Going North: limitations and expectations

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Abstract

This research was based on my personal experience of an artist residency to the Arctic Circle in 2015. I investigated the immersive nature of the Arctic Circle region in order to explore the relationship between natural environment and digital imaging. Through the synthesis of sound, light, and image capture, my aim was to create a new form of environment that could be translated into an exhibition context.

I tried to understand the ways in which framing and capturing an exterior landscape can bring sensations to an interior space. How can the frame contextualize natural spaces? I'm interested in modes of seeing the world and how digital imaging plays a role in the way we interact with these spaces. In my Masters of Fine Arts research, I explored the limitations of representation, the ways in which a virtual and imagined Arctic can be conveyed through my practice.
Declaration

This is to certify that;

- the thesis comprises only my original work towards the Masters of Fine Art degree,
- due acknowledgment has been made in the text to all other material used,
- the thesis is 10,014 words in length, exclusive of tables, maps, bibliographies and figure list.

[Signature]
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Introduction

I looked out of the aeroplane porthole as we passed over the remote Arctic region. Laying ahead of me was endless icy blue and white terrain. Snow was resting at the top of every mountain peak, casting blinding reflections where the sun was shining, and the water smooth and frozen – a seemingly limitless sublime. However, through the limitations of my window I was only able to imagine this limitlessness, which made this northern environment all the more fascinating to me.

This first experience with the Arctic ignited an interest in the different ways of perceiving a northern environment. For my Master of Fine Art research, I sought to represent incomprehensible natural spaces through the limitations of digital equipment. By capturing this space with my camera and the frame, I aim to translate my Arctic experience into the virtual. I seek to interrogate the role of the imagination and materiality within the context of northern exploration. How does imagination alter an experience?

The written component of this research is structured by the writings of Rebecca Solnit. Specifically, her chapter layout from her book, *The Faraway Nearby*. Solnit’s format of storytelling resonated greatly, as she uses a series of closely linked essays as a
“meandering line [that] sutures together the world in some new way”. In the same way an artist may use a series of individual works within their practice to convey one whole concept, Solnit uses moments from her own life to facilitate pondering of grander questions about the world around us. “One of the arts of perspective,” she writes, “is to see yourself small on the stage of another's story, to see the vast expanse of the world that is not about you ... to tell stories rather than be told by them.” The idea of seeing the world far away and simultaneously nearby eliminates the middle distance, garnering an immediate response from viewers.

Solnit engages in a style of seeing in her book – from a distance all her stories are connected. My research and practice, is similarly connected by a series of trials, experiences and personal stories. Solnit structures her book with simple headings such as “apricots” and “mirrors” as her first two chapters. She then revisits these ideas once more by using the same headings for the last two chapters. In this structure, Solnit uses the return to trek through a terrain of experiences in order to come back with a new perspective. Just like my ventures out to nature, the theme of return is unavoidable. When diving underwater, one must make their way back to the surface, after trekking up a mountain one must go back down, and when sailing towards the North

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2 Ibid.
Pole, one must return south. This notion of re-examining the same concept allowed me to realise connections within each idea, and also the key experiences. It is the notion of coming in close to the subject then stepping away to see a whole picture.

Solnit’s personal story is the central theme for her book, *The Faraway Nearby*. It is based on her strained relationship with her ill mother and Solnit’s growing fascination for Polar Regions. Solnit was invited to Iceland to undertake a writer’s residency. This residency in Stykkisholmur was conceived by the American artist Roni Horn and is located in a former library housing the *Library of Water* glacier columns.

The *Water* chapter explores my fascination with the limitlessness of the sea. A near drowning experience sparked my curiosity with underwater exploration, resulting in several research dives. In order to try and comprehend the experience of being underwater, I explored ways of documenting and augmenting video footage from the sea.

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3 My referencing of sailing north is from the start point of our Arctic Circle residency Longyearben, Svalbard, towards the North Pole, the furthest our ship reached was 79°33.9 North, 010°50.0 East. If we were to sail further north or stay there, the desolate landscape and sea would have consumed us. There is no capacity to harbor human life this far north and so there will also inevitably be a return to the south. The concept of the “return” that I’m trying to establish is of a person who is merely visiting such places as the top of mountain, or the far north of the earth. For me it was more about reaching the limits of what one knows or is familiar with and return to reflect on how far they have gone.
These underwater scuba diving research trips acted as practice before embarking on an artist residency to the Arctic Circle. Chapter Ice extrapolates on the imagery that can be conjured in the traveler’s mind when going north, and interrogates the important role of imagination when one anticipates a physical experience. I reflect on Glenn Gould’s radio broadcast The Idea of North to understand the concept of the Arctic being a place within the mind. This impression of the north being an internalised exploration is expanded in chapter Dream, where the Arctic is associated with otherworldliness, placing the physical space outside of the norms of what is familiar. Concurrent states of dream-like and physical experience pose the question of how I could best represent the Arctic through my practice.

The Rectangle inside a Circle chapter steps into the Arctic environment, and surveys some of the imagery I have come across prior and during the Arctic Circle expedition. I find connections and reoccurrences with the rectangular shape throughout this research, and explore how this shape has framed my experience. With the similar title, the Circle inside a Rectangle, this chapter takes the concept of the rectangle as a reoccurring shape within the landscape, and into a frame which the landscape is held. Furthermore, I take this frame and turn it into an architectural window, then a virtual window which sits within the rectangular gallery space. I address the difference between installing my video works within the white cube and the black box of the gallery setting, and the varying effects it has on the viewers’ experience.
Control chapter reviews the daily schedules of the Arctic Circle expedition and the limitations our residency coordinators placed on us. To keep safe from dangers of the northern wilderness, we were restricted in our access to the Arctic which subsequently resulted in frustration—being able to see the expansive and limitless space yet unable to reach it. I expand on this sense of frustration with a video work Northern Veil, in order to help represent some of the control I was subject to. In this chapter, I also explore my own attempt at restricting and containing the Arctic landscape— as a way to contextualise the experience and find modes of transporting it back with me to Melbourne.

For the returning chapter of Dream, I introduce the concept of the virtual being similar to that of a dream—both belonging to the realm of immateriality, yet is able to produce tangible sensations. Going by my previous explorations that dreams generate tangible memories, I argue that a virtual image allows a transfer of Arctic experiences to the viewer. Moving away from the interiority of the Arctic space, the secondary chapter Ice observes these frozen molecules in its physical form. I observe the likenesses between the frame and ice, as they both possess qualities of limitations and control.
Throughout writing this thesis, I would often stare into the white spaces of my computer screen and take myself away from my immediate reality, daydreaming about what I would be doing if I hadn’t left the Arctic – the equivalent of a child staring out the window of a classroom and wishing to be somewhere else. As I’ve always been the sort of child to get lost within another world of thought, I continued to find it difficult to stay in present moments. I noticed as an adult, whenever I sense myself approaching anxiety, I would sweep my thoughts away to another world. It would be the kind of place a yoga instructor guides you to during a breathing exercise, encouraging you to take your mind to somewhere calm, like the beach, and listen to the waves pull you in and out.

The waves, or more so the water, is a source of great fascination for me. I lived the majority of my childhood between two worlds: Australia and China. It was overwhelming to comprehend the distance between my two homes physically, when in my mind they were next to each other. The comfort came in knowing that water was connecting these two important places.
It was a traumatic near drowning experience that sparked my fascination and connection with water. As a child, my parents took me to pools and lakes during holidays or after school. I remember being young and uncoordinated, splashing around in the shallows, alone and fearful of the deep end of the water. One summer when I was scaling a local pool, I ducked my head under and missed the side railings. I didn’t know how to swim at the time and couldn’t manage to find any edge that I could anchor myself to. Through my physical limitations of not being able to swim at that age, and not knowing what to do, I had quickly gone into a panic.

In a swift turn of events I managed to find an edge and bring myself up. Gasping desperately for air then eventually crying while limp on the ground. My father seemed unsympathetic as he couldn't empathise with my experience; perhaps this was a poignant moment for my five-year-old self, to tap into the phenomenon of experience⁴. Through my father’s reaction, I couldn’t fathom if this traumatic episode was imagined or if it had just been fear of an unknown sensation. What was most notable was feeling time had changed while I was underwater. I stopped being afraid of the elements that summer, and

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⁴ What I mean by experience, it is instantaneous, begins before conscious thought and happens in such an immersive way that the senses are engaged before they can be located or understood. Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy is concerned primarily with experience as coming from instantaneous sensuous moment, as related to the centrality of the body. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception, (Abingdon: Oxon Routledge, 2014).
continued to swim well into my adulthood, often seeking to be in places with extreme circumstances. I felt a mystery in the water that day and it continues to propel me to question concepts of the unknown, boundaries, experience and nature throughout my artistic practice.

Bill Viola similarly uses his childhood experience to drive his artist practice. Viola also had a near drowning encounter as a child, at the age of six. Often recalling his experience with fondness, “describing it as a moment of beauty rather than terror”\(^5\). Viola was away on a family holiday at a lake, and splashed after his cousins in to the water. Not knowing how to swim, he sank straight to the bottom of the lake. “It still haunts me to this day” Viola recalls, “and it’s the absolute deepest connection that I have now”\(^6\). This experience has played out in several of Viola’s video works; *The Messenger* (1996) features a young man rising repeatedly to the surface of a pool of water to gasp for breath before sinking again. Viola states, “Everything to do with water always is very, very connected to me. I have a real affinity towards it. And that’s how my art started”\(^7\).

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5 Andrew Taylor, “Way deep down inside; that’s where all great art comes from.” *The Sydney Morning Herald*, December 13, 2014.
6 Ibid.
Water immediately ruptures linear time, it exposes the transitory and inexplicable nature of temporality: the changing state of the element, the evaporation into thin air, precipitation, an endless cycle of return from ice, to water, to steam, to vapour, finally collapsing into nothingness.\(^8\)

The states of water described above by Naomi Riddle mimics how I continuously interact with my memory from the pool. I began in the water as a child, then the trauma froze into my thoughts, and sustained over time as one of my strongest memories. When endured, the fear evaporates and turns into a fascination, which brings me back to water. Perhaps I would never be able to discover the mysteries of the water as it represents a time within and a frozen memory. The “nothingness” prevails, and becomes continuous failed attempts at understanding the incomprehensible experience of water.

\(^8\) Naomi Riddle, “All Things are Water”, Das Platforms, (June 26, 2014) http://dasplatforms.com/writing/all-things-are-water/. Naomi Riddle is a Sydney-based writer and artist working across the mediums of analog photography, archival film, text and video. “All Things are Water”, was a piece she wrote in retrospect to Roni Horn’s sculpture Nine Liquid Incidents, 2010–12. Her quote is expanded from words by Anne Carson, ”Anthropology of Water”, in Plainwater (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 117.
Figure 1. Bill Viola, *The Messenger*, Single-channel video and sound installation, continuous loop, 762 x 914.4 x 975.4 cm, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum © Bill Viola

Figure 2. Leela Schauble, research trip, scuba diving in Portsea Victoria, 2015
By reflecting on my childhood pool experience, I sought further questions by going deeper. I had been pulled down by an unknown force, deep into the sea\(^9\) through Scuba Diving. Thus began the first research trips for my Masters of Fine Arts research project during the winter of 2015. I scheduled and embarked on a total of three underwater dives with the specific goal of filming footage from each trip. What resulted were several failed attempts of capturing moments I had experienced underwater. More specifically, the reality failed my imagined expectations.

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\(^9\) I went into the sea rather than exploring a pool environment because I felt that I had completely understood the depths of the pool as soon as I learnt how to swim. The sea is understood as bottomless, the Mariana trench still only explored by few individuals through a machine. The Mariana Trench is part of a global network of deep troughs, formed by the collision of two tectonic plates, across the ocean floor. They form the deepest part of the world’s ocean located in the western Pacific Ocean, between China and Australia.
I encountered Patricia Piccinini’s video installation, *Swell*, (2000). The three channel video installation depicts computer-generated sea waves with accompanying sounds. “Swell is an immersive video installation that focuses on the changing nature of space ... through the vision of a turbulent but synthetic sea.”¹⁰ While moving myself to the center of the dark gallery space (figure 3), I was compelled to anchor myself against the wall; the vivid and visceral swell of the sea, in Piccinini’s installation, becomes overwhelming and disorientating. Her videos succeeded in replicating the experience of how one might feel being sea

sick. Most interestingly, this is an experience I’ve never had in real life. “The idea of the horizon figures strongly”\(^{11}\) within Swell, Piccinini erases the horizon, therefore, any ability to fixate ones’ gaze in order to increase sensations of destabilisation.\(^{12}\)

I considered Piccinini’s use of the synthetic waves as I digitally manipulated all of the underwater footage. Water and Sound Test (2015) depicts an abstract underwater view, and the sand-covered sea floor and sparkling waves at the top of the frame make the watery environment obviously recognisable. In contrast to Piccinini’s Swell high definition detailing, I designed Water and Sound Test (2015) to blur out all notable visual cues. The sound echoes a watery atmosphere with audio of bubbles hitting the camera microphone loudly. When viewing this work, my vision blurs like it would when I stare into a fire or daydream out a window. This work is an investigation into the space required for contemplation rather than merely an indexical relationship. I was concerned with how movement and sound can generate an immersive experience.

\(^{11}\) Ibid.

\(^{12}\) I was able to experience Swell by Patricia Piccinini in person at Screen Space gallery in Melbourne, 2015. The three channeled video is projected in a completely dark space. When I situated myself in the middle of the installation, I couldn’t find balance due to the strong waves mimicking the open sea, rolling over each other and never letting the horizon line stay too long in one frame.
Ice

In the midst of my underwater research trips, I was preparing to partake in an artist residency program named *The Arctic Circle Expedition*. “Going North” suggests leaving a metropolitan area to encounter a colder climate. Places that are identified with the northerly also suggest mountainous terrains, “going up and going north have something in common.” I had been vertically north in the past, climbing to the base camp of Annapurna, 4130 meters above sea level, where the climate became colder and connections with civilization severed. During the trek up the mountainous terrain, signs of ice and snow indicated further isolation. In this instance of going geographically north on the map, away from the warmth of familiarity and civilization, the cold ice positions the Arctic as a place of solitude.

Solitude is a common theme when paired with the concept of going north towards a cold place. In some ways it could be a pilgrimage to discover oneself in the icy landscape, or to separate oneself from an unwanted situation. In Rebecca Solnit’s case,

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14 Ibid.
15 Annapurna is a 55 kilometres long massif in the Himalayas in north-central Nepal. Annapurna I Main is the tenth highest mountain in the world. I trekked to the base camp of Annapurna I Main in October of 2013, the total journey took 14 days.
she pulls away from the difficulties of her life by accepting a writing residency to Iceland. “When everything else was falling apart, the far north came calling”\textsuperscript{16}, Solnit writes, “it was my ticket out of deep trouble”\textsuperscript{17}. The musician, Glenn Gould\textsuperscript{18} set his journey north to explore the concept of isolation in his inaugural radio broadcast \textit{The Idea of North} (1976), he states, “isolation is the indispensable component to human happiness.”\textsuperscript{19} Gould nevertheless maintained his belief in the possibility of a new creativeness awakened by such isolation.

Much like Solnit, my acceptance into the \textit{Arctic Circle Expedition} came as a welcomed escape from a taxing time in my life. The act of going north would stop my troubles in motion, freeze-frame problems so that I could come back to them when I had found some perspective. I understood that the experience I was about to embark upon would be purely my own. To depart from my known world and into an unknown.

\textsuperscript{16} Solnit, \textit{The Faraway Nearby}, 73.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 75.
\textsuperscript{18} After retiring from being an international concert pianist, Glenn Gould took a train deep into the northern regions of Canada to work on his first radio documentary, \textit{The Idea of North} 1967.
The ice in the far north represents a place that is set apart from the world to which I was acquainted. Coming from “temperate zones”, much of what we thought was universal were in fact untrue. Ice is blue, snow insulates, the sun shines at midnight, nothing decays. “Cold is stability and warmth can be treacherous.” The idea of going north and reaching an incomprehensible origin creates an insistent magnetism that pulled at my imagination. The notion of an imagined north later became an integral aspect to my practice post Arctic Circle expedition.

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21 Ibid.
Dream

“The far north is an unearthly earth” – Rebecca Solnit

Was there a magnet pulling me? Were pioneers of Arctic explorations, such as Pytheas of Massalia or Fridtjof Nansen, just attempting to find an edge of the earth? Often referenced as “journey to the edge”, much like when I was a child scaling the edge of the pool, was it an attempt to contextualise their place in a floating world? The great white north is a place of endlessness but not of possibility, it was a place you would go to witness and come to say “I have seen the end”. The Arctic is often referred to as the “End of the World”, and associated with apocalyptic warnings. The “landscape promised [explorers] a kind of immortality: the immortality of cold in which nothing decays.”

22 Solnit, “Rebecca Solnit: The Far North of Experience”.
23 Pytheas, Greek sailor, reported sailing northwest of the British Isles for six days until “an ocean of slush ice and fog so thick one could not sail through” forced him to turn back. Pytheas was the first person to record a description of the midnight sun, the aurora, and Polar ice in 325 BC.
24 Scott Mackenzie and Anna Westerståhl Stenport, "All that’s frozen melts into air: Arctic cinemas at the end of the world." Public 24, no. 48 (December 2013): 71.
Glenn Gould dreamt of going north since he was a child, “when he pored over maps of the region, then over aerial photographs and geological surveys”26.

I’ve been intrigued for quite a long time ... by that incredible tapestry of tundra and taiga country. I’ve read about it, written about it occasionally, and even pulled [on] my parka once and gone there. I’ve remained of necessity an outsider and the North has remained for me a convenient place to dream about, spin tales about sometimes, and, in the end, avoid.27

Gould in his broadcast, The Idea of North, expresses his long-lasting desire to visit the great white. He created an ideal place within his mind of the sublime. Though it seems once he had been there, Gould preferred the north he had dreamt about rather than the one he was physically faced with. His description of pulling on his parka to bear through the northern cold suggests that north as a lived experience was definitely not for him.28 Gould’s broadcast featured interviews of five people who had experienced the north physically, the voices meditate “on the mentality and metaphor of North”. He finds comfort in the

voices as “they are not his own”, as if coming from a dream, they weave in and out of each other in no uncertain terms and provide Gould with an imagined north.

I had always viewed the Arctic as a place inside my mind – it was a place to dream about. The idea of an unknowable origin seems to resurface in the Arctic north, “there is an insistent attraction that pulls at the imagination”, a fascination with its beauty and dangers. After I was accepted to the residency program, I spent two years dreaming of this environment. Imagining a world, detached from everything familiar, to be inside a blank page. “The idea of North, or Northness, as something original or primal is fueled by stories”, either imagined or through the experience of others. Though, the true north may never be discovered as each experience can be entirely subjective.

“The Arctic is not so much a region as a dream: the dream of a unique, unattainable and compellingly attractive world. It is the last imaginary place ... the ultimate otherworld.” Robert McGhee’s rendition of the Arctic as a “dream” resonates with me on the concept of realness. Neuroscientists have discovered that our dream states reveal similar brain patterns to our waking life.

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29 Ibid., 45.
30 Blessing and Solnit, ed., True North, 8.
31 Ibid., 14.
32 Mackenzie and Stenport, "All That's Frozen Melts into Air", 71.
Neurologically speaking, dreaming and being awake can be perceived as identical. Aristotle believed that dreams were a consequence of waking experience. When awake, we can imagine objects to a certain degree, and when we dream, our imagination becomes so potent that our dreamt experiences feel real. If reality and dreams share the same neurological paths, perhaps this is why my Arctic experience felt like a mixture of both reality and dream state.

Since humans began to explore the earth, the Arctic has always been understood as the end of the world. McGhee’s image of the “dream” and “ultimate other world” performs the concept of an external and internal space. There is no question that the external space is in fact real – history serves us an archive of accounts by explorers and Inuits. The Arctic existence has been further perpetuated by moving images throughout the twentieth century. Though “profound ‘lack of language codes and artistic conventions’ hampered the possibility of conveying the complexity of the Arctic landscape”, I caught myself questioning, can I as an artist truly convey my subjective experience of the Arctic?

36 MacKenzie and Stenport, Films on Ice, 3.
37 Mackenzie and Stenport, "All That’s Frozen Melts into Air.", 72.
Rectangle inside a Circle

As a child I was exposed to images from *Operation Breakthrough* from the year 1988. Three grey whales were found to be trapped under a pack of ice in the Beaufort Sea near Alaska. I can’t recall the circumstance of seeing these images, I just remember my father recounting the story to me and perhaps showing me a documentary or an image. The image I was shown depicted a large expansive landscape, only a thin line separating land from sky. In the foreground, a large manmade rectangle carved out of the white unforgiving ice sheets to make way for whales to come up for air. Sometimes I wonder? Were these rectangles freeing the whale, or trapping them inside its edges? The whales could only function within the rectangular holes as it was the only way for them to access air, but at the same time they were completely restricted by this set up.

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*Operation Breakthrough* was an international effort to free three grey whales from pack ice in the Beaufort Sea, Alaska, 1988. The whales’ plight generated media attention that led to the collaboration of multiple governments and organisations to free them.
Figure 5. David Withrow, *Operation Breakthrough*, February 1st 1988
It is evident through *Operation Breakthrough* that the snowy landscape is distinctively synonymous with the concept of danger and threat. “There is a dualism inherent in Arctic imaginings as both treacherous terrain and spiritual space”39. The Arctic is unforgiving, not only in its extreme weather conditions, but also from the wildlife. This danger was not lost on me during my twenty-one-day Arctic Circle residency. Our program coordinators conducted numerous safety procedures for the participants to memorise, with daily briefings on potential threats the Arctic could pose. On our first few days, we stayed in the town called Longyearbyen in Svalbard. The town was very small, with only a few main streets leading to shops. There was a map which had a perimeter drawn around the town, no one was to cross this line without an armed guard accompanying them, in case we happened upon a polar bear. I didn't know it at the time, but invisible safety perimeters would be a challenging aspect that would reverberate throughout my interactions with the Arctic landscape.

The invisible line cut into the landscape much like an architectural structure. One wasn’t able to walk through a wall just like one wasn’t be able to cross the invisible safety perimeters. It created the possibility of an “inside and an outside”\textsuperscript{40} – the wall separated us from the world on one side, and created another framed world, on its other side. The space on land that was selected for us by the Arctic residency coordinators, while seemingly still within the wilderness, became a constructed space. Though the line was to primarily divide us away from the dangers of the wilderness, it also provided new connections within. As the walls most direct purpose was to “separate or divide, the wall equally functions to select and bring in”.\textsuperscript{41}

\textsuperscript{40} Elizabeth Grosz, \textit{Chaos, Territory, Art: Deleuze and the Framing of the Earth} (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 23.

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid.
Whenever someone visits a place as unusual as the bottom of an ocean, atop a very high mountain, or to the far north, there is a definite pre-expedition procedure to aid in protecting oneself from harmful situations. I know this as I have now been on all these trips. Each time, a layer was required to separate my vulnerable body from extremes. Months leading up to the Arctic Circle residency, our cohort was given a list of instructions on how to best equip ourselves. I went through the list and imagined what I would use each item for. When it came to footwear the list stated, “Boots: waterproof, hiking boot, insulated
and rated for at least -20 Celsius. Plus a second pair of insulated, high profile rubber boots\textsuperscript{42}, in addition we also needed rubber soled shoes to wear inside the ship. When I was packing my three pairs of boots into the tiny rectangular suitcase, I pictured myself strapping into these boots and going on an imaginary walk. How would these boots hold up during a long trek through the thick snow? Could they protect me from the dangerous conditions of the Arctic? There was an overwhelming concern for the fragility of my body against the wilderness of the north. Through the familiarity of suburban life in the south, I forgot how dangerous a place like the Arctic really was. I noticed during the course of our expedition, I was very much separated from the direct wilderness, either through visible or invisible barriers; the ship’s wall, my protective clothing, armed guards, portholes, and even my camera.

The expanse of smooth snow and jagged ice rising into small peaks and ranges seemed to go on forever, to dwarf the figures pursuing each other across it, and to threaten or promise to swallow them. They were small dark forms like two letters on an otherwise blank page, overwhelmed by that whiteness.\textsuperscript{43}

\textsuperscript{42} Planning and Logistics October 2015, PDF document emailed by The Arctic Circle Expedition Director Aaron T. Connor.

\textsuperscript{43} Solnit, The Faraway Nearby, 39.
Solnit recalls this imagery of pristine Arctic whiteness from the opening scenes of the cinematic version of Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*. A scene Solnit came across as a teen on television, which “ launched” her “lasting desire to go [North]”\(^{44}\). Solnit’s first encounter is notably through a rectangular screen, a digital window, that would deliver the sensations of the Arctic to her. The screen became the layer which protected Solnit from the dangers of the north.

When encountering a representation of the Arctic there is an option to turn off the screen, close the book, or to listen elsewhere – the dangers are optional. Visual representations cemented the view of the Arctic as a “sublime space overwhelmed by nature and as a point of desolation”\(^{45}\). Even Gould, whom fantasied about the north since childhood, would learn his distaste with being physically situated in the north. He felt comfort in appreciating the Arctic from a distance – it was a place he’d rather “ avoid”. In the words of Immanuel Kant “the beautiful in nature is a question of the form of the object, and this consists in limitation, whereas the sublime is to be found in an object even devoid of form, so far as it immediately involves, or else by its presence provokes, a representation of *limitlessness* ...”\(^{46}\). Kant suggests that the sublime “cannot be contained in any sensible form” and that “one must be at a safe distance to contemplate the terrors of nature.”\(^{47}\)

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\(^{44}\) Ibid.  
Figure 8. Leela Schauble, *Landings* (still), 2016, HD video with Sound, 8 minutes 4 seconds
*Landings* (2016) is an exploration on the complexities and layers that come with visiting a new environment and encountering the sublime. Every day our cohort conducted an activity we called “landings”, where we would prepare to leave the safety of the ship and explore land for the first time. Each location was different and very rarely did we repeat visiting the same place twice. The video is a reflection on how I first experienced the Arctic wilderness and the separation from the landscape I had experienced. Although I travelled with a large group of artists, our presence seemed insignificant against the backdrop of this barren place.

The video contains common tropes of the north - cold, inhospitable, and static, an environment impossible to comprehend and seemingly limitless. The sublime view is disturbed by a visual impairment of some sort on screen, and soon with time it reveals a manmade structure, somewhat mimicking the cut out rectangular shape from the whale rescue that was *Operation Breakthrough*. The resulting rectangular structure closely resembles the monolith featured in Stanley Kubrick’s film *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968). Hovering almost out of place, it reads like a portal to a dystopian landscape. Although there are humans dotted along the screen, their presence does not yet impact the space. As the structure slowly forms and begins to dominate the landscape, it serves as a barrier, a layer between viewer and landscape.
The monolith in Kubrick’s film appears three times at three different locations. It dominates the room or landscape which it appears, giving no clues of its origin or what purpose it serves. When the first monolith appears in *2001: A Space Odyssey*, a tribe of apes gingerly approach the structure to caress it. While the apes interact with the monolith, a spark is created in their consciousness. They gain a self-awareness about themselves and their surroundings, gazing towards an object in the environment to discover a club that can be used as a tool. This transcendent experience is repeated with a more evolved man set in the future, this time the monolith discovered on the moon. It becomes man’s mission to discover the mythical qualities behind the monolith.

The Arctic has been mythologized for centuries, “the virginal ices covering the poles have for centuries stimulated robust visions, serving as blank screens on which men have projected deep reveries -tyrannical narcissisms and spiritual sublimities.”48 There’s a similarity with the Arctic, the monolith, and even the rectangle cut out of *Operation Breakthrough*, one of sublime. They all possess an experience mixing fear and delight, terror and awe.49 The rectangle offers an oxygen portal for the whales, yet traps them in a looped cycles of dipping in and out to survive. The monolith seemingly aids man in

discovering tools, yet ultimately generates the HAL4000 – a tool that threatens humankind. The Arctic is a place for great contemplation but also poses a terror, “terror is in all cases...the ruling principle of the sublime”⁵⁰.

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Control

8.00 - 9.00: Breakfast and briefing on the “morning landing”.

9.30 - 10.00: Layer on gear and equipment for the landing. Guides sets up a safety perimeter on land for us to work within.

10.30: Sign out/sign on board prior to taking the zodiac onto our landing.

10.40 - 12.40: Work at the landing site, staying well within the boundaries mapped out by the guides.

13.00 - 14.00: Lunch and briefing of our “afternoon landing” site
14.00 – 14.30: Layer on gear and equipment for second landing. Guides set up a safety perimeter on land.

14.30 – 14.40: Sign out/sign on board prior to taking the zodiac onto the second landing.

14.40 – 16.40: Work at the landing site, staying well within the boundaries mapped out by the guides.

17.00: The most sacred time of the day: afternoon tea and cake.

19.30: Dinner followed by a presentation given by each artist in residence. Sometimes followed by a movie night.
What separated the expedition north from a dream state was the series of routines that were put in place for us. The realness came from the crew members of *Antigua* guiding us through each day with safety instructions and mandatory procedures. One of which was to properly account for yourself at all times, for example, when we went on to land, we had to indicate through a mark on a sign-out sheet. Once we returned we would need to place another mark on the existing slash. With each circumstance there was a different symbol. This eliminated a sense of freedom— we were simply not allowed to lose ourselves in the landscape or to wander off like the penguin from the Werner Herzog documentary, *Encounters at the end of the World.*
We were anchored by the heavy boots in order to protect our feet from the cold, guarded by invisible barriers our armed guides had laid out at each landing site. During our first landing, we visited an active glacier named Svearbreen. Active glaciers are extremely dangerous at a close distance, as not only can a mass amount of ice break at any moment, sending shards as large as one’s head flying through the air, but there is also a possibility of glacier breakages to cause tsunamis. Once a glacier breaks off a piece of ice, you can hear a huge cracking thunderous sound coming from that direction. To keep the participants safe from dangerous active glaciers, we would often land in an area close to inactive parts of the same glacier.

During our visit to Svearbreen, there was only a small part of land for all twenty-seven participants to stand on. The invisible lines mapped out by our guides restrict our small space further, and creates tension amongst the artists as we are all struggling to find an uninhabited frame to document the landscape. The theme of frustration and amusement of this situation continues throughout the trip.

In the movie Encounters at the end of the World (2007), Werner Herzog captures a penguin waddling in the opposite direction to his fellow penguins and into certain death. Herzog narrates that even if scientists were to intervene, the penguin would turn around and go back out into the landscape. The mystery as to why the penguin headed out on its own would never be solved.
The creation of the work Northern Veil (2016) was an amalgamation of environmental circumstances, and one of an honest reflection of my Arctic experience. Halfway through the Arctic expedition, we began to notice the rapid changes in the weather. Days becoming shorter, visibility getting lower, conditions changing within hours. I found myself in the ebb of excitement for the trip, days slipped into each other and motivation for creating projects each day decreased. About twelve days into the trip, I started to doubt my capability of continuing on with the project at hand. I felt limited in myself, only
wanting to stay in my bunk bed and looking out of my small porthole, watching the water wash by. I felt like Glenn Gould, having created a great expectation of the north in my mind only to be let down by my limited physical capacity to endure it. I recall begrudgingly placing one heavy booted foot in front of the other, snot dripping out of my numb nose, participating in another “landing”. Watching the snow fall all around me and feeling lost in every sense of the word, physically and mentally. I looked out at the horizon and– I wanted to cover my eyes and un-see the landscape. In an attempt to control my vision through the camera view finder, I begin to cover the lens with my neck warmer. This action obstructed much of the landscape within the video, blackness of the fabric in stark contrast to the whiteness of the landscape. *Northern Veil* distinctively creates the sensation of looking outwards, either through one’s own eyelids or pass a curtain, there is an impression of an exterior and an interior.
Circle inside a Rectangle

During the process of attempting to capture the Arctic landscape, one cannot avoid the consequence of framing. The act of limiting the environment into a small rectangular shape creates tension between the space outside of the camera’s view finder and inside the frame. How does one choose to frame nature? There has to be an understanding on the effects of imposing a restriction to the landscape and how that may implicate the understanding of the space. Gilles Deleuze defines the act of framing as a way of creating the “plane of composition”\(^52\), when positioned within the context of art, the frame “disjars, distends, and transforms”\(^53\) the image within and outside of it. “Art thus captures an element, a fragment, of chaos in the frame and creates or extracts from it not an image or representation, but a sensation.”\(^54\) While out in the Arctic landscape, my goal wasn’t to try and capture a true representation, but perhaps capture my memory and experiences within the landscape, and to therefore transport a sensation. “The frame separates”\(^55\), cuts into space, as a way of ordering nature into a man-made structure which can aid in the human understanding of nature. In that sense, the act of framing is a way of ordering chaos

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\(^52\) Grosz, Chaos, Territory, Art, 18.
\(^53\) Ibid., 27.
\(^54\) Ibid.
\(^55\) Ibid., 23.
which would “entrap chaotic shards”\textsuperscript{56} of nature. “This cutting of the space of the earth through the fabrication of the frame is the very gesture that composes both ... inside and outside, interior and landscape”\textsuperscript{57}. Framing the Arctic Circle into a rectangle detaches the image, no longer anchoring it to the natural place to which it once belonged. Transported through a series of re-framing, either through video editing, physical frames, or projections, onto framed spaces.

Architecturally and metaphorically speaking, a rectangular frame can take on the form of a window. “The frame can be converted into the window, which selectively envisions its natural exterior...within the enframed space of the room.”\textsuperscript{58} The window has the capability to “selectively” bring in a “framed outside”\textsuperscript{59}. During my Arctic Circle expedition, there had been several instances where windows transported the outside in. My first glance at the Arctic landscape was through an aeroplane window. The window was the key to an initial understanding of this natural space and yet was not fully representative of it. The image delivered through that window brought the sensation of coldness, isolation and stillness, and as I soared above at hundreds of kilometers per hour, the view was motionless and unwavering. This instance of seeing through, and the separation from the interior and exterior, would not be my only one. I would often encounter windows throughout the Arctic

\textsuperscript{56} Grosz, Chaos, Territory, Art, 18.
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., 23.
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid.
residency (figure 12); looking out from the lodge we stayed at, out of the ships porthole next to my bed, out of the portholes of the saloon, there was always a great sense of looking outwards.

Figure 12. Leela Schauble, Research image: Windows (Svalbard from aeroplane, Longyearben lodge, Porthole on-board Antigua ship), 2015, digital photograph

When speaking of these windows and framing within art, how does video art compare with these concepts? Technically speaking, there are two ways in which a digital moving image can be viewed, either through a projection where the image is placed onto a surface or from within a screen where the image emanates out from within the surface. “Like the frame of the
architectural window and the frame of the painting, the frame of the moving-image screen marks a separation – an ontological gut-between the material surface of the wall and the view contained within its aperture.”

Figure 13. Robert Whitman, Window, 1963, DVD, window, and white backdrop, installation dimensions’ variable, video loop, 6 minutes 27 seconds, http://www.pacegallery.com/artists/504/robert-whitman

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Robert Whitman’s *Window* (1964) is a material expression of containing an image within the frame as well as transporting viewers past the projected space. “As if ripped from a dream” the installation displays a domestic window, physically set into a wall within the gallery space. While peering through Whitman’s window, into the space beyond the material frame, viewers can “see a pastoral landscape through which a woman will pass and disrobe.” The rear projection pushes the image towards the window frame, pressing up against the wood, in an attempt to enter the interior space. The landscape depicted in the projection is of a forest. Through the use of a figure entering from outside the frame, the space of the forest is implied to continue outside of the window. “This window on the world provokes a spectatorial experience,” the window frames are a real physical object which is then met with an illuminated surface projection. The viewer is pulled in by the enticing imagery of the forest and the woman and yet pushed back out by the frames. Nevertheless, the window frames allow the viewing to take place and sets the parameters for the image to be viewed by the audience. There is a distinct “phenomenal experience of space” through “this construction”, in turn splitting between what “we can navigate with our corporeal body” and what “we navigate through our affective imaginations.”

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62 Ibid.
63 Ibid.
64 Ibid.


In the film work of Tacita Dean we see a different usages of framed structures which works to a similar purpose of hollowing out an interior to the screen. Dean’s films, *Bubble House* (1999) and *Film 2011* (2012) visually recall the shape of a cinema or TV screen and the frames of a filmstrip (figure 16). Dealing with the interiority of architectural frames she invite us to inhabit alternative imaginative landscapes; there is a sense of “imaginative escape and expulsion and as the material to form a spatial structure into which the viewing consciousness, and viewing desire, can be projected”\(^{66}\)

\(^{65}\) Trodd, *Screen/Space*, 167.

\(^{66}\) Ibid.
*Porthole* (2016), similarly to Whitman’s installation, has a constructed physical frame in which the moving digital image can be observed from. The installation displays a black acrylic box with a two-way mirror on either side. Within the floor of the box displays a screen portraying a porthole belonging to the side of a ship. The porthole sits just at the sea level and allows the water to wash over in unpredictable manners. “But over time, as we fix upon the moving image depicted in the world beyond, the experience of space itself becomes strange and uncanny.” *Porthole* has been installed in two different circumstances, one
inside a dark gallery space and the other inside a light gallery space. I was interested in viewing this particular work in two separate settings in order to determine the effects each environment had on the installation. When the lights are out and windows sealed, a gallery space can almost be pitch black. Suddenly, the viewer is encompassed by this darkness, becoming an invisible and disembodied spectator. The gallery space “fosters an environment in which the sensing individual plays only a supporting role to a disembodied and discerning ‘eye’.”\(^6\) The darkened gallery space creates a sense of interiority, and portrays more accurately my personal inner space when sleeping next to the porthole. For the installation in the lighter space (figure 18), the visible structure of the installation aims to turn the viewers’ attention away from the illusion of the screen and onto its material space. The spectator becomes a participant, as they are forced to navigate their line of sight or cup their hands around their eyes to create darkness. They are able to distance themselves from the absorbing effects of the video and negotiate their experience with the materiality of the work.

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Figure 19. Leela Schauble *Northern Veil*, HD video, two-way mirror acrylic, white acrylic, dimensions variable, Student Gallery Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne
Northern Veil is a video and sound installation that simulates the experience of peering through a black fabric-like obstacle, trying to get a glimpse of the snow covered landscape without gaining much information. In an enclosed dark room, the footage is projected through a two-way acrylic mirror and onto a white acrylic sheet. The two sheets were angled at 45 degrees, allowing a person to come and stand inside of the structure. The blackness moves around the screens with fluidity, opening and closing to reveal barren Arctic landscapes, as if viewing it through inside an eye or behind a veil. Every few minutes it fades to complete blackness and blinks to the next image.

Through each scene, it could appear that the landscape is a motionless image—nothing except the black veil moving around the frame. The two-way mirror allows the projection to come through onto the white acrylic, but also reflects the image on to an opposing wall. When a person places themselves within the two sheets they are in fact able to see three projections of the same video. The projection is one-meter square, enough to gain significance within the gallery space but not large enough to make out small details from a distance. Once the spectator comes closer to the installation, they find themselves within the wedge of acrylic sheet and the two-way mirror directly places them within the environment. Therefore, the landscape is rendered less empty than at first appearance, as the spectator is contained within it, implicated and suggestively trapped. Northern Veil harvests feelings of frustration and curiosity, the black veil being an intruder on the space, and doesn’t garner
enough information for the spectator to take away with them. As the black veil provocatively reveals small glimpses, the sense of curiosity increases garnering further viewing of the infinitely looped video.

When placing these video installation works within the gallery, I can’t help but note that I’ve created an indoor experience of the outdoor environment. There is a sense of looking outwards from *Northern Veil*, and subsequently most of my video works. Looking out of a porthole, looking out from the ships deck, looking out from the neck warmer. The gallery acts as my internal space – a space I feel safe where I can explore the Arctic further at a distance. The gallery space, “is a highly mediated, temperature-controlled and sterile space, resolutely segregated from the rest of the world.”

In his seminal text, *Inside the White Cube* (1976), Brian O’Doherty investigates the controlled context of modern art exhibitions. He argues, “the space offers the thought that while eyes and minds are welcome, space-occupying bodies are not.” The outside world is also denied entry to a gallery space– as if it would contaminate, windows are sealed, walls smoothed out and painted. If the outside world is restricted from the gallery space, perhaps it fosters an ideal situation to view it as an internal contemplative space for my video works.

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68 Bishop-Stall, “Arctic Exposure.”, 192.
Signal (2016) is an experiment which sought to communicate with the icy landscape of the Arctic. I placed LED lights within the northern landscape to begin a dialog, suggestive of a line of fluid communication. By working with light signals and subtly skewing the everyday visual interactions, the goal of these works is to shake myself out of a specific habit of seeing and understanding a natural environment.

Figure 20. Leela Schauble, Signals & Snow light, 2016, screens, HD video and sound, installation at BUS Projects, Melbourne

Figure 21. Leela Schauble Just Tell Me When It's Okay, 2016, HD video with sound, 4 minutes 12 seconds, Trocadero Art Space
Figure 22. Leela Schauble *Landings*, 2016, HD video with Sound, 8 minutes 4 seconds, Seventh Gallery, Melbourne

Figure 23. Leela Schauble *Dark Waves*, 2016, HD video with Sound, acrylic sheet, dimensions variable, Student Gallery Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne
I had installed this work in a small gallery space at BUS Projects (figure 21), mounting screens against a wall instead of the usual projections. I wanted to view these works with a clear frame, therefore the materiality of the screen is made obvious from the lightness of the gallery. Rather than having the screens sit directly on a wall, like a virtual window, I tilted them forwards and sideways. This was an attempt to create a three dimensional space that could occupy the space, pushing the image towards the viewer. We are exposed to frames every day, through “the material frames of movie screens, television sets,” and “computer screens”70. The dominance of these frames within our visual systems is quite compelling. Our bodies naturally react to the geometric rectangularity of the frame, automatable duped into the act of viewing.71

Both strategies of installing video works within a dark and light gallery spaces created different outcomes. In darkness, the spectator could lose themselves to an internalised environment, where becoming invisible to the space created a sense of anonymity. Spectators are given an opportunity to experience the works in solitude, much the same way that I experienced the Arctic: in isolation, away from civilization.

70 Friedberg, The Virtual Window, 15.
71 Ibid., 16.
Dream

Virtual (Latin, virtus, for strength or power) of, relating to, or possessing a power of acting without the agency of matter; being functionally or effectively but not formally of its kind.\(^{72}\)

Computer terminology invokes “virtual” to refer to a digital object or experience without physical existence. Similarly, how dream state is an internalised experience which creates solid memories. The virtual, like dreams, is a matter of materiality versus the immateriality\(^{73}\). Virtual doesn’t just refer to only electronically mediated or digitally produced images and experiences, but it is also a substitute. “It is the immaterial proxy for the material”\(^{74}\), or how I like to interpret, a copy of the real. The term becomes a key marker of a “secondary order”, that there is an original and a reproduction, “the image and its likeness”\(^{75}\). The video works that I have produced and installed within the gallery space can be likened to a virtual sort of Arctic. The frame is only able to sustain a virtual northness, one that exists on its own, away from the original landscape. The

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\(^{72}\) The term “virtual” has long existed in the discourse of optics, and was an operable philosophical concept in the late nineteenth century.

\(^{73}\) Friedberg, *The Virtual Window*, 8.

\(^{74}\) Ibid.

\(^{75}\) Ibid.
virtual image projected begin to have its own liminal materiality. Much like the dream state begins to form real memories in
the mind, memories of lived experiences.

Virtuality of the image does not imply direct mimesis, but a transfer – more like a metaphor – from one plane of meaning and
appearance to another.\textsuperscript{76} The video installation is a vehicle for this transference of experiences from the North. \textit{Porthole} (figure
17) isn’t a real porthole that looks out to sea, nor a copy. It is a virtual porthole which transfers the experience of looking out of
a porthole repetitively throughout a journey. \textit{Northern Veil} (figure 19) and \textit{Dark Waves} (figure 23) similarly use the darkness of
the surrounding gallery space as a vehicle to portray the virtual image to the viewer. These works demonstrate a way of
producing an interiority for the spectator’s consideration, and facilitate a solitary experience akin to my own experiences in
the north. It is like being invited to a dream and having the freedom to explore your own place within it. \textit{Northern Veil} and
\textit{Dark Waves} further propel the concept of the dream state by defying the frames onto which the videos are projected. A screen
and acrylic sheet are set up as the canvas for the projected image, but simultaneously push the image onto another surface,
such as the wall. Interlacing the space within the north and the gallery space, this effect rhythmically joins the concept of
interior to exterior. The imagination of the mind to the physical body.

\textsuperscript{76} Friedberg, \textit{The Virtual Window}, 11.
The north, the virtual and the dream embody apartness – being separated from the real and present moment. The frame, the screen and the installation structures act as the counterpart – it represents a dichotomy, and inflicts opposing sensations on the viewer.
Ice

Ice in the Arctic comes in many forms – snow, expansive sheets, glaciers, caves, icebergs. But what is most notable of ice in the north, is the “life” it seems to possess. When being described, ice can possess qualities of something living, much like an animal. “Slow, steady, silent and measured” ice can lurk and “their movement is like that of one who says little, but acts at the right moment with formidable force.”77 This force, reverberates throughout all ice forms, though it can also take on a docile demeanor, as ice can seem to be “deceptively passive”78.

Ice is active. Ice is controlling. It has the ability to preserve time and history into bubbles deep within a glacier, only allowing escape after a considerable amount of time. Sheets of ice dictate a ship’s voyage, dictating whether it can continue on its journey or must turn around. Ice can imprison three whales under an impenetrable layer. The capabilities of ice mimics that of a frame. However, even in the cold Arctic landscape, ice can melt. Just as the hard edges of a frame can dissolve, to let the water trickle out from its grips.

77 Charter, “The Gender of Ice and Snow”, 32.
78 Barry Lopez, Arctic Dreams, (Open Road Media an imprint of Open Road Integrated Media on, June 25, 2013) 275.
In Sequence (2016) takes on some of the themes of ice being perceived as passive, and the slippage which occurs outside of the frame’s view. Without reference to any object surrounding these pieces of ice, scale becomes nearly impossible to determine. As the ice sheets melt into the sea water, they also melt through the edge of the frame, each piece seemingly to continue onto the next.

Whereas for the video work, Just Tell Me When It’s Okay (figure 21), a piece of glacial ice becomes a central object to the framed landscape. My own disembodied voice reverberates out of the camera’s frame, seemingly giving instructions and controlling the backdrop for the ice block. The ice block in Just Tell Me When It’s Okay is just a smaller piece of an iceberg, fished out of the sea and placed on the zodiac. Icebergs acts as “a messenger from the Arctic to southern seas”79, much like a message in a bottle, but within the ice holds frozen time, it “embodies an originating past impossible for man to comprehend”.80 The ice block itself was only a small fragment of a much larger whole, yet was heavy and awkward to extract from the sea. It was “impenetrable but living”81 and weighed down by age. Within Inuit beliefs, “the iceberg is a living thing, “it is dangerous to approach. It takes you with its icy hands and devours you”82.

79 Charter, ”The Gender of Ice and Snow”, 31.
80 Ibid.
81 Ibid.
82 Ibid.
To capture these varied qualities of ice, I played between the frames in which they are captured. In, allowing the fluidity of the form and idea of ice to melt throughout the video or to be held materially within the frame. The messenger from the Arctic floats between my imagination and my line of sight, bringing with it an intense complexity of what the North could be. The ice becomes more than just a symbol for the Arctic, but embodies a frame and controlled space. Once this space melts into the sea, the history dissolves with it and back to water everything goes.

Figure 24. Leela Schauble, *In Sequence*, 2016, HD video, 9 minutes 22 seconds

Figure 25. Leela Schauble, Seminar Installation, 2016, dimensions variable, Victoria College of the Arts, Melbourne
Water

“I reached my North and it had meaning” – Randall Jarrell “90 North”

As we huddle in a group, all 27 of us, we begin to defrost. Tears run down our faces as we know that our northern experience has come to an end. One by one each, each participant begins to trickle away through the airport gates, and for some, it would be the last time I may ever see them. As salty tears come down my face, I am not only saddened to leave a group of people who would be the select few in the world to empathise with my experience and I with theirs, but to know that I was returning south. The idea of going north became, for me, a state of mind. The beauty of the Arctic landscape came from the temporality of it – the Arctic I knew in my short stay would never be the same, perhaps it would cease to exist. And so through my practice, I have desperately tried to recreate and revisit the memories and my state of mind during my stay, exploring and understanding the solitude of my mind and the sensations I’ll never forget.
Randall Jarrell’s poem *90 North* personifies the state of dream, separateness and belonging. Portraying the dream of a child in bed, imagining the northern landscape and the adventures he may encounter but also the fear and retreat of isolation. This extract reminds me of the intensely personal north I experienced.

I reached my North and it had meaning.  
Here at the actual pole of my existence.  
Where all that I have done is meaningless.  
Where I die or live by accident alone—

I felt the “meaningless” after returning to the south, though the north held all the answers. It had the effect of taking me away from troubled places in my life and returning me to exactly where I left off. I feel like I once did in the swimming pool, surrounded by water and unable to breathe, with the experience sparking an unquenchable thirst to continue exploring an idea of a place inside myself.

I set out on this research to try and understand my experience on the Arctic Circle residency, and some of the limitations I encountered when trying to transfer this experience into a gallery space. Through Rebecca Solnit, Glenn Gould, and my own

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83 Caws, “Thinking North.”, 45.  
84 Ibid.
experience— the concept of solitude serves as an important purpose to understanding the internal sensations of being north. What becomes apparent through some of my installation outcomes, is that a darkened gallery space fosters such feelings of solitude. Viewers are able to move freely, without self-consciousness, around the gallery space and receive the virtual Arctic in which ever manner they choose.

I have found reoccurring shapes of the rectangle and circle to pose as frames for understanding limitations of capturing the Arctic experience. These frames serves as a way to help understand my own perspective of the Arctic landscape. What has become apparent in this investigation is that no matter how I may restrict modes of viewing the Arctic, such as through covering the camera lens, the imagination will always extend the image beyond the frame. The sublime “cannot be contained in any sensible form...”\(^8\), which explains my limitations in trying to represent the Arctic through digital forms – where screens are intrinsically bound by the edges of a frame.

Perhaps going north can exist as a sensation, which we filter through frames, imaginations and stories – a place where my Arctic virtually exists but can never truly be accessed.

\(^8\) Anyssa Neumann, “Ideas of North”, 39.
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Appendices

Appendix A
Images of works for Masters of Fine Arts presented for exhibition.

Figure 26. Leela Schauble, *Installation at VCA Masters Exhibition*, 2016, acrylic sheets, projection video with sound, dimensions variable
Figure 27. Leela Schauble, *Norther Veil*, 2016, HD video, two-way mirror acrylic, white acrylic, dimensions variable
Installation at VCA Masters Exhibition
Figure 28. Leela Schouble, *Porthole*, 2016, acrylic sheets, acrylic mirror, iPad video with sound, 30cm x 15cm x 15cm
Installation at VCA Masters Exhibition
Figure 29. Leela Schauble, *In Sequence*, 2016, plywood board, projection video with sound, 150cm x 600cm
Installation at VCA Masters Exhibition
Appendix B

Installation at VCA Masters Exhibition video documentation attachments list:

1. Leela Schauble, *Porthole*, 2016, acrylic sheets, acrylic mirror, iPad video with sound, 30cm x 15cm x 15cm
   Documentation video; Installation at VCA Masters Exhibition
2. Leela Schauble, *In Sequence*, 2016, plywood board, projection video with sound, 150cm x 600cm
   Documentation video; Installation at VCA Masters Exhibition
   Documentation video; Installation at VCA Masters Exhibition