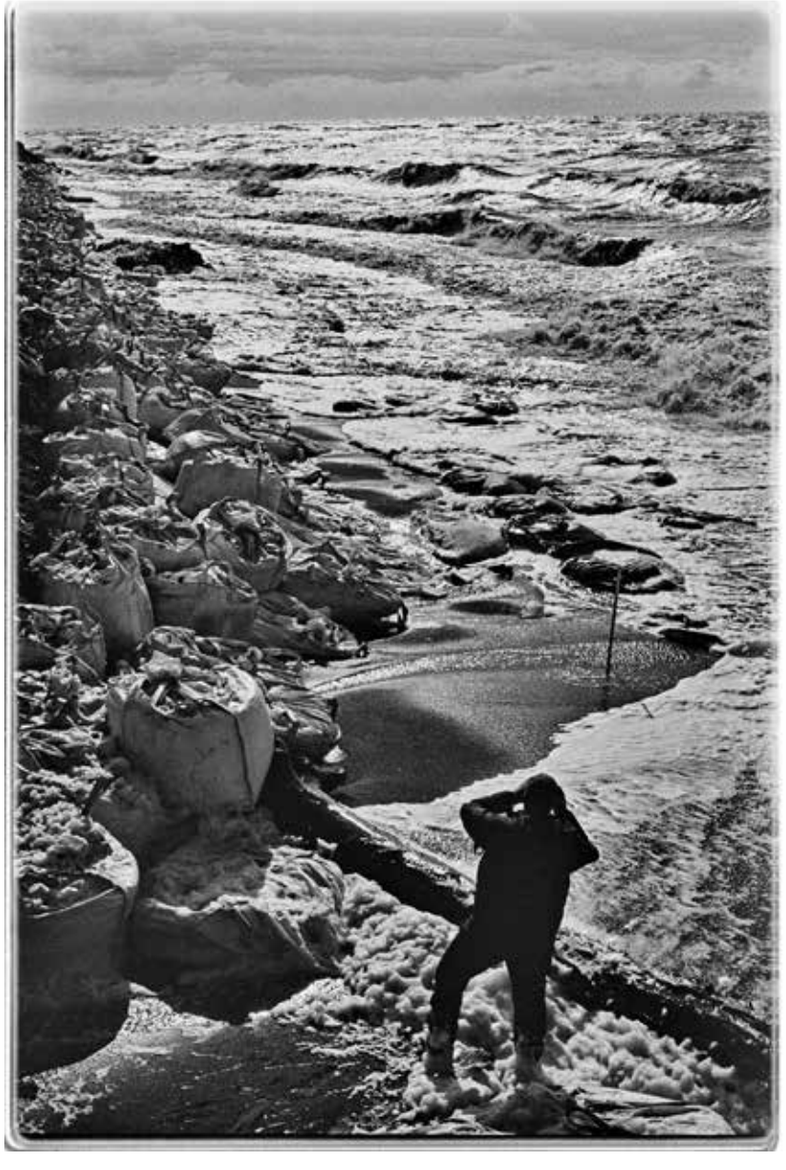
THE DROWNING WORLD

BY DENISE MARKONISH

It was a howl in which pain, anger, menace, and the outraged majesty of Nature all blended into one hideous shriek. For a full minute it lasted, a thousand sirens in one, paralysing all the great multitude with its fierce insistence, and floating away through the still summer air. . . . No sound in history has ever equaled the cry of the injured Earth.

— Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, *When the World Screamed,* 1928



Blane De St. Croix in Utqiaġvik, Alaska surveying the coastline with super bags of gravel attempting to slow erosion.

The data is irrefutable (despite the assertions of climate-change deniers): global sea levels are rising approximately 0.13 inches per year, with an expected rise of 32 inches by the end of the century; glaciers are melting, with thirty remaining compared to one hundred fifty in 1910; 2016 was the warmest year on record, with global average temperatures running 35 degree Celsius warmer than the mid-twentieth-century mean; previously labeled "natural disasters" are now seen to be the result of climate change, such as the fires in California and Australia and stronger, more frequent, hurricanes and tornadoes worldwide; and the permafrost is thawing due to a 3-degree Celsius temperature increase in the last thirty-five years, with further melting capable of releasing billions of tons of methane into the atmosphere.[10] David Wallace-Wells opens his book, *The Uninhabitable Earth: Life After Warming,* with the line, "It is worse, much worse, than you think," before diving into data such as "more than half the carbon exhaled into the atmosphere by the burning of fossil fuels has been emitted in just the past three decades. Which means we have done as much damage to the fate of the planet and its ability to sustain human life and civilization since Al Gore published his first book on climate change than in all the centuries—all the millennia—that came before."[11] Wallace-Wells goes on to discuss the estimation of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (UN IPCC) that the tipping point for climate collapse is estimated to be 2 degrees Celsius, yet we are likely to see 3.2 degrees Celsius of warming in the next century, three times more since the start of industrialization.[12] It is no wonder that sixteen-year-old Greta Thunberg, addressing the United Nations, spoke with anger and resolve, declaring: "You have stolen my dreams and my childhood with your empty words. And yet I'm one of the lucky ones. People are suffering. People are dying. Entire ecosystems are collapsing. We are in the beginning of a mass extinction, and all you can talk about is money and fairy tales of eternal economic growth. How dare you!"[13]

These are not just twenty-first-century problems, for, if we look through history, the need to protect our planet from our own meddling is foreshadowed in the art and writing of the past. From the late 1940s to the early 1960s, the environmentalist movement—handed down from nineteenth-century writers like Henry David Thoreau (1817–1867), Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882), and John Muir (1838–1914)—truly began with writers such as Aldo Leopold (1887–1948), Albert Schweitzer (1875–1965), and Rachel Carson (1907–1964). Each openly pleaded with humanity to consider the planet, writing passages such as: "That land is a community is the basic concept of ecology, but that land is to be loved and respected is an extension of ethics";[14] "Man has lost the capacity to foresee and to forestall. He will end by destroying the earth";[15] and "The more clearly we can focus our attention on the wonders and realities of the universe about us the less taste we shall have for the destruction of our race."[16] All three quoted authors were discussing ethics and conservation at a time when it wasn't too late to intervene; had we heeded their warning, we might not find ourselves in such a dire predicament today. There was a sense of hope seventy years ago; it was less so in the second decade of the twentieth century. However, contemporary writers Rebecca Solnit and Derrick Jensen wrestle with what hope means when the facts are hard to handle. Solnit writes: "Hope just means another world might be possible, not promised, not guaranteed. Hope calls for action; action is impossible without hope,"[17] while Jensen sees the danger in hope, in its false positivity, stating, "I would say that when hope dies, action begins."[18] What unites these two sentiments is action—the impassioned pleas of Greta Thunberg and scientists fighting to have their voices and data be heard. This is the new hope, not one of reversal, but one of survival.

Alongside facts; art, literature, and poetry can uniquely open our eyes to the world around us. Just as Leopold, Schweitzer, and Carson were harbingers of our current predicament, so were Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1859–1930) and J. G. Ballard (1930–2009)—two English writers, decades apart, who almost predicted the peril of our planet. Conan Doyle's short story, *When the World Screamed* (1928), follows Professor Challenger's attempt to drill into the Earth's mantle, inside of which he believes is a sentient being. Upon excavation, he awakens a giant creature that proceeds to close the hole he created while spewing noxious liquid onto a crowd of onlookers. In this moment of horror, Conan Doyle describes the "howl in which pain, anger, menace, and the outraged majesty of Nature all blended into one hideous shriek,"[19] as if to say, "How dare you!" Thirty-four years later, Ballard wrote *The Drowned World*, which takes place in 2145 (eerily close to the 2100 date often cited as the tipping point for the climate crisis), and tells the story of Dr. Robert Kerans, a biologist from the Arctic Circle (now a sub-tropical zone of 85 degrees Fahrenheit). Kerans is in London surveying the devolutionary impulses of the environment—a London now teeming with tropical flora and fauna reminiscent of the Mesozoic period. Ballard writes: "The succession of gigantic geophysical upheavals which has transformed the Earth's climate had made their first impact some sixty or seventy years earlier.… All over the world, mean temperatures rose by a few degrees each year. The majority of tropical areas rapidly became uninhabitable, entire populations migrating north or south from temperatures of a hundred and thirty and a hundred and forty degrees. Once-temperate areas became tropical, Europe and North America sweltering under continuous heat waves, temperatures rarely falling below one hundred degrees. Under the direction of the United Nations, the colonization began of the Antarctic plateau and of the northern borders of the Canadian and Russian continents."[20] Neither of these works of literature reads like fiction, they read like news.

As with the writers of the past, comprehension of the incomprehensible is the primary drive of artist Blane De St. Croix. De St. Croix's work sits at a crossroad—inspired by the long history of landscape painting as well as by

Agnes Denes, *Wheatfield—A Confrontation: Battery Park Landfill, Downtown Manhattan—With Agnes Denes Standing in the Field*, 1982 Photo credit: John McGrail courtesy Leslie Tonkonow Artworks + Projects, New York. Copyright Agnes Denes, Courtesy Leslie Tonkonow Artworks + Projects, New York

Mel Chin, *Revival Field, MN Fall*, 1993 Harvest. Courtesy Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN

land art. In the late 1800s, the Hudson River School painters like Thomas Cole (1801–1948) and Frederic Edwin Church (1826–1900) depicted a new American landscape, whereas in the 1960s a new generation of artists like Robert Smithson (1938–1973) and Michael Heizer (b. 1944) challenged this approach by making work in and of the actual land. De St. Croix utilizes these dual approaches and deepens them by engaging with ecology and the politics of place. Starting with intense research—visiting actual sites, talking to people who live and work there, consulting scientists, journalists, and cultural historians—De St. Croix unpacks his subject in a collaborative manner, looking at every facet in order to create a more complete picture. This leads to sculptures, installations, and drawings that render, and at times make abstract and poetic, the scientific data he presents. As a result, while De St. Croix's work is seductive, it also tells stories in order to facilitate a greater understanding of the shared social, political, and environmental changes we face on a global level. De St. Croix works in a similar fashion to the Hudson River School painters, who made their work based on compiled sketches, leading to vistas about representation rather than veracity. For *Broken Landscape* (2009), he spent months traveling the US/Mexico border, visiting fifteen crossings and speaking with residents, fencing contractors, Border Patrol, and journalists, while photographing and sketching along the way. The result is an eighty-foot-long model of this contested site, one made from his experience. Because the piece stands at shoulder height, and all the landscapes and manmade structures are miniaturized, we look down and across its expanse, a view never truly available at the border itself.

Lauren Bon. *Not a Cornfield*, 2005–6. 32-acre brownfield transformed into a cornfield for one agricultural cycle. [2020.1] © Metabolic Studio

This reliance upon the translation of scientific data and field research aligns De St. Croix's practice to those artists working directly on environmental impact. In 1982, Agnes Denes (b. 1931) created *Wheatfield—A Confrontation: Battery Park Landfill, Downtown Manhattan*. For this project, Denes planted a two-acre wheat field on a landfill in lower Manhattan, just blocks from Wall Street and the site of the World Trade Center. On this parcel of land, soon to be swooped up by developers, Denes sowed and maintained a crop that yielded over 1,000 pounds of wheat. Transforming a barren site into a place of reclamation turns art into action, allowing discussions to arise about food scarcity, energy, commerce, economics, and land use. Additionally, in 1996 Denes created *Tree Mountain—A Living Time Capsule*, in Ylöjärvi, Western Finland, the first-ever man-made virgin forest to be legally protected for four hundred years. Like Denes, Mel Chin (b. 1951) harnesses the power of plants. In 1991, he began work on *Revival Field*, located at Pig's Eye Landfill, a State Superfund site in St. Paul, Minnesota. Chin cooperated with USDA agronomist Dr. Rufus Chaney to create a replicated field test (one of the first in the world), seeding the site with plants that function as hyperaccumulators, thought to be capable of extracting heavy metals from contaminated soil. The conceptual intervention confirmed the science that certain plants can clean the soil. *Revival Field* presented a longer, though more environmentally friendly and cost-efficient way of remediating toxic land. Continuing this tradition is artist Lauren Bon, who since 2005 has been working to regenerate the flood plain that has now become the Los Angeles State Historic Park. This began with *Not a Cornfield* (2005–6), for which she transformed an abandoned rail yard in downtown Los Angeles into a thirty-two-acre cornfield using natural seeds for one agricultural cycle. Of the project, Bon writes: "The work signaled the beginning of a decade of experimentation on reconnecting land with water, engaging and collaborating with agencies and communities in the city, and questioning and probing the edges of the permissible"[21] In 2005, Bon founded the Metabolic Studio, which engages with issues around the building blocks of life, including topsoil, the atmosphere, and water supply, and abides by the motto "artists need to create on the same scale that society has the capacity to destroy." To that end, in 2019 Bon became the first private citizen to obtain water rights to the LA River. This feat of contesting bureaucratic red tape is for the forthcoming project *Bending the River*, which involves building a waterwheel to clean and redistribute water to the citizens of Los Angeles.

While the landscape has been artistic fodder for centuries, the Arctic appears to have a particular draw, due to its perception as terra incognita. Perhaps this idea of North begins in Edmund Burke's (1729–1797) sublime, of which he writes: "Whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the *sublime*; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling."[22] This seems a perfect description of the Arctic, a landscape that Frederic Edwin Church once labeled under a drawing as "strange supernatural,"[23] a landscape that is almost incomprehensible and abstract. Writing about the Renaissance fascination with the Arctic, Christopher P. Heuer states: "The idea of description as a kind of accumulative endeavor of 'representation' was thrown into question. The North was unsettling not because of dazzling difference, but because of monotonous sameness."[24] This is evident in iconic nineteenth-century paintings by Caspar David Friedrich (1774–1840) and Church. Friedrich's *The Sea of Ice* (1823–4) depicts jagged sheets of ice ranging from dirty brown to sharp white against a cold blue sky. Though he never visited the Arctic, Friedrich studied ice floes at the River Elbe near Dresden, Germany, and would have been aware of accounts of famous Polar expeditions by Williams Edward Parry, who in 1819 went in search of the Northwest Passage. As a result, Friedrich placed a shipwreck lodged in the ice, showing the power of nature, and the terror of Burke's sublime.

Unlike Friedrich, who stuck to his imagination, Church, inspired by Arctic explorations such as the disappearance of British explorer John Franklin (1786–1847) as he searched for the Northwest Passage, traveled to Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada, in 1859. Using a small rowboat to approach the icebergs and sketch them, Church then returned to his studio to create the painting *The Icebergs* (1861). Unlike Friedrich's painting, in his work Church creates a less romantic scene, with gestural icebergs—one-part

Caspar David Friedrich, *The Sea of Ice*, 1823-4, Kunsthalle Hamburg, Germany

cloud and one-part ice—and an accompanying gloomy sky. Originally, the painting was not received favorably due to its "monotonous sameness." To counterbalance this criticism, between showing the work in the United States and bringing it to England, he not only changed the title of the painting from *The North* to *The Icebergs*, but also added the rusty remnants of a shipwreck in the foreground. This addition gives narrative to the picture, yet the title still prioritizes the subject of the painting to be the ice itself.

The lure of the Arctic didn't end in the nineteenth century, but continued into the 1930s with the Group of Seven, Canadian landscape painters who worked in Ontario from 1920 to 1933.[25] The Group predominantly depicted their native Ontario, but some, like Lawren Harris (1885–1970), evoca-

Frederic Edwin Church, *The Icebergs*, 1861, Dallas Museum of art, gift of Norma and Lamar Hunt

Lawren S. Harris, *Icebergs, Davis Strait*, 1930, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. H. Spencer Clark McMichael Canadian Art Collection, 1971.17, ©Family of Lawren S. Harris

tively imaged Northern climes. Harris's winter landscapes function less like the heroic and realistic renderings of Friedrich and Church and more like illustrative contemporaries Rockwell Kent (1882–1971) or Georgia O'Keeffe (1887–1986). In the 1930s, Harris traveled to the Arctic, visiting Davis Strait in the Labrador Sea nestled between Greenland and Nunavut. In *Icebergs, Davis Strait* (1930) Harris eschews signs of civilization—no people or ships seen here—denying us the drama of a gloomy romantic sky and jagged shards of ice. Instead, Harris presents a blue/white iceberg seemingly halted in time, as if posing for the perfect picture. Traveling in a similar region, writer Barry Lopez states: "With no middle tones to work with, the eye has trouble resolving these two-dimensional vistas into three dimensions. The human eye also commonly uses the relative density of blue light scattered in the air to judge distance (this is the light that softens the edge of a far mountain); but the clear arctic atmosphere scatters very little light."[26] Harris adheres to this, flattening his image to help us understand its unresolvability.

Shifting from the Arctic imaginary of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—the unknown exotic land that resisted image making—the twenty-first-century Arctic functions more like an image of the Anthropocene, our current geological age, which is marked by human activity as the dominant influence on the climate/environment. The Anthropocene, unlike the sublime, is inherently visual rather than felt. It is "primarily a sensorial phenomenon: the experience of living in an increasingly diminished and toxic world…the way we have come to understand the Anthropocene has

frequently been framed through modes of the visual, that is, through data visualization, satellite imagery, climate models, and other legacies of the 'whole earth.'"[27] This leads to a new generation of artists using scientific data and exploration to visualize this epoch, with the Arctic as ground zero for the visible effects of climate change. In addition to writing about the Renaissance, Heuer brings the discussion of the Arctic to the present, writing that "the Arctic today can no longer be imaged in any stable sense as some passive realm 'out there,' some far-off utopia or hell. The former ice is physically here, right now. It is all too late. The Arctic is coming for *you*."[28]

The Arctic did indeed come for De St. Croix. Since 2013, he has turned his attention to Arctic landscapes, starting with taking part in the Arctic Circle Residency in the Svalbard Archipelago off Norway's Arctic Ocean. This residency brings together artists, scientists, architects, and educators for one-month stints aboard a Barquentine sailing vessel. Like Church and Harris before him, De St. Croix spent time among the icebergs, creating small sketches and photographs, which he took back to his studio to be reworked and expanded into new bodies of work. Large works on paper such as *Dark Ice* and *Arctic Landscape Glacier Front* (both 2014) go through an extensive collage process. On-site aerial and on-the-ground photographs taken by De St. Croix are used as source material to create unique drawings. The drawings are scanned and turned into digital archival prints which are then shredded and layered onto canvas, with further ink drawing across their surface. This process—like the use of sketches to make a final painting—allows De St. Croix to create composites that evoke the ever-changing Arctic environment. The white paper has the coldness of ice, and the layering process allows crevasses to form along its surface, making manifest the tangibility of the landscape. In *Dark Ice*, De St. Croix shows us the complicated view of an iceberg—the small area that protrudes above the waterline and the vast mass of the structure that floats below—giving us, as in *Broken*

Blane De St. Croix, *Dark Ice*, 2014. Ink on paper and digital archival prints mounted on canvas

Landscape, an impossible view. Alternately, in *Arctic Landscape Glacier Front*, De St. Croix presents us with the sheer face of a glacier, flattened out like a Lawren Harris painting. This is an image that one cannot back away from in order to have it resolve, recalling the vast expanse of Friedrich's *The Sea of Ice*—but now for a technological age, where the digital can become material and representational.

Through both drawing and sculpture, De St. Croix shifts the scale in his work so that we cease to understand our bodily relationship to the landscapes he depicts. Of this, he states: "The miniaturization of the world is part of our psyche. We fly in a place and see a distorted view of the world below. New interactive tools, like Google Earth, with accessible satellite imagery, have made the world more or less available with the touch of a keystroke. The monumental miniaturization in my work, on the other hand, gives viewers not only a sense of power over the object, but also a feeling of being overwhelmed by the objects. Humans have a desire to control or impose on the land, but it is impossible, as we know, to really harness nature. That kind of push-and-pull interests me."[29] De St. Croix enacts this monumental miniaturization in *Dead Ice*, (2014) an over twenty-foot-long, two-sided sculpture made from recycled materials. On one side, we are confronted with what looks like a ghostly remnant of the hull of a ship embedded in a slab of Arctic ice. The white seeps through the slats of the structure, envisioning the powerful way in which nature consumes the manmade, while highlighting humankind's futile desire to tame the natural world. The other side of the sculpture represents "dead ice," ice shed by a living glacier that sits motionless in the ocean gathering detritus. Like *Broken Landscape*, this work also functions as a border with distinct sides, showing both the natural world and our effects upon it.

These shifts in scale allow De St. Croix to explore his interest in how we metaphorically carry the landscape with us. Resulting from this exploration is an ongoing series of sculptures made inside wooden shipping crates. Each piece can be worked on in the field, then packed into itself and shipped back to the studio. These moving landscapes include a depiction of the Gobi Desert (*Nomadic Landscape*, 2012), as well as examples from the Arctic. *Dark/Light Arctic Ice Float* (2017), like the drawing *Dark Ice,* depicts the top and bottom of a glacier, the former resting atop the shipping crate, while the latter is nestled inside. The inner/underwater portion glows a blueish black in contrast to the stark white of the exposed berg. This recalls Barry Lopez's description of glaciers. He writes: "They took their color from the sun, and from the clouds and the water. But they also took their dimensions from light: the stronger and more direct it was, the greater the contrast upon the surface of the ice, of the ice itself with the sea. And the more finely etched were the dull surfaces of their walls. The bluer the sky, the brighter their outline against it."[30] De St Croix's sculpture embodies this, glowing from within like a chunk of glacier, one that need not be moved in a refrigerated truck for us to understand its fragility.[31]

Another crate sculpture, *Pyramiden/Permafrost* (2014), references a strange moment in the history of Svalbard. Until the early twentieth century, the Svalbard archipelago "belonged to no nation and was freely used by the Dutch, Danish, Norwegians, British and others. In 1920, that changed. A handful of nations—including Norway, the United States and Britain—created the Svalbard Treaty, which granted Norway sovereignty over Svalbard. Russia, however, was left out…The Svalbard Treaty dictated that not all Norwegian laws applied on the islands, and that all signatories of the treaty have equal rights to develop and pursue commercial activities on the islands. Russia—and, eventually, more than 40 other nations—quickly became signatories."[32]

Blane De St. Croix, *Dead Ice*, 2014. Mixed media, aqua resin, eco epoxy, recycled material. **Left:** As installed in Blane De St. Croix: *How to Move a Landscape* (MASS MoCA, North Adams, on view July 11); **Right:** detail
Photos: Kaelan Burkett

Blane De St. Croix, *Dark / Light Arcitc Ice Float*, 2017. Recycled foam, wooden panels, gesso, acrylic paint, water pigments, glue, matte medium, eco clear cast resin, cellophane sheets, vinyl paste

Blane De St. Croix, *Pyramiden / Permafrost,* 2014. Mixed media and recycled material. Photos: Kaelan Burkett

As a result, in 1936 Russia acquired the rights to the coalfields in Pyramiden, a settlement in Svalbard. Along with resource extraction, the Russians also used this as an experiment in the spread of communist thought, with more than one thousand people living there in the 1980s. The Soviet government built a "Cultural Palace," featuring a library, weight-lifting room, basketball court, and auditorium. Additionally, playground equipment was shipped in, a heated indoor pool was built, and soil was imported to grow grass in the summer months. This idealized society did not last. The coal mines were never profitable and, with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the town was soon abandoned. Officially closed in 1998, vestiges like a statue of Lenin still remain. De St. Croix saw this story as an allegory for the human impact on the environment. Events like the settlement in Pyramiden irrevocably change the landscape, even when the people are long gone. To illustrate this, De St. Croix depicts the pyramidal peak overlooking the town in ghostly pristine white, while the other side of the sculpture takes us inside the earth. This interior depicts the permafrost, which is thawing at alarming rates as a result of climate change. In this one sculpture, De St. Croix allows us to confront the utopian past alongside a dystopic present/future.

In 2017, based on his experience in Svalbard, De St. Croix began looking at other sites in the Arctic, in particular researching the dissolving permafrost in Alaska. This led De St. Croix to Utqiaġvik (formerly Barrow), Alaska, in the summer of 2019, ground zero for climate change. "The Arctic is warming twice as fast as the rest of the planet, according to a 2004 Arctic Climate Impact Assessment report, the most recent available. Summer sea ice in the region shrank by nearly 40 percent between 1978 and 2007. Winter temperatures have been several degrees Fahrenheit warmer than they were a few decades ago. Trees have spread into the tundra. In 2008, a wildfire broke out in an area north of the Brooks Range, where the local dialect has no word for forest fire."[33] The changes in the ice have disastrous enough effects on local wild and human life, but the real canary in a coal mine is the vulnerability of the permafrost. "Permafrost, a unique substance, is frozen soil, not ice. Part of the confusion over how to classify it, however, arises from the fact that it behaves somewhat like ice, extending itself through the soil by a process of crystalline growth. The complex pattern of its development accounts for the fact that it underlies ground in the Arctic that was never covered by glacial ice and that east of the Taimyr Peninsula it reaches a depth of 1900 feet."[34] So, as global temperatures rise the permafrost begins to thaw. The danger in this is that "according to a NASA report, over hundreds of millennia, 'Arctic permafrost soils have accumulated vast stores of organic carbon'—an estimated 1,400-1,850 gigatonnes, compared to 850 gigatonnes of carbon in the Earth's atmosphere. That's equal to around half of all the estimated organic carbon in the Earth's soils, with most of it located in the top 10 feet of thaw-vulnerable soil."[35] In addition to carbon, there are stores of methane gas in the permafrost. Unleashing any of this through melting would be like opening Pandora's Box and turning Ballard's *The Drowned World* into reality.

Previous to his travel in Utqiaġvik, De St. Croix sought out Dr. Vladimir Romanovsky at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks, who studies permafrost, and Dr. Craig Tweedie at The University of Texas at El Paso, who provided invaluable access to the scientists and Iñupiat communities in the region. As with all his projects, De St. Croix engages as many experts as possible, from scientists to Indigenous locals, in order to understand the drastic changes in the landscape. This source material was gathered to create new sculptures for the exhibition *How to Move a Landscape* at MASS MoCA. Inside the Museum's triple-height gallery, visitors are transported to the Arctic. In *Hollow Ground* (2020), as with *Dead Ice*, the scale of the sculpture immediately relates to and then engulfs the visitor's body, sloping down from ceil-

Blane De St. Croix, *Collapsing Pillar,* detail, 2020. Paint, wood, eco-resin, natural and recycled materials. Photo: Etienne

ing to floor with ample space to get underneath its almost forty-foot-diameter mass. Using the language of model making, theater, and special effects, De St. Croix combines recycled Styrofoam with eco resins and other Earth friendly materials to model the surface. Icicles drip down the walls. When below the work, one is deep inside the tundra, with gaping holes referencing its dissolving surface. From the gallery's two upper balcony vantage points the top of the sculpture becomes visible—an austere icy plane. The ability of the viewer to go both below and above the sculpture permits vantage points impossible in reality, allowing De St. Croix to use art as a tool to interpret and extrapolate his firsthand experience of the landscape, and to in turn give viewers a glimpse into the future.

While *Hollow Ground* hovers like a horizon, *Collapsing Pillar* (2020) towers up from the ground. For this work, De St. Croix modeled sections of icy tundra as if harvesting slabs of permafrost from his other work. The piece teeters, with sticks propping up the stacked pieces and anchoring it to the wall as if it could tumble down at any moment. From the balcony, visitors can approach the sections, as the form soars above and trails below. The precarity of this work emphasizes the vulnerability of the Arctic landscape—a space both vast and under threat. Opposite these pieces is a wall of ice made out of recycled plastics (one of the materials enhancing the effects of climate change), onto which is projected the façade of a drifting glacier. The over thirty-by-thirty-foot expanse engulfs a visitor's visual field. Together, these works are joined by *Alchemist Triptych* (2020), depicting three tornado-like structures in gold, silver, and bronze. The forms represent mineral ores extracted from the earth in tapering concentric rings, dangling and vulnerable, and separated from their place in the land. Each mine also has a corresponding hole in the floor, impossibly small compared to the forms—perhaps a signal of the land healing itself, as in Conan Doyle's *When the World Screamed*, closing up in the face of extraction. The piece also recalls the story of Pyramiden and the extraction

of coal in the Arctic, an apt companion to the gaping holes in the permafrost. De St. Croix's exhibition also includes drawings and relief paintings showing different types of Arctic ice, including the aforementioned dead ice, as well as multi-year ice, which stays frozen for consecutive seasons, or dark ice, which is caked with algae or animal feces. Chester Noongwook, a dog-sled mail carrier on St. Lawrence Island in the Bering Sea, described the varieties of ice in his book *Watching Ice and Weather Our Way*, an Indigenous guide to climate. Noongwook states: "*Maklukestaq*–is Tupik Eskimo for solid, slightly bumpy ice, capable of having boats pulled across it. There is less maklukestaq of late. *Ilulighaq* refers to small- or medium-sized cakes of ice, big enough to support a walrus. *Nutemtaq*—old, thick ice floes—are safe for a seal or whale hunter. *Tepaan* is broken ice blown by wind against solid ice, dangerous to walk on."[36] In *Arctic Fast Ice Pack* (2017), De St. Croix begins with a blue-black ground like cold water devoid of reflected light, on top of which he carves sections of ice drifting apart and making the water underneath seem exposed, while in *Arctic Ice Shelf* (2017) the ice seems to skim across the surface, turning the water underneath a milky blue.

Alongside these reliefs is *Over Ice* (2020), a stark white topography crafted from handmade paper. Covering a twelve-by-thirteen-foot section of floor, the work gives the viewer a sense of aerially surveying the landscape below. All the works in *How to Move a Landscape* continually shift in scale and vantage point, leading to a vertiginous feeling, an unsettling sense of whether we are standing on the ground or floating above it. The title of the exhibition relates to this de-centered feeling. From the projection of glaciers, to landscapes in shipping crates, De St. Croix asks us to consider what it means to hold a landscape within us—a memory, an image, an experience—reminding us that alongside scientific data we must understand the cultural importance of the landscape to our daily lives. This idea of cultural landscape is exemplified in the notion of solastalgia, or "the pain or sickness caused by the loss or lack of solace and the sense of isolation connected to the present state of one's home and territory."[37] Resulting from the rapidly changing climate, we have entered an era where people are homesick at home, longing for a sense of place. This is emphasized in De St. Croix's work *Moving Landscape* (2020), featuring a series of small landscapes on flatbed model railroad cars—imaging tundra, wetlands, forest, desert, etc. The train cars revolve in a circular loop through the entry wall of the exhibition and into the gallery beyond. These landscapes are in perpetual motion (much like glacial ice), chasing their own tails. With this gesture, De St. Croix reminds us that holding onto these ever-changing landscapes, despite our human desire, will always be just out of our grasp.

Returning again to literature, it seems fitting to end with Samuel Taylor Coleridge's (1772–1834) *Rime of the Ancient Mariner,* an epic tale of warning. The poem, which tells the story of the Mariner's last sea voyage, gives a dramatic account of becoming trapped in ice near the South Pole. An albatross follows the boat, and rather than see it as a good omen, the Mariner goes mad. Coleridge writes: "'God save thee, ancient Mariner! / From the fiends, that plague thee thus!— / Why look'st thou so?'—With my cross-bow / I shot the Albatross."[38] This single act of destruction leads to more trouble for the Mariner, including a ghost ship descending from the sky. After recounting his ocean voyage at a wedding, the Mariner departs as the poem ends and the wedding-guest, heeding the cautionary tale, is left a "sadder and wiser man." The albatross, the cry of the injured earth, and the drowned world all remind us that, as painter Thomas Cole wrote in 1836: "Nature has spread for us a rich and delightful banquet. Shall we turn from it? We are still in Eden; the wall that shuts us out of the garden is our own ignorance and folly."[39]

10 These facts come from: https://climate.nasa.gov/evidence/; www.nrdc.org/stories/global-warming-101; www.nasa.gov/press-release/nasa-noaa-data-show-2016-warmest-year-on-record-globally; www.theguardian.com/news/2019/jan/08/when-the-ice-melts-the-catastrophe-of-vanishing-glaciers; www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/barrow-alaska-ground-zero-for-climate-change-7553696/

11 David Wallace-Wells, *The Uninhabitable Earth: Life After Warming* (New York: Tim Duggan Books, 2019), pp. 3–4.

12 Wallace-Wells, *The Uninhabitable Earth*, p. 11.

13 www.npr.org/2019/09/23/763452863/transcript-greta-thunbergs-speech-at-the-u-n-climate-action-summit

14 Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac: And Sketches Here and There* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1949), p. viii.

15 Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (1962; NY: Houghton Mifflin, Co., 2002). Carson dedicated Silent Spring to Schweitzer with this quote.

16 Rachel Carson, 1963 National Book Award acceptance speech, www.fws.gov/northeast/rachelcarson/writings.html

17 Rebecca Solnit, *Hope in the Dark: Untold Histories, Wild Possibilities* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, Second edition, 2016), p. 4.

18 Derek Jensen, "Beyond Hope," in *The Future of Nature*, ed. Barry Lopez, (Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 2007), p. 29.

19 http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks01/0100031h.html

20 J. G. Ballard, *The Drowned World* (New York: Berkley Books, 1962), p. 33.

21 www.metabolicstudio.org/tags/not-a-cornfield

22 Edmund Burke, *On the Sublime and Beautiful*, Vol. XXIV, Part 2 (The Harvard Classics. New York: P. F. Collier & Son, 1909–14; Bartleby.com, 2001). www.bartleby.com/24/2/.

23 Barry Lopez, *Arctic Dreams: Imagination and Desire in a Northern Landscape* (New York: Vintage Books, 1986), p. 246.

24 Christopher P. Heuer, *Into the White: The Renaissance Arctic and the End of the Image* (New York: Zone Books, 2019), pp. 10/12.

25 The Group of Seven included J. E. H. MacDonald (1873–1932), Lawren S. Harris (1885–1970), A. Y. Jackson (1882–1974), Arthur Lismer (1885–1969), Fred Varley (1881–1969), Frank/Franz Johnston (1888–1949), and Frank Carmichael (1890–1945), plus, tangentially, Tom Thompson (1877–1917) and Emily Carr (1871–1945).

26 Lopez, *Arctic Dreams*, p. 240.

27 Heather Davis and Etienne Turpin, "Art and Death: Lives Between the Fifth Assessment & the Sixth Extinction," in *Art in the Anthropocene: Encounters Among Aesthetics, Politics, Environments and Epistemologies*, ed. Heather Davis and Etienne Turpin (London: Open Humanities Press, 2015), pp. 3–4.

28 Heuer, Into the White, p. 197.

29 Jill Conner, "Uneven Terrain: A Conversation with Blane De St. Croix," *Sculpture Magazine*, December 2011, Vol. 30 No. 10, p. 22.

30 Lopez, *Arctic Dreams*, pp. 206–7.

31 Icelandic artist Olafur Eliasson's (b. 1967) Ice Watch was staged in Copenhagen City Hall Square to mark the publication of the UN IPCC 5th Assessment Report of Climate Change (2014); Place du Pantheon, Paris on the occasion of the UN Climate Conference COP21 (2015); and Bloomberg and Tate Modern in London (2018/19). Each iteration of this work controversially involved harvesting blocks of ice from Greenland, which traveled in refrigerated containers before reaching their final destination where they were placed outside, arranged to mimic a clock, and allowed to melt. A carbon footprint report is available here: http://olafureliasson.net.s3.amazonaws.com/subpages/ice-watchparis/press/Ice_Watch_Carbon_Footprint.pdf

32 Rachel Nuwer, "A Soviet Ghost Town in the Arctic Circle, Pyramiden Stands Alone," *Smithsonian Magazine*, May 19, 2014. www.smithsonianmag.com/travel/soviet-ghost-town-arctic-circle-pyramiden-stands-alone-180951429/

33 Rob Reiss, Smithsonian Magazine, March 2010, www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/barrow-alaska-ground-zero-for-climate-change-7553696/

34 Lopez, *Arctic Dreams*, p. 210.

35 Dahr Jamail, "When the ice melts: the catastrophe of vanishing glaciers," The Guardian, January 8, 2019. Excerpted from The End of Ice (The New Press, 2019). www.theguardian.com/news/2019/jan/08/when-the-ice-melts-the-catastrophe-of-vanishing-glaciers

36 Reiss, *Smithsonian Magazine*.

37 Glenn Albrecht, "Solastalgia: A New Concept in Health and Identity," in *Solastalgia: The Distress Caused by Environmental Change, Australasian psychiatry: bulletin of Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists*. 15 Suppl 1. S95-8. 10.1080/10398560701701288. p. 45.

38 https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/43997/the-rime-of-the-ancient-mariner-text-of-1834

39 https://artistshomes.org/site/thomas-cole-national-historic-site

Denise Markonish is the senior curator and director of exhibitions at MASS MoCA. Her exhibitions include Suffering from Realness; Trenton Doyle Hancock, Mind of the Mound: Critical Mass; Nick Cave: Until; Explode Every Day: An Inquiry into the Phenomena of Wonder; Teresita Fernández: As Above So Below; Oh, Canada; Nari Ward: Sub Mirage Lignum; These Days: Elegies for Modern Times; and Badlands: New Horizons in Landscape. She edited the books Teresita Fernández: Wayfinding (DelMonico/Prestel) and Wonder: 50 Years of RISD Glass, and co-edited Sol LeWitt: 100 Views (Yale University Press). Markonish has taught at Williams College and the Rhode Island School of Design, was a visiting curator at Artpace, San Antonio, Texas, and Haystack School of Craft, Deer Isle, Maine.