

Anna McKee: 68,000 Years of Ice **Collection CAE1605**

Introduction/Abstract

Anna McKee received a National Science Foundation Antarctic Visiting Artists and Writers Program grant for the 2009-2010 Antarctic field season, where she used data from the 3,405 meter long ice core to create the artwork titled *WAIS Divide Reliquary*. Materials include process samples, digital images, research materials, presentations, exhibition ephemera, grant materials, design documents, sketches, watercolors, and prints.

Biographical Note: Anna McKee

Anna McKee searches for visual patterns, such as tree growth and soil strata, to create narrative portraits of the earth. Her work is informed by interest in human history, environmental sciences, and the naturalist tradition. McKee earned a BA at Evergreen State College in 1981 and a Master's Degree in Landscape Architecture & Certificate of Urban Design at the University of Washington in 1992. She has also studied drawing, painting, and printmaking at the Pratt Fine Arts Center, The Gage Academy of Art, and Crown Point Press. She began exhibiting actively in 2005, and in 2006 was awarded an Artist Trust Grant for Artists Projects (GAP) Award in Seattle, and then a National Science Foundation Antarctic Visiting Artists and Writers Program grant for the 2009-2010 Antarctic field season.

Scope and Content

Inspired by climate change research, timelines and natural history archives, McKee's *Deep Ice Reliquaries* are multi-disciplinary installations comprised of abstract forms and artifacts from field expeditions. Data obtained from ice cores describe ancient and powerful actions within nature. These sculptures act as shrines and permanent memorials of these projects, symbolically recapturing and repatriating samples taken from the depths of ice sheets and drawing connections between the secular and sacred.

The *WAIS Divide Reliquary* is based on a 3,405-meter long ice core that American scientists finished drilling on the West Antarctic Ice Sheet in January 2012 after ten years of planning and fieldwork (<http://www.waisdivide.unh.edu/>). It is one of the deepest and most detailed ice cores ever retrieved. Data from the study of this ice at the University of Washington and collaborating institutions has redefined our understanding of the global climate record.

McKee visited the *WAIS Divide Ice Core* field camp during 2009-10 and was struck by the scale of time and space that the Ice Core represents. Since then, she incubated ideas to create work that embodies the enormity and complexity of both the West Antarctic Ice Sheet landscape and the ice core. The *WAIS Divide Reliquary: 3,405 meters* consists of 3,405 handmade borosilicate glass ampules, each filled and sealed with 0.2ml of sample water from each meter of the core. She then sewed the ampules along the bottom of 678 silk organza panels. Each panel represents 100 years; the length corresponds to its isotope chemistry measurements. The panels are suspended from a framework to create a three dimensional graph of temperature from 67,500 years ago to present day and forms an abstract model of the *WAIS Divide Ice core* climate record. The overall dimensions are 22 feet long by 14.5 inches deep, height between 9 and 5 feet, suspended from the ceiling. Upon entering the space, the viewer sees these ampules, hanging from tinted translucent panels as if dripping from sheets of thin ice. The rows undulate, forming a long graph. Lighting projects a shadowy wave on the adjacent wall, distorting and repeating the graph form.

The ampules for both the WAIS and Mt. Waddington reliquaries were created at the University of Washington IsoΔLab during an artist residency in 2011-12, invited by Dr. Eric Steig, Professor of Glaciology and Director of the IsoΔLab, and with technical assistance by lab staff.

An added element of the work is an eight-channel sound element created by Seattle composer/sound artist Steve Peters which he composed from field recordings of a melting glacier. This provides an additional layer to consider the passage of time, impermanence, and altered water resources. Peters has many years of experience making site-specific audio installations based on environmental sound and natural phenomena, and a long history of collaboration with artists working in other disciplines, presenting these works in museums, galleries, and public places.

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Inclusive Dates

2008 – 2017

Bulk Dates

2009 – 2014

Quantity / Extent

.5 cubic feet

Language

English

Arrangement

Anna McKee: 68,000 Years of Ice is organized into three series that follow the chronological development of the WAIS Reliquary.

- Series 1: In the Field
- Series 2: Consequent Artworks
- Series 3: Outreach Materials and Press

Related Archive Collections

- CAE1042 *Lita Albuquerque: Stellar Axis, Antarctica*
- CAE1103 *Joan Myers: Wondrous Cold, An Antarctic Journey*
- CAE1107 *Stephen Eastaugh: Antarctic Work*
- CAE1112 *Simon Balm: Stellar Axis, Antarctica*
- CAE1116 *Chris Drury: Antarctica*

- CAE1117 William L. Fox: *Terra Antarctica*
CAE1202 David Rosenthal: *Paintings of the North and South Polar Regions*
CAE1217 Paul D. Miller, aka DJ Spooky That Subliminal Kid: *Ice Music*
CAE1218 Jean de Pomereu: *Antarctic Photographs*
CAE1219 Stuart Klipper: *The Antarctic, From the Circle to the Pole*
CAE1307 Chris Kannen: *An Antarctic Extended Season*
CAE1504 Diane Burko: *Polar Investigations*

Related Publications

Andrews, Lynne. *Antarctic Eye: The Visual Journey*. Mornington, Tasmania: Studio One, 2007.

Chapman, Walker. *The Loneliest Continent: The Story of Antarctic Discovery*. Greenwich, CT: New York Graphic Society, 1964.

Fogg, G. E. *The explorations of Antarctica: The Last Unspoiled Continent*. London: New York, N.Y.: Cassell; Distributed in the United States by Sterling Pub. Co., 1990.

Fox, William L. *Terra Antarctica: Looking into the Emptiest Continent*. San Antonio TX: Trinity University Press, 2005.

Readers Digest. *Antarctica: The Extraordinary History of Man's Conquest of the Frozen Continent*. Sydney, Australia; New York, N.Y.: Reader's Digest, 1990.

Container Listing by Series:

CAE1605/1 Series 1: In the Field, Folders 1 - 5, 2008 – 2010

Series 1 includes materials generated in preparation for McKee's visit to Antarctica as well as digital imagery and sketches she produced while in the field. Materials are organized chronologically, followed by location.

CAE Box 115

- 1-1 NSF Grant Application, 2008
- 1-2 Packing List and Field Plan, 2009
- 1-3 Christchurch and McMurdo Images, 2009 – 2010
- 1-4 WAIS Deep Field Camp Images, 2009
- 1-5 Field Sketches and Watercolors, 2009

CAE1605/1 Series 1: Additional Materials

CAE S-Box 20

- 1-5#9 *Moose Door*, Watercolor, 2009
- 1-5#10 *Snow Pit Flags*, Watercolor, 2009
- 1-5#11 *Tent City*, Watercolor, 2009
- 1-5#12 *Winter Berms*, Watercolor, 2009

CAE1605/2 Series 2: Consequent Artworks, Folders 1-6, 2008 – 2016

Series 2 includes information about the artworks created by McKee after her time in Antarctica. Materials are organized chronologically.

CAE Box 115

- 2-1 Checklist of Paintings from 2009 – 2011, 2016
- 2-2 WAIS Camp Stories Etchings, 2011
- 2-3 WAIS Reliquary Research Imagery, 2008 – 2014
- 2-4 WAIS Reliquary Fabrication and Specifications, 2012 – 2016
- 2-5 Scimitar Journey Etchings, 2013
- 2-6 Proposed WAIS Reliquary Urn, 2016

CAE1605/2 Series 2: Additional Materials

CAE Box 14: Small Objects

- 2-4#36 First Prototype Ampule, 2012 – 2014
- 2-4#37 Borosilicate Glass Tubes, 2012 – 2014
- 2-4#52 WAIS Divide Ice Core Water Sample, 2010

CAE S-Box 9

- 2-5#1 *Scimitar Journey 2*, Etching, 2013
- 2-5#2 *Scimitar Journey 6*, Etching, 2013

CAE S-Box 20

- 2-2#11 *Arch Door*, Etching, 2011
- 2-2#1 *Arch Entrance*, Etching, 2011
- 2-2#6 *Arctic Oven*, Etching, 2011
- 2-2#2 *Cargo Lines*, Etching, 2011
- 2-2#8 *Fuel Drums*, Etching, 2011
- 2-2#9 *Sastrugi Camp*, Etching, 2011
- 2-2#4 *Tent City*, Etching, 2011
- 2-2#10 *Trucker Tracks*, Etching, 2011
- 2-2#3 *WAIS Galley*, Etching, 2011
- 2-2#5 *Winter Arch*, Etching, 2011
- 2-2#7 *Winter Berms*, Etching, 2011
- 2-4#39 Silk Swatch, Turquoise Blue, 2012 – 2014
- 2-4#40 Silk Swatch, Mixing Blue, 2012 – 2014
- 2-4#41 Silk Swatch, Sapphire Blue, 2012 – 2014
- 2-4#42 Silk Swatch, Basic Blue, 2012 – 2014
- 2-4#43 Silk Swatch, Black Gray, 2012 – 2014
- 2-4#44 Silk Swatch, Brushed Steel, 2012 – 2014
- 2-4#45 Silk Swatch, Gray Tests, 2012 – 2014

Textile Rack: Oversized Items

- 2-4#38 Panel Prototype, 2013 – 2014
- 2-4#46 Panel Experiment, Turquoise Blue, 2013 – 2014
- 2-4#47 Panel Experiment, Mottled Blue, 2013 – 2014
- 2-4#48 Panel Experiment, Brushed Steel, 2013 – 2014
- 2-4#49 Panel Experiment, Yellow, 2013 – 2014

2-4#50 Panel Experiment, White, 2013 – 2014
2-4#51 Panel Experiment, Multicolor, 2013 – 2014

CAE1605/3 Series 3: Outreach Materials and Press, Folders 1-4, 2010 – 2017

Series 3 contains outreach materials including exhibition ephemera, presentations, educational materials and press materials. Materials are organized by subject.

CAE Box 115

3-1 Exhibition Ephemera, 2010 – 2016
3-2 Presentations, 2010 – 2016
3-3 Educational Material, 2015
3-4 Press, 2010 – 2017

CAE S-Box 23

3-4#8 *Waterline: A Creative Exchange*, Poster, 2017