

VANISHING ICE: ALPINE AND POLAR LANDSCAPES IN ART, 1775–2012. Barbara C. Matilsky. 2013. Seattle: University of Washington Press. 144 pp, illustrated, softcover. ISBN: 978-0-295-99342-3. £26.99.

Vanishing ice: alpine and polar landscapes in art, 1775–2012 is a publication accompanying the touring exhibition of the same name. This exhibition has been organised by Dr. Barbara C. Matilsky, who also wrote the publication. Dr. Matilsky is a curator of art at Whatcom Museum in Bellingham, Washington, where the exhibition was presented from November 2013 to March 2014. The exhibition will travel to El Paso Museum of Art in Texas for the summer of 2014, and from October 2014 to January 2015, it will be at McMichael Canadian Art Collection in Ontario, Canada. However, one does not need to visit the exhibition to enjoy the published version, which was designed by Phil Kovacevich and edited by John Pierce.

In 1983, Dr. Matilsky wrote her doctoral dissertation, *Sublime landscape painting in nineteenth century France: alpine and arctic iconography and its relationship to natural history*, on French romantic landscape artists who started depicting alpine and frozen polar-sea ice scenes. She writes in the prologue that she presented the paintings within the contexts of natural history and the public's fascination with new knowledge and pictures of geography and the earth. Today, the paintings are scientifically significant sources of continuing research examining climate change. The idea for *Vanishing ice* emerged in 2005, when Dr. Matilsky realised that many contemporary artists were interested in the Arctic and Antarctica. She then began thinking about the similarities and differences between artists today and artists 200–300 years ago. She realised, while examining these parallels, that cultural perspectives on climate change could be seen in a new way and through the new art media. The published version deals with art history, the history of exploration, and raising awareness of environmental issues.

The publication contains four chapters, as well as a prologue, elegy, and timeline. The first chapter, 'From the sublime to the science of a changing climate', briefly deals with the dialogue of art and science and how collaborations between the arts and sciences have expanded awareness of glacial and polar areas. It also reviews the means through which art has depicted ice from the 18th century to the present day. The second chapter, 'Voyage to glacial peaks', focuses on alpine landscapes in Europe and in North America. The literature of the 16th and 17th century considered cold, ice, and snow to be negative, and mountains and wilderness to be ugly and frightening. During the subsequent centuries, thanks to natural science and landscape painting, people gained more knowledge and different images of new areas, and became more curious. These effects were

part of a chain of events. The chapter explains how Horace Bénédict de Saussure's book about the Alps inspired John Ruskin and William Turner's interpretations of them. Ruskin's and Turner's influence spread throughout Europe and the United States in the middle of the 19th century. With the creation and development of photography, painting and drawing lost their importance as tools of documentation in the first decades of the 20th century. This chapter also presents dramatic examples of ice shrinkage. Readers can compare Eliot Porter's colour photography of Mount Baker in 1975 with Brett Baunton's in 2007 on pages 42–43.

The third chapter, 'Magnetic attraction: the allure of the poles', explains how different economic factors have increased interest in the Arctic, including whales in the 17th and 18th centuries, mining in the 19th century, and easy and cheap transportation, oil, and gas today. Scientists and artists began getting involved in Arctic expeditions at the beginning of the 19th century. Despite their romantic style, paintings of the Arctic by Biard, Church, Friedrich, and Landseer are detailed and credible. A Russian artist who provided a good example of realistic open-air Arctic painting is Aleksandr Borisov (1866–1934), who was born near Arkhangelsk. He was a part of the Russian expeditions to the far northern islands of Novaya Zemlya in 1897–1899 and 1900–1901. During the period of the Soviet Union, before the Second World War, Russians made many expeditions to Arctic areas. Today, artists worry about climate change but also the struggle of Arctic areas, as Miller's print, 'Manifesto for a People's Republic of Antarctica', shows. Dr. Matilsky's last chapter, 'Elegy: the open polar sea', deals with melting ice and the rising global sea level. Artists of our time point out the situation with melting ice and interpret these extraordinary changes in their pieces of art.

In the book there is a good focus on the dialogues between old and contemporary art, between the history of science and art, between ethics and aesthetics, and between sense and sensibility. However, an index of persons, pieces, and places would have made the book even more reader-friendly. The art exhibition and catalogue are a fine way to popularise research and scientific knowledge. It seems that facts alone do not affect audiences, perhaps because they are too clear and clean. Art, with its emotional and often metaphorical interpretations, speaks directly to the heart, leading people to become interested in facts and change their ways of life. The visual imagery of *Vanishing ice* is as open and clear as the Arctic landscape. The layout gives space to the texts and the pictures are large, enabling readers to get a feel for the panoramas of big mountains and endless Arctic landscapes. Both the publication and exhibition of *Vanishing ice: alpine and polar landscapes in art, 1775–2012* are definitely worth looking into. (Tuija Hautala-Hirvioja, Faculty of Art and Design, University of Lapland, PO Box 122, 96101 Rovaniemi, Finland (tuija.hautala-hirvioja@ulapland.fi)).