THE CULTURE OF CLIMATE CHANGE:
CAPE FAREWELL YOUTH EXPEDITION 2008

TOP
DEVIN AIRUGANA
(TUSARVIK SCHOOL, NUNAVUT); VISTA OF PADLOPEN ISLAND PART OF "DRAWING THE LINE"
PENCIL ON REEVES PAPER

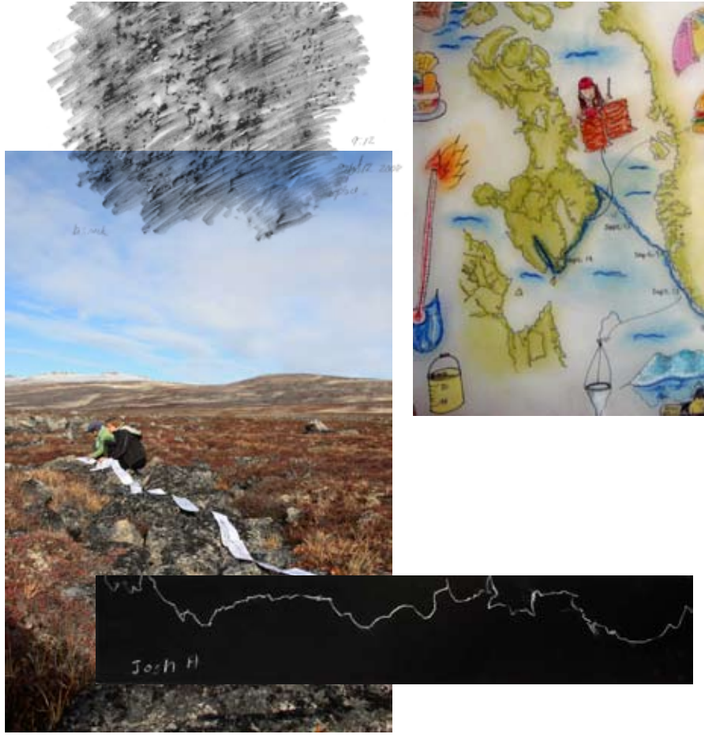
ABOVE
JUNK LINE
PART OF "DRAWING THE LINE"
PADLOPEN ISLAND
PHOTO BY COLETTE LALIBERTÉ

TOP, RIGHT
BOW OF VESSEL
PHOTO BY ROBERT VANWAARDEN
COURTESY OF BRITISH COUNCIL CANADA

ABOVE, RIGHT
COLETTE LALIBERTÉ
CROSSING THE ARCTIC CIRCLE ON OUR WAY TO QIKIQTARJUAQ, BAFFIN ISLAND, SEPTEMBER 15, 2008
WATERCOLOUR ON PAPER

OPPOSITE, TOP LEFT
COLETTE LALIBERTÉ
RUBBING OF A ROCK, WEST COAST OF GREENLAND
GRAPHITE ON PAPER

OPPOSITE, TOP CENTRE
LUISA LIZOAIN
(UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO SCHOOLS, TORONTO, ONTARIO)
EXPEDITION MAP
PASTEL/TRACING PAPER; WATERCOLOUR/PAPER



ABOVE
RUBBINGS OF ROCKS: LINE VIEW
JESSICA HOUSTON (L), COLETTE LALIBERTÉ
PHOTO COURTESY OF COLETTE LALIBERTÉ

OVERLAY (B/W)
JOSH HOCKRIDGE (LAUNCESTON COLLEGE, LAUNCESTON, CORNWALL, U.K.)
DRAWING-THE-LINE: RECORD OF THE IMPRESSION AND SENSATION OF THE GROUND WHILE WALKING AMONG THE DEBRIS OF PADLOPEN ISLAND
WHITE CONTÉ ON BLACK REEVES PAPER

TOP, RIGHT
COLETTE LALIBERTÉ AND DAVID BUCKLAND
CAPE FAREWELL YOUTH EXPEDITION 2008 PRESS CONFERENCE AT THE ONTARIO SCIENCE CENTRE
PHOTO BY LINO RAGNO

ABOVE
LAND ART
CAPE FAREWELL YOUTH EXPEDITION STUDENTS CREATE LAND ART IN THE SPACE LEFT BY THE RETREATING GLACIER SKJOLDUNGEN, GREENLAND
PHOTO BY COLETTE LALIBERTÉ

In fact, as a way to echo the repetitive scientific collection of data, the artists invited all students to devote 10 minutes a day to their sketchbooks. The sketchbook thus became a place to retreat from the group, a site to reflect. Students in the oceanography and climatology groups were also required to go on the bridge each day to complete two watercolour paintings: one of the skies and one of the oceans.

The art mentors and students discussed at great length the power and versatility of mark-making, or the process of applying pencil to paper. We asked students to inscribe, through mark-making, a vanishing moment, and to do so by observing in nature a moment of change — a cloud, a bird singing, a pebble thrown in the water.

THE VANISHING MOMENT: A TRACE

trace: *v. tr.* ***1 a*** *observe, discover or find vestiges or signs of by investigation*

The Cape Farewell Youth Expedition 2008 brought together artists, scientists and students on a journey of discovery. The idea, of course, was to take it out, upon returning home, to communicate to a larger audience. But what of during? Perhaps the first directive was, simply, to observe. To not only look, as geomorphologist Chris Burns remarked, but also to see. What was perhaps impressed upon all travellers was that what they were seeing would soon be no longer.

So, as Laliberté asks, how to record a trace? How to record a vanishing moment?

Colette Laliberté: On our third landing, I picked crowberries with the intention of making jam once back on board. I marvelled at the soft-carpeted lichen growing painfully on the rock's surface. And I thought of taking home with me a vestige of time by making rubbings.

To make a rubbing is to lift something from a place without actually taking it. In essence, it is "found" work that emerges out of the site-specific activity of tracing a physical presence, of turning a moment in time into a drawing. Jessica Houston and I would later decide to do a "line" of rubbings. The frottage drawings that emerged in our case were of 40 000-year-old rocks deposited, then shifted, by the movement of glaciers in the Arctic.

We walked on grounds touched by few other creatures. We took imprints of rocks that could not, or should not, be removed. It's not incongruous to create rubbings in a land once home to age-old glaciers; the technique goes back to 300 B.C. And the rubbings we created? They point to what's already there, what has always been there: a rock, a fragment of a whole, a vestige of the dynamic forces of nature and the ceaseless passage of time. They represent the impossible task of trying to pin down, to capture and then hold still the ever-vanishing present, this moment in time.

THE LINE: AN INTERVENTION

in•ter•vene: *v. intr.* ***2*** *interfere; come between so as to prevent or modify the course of events*

If scientific consensus is anything to go by, climate change should not be a partisan issue. Hopefully, as we move forward we'll value the impartial analysis of scientific evidence and we'll also realize that the question has become one of affecting change. Nobel laureate Sherwood Rowland has said: "After all, what's the use of having developed a science well enough to make predictions if, in the end, all we're willing to do is stand around and wait for them to come true?"

How, then, do we move from tracing a physical presence to intervening in it? How do we move from drawing a moment in time to drawing a line, drawing the line that delineates a moral boundary — the line that says, and loudly, *enough* is *enough*.

Colette Laliberté: A couple of days before arriving in Iqaluit, we conducted a ritual unifying art and nature. We landed in Padlopen near the small Inuit town of Qikiqtarjuaq, and as we approached shore we discovered the remains of a previous settlement. Hundreds of crushed oil drums lay with the carcasses of tractors, rusted machinery, tin cans and other detritus. We learned that the burnt buildings and the dump left behind was an abandoned weather station dating back to the '50s or early '60s.

Chris Burns used the site to talk about marginality, reminding us that we were standing on a landscape in flux. And he spoke of what makes change happen. The people who made camp here brought what they needed to survive, he said, much as we had done. The problem is what they left behind. We were horrified to find so much evidence of human activity on this remote seashore of the Arctic. And we decided to stage an intervention. *Drawing the line* was an art ritual, a metaphor to express the urgency we felt, the need to stop — or, at the very least, slow down — what is clearly endangering our world.

We asked the students to record, as they walked amidst the debris, their impressions and sensations of the ground beneath their feet. They did this with a strip of black paper and white Conté. On another, larger piece of paper, they drew the vista they saw after reaching the end of their linear walk.

Everyone then scavenged through various pieces of metal to build a three-dimensional junk line, which extended from a group of rusted barrels to another pile of metal junk a hundred metres away. This was our way of expressing the necessity and the responsibility we have as individuals and as a society to change our habits of consumption and the way we treat the world.

CLIMATE CHANGE: THE RATIONAL AND THE EMOTIONAL

Laliberté hopes that others will join her, that "we'll draw the line together" — for ourselves and for future generations. She's looking into a post-expedition exhibition at OCAD and is eager to discuss the back-home initiatives of student voyageurs like George Voronov from Dublin, Ireland, who is publishing a book. (For more information, visit www.capefarewell.com/expeditions/2008youth.)

Cape Farewell — its legacy and learning — will live on in the work of its student ambassadors and its artists and scientists, who will draw their own conclusions and decide how best to appeal to their communities, now and in the future. Buckland's premise — that science and art, the rational and emotional, will together make the fiercest appeal, the one that comes from head *and* heart — is both powerful and plausible.

As British Council Canada Director Martin Rose wrote, in sum, of the students who participated in the expedition: "They have made for themselves opinions on the greatest issue of our time, and they are going off into the world, strengthened, to become leaders and thinkers.

"It has been a stunning, transforming, illuminating voyage."

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Colette Laliberté is an artist and an associate professor at OCAD, where she teaches drawing, painting, installation and site-specific art intervention. Since returning home she has continued to do rubbings. She is also developing a series of paintings in preparation for a solo exhibition next year.