

Andrea Legge: *If heroism is good, who defines what is good? And how much good is a heroic amount? Moreover, even if a standard of goodness were found and applied, who determines the criteria for judging a heroic level of exceptionality, sacrifice and risk? Advocates of the subjective heroic approach claim that there can exist no absolute standards or criteria for determining a threshold by which sufficient levels of goodness, exceptionality, sacrifice, or risk can merit an [objective] 'heroic' designation.*

—Scott T. Allison, George R. Goethals, and Roderick M. Kramer, editors, *Handbook of Heroism and Heroic Leadership* (London: Routledge, 2017), 6.

The greatest peril of wintering in the arctic was not the cold; It was boredom. For eight, sometimes ten months nothing moved. Ships [stuck in ice over the dark polar winter] became prisons. Masts and superstructure were taken down, hatches hermetically sealed, the ships smothered in blankets of insulating snow. Hived together in these wooden cockleshells with little to do, the best-disciplined seamen could break down. Small irritations could be magnified into raging quarrels. Fancied insults could lead to mutinous talk and even mutiny

—Pierre Berton, *The Arctic Grail; The Quest for the Northwest Passage and the North Pole 1818-1909* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1988), 34-35.

I undertook The Arctic Circle residency in 2022 to research *Overwinter*, concept for an interactive public art project concerning nineteenth-century polar explorers stuck over Arctic winters in their icebound ships. These men often resorted to theatre, creative writing and art to amuse themselves and keep from going mad during the long dark winters. I needed to experience an Arctic environment as close to winter as I could get, and experience life aboard a barquentine ship. European hegemony—including colonization, slavery and polar exploration in its heyday—was largely pulled off by white men in barquentine tall ships. Early polar expeditions especially helped to perpetuate the brand of the good and indefatigable white male hero aboard the beloved and sturdy vessel to which he had entrusted his life. These enduring caricatures, images of the barquentine sailing ship and her explorer/conqueror heroes, have taken on entirely different meanings within modern dialogues of decolonization. Using a steel shipping container as a ship set in a public square and disheveled actors presenting vignettes of absurd street theatre, *Overwinter* aligns with these reevaluations and attempts to remodel one of the last bastions of “objective” heroism: polar exploration.

Harley Cowan: I have spent the past decade photographing cultural heritage and places of historical significance. I was an architect, primarily for scientists. As a heritage photographer I employ this fluency in collaboration with historians, conservationists, and explorers in order to elucidate achievements in architecture and engineering, scientific advancement, and the human endeavor to investigate and shape our environment.

The choice to use analog processes is in part technically prescriptive: federal heritage documentation programs like the Historic American Buildings Survey, of which I am a contributing photographer, require photographs to be made on large format, silver gelatin sheet film. Perspective correction must be executed in-camera and film processed by hand for archival stability, ensuring that photographs meet the needs of local, state, or federal archives, up to and including Library of Congress.

The choice to use analog processes is also a personal preference: initially, heritage documentation seemed an appropriate entrée for an architect to exercise artistic self-expression. After all, many photographers of merit can point to practical beginnings in a documentary

context. Today, the pace of a view camera feels suitably deliberative for discovery and introspection. And I continue to find joy in the abstraction of black and white—poetic in its subtlety and sublimity, but ever an abstraction that is perceived as truth. In 2022, I participated in The Arctic Circle Residency where I focused on portraiture as a facet of visual storytelling. Sailing on a traditional tall ship in the Svalbard Archipelago, I profiled expedition members while exploring rarely visited places. I developed film onboard in a makeshift darkroom, connecting the craft to the journey as well as the subjects to their predecessors.

Hannah Larrabee: The poems included in this Arctic series were composed during and after the residency, and without any forethought, I began to include the date each poem was written (not finished, if they are ever finished) as a more linear way to recall the residency and my creative process. The theme of memory is somewhat prevalent in my work, as poems become necessary time capsules of experience. They are not arranged chronologically. Instead, the poems are rooted in place—whether in Svalbard or in New England—and the poems are also rooted in emotion, as they converse with real feelings of displacement and sadness given the imminence of climate collapse. Svalbard is such a strange world to set foot in ... my hope is that glimpses of this world emerge in the poems.

Jessica Creane: Blah: The Arctic is just so blah, you know? If you've seen one fjord you've seen 'em all. Every mountain is the same pointy cone shaped thing copy and pasted over and over again to the horizon. Why even bother spending three weeks there when you get a full picture of the place from Netflix's infinite stream of nature documentaries?

This series of images is my feedback for the residency organizers who need to know what a waste of time the whole thing is. It was developed while still onboard the ship because honestly, what else was I going to do while sailing into another picturesque fucking inlet?

Just to be clear, we had a lot of time onboard the ship and this series is not my only work. My first major project following this residency was a full-length playable theater piece called "Tea Party at the End of the World." It, too, invites us to question what we take for granted. Little things like how we live and how we will someday die, only instead of sarcasm, there is tea. So much tea. Where "Tea Party at the End of the World" is earnest and probing in its interactions with the audience about what it means to live through big and small ends of the world nearly every day of our lives, this series asks us to pretend, for a moment, that the world is static enough for us to take it for granted.

This project is inspired by Amber Share's *Subpar Parks: America's Most Extraordinary National Parks and Their Least Impressed Visitors* (New York: Plume, 2021). To the point of a rip-off. Many thanks to Amber for giving voice to those of us who despise wonder and have no patience for majesty. Ugh. Nature blows. More concrete, please.