an enigmatic, inaccessible and remote wilderness that has always captured the imagination: people from all walks of life and spheres of interest are drawn to it. For over 200 years this frozen continent has been a focus for scientific discovery, geopolitical aspirations and economic speculation — but that is not the whole story.

Creativity on a frozen continent

PATRICK SHEPHERD

There have been many contributions to the Antarctic legend over the past two centuries—not least by visiting artists and writers from a wide range of disciplines who have visited Antarctica with the support of Antarctica New Zealand.

Artists in Antarctica highlights some of the work created by those who have participated in the artists and writers programmes run by Antarctica New Zealand, including the period from 1997 to 2007, when visits were run in partnership with Creative New Zealand. The stated aim was ‘to increase New Zealanders’ understanding of Antarctica’s value and its international importance through the work of our top artists’.¹

Through interviews and artworks, this book showcases the rich, diverse body of work created through arts programmes and gives valuable insights into the creative process and practices of the featured artists. There is no doubt that their work has led to a deeper understanding of life on ‘the Ice’.

The paintings, prints, sculptures, music, writing and dances are important in their own right (*ars gratia artis*), and a number of the artists featured in this book have pointedly remarked that referencing the science was not part of their role. Others, however, hoped that their creative response may have helped (either deliberately or by chance) to support the scientific work being done in Antarctica by providing a touchpoint in the public awareness. In their reflections, many of the contributors make mention of the role science plays in Antarctica and how that research—especially regarding climate change—has affected them.

Antarctica’s bleak and inhospitable environment provides a one-of-a-kind space in which the creative imagination can range. The social settings are also unique, given that the Antarctic community is predominantly science focused. In that environment, the artist is often regarded as an outsider, searching for inspiration in a place where sensory deprivation is the norm and where



Peter McIntyre, *Mt Erebus*,
Antarctica, 1957, oil on canvas,
705 × 935 mm. Christchurch Art Gallery
Te Puna o Waiwhetū, 2009/033

nature is at its most unpredictable and hostile. Antarctica is one of the most forbidding places on Earth and does not give up its secrets easily, to either art or science.

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New Zealand artists have been heading south to the frozen continent since 1957, either as part of the Artists to Antarctica programme (also known as the Antarctica New Zealand Invited Artists Programme and the Antarctica New Zealand Arts Fellowship), or under its predecessor, the Antarctic Division of the Department of Science and Industrial Research (DSIR). More recently, the Antarctica New Zealand Community Engagement Programme has sought to attract applicants who understand the importance of the science carried out in Antarctica and who can express and communicate this in new and different ways to reach a wide audience of New Zealanders. The history of these programmes is explained in more detail on pages 23–30.

Since 2007 Antarctica New Zealand has specifically invited artists to participate in the programme. The painters Peter McIntyre (who went to Antarctica in 1957, 1958 and 1959), Maurice Conly (1970 and 1974) and Austen Deans (1981/82 season) were the first artistic pioneers to head south, and in many ways their work paved the way for what was to come. Since then, Antarctica New Zealand has sent artists representing a range of disciplines, including painting, sculpture, musical composition and performance, choreography, playwriting, fiction and poetry, photography, fashion design, ceramics, printmaking, jewellery, multimedia and textile art. These trailblazers made it very clear that Antarctica was no longer purely the domain of science and exploration.

Given the volume and variety of work produced by New Zealand artists over nearly 80 years, now seemed the perfect time to showcase some of this work, especially given the urgency surrounding the climate crisis. Many of the artists made reference to Antarctica as a place where the rapid acceleration of climate change is clearly evident. The critical climate research done there was often reflected in their work, or otherwise influenced their general outlook.

We are now in a strong position to examine the artists' relationship with Antarctica through their own words and work. It is rare to have the opportunity to examine such a substantial body of work by a group of creative people who over several decades have been exposed to virtually the same narrowly defined experience, and to compare the results. Through their work we begin to see how art relates to the context in which it was conceived. Their work and thoughts allow us into the creative process and give us an experience of Antarctica through the lens of artistry and ingenuity,

adding to our understanding of what it is to exist in such a hostile, desolate and yet utterly absorbing and fascinating place.

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Antarctica existed first only in the imagination, and like so many other things in the foundation of Western understanding, it began with the Greeks and their inevitable pairing of the Arctic and Antarctic. The Arctic, from the Greek *arktos*, meaning 'bear'—referring to the Great Bear constellation visible in the northern hemisphere—was identified by the Greeks from the discoveries of explorers such as Pytheas of Massalia. Applying the inscrutable logic later echoed in Isaac Newton's Third Law—that for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction—the Greeks determined that if there was a large expanse of land in the Arctic north, then there had to be an equivalent counterbalance in the south: this became known as *Antarktikos* or 'opposite to the bear'.

That referential pairing between the two poles endures, with much of the equipment in Antarctica bearing the name of its Arctic counterpart. For example, the large insulated boots everyone wears are called mukluks and Scott Base's green prefabricated huts are known as wanigan, both terms from the languages of indigenous Arctic peoples. The supple fur-lined boots some wear are called finnesko, from the Norwegian *finnsko* (Finnish shoe), and sastrugi, the word used to describe the waves of hard-packed snow created by winds streaming across the plateaux, comes from the Russian word *zastruga* (ridge or furrow).

Arctic history mirrors its Antarctic counterpart, too. Sir John Franklin's doomed mission to find the Northwest Passage is one of the most infamous Arctic episodes, containing all the essential ingredients of a good polar yarn that find echoes in the later journeys south—patriotic fervour, the quest for glory, futile heroics and bad decisions (or bad luck) resulting in deprivation, starvation, madness, cannibalism and death.

The mystery of what happened to Franklin's men persists to this day: several expeditions have turned up precious little apart from gnawed bones and silver cutlery. In the south, a similar story; the bodies of Captain Robert Scott and his companions remain buried under snow and ice, the expedition ending in unimaginable suffering. Douglas Mawson (Australasian Antarctic Expedition, 1911–14) trudged back to base alone across the ice, malnourished and reattaching the soles of his feet each evening; his two companions, Ninnis and Mertz, both dead. Amundsen's resounding success in reaching the South Pole first and Ernest Shackleton rescuing his men from Elephant Island stand in stark juxtaposition to these tales, but both suffered in this unforgiving land and faced incalculable odds. The stories of human endurance, the butchering of dogs and ponies, the madness and deprivation, the high ideals of men striving for the ultimate in the worst possible conditions,

Edward Wilson, *The Great Ice Barrier*,
Looking East from Cape Crozier,
4 March 1911, lithograph on paper,
270 × 370 mm. Alamy

FOLLOWING: John Wilson Carmichael,
Erebus and Terror in the Antarctic, 1847,
oil on canvas, 1232 × 1842 mm. Alamy



and the remarkable characters that emerged have now all become the stuff of Antarctic legend.

✧

The tales of adventure and polar derring-do filtered back to civilisation, fuelling the imagination of writers looking for inspiration and unusual settings for their stories. Edgar Allan Poe's short story 'MS. Found in a Bottle' (1833, 1845) and *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket* (1838), James Fenimore Cooper's *The Sea Lions* (1849) and Jules Verne's *An Antarctic Mystery (The Sphinx of the Ice Fields)* (1897) all incorporated tales from polar travellers.

Andrew Kippis' *The Life of Captain James Cook* (1788) was inspired by the paintings William Hodges made following Cook's second expedition of 1772–75, which ventured south of the Antarctic Circle. Explorer James Clark Ross' narrative inspired J. M. W. Turner to paint two whaling scenes; and Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1798) may have been drawn from either Cook's voyage (Coleridge's tutor was

William Wales, Cook's astronomer) or Captain Thomas James' voyage into the Arctic in search of the Northwest Passage. Coleridge's poem was, in turn, the inspiration for the evocative images of Gustave Doré.

H. P. Lovecraft's novella *At the Mountains of Madness* (1939) and *Who Goes There?* (1938) by Don A. Stuart (aka John Wood Campbell) both had their origins in the adventures of polar explorer Richard E. Byrd, and John Carpenter later adapted Stuart's short story in his sci-fi horror classic *The Thing* (1982). T. S. Eliot incorporated elements of Shackleton's narrative from *The Heart of the Antarctic* (1914) in *The Waste Land* (1922), and critics often see parallels between polar exploration and Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899), in its 'brooding damnation of European imperialism and intellectual self-complacency'.² Mary Shelley sent Victor Frankenstein and his monster to the Arctic in the Gothic novel *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818), and now Hollywood sends its monsters to Antarctica in movies including *Alien vs Predator* (2004) and *The X-Files: Fight the Future* (1998).





J.W. Cawthon
1817

The precedent for the place of art *on* the Ice was established early on by photographers such as Herbert Ponting on Scott's *Terra Nova* Expedition (1910–13) and Frank Hurley on Mawson's Australasian Antarctic Expedition and Shackleton's Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition (1914–16). There were also many amateur artists, such as Dr Edward Wilson, chief scientist with Scott, who sketched, wrote poetry and composed songs, often to entertain their companions rather than to provide a historical record. Their efforts were not designed for the public gaze, but rather to keep up morale or occupy the mind during long periods of inactivity.

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Antarctica New Zealand holds a number of artworks, interviews and papers by and relating to New Zealand artists, in part because each artist is expected to donate a work to the collection, that provide a valuable resource for researchers. There have been earlier attempts to collate and publish this material but no collection has ever eventuated—although Antarctica New Zealand's unpublished book 'The Ice Pick' was, in many ways, the starting point for this project. It has largely been left to the artists themselves to promulgate their work via exhibitions, publications, concerts and performances.

The intention of this book has always been to present the work of Antarctic artists to the world, but I was also keen that the artists' voices be present, so they could share the backstory of their experiences in Antarctica and give the reader further insight into how the works were created. A number of these artists do not work in a visual medium, so we have attempted to include something that relates to the artists' creativity, for example a score extract for composers, an excerpt of writing, or still images from a live performance.

The artists' thoughts were captured either when I interviewed them, or in their own written commentary. Either way, we worked to a set of questions that covered their overall experience; the places they visited and activities in which they took part; the work produced as a result of the trip; their reasons for going and what they hoped to get out of it; what was memorable; how it affected them and/or their work; and the challenges they faced. Each interview inevitably deviated from the questions, as they were designed to do.

The rich conversations that ensued went on many tangential journeys, and it was a joy to see the artists animated when talking about their experiences, as they relived their time down on the Ice. Even though for some it was several decades ago, the memories came flooding back, and the passing of time gave them a chance to reflect on their body of work and see how the Antarctic experience had changed their creative practice.

I would like to make special mention of painter Jonathan White—the next to head south after Deans in 1989—who in 2021 spent what turned out to be some of the last moments of his life recounting his experiences for this book. I managed to get in contact with Jonathan just in time to hear his thoughts before he died, and it is perhaps fitting that his final thoughts may have been of the peace and magic that is Antarctica.

It is testament to the power of the experience of being in Antarctica that there is a compulsion to communicate it to the world. Apsley Cherry-Garrard, who was part of Scott's doomed *Terra Nova* expedition, wrote in his book *The Worst Journey in the World* (1922) that 'everyone who has been through such an extraordinary experience has much to say, and ought to say it if he has any faculty that way'.³ That is certainly the impression I got when talking to the artists, and it is how I have felt ever since my first trip to Antarctica in 2004: it is an overriding imperative, an almost obsessive compulsion, to communicate and continue the story of one of the most fascinating places on our planet.

The theoretical physicist David Bohm reinforces this when he discusses the human need to create, and he makes an important observation about the metacognitive process involved, describing it as a 'fundamental need' to assimilate all our experiences, of both the 'external environment and...internal psychological process'.⁴ Perhaps the explorer Shackleton got it right when he said that Antarctic exploration was not an outward journey but rather an inward journey of discovery.

This formed a critical part of the discussions with the artists about their experience and the subsequent creation of their work, and it is a recurring theme with all of the artists who have been part of Antarctica New Zealand's programme. There is an overwhelming sense that the experience was so life-changing and the purpose of the programme so significant that they have to share what they learned from their Antarctic experience. This was certainly the case with Jonathan White.

Swiss photographer Emil Schulthess described Antarctica as a 'symphony of splendour'.⁵ The American polar explorer Richard Byrd took it one step further when he said: 'There was great beauty here, in the way that things which are also terrible can be beautiful'.⁶ The artists often noted the juxtaposition of brutality and beauty; the word 'beautiful' cropped up frequently in the conversations.

Laura Taylor's 2009 postgraduate dissertation on the Antarctic arts programmes examined the relationship between science, the natural landscape and art; as she put it, the arts 'give texture and substance to the public perception of Antarctica'. She suggests that artists, through their work, are able 'to communicate ideas and feelings, emotions, quite complex and multifaceted things in often quite different ways than scientists do'. Taylor identifies that the artist is able 'to reach out to a different audience [and] can increase awareness to a very wide audience, to capture their imaginations, move them emotionally even!'⁷

Several of the artists talked about the sense of awe and wonder they felt stepping out of the cramped



Everyone who goes to Antarctica is required to undertake Antarctic field training (AFT), which usually consists of a three-day camp somewhere relatively close to Scott Base. Essentially it is a health and safety course where you learn how to survive in Antarctica. Like everything else on the Ice, you are at the mercy of the weather and ever-changing schedules, but typically it would include travelling in—and learning to escape from—a Häggglunds vehicle, building a snow cave or igloo (and possibly sleeping in it), pitching and living in a tent, operating a Primus stove and arresting yourself if you fall into a crevasse. AFT is an adventure in itself, but some of the artists found it a bit frustrating having to go through this compulsory exercise, especially when it cut into their already short stay of 10–14 days. One of the first things you learn about Antarctica is that plans can change in a moment, for any number of reasons.

The next step is to discuss with the base commander the logistics and the practicality of what you are planning to do while there, depending on the schedule, the weather and the demands of the other projects. You are assigned a project number and that is how you're officially known: all announcements and schedules relate to that. When your number is called over the public address system or posted on the noticeboard, that's your cue to jump into action.

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darkness of their plane's cargo hold onto the sea-ice runway. The cold hits you, but so does the dazzlingly bright sunshine and the stunning 360-degree white-and-blue panorama. You can't help but think, 'I'm finally here!' and pinch yourself.

✧

Getting there is the result of lots of preparation, an extremely early start and a five-and-a-half-hour flight (if you're lucky) from Christchurch. 'Boomerang flights', where weather conditions have deteriorated in the time since takeoff and the plane has to turn back to New Zealand, are common. Once there, the 14-metre-long giant passenger transport 'Ivan the Terra-Bus' takes you to Scott Base for processing. Clambering about in your extreme cold-weather gear takes a bit of getting used to, but you have to wear it on the plane in case it goes down. You also have to carry everything yourself—no luggage handlers down there—and there are limits to how much you can take, so extra-bulky equipment has to be cleared before departure.

How the artists' projects have been handled at Scott Base has differed over the years. When the programme kicked off in 1997 artists were generally stationed at Scott Base and made day trips out to the various sites. By the time I went in 2004 (as project K232) it was more usual to camp out in the field overnight at some point. I've never been one for camping—especially in such extreme conditions—but even I was moved by the view of Mount Erebus perfectly framed in the apex of my tent opening.

A trip to the American base, McMurdo Station, is something everyone does, and most of the artists make mention of it at some point. McMurdo (or Mac-Town as it is affectionately known) is a short walk from Scott Base and is on the way to Scott's Discovery Hut at Hut Point, so even if you're beset by bad weather, that trip is usually possible without too much prior organisation. However, if you do use a vehicle to make the trip, you are first required to sit a short 'driving test' to practise driving on the right (as the Americans do).

At McMurdo the reminders of the world you have left behind—an enormous cafeteria with 24-hour pizza

Discovery Hut at Hut Point, with
McMurdo Station in the background,
in 2007. Courtesy of Tessa Duder

OPPOSITE: Stuart Robertson,
*Whispers of Eternal Bonds: Focus on
the horizon, not the footsteps behind
you* (Skidoo trip to Scott Base after
a stay at Square Frame Hut), undated.
Courtesy of Stuart Robertson



and self-serve ice cream, a host of bars and small coffee hangouts—quickly become very attractive. There is also the occasional wild party or full-on rock concert. McMurdo houses other places of interest on artists' itineraries, including the Crary Science and Engineering Center—4320 square metres of scientific pods and an aquarium—and the Chapel of the Snows, which has to be one of the most picturesque churches in the world.

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In his book *The Ice*, American environmental historian Stephen J. Pyne describes Antarctica as 'abstracted, minimalist, conceptual', and he adds that it is a place where we see 'nature as modernist'.⁸ Antarctica can be a coldly aloof and dispassionate environment at the best of times, and for many of the artists their experience there was life-changing—and challenging.

For some the challenge was creating their art in the harsh conditions; for others, it was coming up with a concept for their work back on the mainland. Pyne perhaps explains this when he talks about Antarctica as an 'aesthetic sink, not an inspiration...its fantastic isolation seemingly defied any but self-referential attempts to assimilate it'.⁹

Several artists found themselves looking at the small (often tiny) details, something I experienced myself, as I was very conscious that you could go only so far in trying to represent the broad, majestic vistas in music without it sounding derivative or trite; I found the initial answer in the small things rather than the grand.

The main attraction of heading to a barren wilderness may lie in its remote inaccessibility, but a consequence is that it doesn't give you much to work with, and you find yourself digging deeper to get more out of the material you are presented with. Some artists noted the challenge of the lack of perspective, given there are few roads and buildings and no trees. The minimal colour palette and the reduction in ambient sound are other constraints: it may well be that less is more, in this case. Being in a place with no indigenous culture, and minimal plant and wildlife, raises the interesting question of how sensory deprivation can affect creativity.

Of course, some of the challenges had to do with logistical issues around weather, altered flight schedules, delays, other projects taking precedence and so on. Between 1997 and 2007, artists had to apply and indicate what they would produce as a result of their



trip; the reality was that often those plans were altered and the artists had to make adaptations and adjustments.

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The effects the trip south had on the artists and their work is as varied as the artists themselves. They felt privileged to have been able to go there and see it all first hand. All acknowledged their good fortune to have had the chance to take part in the programme. With that came a strong sense of wanting to do justice to Antarctica and their experience there.

There is only a short window of opportunity when you are a visitor to Antarctica, and always in the background is an awareness of the cost of getting there, and of the need to maximise what time you have. The pressure is on to produce something of substance.

For some, their visit to Antarctica was a project like any other and the way they approached it differed only in the subject matter. For others it became a deeply spiritual experience, connecting—or reconnecting—with their own beliefs and way of working.

The natural landscape is obviously the first thing that one is struck by, but for many the human aspect became increasingly important, whether it be the

discussions with scientists over a coffee at Scott Base or partying over at McMurdo Station. The Scott Base staff and scientists were frequently praised for the help and encouragement they gave the artists.

While not exactly explorers, in many ways each artist was a pioneer, bringing something new to the continent then taking something even more valuable back to the world. Being part of only a minuscule percentage of the world's population to ever set foot on the continent accentuated the enormous privilege the artists felt in being there.

The final question I asked each artist was what they would do if they had the chance to go again. Many said they would leap at the opportunity and felt that having been once gave them a better idea of what they would want to do next time. Some, however, said that going again would somehow detract from the very special nature of the first trip; they wanted the memory to remain intact and unspoiled by over-familiarity. A number laughed off the suggestion of going again, saying they were too old, but I did mention that Sir Edmund Hillary made his last trip in 2007, aged 87. Incidentally, his age and extensive Antarctic experience made him one of the few people excused from doing AFT.

1 New Zealand Antarctic Society, 'Antarctica New Zealand Announces Invited Artists', *Antarctic* 26, no. 2 (2008): p. 27.

2 Stephen J. Pyne, *The Ice* (London: Pheonix, 1986), p. 171.

3 Apsley Cherry-Garrard, *The Worst Journey in the World*, 2nd edition

(New York, NY: Dial Press, 1930), p. viii; p. 577.

4 David Bohm, *On Creativity* (Oxford: Routledge Classics, 1996), p. 33.

5 Emil Schulthess, *Antarctica* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1960).

6 Richard E. Byrd, *Little America: Aerial Exploration in the Antarctic* (New York,

NY: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1930), p. 354.

7 Laura Taylor, 'Communicating Gateway Identity' (postgraduate thesis in Antarctic Studies, Gateway Antarctica, University of Canterbury, Christchurch, 2009), pp. 63–65.

8 Pyne, p. 152.

9 *Ibid.*, p. 150.



Bubbles in the ice, Lake Vanda.
Fieke Neuman

The Artists



Laurence Aberhart

PHOTOGRAPHER

I use what would now be called a very large-format camera, an 8 × 10-inch view camera, so it takes a negative about that size. In terms of its age, it's the same camera that Ponting and Hurley used in their pioneering photography on the *Terra Nova* and *Endurance* expeditions in the early 1900s; it's the same technology.



PREVIOUS: *Small trapped iceberg, Cape Evans, Ross Island, 1 December 2010*, silver gelatin, gold and selenium toned photograph, 195 × 245 mm.
Laurence Aberhart

I wanted to see if it was possible to take photographs in the same way as Herbert Ponting and Frank Hurley had. The only difference is that they used glass plates and I used film.

Antarctica is bigger than anything any of us can cope with. You deal with it as it presents itself, at that time and at that moment. My biggest challenge was not being able to access as much as I wanted to, and getting work done within the time available. I thought the whole experience was fantastic and I was very privileged to be there, but it was also frustrating because my *modus operandi* is to be out there, and there's actually very limited freedom down on the Ice.

When we arrived the weather was beautiful, but we spent the first three days doing Antarctic field training. I was there for only 10 days, so already that limited my opportunities. It was all out there, that great vastness, and I couldn't join it. But I did get a helicopter ride to the Dry Valleys, which was fantastic. I ended up in a high area and it was like being in Henry Moore's playground; all around were these big boulders with holes drilled through them. It was blowing 40 knots and that's unphotographable conditions for me so I didn't get any shots. That's the trouble with photography—painters, writers and musicians can go there and use the experience later on, but photographers have to grab what they can at the time.

It was really good being out and about at Cape Royds. That was the one occasion I should have stayed up all night but I just couldn't manage it, having only recently returned from a three-month trip to the United States. It was all about nature and the wilderness for me. I was able to walk around and photograph things like a small trapped iceberg. When I photographed the huts, I didn't like Scott's hut at Cape Evans because the differentiation between officers and enlisted men was obvious there, whereas in Shackleton's hut it was clear that 'we're all in it together'—it had a sense of intimacy about it.

It was great that the whole team, including the scientists and others, responded to what I was doing. They understood that I wasn't doing it the easy way. I did get quite a few photographs done. While most people count photographs in the dozens or hundreds, I count them in the ones and fives, but I produced 32 exhibitable photographs. My favourite pictures include one of White Island; the small trapped iceberg I mentioned earlier; and a nice shot of Erebus.

The only place I could go and work quietly on my own was where the sea ice had pushed up in front of Scott Base. It was all crushed and stacked, and I walked through carefully, observing the warning not to go further than 2 metres beyond the markers. The one time I tried to do this, I went down a crevasse. Luckily, I had my tripod, which stopped me, but my leg went right into it. I learned my lesson not to do that again!

My trip to Antarctica hasn't made any difference as such to my practice, because that's how I work, going to places and making images out of them. I'm a person who takes that environment as it presents itself and records it. For example, when you've got it right it's still a photograph of, say, Shackleton's hut, but it gives you a little extra, maybe the feeling of it or something like that. Even though things may have been photographed before, I would hope that through my process, it delivers that elusive 'something more'. You hope to be satisfied with what you get at the end of it and I was satisfied. It is a relatively small chapter in the whole of my work but a very profound one.

At my age I don't think they'd have me, but I would like to go again. I know of the frustrations with the environment but, equally, if they said I could go for two months, I'd be there in a flash.



BELOW: *The singing girls, Shackleton's Hut, Cape Royds, Ross Island, 1 December 2010, silver gelatin, gold and selenium toned photograph, 195 x 245 mm. Laurence Aberhart*

FOLLOWING: *White Island from Scott Base, Ross Island, Antarctica, 29 November 2010, silver gelatin, gold and selenium toned photograph, 195 x 245 mm. Laurence Aberhart*







For many years I had tried desperately to get to Antarctica; I had applied and was turned down for a couple of expeditions. My persistent begging must have left an impression and I was eventually invited by Antarctica New Zealand to photograph Ross Island and the Dry Valleys. I did this over three two-week visits in the summer months of 2003/04 and 2014.

Andris Apse

PHOTOGRAPHER

On my first flight south I was glued to the window as soon as we were within sight of the sea ice and the ice-covered mountains, and I stayed glued to it until we landed at McMurdo. The uncertainty and challenges of the Antarctic climate were brought home to me in a very graphic way when I was presented with a water bottle with the words 'Rehydrate or Die' printed on the side in large letters.

During my visits I was able to photograph the Imax crevasse on Ross Island, a few of the historic huts, the Adélie penguin colony at Cape Bird and emperor penguins on the sea ice in McMurdo Sound. However, I spent the majority of my time in the Dry Valleys at locations such as the Dias, the Labyrinth and Lake Vanda in the Wright Valley; at the ice formations at Lake Brownworth west of Wright Lower Glacier; the





The mesmerising patterns of frozen sea ice and windblown snow on McMurdo Sound. Andris Apse

RIGHT: Lake Brownworth in Wright Valley in the Dry Valleys of Antarctica. The towering ice cliffs are so incongruous among the windblown sand covering the valley floor. Andris Apse

BELOW: Labyrinth, Dias and the Wright Valley, with the Olympus Mountain Range in the background. A very fresh snowfall was evaporating in the extremely low humidity as we watched. Andris Apse



Olympus Range; Finger Mountain in the Upper Taylor Glacier; the ventifact rock formations near Péwé Peak; and the Joyce Glacier in the Upper Garwood Valley.

In some ways I found my Antarctic photography missions rather restricted. The environment is so harsh and unforgiving that I was unable to work in my normal manner of walking long distances, studying and carefully selecting the best angle to photograph from—in Antarctica that is just not possible—but I was there long enough to find a workaround. However, this workaround almost destroyed me. Daylight in summer is 24/7 and to get the best of the modelling effect that lower levels of sunlight bring in the early hours, I was sleeping very little and walking the marked tracks between two and five in the morning. Then, afraid I would miss an opportunity during normal working hours, I stayed up all day as well. That could not last, though, and I soon reverted to a more sensible schedule.

Fiordland, Stewart Island, the Subantarctic Islands and Antarctica have been at the heart of my dreams for so long, and now, 40 years on in my photography career, I have visited and photographed all but the Bounty Islands. The best of these wilderness images are in my book *The Deep South*, published in 2022. I do not have the geographic coverage to produce a dedicated book on Antarctica, but my Antarctic images are displayed in my own gallery, in exhibitions in other galleries and in *The Deep South*.





I went to Antarctica expecting to discover a landscape, a physical geographical experience. I returned to New Zealand having experienced not only that, but also an exciting and unfamiliar culture, in exactly the same way as I have in the United States, Indonesia, Australia and many other countries.

Gareth Farr

COMPOSER





SACRED
TO THE
MEMORY
OF

CAPT. A.L.A. MUIRHEAD, R.N.R. AND V.O. MUIRHEAD
WHO PERISHED ON THE SEA-ICE IN A BLIZZARD ABOUT MAY 8TH 1916.
AND OF
THE REV. A.D. SPENCER-SMITH, B.A.
WHO DIED
ON THE
ROSS BARBER
ON
MARCH 8TH
1916

A PAPER BEARING THIS INSCRIPTION, WRITTEN BY THEIR COMRADES
A.K. JACK WAS FOUND IN THE ICE FILLED HUT BY THE
NEW ZEALAND HUTS RESTORATION PARTY, 1960.
JACK AND JOYCE WHO MADE AND ERECTED THIS CROSS
HAD NOT ENOUGH TIME TO CARVE THE INSCRIPTION ON IT.

THIS PLAQUE WAS ERECTED BY ANTARCTIC DIVISION O.S.L.A. N.Z. 1942-1943

PREVIOUS: The memorial cross at Cape Evans, erected by the Ross Sea Party, led by Captain Aeneas Mackintosh of Sir Ernest Shackleton's Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition of 1914–17, in memory of three members of their party who died in the area in 1916. Megan Jenkinson

RIGHT: The artist with a Håggglunds, on the way to Cape Royds. Megan Jenkinson

OPPOSITE: An extract from Gareth Farr's *Terra Incognita* score. Courtesy of Promethean Editions

There is Scott Base, which is profoundly Kiwi, and then there is McMurdo Station—with its fascinating aquatic science labs—where, to my surprise, there were bars with live music, and I was suddenly buying beers with American dollars, all just five minutes' drive away. Despite the difference between the bases there is an overriding Antarctic culture, with an understanding of things they all have in common that are utterly peculiar to Antarctica. There are issues of safety, survival and science, along with general things you have to know in order just to exist in a space-station-like environment.

When we finally landed and I climbed out of the Hercules onto the sea ice, having been 'boomeranged' back to Christchurch twice already due to bad weather, it was like being on the set of a Peter Jackson movie—the horizon seemed impossibly far away, and there was a sensation of expanse and distance that I'd never experienced before. That was in December 2005. The astonishing Imax crevasse was like being in a massive ice cathedral; and it was a strange feeling to be standing in Scott's hut where he had stood 100 years earlier. It's amazing that it's still there. I had my first helicopter trip—to the Dry Valleys, where the glaciers were stunning.

I went down to Antarctica to have a fantasy experience that barely anyone gets to have. I'm a fan of the symphonies of Strauss and Vaughan Williams, and I wondered whether I could produce something different by actually being there—but I found myself too wrapped up in the experience to write anything during those intense 10 days. It was a relief to have time at home to gain a more focused perspective on my journey and what I really wanted to write. The musical work resulting from the trip was *Terra Incognita* for bass voice, orchestra and choir. Initially I intended to represent the landscape and geography of the place, along with the beauty juxtaposed with the terror, but it ended up being more about the people who have been there and are still there.

I've always disliked the idea of trying to express landscape in music or, for that matter, anything visual in music, because I don't think that music exists for that purpose. Music is music. I don't even like writing programme notes, as they seem to me like an apology



because the music wasn't capable of communicating to the audience. So to write a piece of music inspired by my experience in Antarctica was utterly impossible based on these self-imposed restrictions! But there was a moment—the epiphany moment—when I realised that it was the people who have been to Antarctica in the past 100 years that I can reflect in my music.

The minute I realised the project was about people and their relationship to the continent, I had this major change of heart. I had talked to Paul Whelan—a Kiwi singer based in London—a few years earlier about writing a piece, but as always happens the idea had fallen by the wayside because neither of us had the funding to do anything. The epiphany was, 'Oh my God, this is the piece—I need the epic sound of an orchestra and I need the human communication of a singer—this is the piece!'

The visit to Antarctica didn't change the way I work, but the whole trip was totally life-changing and my general outlook was altered in a very specific way—ecologically. I said that a few times to people when I got back, but when they asked me how it changed my life, I faltered. It took me a while to figure it out. I realised that there are two overwhelming things that hit you in the face when you go to Antarctica. The first is that the world is a very scary place. It's fierce, unrelenting and non-negotiable. The second is that the world is a very fragile place. If something that appears so invincible, so powerful and so eternal can be falling apart because of what us humans have done in the past hundred years or so, then we have really screwed up badly.

Terra Incognita

T

Musical score for "Terra Incognita". The score is arranged in systems, with each system containing multiple staves for different instruments and vocal parts. The instruments listed on the left include Flutes 1 and 2, Oboe 1, B♭ Clarinets 1 and 3, Bassoons 1 and 2, Contrabassoon, Horns 1-4, Trumpets 1, Trombones 1 and 3, Tuba, Percussion 1-3, Piano, Solo Bassoon, and Violins 1 and 2, Viola, Violoncello, and Double Bass. The vocal parts are labeled S (Soprano), A (Alto), T (Tenor), and B (Bass). The score includes dynamic markings such as *mf*, *p*, and *f*. The lyrics for the vocal parts are: "ver no - ness and light end space," and "ver no". A section marker "T" is placed above the Solo Bassoon staff in the lower half of the page.