



**Polar expeditions**  
12.12.2009 – 15.05.2010  
Questions to the artists

**1. How did you get interested in the poles (old fascination, lecture, meeting, documentary)?**

Our interest in the arctic developed because we wanted to make an artwork referencing natural daylight and its impact on the human body. A relatively unpolluted and remote landscape with no human settlements, the peninsula of Hold With Hope was an ideal setting to study 24 hour daylight and the transition towards winter darkness. We were also interested in problems around the authenticity of mediated experience in virtual environments: the poet Gary Snyder says that the best way to experience the world is in one's own body; with this in mind we were curious about whether we could transmit something about our experience of such an extreme place to other bodies in a gallery.

**2. How many trips to the poles did you make already?**

We visited NE Greenland in 2001 to make Polaria and stayed for a month. Since 2001 we have visited the Arctic region (Alta, Northern Norway) twice in 2004 whilst developing another project: Little Earth. We also visited the island of Svalbard to make a short documentary for University of Leicester about one of their radar installations sited there.

**3. When did you make them?**

2001-2005

**4. How long did you stay there?**

We stayed in NE Greenland making Polaria for the month of August, 2001.

**5. Did you leave on your own or in a group? Why?**

We went on our own, with logistical support from the Cambridge Arctic Shelf Programme.

**6. What did you feel whilst travelling?**

It has always been our intention not to project our remembered subjective experience onto the Polaria project or its documentation. We adopted a rigorous, reductive, scientific-like methodology and detachment in order to work with the idea of science as metaphor. We are concerned with the disconnection of the human from the natural world through technological colonisation of the bodymind and the abstractions of science. It was our aim at the time to leave the 'feeling' and interpretation to the users of the installation once they had completed the (electrical) 'circuit' of Polaria.

7. With which challenges were you confronted during your trip(s)?

Generating enough power from a pair of 24V solar panels. Maintaining radio contact with the Danish Polar Centre. Maintaining firearms and bear alarms--trip wires connected to flares.

8. Do you consider making other trip(s)?

We are not currently planning another polar trip. There are many artists messing about around the Poles now; it has become too easy to get there. The trips have become like package tours for artists, organised by various art & science agencies pushing 'culture of climate change' agendas. It's as if the artists have no real reason or desire to go there; they are going because there is the money and ready made agenda to do so.

9. Did you define the nature of your artistic project in advance?

We knew we wanted to measure and record the 24 hour daylight regime with a spectroradiometer (a very sophisticated light-meter) and the body's responses to it using various biomonitors. We knew it was going to be a field-trip to collect data. We also knew that on our return we would build an interactive installation using the data to form the interface, but we didn't know what the exact nature of the interface would be.

10. In which way did your project change by the conditions of its realisation?

Towards the end of our trip the sun was lower in the sky, there was more cloud and stormy weather conditions that meant the solar panels were producing significantly less power. We therefore became conscious of a solar budget that started to determine the priority and frequency of our work. Generally, conditions of the realisation of Polaria didn't change anything, but generated everything that we set out to make there. The fieldwork is an intrinsic part of our practice.

11. Once you were there, did you have contact with scientists? In which way did this encounter influence your work?

We only heard scientists' radio transmissions to the Danish Polar Centre organising helicopter pickups, sharing local weather reports, their whereabouts and polar bear sightings.

12. Do you experience a certain form of urge to work on the poles?

We are still interested in the poles but even more so in what lies in between.

**13. Do you possess a specific documentation of your trip(s)?**

There are photographs of the NE Greenland fieldwork, light and physiological data, video footage, diaries, polaroids and collected objects.

**14. How do you use this documentation to create new work?**

The documentation mentioned is specific to the Polaria project which is a discrete work, although photographic documentation has been used in various publications and conferences.

**15. Do you think that there are pole aesthetics?**

If aesthetics is the study of new ways of seeing and of perceiving the world then the Polar Regions are exceptional loci for the quest for multiple ways of interpreting what it feels like to be human in the natural world.

**16. Which link do you see between the territories you discover and their belonging or not to nations/states?**

The fieldwork for the Polaria project took place at Hold With Hope peninsula in the Northeast Greenland National Park, which was designated an international biosphere reserve in 1977 and is overseen by the Greenland Department of Environment and Nature. Greenland has had a colonial relationship with Denmark since the 18<sup>th</sup> century and Greenlandic Self-Government was established in June 21, 2009. With the new Self-Government agreement, Greenland has taken a very important step towards becoming an independent state with legal and political autonomy.

**17. How do you position your work towards the works of other artists who are also interested in the poles?**

Perhaps what sets Polaria apart from the majority of more recent artists' polar trips and artworks is that Polaria was entirely artist-initiated and artist-led.