

## “the Arctic is screaming! – it is in freefall...”

These are the words of climate scientists modelling recent climate changes in the Arctic.

Unable to ignore the challenge of working with ice as an art material, I soon discovered a wealth of interesting avenues to explore: the surfaces of the ice, its mass, melt, sounds, and translucency. I realised that a study of ice, even with its inherent impermanence, offers a remarkably accessible view of our planet’s geological and paleoclimatological record. Using a fluid material that changes over short timescales allows me to work with the basic condition of change, creating a space for the audience to reflect on the transition between the micro (personal) and macro (global) scale and the complex, but inevitable relationship between the two. I came to believe that the very nature of the material - the ice itself - speaks its own language and engages a variety of onlookers in ways that cannot be anticipated.

While in Svalbard on a residency in Longyearbyen, I met fellow ice artists **Elizabeth Bourne** and **Adam Sébire** and I invited them to exhibit with me. Together with Edinburgh-based researcher, artist and creative technologist **Martin Disley** we produced ***Glacial Narratives: A Report from the Arctic*** for COP26 (2021-22)

The artworks developed into different materials and different relationships when we continued as a group to explore our ideas for ***Glacial Narratives: Cracks in the Ice*** for Edinburgh international Science Festival (2023)

We introduced workshops for young people through a new collaboration with Edinburgh community music project Tinderbox, and with video artist Mettje Hunneman. The young participants created a piece of music from recordings of ice, and built a cardboard iceberg onto which to project images as environmental messages. Tinderbox was then successful in applying for and developing a relationship with a young people’s project in Uummannaq, Greenland – a relationship set to develop digitally into the future.

The third in our series of ***Glacial Narratives: The Greenlandic Chapter*** (2024 – 25) is a result of our experiences of Greenland – both the enormity and fragility of icebergs as they journey from glacier to sea, and the majesty of sea ice in all its various forms: pancake, brash, floe. This exhibition is in Edinburgh at Patrioathall from 1<sup>st</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> March, and then in Ullapool at An Talla Solais from 21<sup>st</sup> March to 4<sup>th</sup> May.

In my art I now search to portray the feelings of sitting in a silent boat amongst gigantic palaces and cathedrals of ice, experiencing the sadness, the beauty, the fear, and the wonder of this broken environment, and at the same time seeing the magnificence and power of the water run-off from the ice cap. It is almost impossible to express the overwhelming feeling that this experience delivers: the sublime presence of chapters of our planet’s history irrevocably dissolving in a slowly passing

procession. Artists can make valuable and relevant contributions to the climate change issue we face in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We cannot solve the climate crisis, but we can encourage an audience that may feel disempowered by the facts to explore the possibilities laid open by an emotional connection to the works, and perhaps to take the necessary and critical actions to create both personal and societal change. My works about ice have little or no relevance if there is no audience, and so I hand it over to the viewer to take up the challenge.

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Artist and Glacial Narratives series producer