



ZELDA ZINN | Artist Statement

In the fall of 2019, I had the good fortune to travel to the Arctic Circle on an artist's residency. We wandered by tall ship, sailing around the fjords of Svalbard, seemingly alone in the world amid the snow, ice, and sea. It is difficult to express the perspective-altering sensation of being a tiny, vulnerable person in such a vast and frozen setting. But the experience brought home the outsized effect that we humans have had on this place, in which glaciers that have taken tens of thousands of years to form are melting at unprecedented rates, with all of the attendant consequences.

I found myself pondering deep time and space vs human time and scale. I thought about the billions of years that this planet has existed as compared with the thousands of years that we homo sapiens have been here. This led me to think about our presence in the landscape, especially the frozen north. For centuries, a mere blip on the earth's timeline, this place was the site of expeditions and often heartbreak. During the Great Age of Discovery, countries sent competing expeditions to search for the Northwest Passage to shorten trade routes, and to reach the North Pole. Loved ones often never knew their fates.

I felt drawn to overlay something manmade on top of the vast vistas as a way to make sense of my pictures and my experience. These veneers would provide reassuring traces of culture, of home, of life in more hospitable climes. I chose fabrics and laces, a reminder of those left waiting and wondering back at home. The contrast between fabricated, ordered patterns and the unpredictable landscapes highlights the unfathomable gap between our brief mortal experience and the (hoped for) endurance of the natural world. By putting these colorful, created patterns atop these settings I am attempting to rationalize it, to see it in human terms. The resulting hybrid photographs combine interior and exterior, exotic and familiar as a framework for considering the Arctic anew.