

The Tethered Artist

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ABSTRACT

There is a long history of artists physically tethering themselves in order to draw attention to the lengths to which they will go in their practice, often with the implied message that they are conceptually straining at the tethers of convention. Beginning with a discussion of my recent Arctic underwater photography, this article looks at the use of tethers in my own work, as well as in that of several other historical artists. I argue that by highlighting any method of production within the artwork, and specifically a tether, artists are revealing a Realist impulse.

Looking down into the deep clear turquoise water, the chain attached to the anchor slightly arced away and eventually was swallowed by the dark Arctic Ocean. It was difficult to say how far down the chain descended until it disappeared. The ship's captain had said the chain was many hundreds of meters long, but it probably wasn't fully extended at that moment, and even if it was, the anchor was beyond the depth I could see. Upon closer looking the chain appeared to change color as it receded. At the surface it was a rusty brown. By twenty feet down it read as grey. Farther, where distance became difficult to gauge, the faint line of the chain was a black wisp fading into the blue.

I have been making underwater photographs for the past ten years. The incredible spectrum of colors created in water as light passes through it has always fascinated me. Water's turbidity, particulate matter, and the angle of the sun work together to render the space described in the photograph in an incredible range of saturations, hues, and shadows.

Other artists, educators, and scientists have shared my interest in water's clarity. The Italian meteorologist, astronomer, physicist, and priest Angelo Secchi, working in the 1860s, fashioned a disk that could be dropped into water on the end of a string to measure the water's clarity. Painted half-black and half-white, the Secchi Disk was thirty centimeters in diameter and is still in use. The Secchi Depth marks the point at which the disk, when lowered in the water, is no longer visible.

In the late eighteenth century, the Swiss physicist Horace-Bénédict de Saussure's invented the cyanometer, which was most famously used by the explorer and naturalist Alexander von Humboldt. It comprises small squares of paper dyed in shades and tints of blue, from nearly black to bright blue to almost white, which are arranged around a circle. Holding it overhead, one can use it to compare the colored papers to the blueness of the sky and thus document the relative color of the sky at any given moment. Though not typically used to register water color or clarity, Saussure's device can be seen as an ancestor of both the Secchi Disk and my project.

In June 2016, twenty-six other artists and I participated in the Arctic Circle Residency aboard the Tallship Antigua as it sailed around the Arctic archipelago of Svalbard. I was there to work on underwater photography, documenting the clarity and color of the water near the glaciers we encountered. I took thousands of photographs under Svalbard's waters, capturing turbidity that ranged from pure white to dusty blue to emerald green. With this specific project in mind, I created a device that would allow me to photograph underwater without spending a lot of time in the frigid ocean. I borrowed a camera that could go to a depth of a hundred feet and then loaded a hundred feet of very strong line onto a collapsible fishing rod. A plastic platform with elastic bands served as the camera mount. Four wires at the corners of the plastic rectangle connected the camera to the fishing line. Because the camera was pointed up, its view included the line as it receded up towards the rod, and the wires. I tied telltale knots at twelve-inch intervals going up the line to give a spatial reference and to register any current in the water. The entire contraption was kept upright by a stone hung below the mount.



Figure 1. The author's fishing rod rig, on which an underwater camera can be mounted

The glaciers all over Svalbard were very actively calving in the relatively warm June weather, meaning that city-block-sized hunks of ice would drop unannounced into the water. Our guide, Sarah Gerats, who is an exceptional artist in her own right, ferried a small group of us in an inflatable boat called a Zodiac. She steered us as close to the face of the glacier as was safe; still more than five hundred feet away.



Figure 2. Sarah Gerats driving a Zodiac, 2016, photograph by Fritz Horstman

As a glacier scrapes across the land, making its way to the ocean, it grinds up and collects an enormous amount of silt and grit. Closest to the glacier's face its meltwater, which carries the silt, is at its most concentrated. Glacial milk – the white silty water associated with melting glaciers – visibly dissipates with distance from the glacier's face as it is diluted by the otherwise crystal-clear Arctic water. Because of the influx of glacial melt, the waters near the Blomstrandbreen glacier provided a particularly varied set of images.

Sarah cut the engine on the Zodiac and brought us to a standstill. I set my camera to take photographs every twenty seconds and dropped it into the water. When there was no more line on the reel, the camera was a hundred feet down and pointing up. I slowly and steadily reeled the camera in. Sarah moved us away from the glacier in increments of a few hundred feet, stopping so I could capture more sets of photographs.

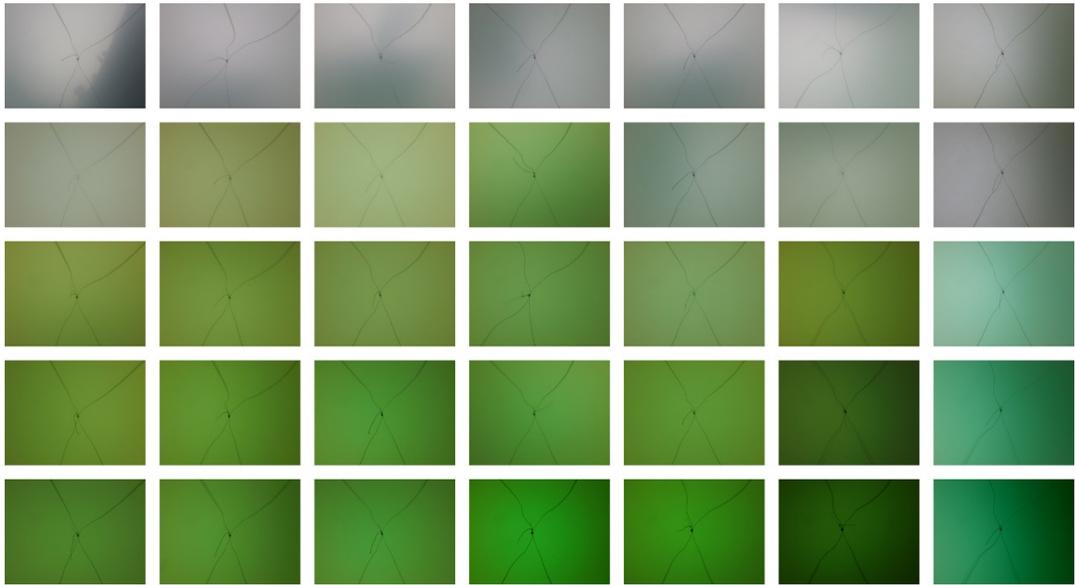


Figure 3. Fritz Horstman, Blomstrandbreen, underwater digital photographs, 2016

The photographs as I've arranged them depict the water closest to the glacier at the far left, moving away from the glacier in the columns to the right. The column at the far right was taken approximately a mile from the face of the glacier. The five images in each column are arranged from the deepest photograph at the bottom to shallowest at the top. The Zodiac can be faintly made out at the top of each column where the camera was just a few feet underwater.

With distance from the glacier, turbidity changed. Overall it decreased, though not consistently. The images in the far-left column show a milky quality that is only present in the shallower images of other columns. There are more minerals suspended in the water closest to the melting glacier, which in the photographs show up as a hazy whitening effect. In general, the deeper photos are more saturated greens, while the shallower photographs display more of the suspended minerals that produce the milky appearance. Curiously, the darkest images in this series are at the bottom of the second column, where I would have expected them to be at the far lower left where the least amount of light would make it through the silt. That may be a result of some change in mineral composition in the water and available light. From a colorist's perspective, I observe that the images at the far left are coolest and that they progressively get warmer in the columns to the right.

The spindly X's in my photographs are fairly consistent. Small changes evince adjustments made between shots. The changing hues of the water are far more visually apparent. The X serves as a register or perhaps as an analogy to a musical staff line. The same could be said of the edges of each individual photograph within the grid, though with the X, it is something that is within the photograph, and so was present in the place where the hue of the water was captured. It is there as a bridge between the moment the photo was taken and the moment it is viewed, linking them and confirming the objective nature of the presentation. Though they in some sense obscure it, the X's registration of the image alters the way the color of the photograph is understood.

The techniques I use are borrowed from science, though a scientist would probably say that I'm not being thorough enough. As an artist, I compare the objective results of photographs taken at different locations with my subjective observations and feelings about color. Psychology and physics are both at play, but ultimately the purpose of the work is to document these colors, not to analyze the results scientifically. Josef Albers gave a series of lectures in the 1960s entitled *Search versus Re-Search*, in which he posits that as an artist he is more interested what comes from searching for something, as opposed to the standardized procedures of research.[1] Driven by curiosity, a search is open and flexible and is an example of active learning. Some of this may be true of research, but it also contains a desire to find or prove a theory, which may get in the way of the open inquiry that Albers espoused. Though my language and techniques may have some elements of science built into them, I wouldn't have pursued this project were there not a poetic level to its realization. My Arctic underwater photography project is an artistic search for evidence.

By traveling to the Arctic, I intentionally made as large a geographical change from my typical studio experience as possible. Few places on Earth are more different from rural Connecticut. Though I saw some incredibly beautiful mountains, glaciers, and waterways populated by whales and polar bears, it wasn't the purpose of my project to bring those images back. Others have done that better than I ever could. I brought back images of the faint light a hundred feet below the surface of the Arctic Ocean, where minerals and shadows mix to create subtle and unique hues. The silt that's been dropped by melting glaciers, which is suspended in the water, is my subject. Taking viewers a hundred feet below the surface in the Arctic Ocean is untenable. Focusing on the wonder of the dirt as it mixes with the water to make blue and green light, allows us to travel down the tether with the camera and rest there in our minds, awash in the murky frigid beautiful color.



Figure 4. Fritz Horstman, Blomstrandbreen (detail), underwater digital photograph, 2016

The Antigua took us past scores of glaciers and eventually far to the north, to the edge of the pack ice. The glaciers groaned and boomed as they slowly eased and tumbled into the ocean. The edge of the pack ice was a slurry of ice chunks sloshing in the undulating Arctic Ocean, creating a cacophony of high-pitched crackling, popping sounds. Conversation aboard the ship often turned to the incredible sounds of the ice. Using a field recorder I asked willing participants to recreate the sounds of the ice using just their voices. Some made the low sounds of the glaciers, many more made percussive sounds like what we'd heard at the pack ice. I compiled the sounds and arranged them with video footage in a composition I call [*Ice Voices*](#). [2]

Participants closed their eyes or looked into the distance in order to better envision the scene. Some tried several vocal techniques before being satisfied that they'd created a good rendition. Few were trained vocalists. Separated from the idea of recreating the sounds of ice, many of the recordings could be mistaken for people clearing their throats or smacking their lips. What would in most recording scenarios be unwanted noise was exactly the point of my composition.

I could have simply made sound recordings of the ice, but there was something much more compelling about the vocal versions. There was slippage between the objective and subjective truths carried in the sound. Everyone tried to the best of their abilities to faithfully render the sounds of ice but were limited by their vocal abilities and memory. The process of making the recordings changed the way we experienced the ice. We were more tuned in to its sounds, and more aware of ourselves being tuned in.

NOISE AND DIRT

Noise in music and dirt in art may simply be what conventionally wouldn't be allowed into the concert hall or onto the canvas. Artists push boundaries. Tastes change. Sometimes boundaries are pushed for theoretical or provocative reasons – to see what would happen or to intentionally rile a complacent audience. At other times, an artist pushes a boundary out of necessity. Robert Rauschenberg created his *White Painting (Four Panels)* in 1951 when he was still a student at Black Mountain College. The painting consists of four completely white square panels arranged in a grid. Light in the room may strongly color, streak, or dapple the canvases. *White Painting* perhaps represents Rauschenberg establishing the opposite extreme of dirt in art. If dirt was to show up on his canvas, it would be immediately obvious and unwelcome. Just a few years after *White Painting*, Rauschenberg created his *Dirt Painting (For John Cage)*. *Dirt Painting* is exactly what it sounds like: a painting made of dirt. It is not a painting made to look like dirt. It is actual dirt. With it, Rauschenberg further established and expanded the edges of his field.

A strong influence on Rauschenberg at Black Mountain was Josef Albers, with whom he studied in 1948, and who taught students to manipulate and explore their material as thoroughly as possible to increase their understanding of its potential. For Albers, anything could be treated as a material in this way—paper, wire, sand, or color.[3] This approach can be applied to something less tangible like teaching or to the broad field of painting. In first making *White Painting* and then *Dirt Painting*, Rauschenberg was being a good pupil (a description rarely applied to him) by identifying his material, then exploring its edges.

Dirt Painting is sculptural and brings dirt in its most natural form directly into the gallery. Though specific historical connections between the Earth Artists, who in the 1960s and 1970s left the white

walls of art galleries to make large – sometimes enormous – sculptures, and *Dirt Painting* are tangential, they most certainly share a desire to push the boundaries of how we think about what sort of “nature” is acceptable in art. In simply presenting dried mud on a canvas, Rauschenberg allowed the natural cracking of the mud to be not only present but visually dominant. This is a significant step towards accepting nature itself as a sort of autonomous art system. It establishes that an art practice may consist of simply identifying and elevating interesting aspects of that system.

The Earth Artists realized that with modern transportation and reasonably large budgets from supporting institutions they had a vastly larger geographical range than any previous artists in history. Artists like Walter de Maria, Robert Smithson and Nancy Holt, created monumental sculptures in the deserts and scrub of Nevada, New Mexico, and other sparsely populated regions. Had they been made a few decades earlier, these sculptures wouldn’t have even registered as art. They were too far from the gallery and too unlike what was expected and accepted as art. The inclusion and acceptance of dirt and noise in art and music that steadily increased across the twentieth century required a constant readjustment of the boundaries of both what was art and where it could be seen. Further, those boundaries became permeable.

Prior to his large sculptural work, De Maria made an experimental percussion recording. In 1964, De Maria made *Cricket Music*, a twenty-four-minute composition of his performance on a drum kit played in response to and mixed with a field recording of crickets.[4] De Maria never explained why he made this recording, but it can be seen as a duet between a landscape-evoking noise and a traditional musical instrument. The two are equally important. The listener is drawn back and forth between them. De Maria’s sculptures would later extend that idea with an actual landscape and his interventions therein. His recording makes this duet completely natural. The crickets are just there to be listened to.

ALAN SONFIST

Alan Sonfist sought to bring nature back into densely populated areas. His *Time Landscape* was begun in 1965 at the corner of West Houston Street and La Guardia Place in lower Manhattan.[5] It is now designated a park by the Parks Department of New York City. The twenty-five by forty-foot plot was cleared of anything that wouldn’t have been present when European settlers arrived in the seventeenth century. If dirt is anything undesired in art, Sonfist’s “dirt” was any invasive species, foreign species, and any variety of modern rubbish. In its place, he sowed native plants like beech, witch hazel, red cedar, poke weed, and aster. Once planted, *Time Landscape* was left to grow. As in any forest, some plants grew faster, while some didn’t survive. Framed by city streets and sidewalks, it is a self-contained, autonomous sculpture.



***Figure 5. Alan Sonfist, Time Landscape, 1965-present, photograph ca. 1980
courtesy of the artist***

I was Sonfist's studio assistant from 2002 through 2004. What follows is an excerpt from a recent phone conversation.[6]

FH: You were very young when you first started *Time Landscape*. You were nineteen, right?

AS: Yep. I grew up next to a primeval forest in the Bronx, a hemlock forest.

FH: I certainly understand the impetus to recreate that forest, but to do it in the name of art – it seems like there was no one who had done that before and said “this is art.”

AS: Exactly.

FH: There were people making parks, obviously.

AS: I didn't see it as art or not art. I just saw it as something I wanted to do. That was the reality of it. I was studying at that time with a gestalt psychologist at Ohio State. He was teaching artists and architects. His idea is, who are you? What are you going to do? It wasn't look in an art magazine and copy it. His idea was search inside yourself to find you.

FH: Do you remember that psychologist's name?

AS: Oh yeah. Great teacher. Hoyt Sherman. Everyone in his class came forward with a different solution to what they wanted to do. I just started digging into my childhood for things that made me happy. And the forest was the happiest moment in my life. So, I said why not make more forests? If that's art, to open a different vision of how we see the environment, or how we see the world, I'm very lucky. I just started writing to people, telling them what I wanted to do: create forests and marshes, rivers in the city of New York. It was kind of interesting. The Modern responded saying this is not art. But they did respond

and I do have the letter. At some point, I'll publish it. They were very nice and said write to the architectural program, and I wrote to the architectural program and of course they said this isn't architecture. I wrote also to the director of parks of the city of New York. He immediately called me in and said we're going to do it. At the age of nineteen.

Sonfist was studying art at Ohio State but didn't yet consider himself part of the art world. Nevertheless, he was sensitive to the possibilities of the wider world in 1965 and ambitious enough to pursue them. The impulse to recreate a primeval forest in lower Manhattan came to him while studying gestalt psychology, which in the simplest terms understands the mind to consist of a global whole.[7] It was a real act of bravado for the teenager to send proposals to major New York institutions. *Time Landscape* can be understood as an application of gestalt psychology to the larger world. Where Sherman's teaching had allowed and encouraged Sonfist to see more fully what drove him, Sonfist was asking the art world to expand what could be considered art—to acknowledge and accept a larger whole.

Time Landscape is both park and sculpture. It continues to permeate the boundary of what counts as art. Sonfist created it when he was really exploring who he was and how he wanted to interact with the world. Later in my conversation with him, when asked about Rauschenberg, he said with real sincerity, "He's one of my heroes, Rauschenberg. He was exploring his own interaction with the environment in different ways." Both artists instinctively looked beyond what was accepted practice. Both brought a raw piece of nature directly into an art context. During this period of expanding definitions of art, some other artists who were focused on the land were going as far from their audiences as possible. Rauschenberg and Sonfist were just as conceptually untethered as those artists but made it their project to bring the dirt of nature directly to the audience.

On our many visits to the parks and forests in and around New York, Sonfist and I often discussed where the line between nature and culture lies. He fostered in me an awareness that I am always pushing at that boundary. Going to the Arctic to make photographs that reveal both the beauty present in the water, as well as the mechanisms required to make the photographs follows that trajectory. I use the camera in such a way that the line between nature and culture fades like the tether leading away from the camera's lens as it disappears into the silt.

OTHER TETHERS

There is a long history of artists physically tethering themselves in order to draw attention to the lengths to which they will go in their practice, often with the implied message that they are conceptually straining at the tethers of convention. Imagine a fifty-five-year-old man tied for four hours on a winter night to the main mast of a steamboat during a snow storm. It was the year 1840 and the man was the great British painter Joseph Mallord William Turner. The artist claimed to have put himself in this position to better observe the meteorological conditions that he wanted to paint. The resulting painting, *Snow Storm – Steam-Boat off a Harbour's Mouth making Signals in Shallow Water, and going by the Lead. The Author was in this Storm on the Night the Ariel left Harwich*, is titled, perhaps overly emphatically, to evoke the artist's heroic observational commitment.

The painting itself is a force. At thirty-five by forty-seven inches it is large enough to fill the viewer's entire field of vision. Painted in oil on canvas, it is composed mostly of shades of grey,

with blue and brown and black, which swirl in a dizzying blur towards the vaguely defined paddlewheel of another steamship. From the short-poem-cum-title of the painting I am right there on shipboard with Turner. It's cold and there's sea water sloshing about the deck. Driven snow stings my face, forcing me to squint. This is the raw sea weather that Turner wanted us to feel.

There is no historical evidence of a ship called the *Ariel* being in Harwich in 1840, nor of the artist being in that part of the country at that time.[8] The oft-told story of Turner tied to the mast of a ship is very likely a fabrication by the artist himself to enrich the myth of his process. Whatever the case, we can, in seeing the painting, imagine what he wants us to imagine—and likely what he also only experienced in his imagination. We empathize with the painter (even a fictional one) tied to the mast of the ship.

The entire escapade first appears to be an earnest attempt at Realism but is actually a very romantic impulse by a decidedly Romantic painter. Realism within the arts is a way of working in which objectivity and truthfulness are upheld. Realism's perennial foil and opposite Romanticism celebrates the individual's subjective view of the world.[9] Where the Realist would have actually been tied to the mast and might even have had an easel there or some method of noting the conditions, the Romanticist is more interested in drumming up the drama of the moment, real or imagined. Since the two terms first became established in the late eighteenth century, most artistic production has leaned towards one or the other. In artists' choices to tether or untether, and whether to call attention thereto, lie Realist and Romantic impulses.

Carolee Schneemann's performative installation *Up to and Including Her Limits* exists today as a rope and harness, as well as a group of videos and drawings, which compile six performances that took place between 1973 and 1976.[10] In the original performances, the artist suspended herself from the ceiling in a tree surgeon's harness. Large pieces of white paper were spread on the floor and adjacent walls. Naked except for the harness, she used crayons to draw on the paper as far as she could physically reach. At some points her eyes were open and she made intentional drawings. At other points her eyes were closed and the drawings became more about the movement of her body in response to the restraint. The resulting drawing is perhaps less important than the act of making it, which is why the video documentation and harness are such important elements of the work. One aspect of Schneemann's nakedness was the attention drawn to a woman making art at a time when women were sorely underrepresented in museums and galleries. Moreover, if a woman was going to be in a museum or gallery, she was usually in a painting, naked, and the subject of the presumed male audience's gaze. Women's Liberation was gaining momentum in the United States, and this work came to symbolize what many were experiencing and pushing against in other professions. Schneemann's contorted body very literally showed how far she could reach while being tethered by the harness.

More than a decade later, Matthew Barney began his *Drawing Restraint* series, which he has continued to enact alongside his other work for thirty years.[11] Deeply indebted to Schneemann's project, Barney's *Drawing Restraints* focus on the physical challenge of making a drawing while tied to an anchor, turning it into a sort of an athletic event. Still a student at Yale when he made his first iteration, Barney tied himself to a point in his studio with a length of bungee that allowed him to reach nearly to the edges of the space. He arranged furniture so that he had other limitations and props. Photographs that survive as documentation show the young artist clinging to a metal bar at the upper edge of a wall, legs splayed at the top of a table wedged as a ramp against the wall. He is

using a long pole to make marks on a piece of paper on the other side of the room. A second table is set as a ramp up which the artist appears to have climbed in order to hang the paper. Subsequent versions of *Drawing Restraint* continue using the key elements of documentation, a tether, the artist, and a drawing implement. The spaces change and the form of tether changes, but the main idea is consistent.

Schneemann used the tether physically, while mining it for metaphor. Barney uses it more literally. His is ultimately a formal exercise. Schneemann's project is conceptually far richer and more provocative. She is physically tethered, protesting loudly for Women's Liberation, and conceptually pushing beyond any previous notion of how a drawing could be made. There is disparity in the renown of the two linked projects. Barney picked up ideas from Schneemann's feminist project and thus far has achieved much more recognition and art world acclaim.

The performative act of tethering oneself has been used in other ways. Linda Montano and Tehching Hsieh's project *Art/Life: One Year Performance 1983–1984 (Rope Piece)* took place in the titular years, during which time the two artists were tied to one another by an eight-foot rope. They set as a condition that they would never in the course of the year be untied and that they would never touch one another.[12] Again, photographs are the main source of documentation. As the year progresses we see the artists' hair styles and length change, clothes change, and expressions change. It becomes possible to imagine the challenge and exasperation that must have accompanied the artists' dedication and endurance. They did not produce any other tangible or physical art based on this project. The only thing that remains are the photographs and the idea. We are left to consider the various ways we are tied to the people in our lives, our notions of privacy, and how long an eight-foot rope really is. It is an extraordinary and multifaceted project, which like Schneemann's, uses the tether both literally and metaphorically to expand how art can be made and understood.

Robert Smithson completed *Spiral Jetty* in 1970. Set at the outermost edge of Utah's Great Salt Lake, the sculpture is the very epitome of an Earth Artist going deep into nature to make a monumental artwork. Most people who were aware of it just after it was completed had only seen it in photographs the artist took from ground level. Over the years, the level of the lake rose, leaving the sculpture mostly invisible. As the lake level dropped, the sculpture reemerged, and in 2009, Francesca Esmay, Aurora Tang, and Rand Eppich launched a helium balloon with a digital camera attached to document *Spiral Jetty* for the Dia Art Foundation, which had acquired the artwork from the artist's estate in 1999.[13] Not wanting to lose their camera, the three tied a long line to the balloon. In addition to documenting *Spiral Jetty* the resulting photographs record their efforts in documenting the sculpture's reemergence from the water. Still, their tetheredness in some way highlights the limits that Smithson found as he pushed as far away from the gallery world as possible. He was still terrestrially bound, as were the photographers.

In 1980 Leila Daw, then based in St. Louis, Missouri, made a series of photographs called *Ancient City in the Sky*. She gave specific instructions to a sky-writing pilot to make drawings over the ancient Native American city of Cahokia near present-day St Louis. Where Smithson and others had been tied to the ground, Daw took the remains of the ancient city and drew them in the sky. The photographs are documents of drawings that existed for only the moment before wind blew them away. They are a rather abstract sort of map. Their beauty lies in the simple act of expanding our conception of the historical landscape to include the sky.



Figure 6. Leila Daw, Ancient City in the Sky, 1980, photograph courtesy of the artist

Had Esmay, Tang, and Eppich been documenting *Spiral Jetty* just a few years later, they very likely wouldn't have used the balloon and tether. Batteries and motors have advanced in such ways that what once was the territory of science fiction has become the reality of drones. Cameras can now be attached to tiny helicopters, which are controlled with handheld devices. Documenting the world from above has become remarkably possible. With rare exceptions, the Earth's entire surface has now been photographed or videoed, often in great detail.

Where is the line between this incredible expansion of documentation and art? Does such a seam exist? I think that it does exist, but it's on the move, permeable, and we may be too close to the invention of this new technology to easily see what will be most interesting about the art made with it. Edward Burtynsky, for example, is currently putting drone technology to great use, making incredible photographs from the sky.[14] In a few decades, someone may look back and observe that he found an important edge of the art form upon which to push; that in his exploration of the vast new freedom of untethered cameras he found a poetry that captures this moment in history. It is also possible, though it seems unlikely, that the work he is producing will someday read as a less-art-like documentary. This unknown perspective is the great challenge to artists who choose to engage with any new technology. We will only know whether they've succeeded if they try. Perhaps this challenge and the progress associated with it is one of the main attractions of making art with new technology.

Most of the artists I've highlighted as boundary-pushing practitioners have been compelled by a Realist impulse. Working at the edges of their fields, their discoveries and innovations are so new that to present them in any form other than objective truth would diminish and confuse their importance. Burtynsky, among others working with drones, is much more interested in using the freedoms of the new technology to establish a deeper and more nuanced view of the world as it is.

Even Turner, who was driven by a Romantic notion of how his audience might better appreciate his gesture, framed it as though it was an act of Realism. There may be a larger truth about the evolution of art: art that truly expands a field will tend towards Realism, whereas innovations within an established genre may tend towards Romanticism.

The twenty-seven artists aboard the *Antigua* came from North America, Asia, Europe and the Middle East. It was a long journey for everyone, and for everyone it was an opportunity to stretch beyond the typical expectations and possibilities of our studios. In the leadup to the trip I sent an email to all of the participants inviting them to bring a small artwork that would be included in an exhibition I planned to organize. I didn't know exactly what or where it would be, and I'd not met any of the other artists, but I trusted that the people who had put themselves forward and had been selected to participate in the residency would muster something compelling. They did. Ultimately, we mounted two versions of the exhibition, which came to be known as *Pole Saw*. The first venue was in a small centuries-old hut on a desolate fjord. The second was in the cantina of an abandoned Soviet coal-mining town called Pyramiden. The extreme limitations of shipboard Arctic travel dictated that most of the objects were small and on paper. There were a few small sculptures. The most ambitious was by Dalal al-Hashash, whose opalescent clear vinyl sheets were configured and reconfigured to evoke the northern lights. Several newly-created additions were submitted between the first and second iterations of the exhibition. The second exhibition in particular captured the spirit of this group of artists, who were by that point far from their usual patterns, feeling and thinking in unusual ways. The faded floral fabric that served as backdrop complicated and heightened the effect. Aquavit was served and songwriter Kate Schutt performed. Something new and unique and incredibly temporary happened. We were out on an edge. Each of us was pushing, straining against some unnamed tether. I will never forget that feeling.



Figure 7. Pole Saw, Installation View, Pyramiden Cantina, 2016, photograph by Fritz Horstman

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Fritz Horstman has shown his photographs, sculptures, drawings and videos in recent exhibitions in France, Russia, Japan, Norway, California, Massachusetts and Brooklyn. He has developed and presented workshops and lectures for institutions such as the Bauhaus Dessau, Dia: Beacon, The Drawing Center, Princeton University, Bennington College, Yale University, Exploratorium San Francisco, the Ecole des Beaux-Arts Paris, and the Lebanese American University in Beirut, as well as numerous elementary, middle and high schools and community centers. He is Artist Residency and Education Coordinator at the Josef and Anni Albers Foundation.