

***True North***  
February 2–April 13, 2008

*True North* features the work of seven contemporary artists whose photographic or video-based projects evoke the tradition of Northern Romantic landscape painting as well as its legacy in later nineteenth-century photography. Yet unlike their Romantic antecedents, the works in this exhibition are historically and politically self-reflexive and call into question the notion of a pure, unchangeable North. Melancholic in tone, many of these photographs and video projections point instead to a certain loss of purity; they connect supposedly untouched northern landscapes to human protagonists who attempt to inhabit, colonize, or commune with the harsh nature of the North.

A place that most can only experience from a distance via various modes of mediation, the North as an idea presents an opportunity to examine the connection between reality and representation. Many of the works in *True North* probe this relationship, picturing a North that mutates, erases, or overwhelms. A fantastical place of fear, desire, refuge, conquest, and decay, the North has played an increasingly important role for many contemporary artists interested in the sociopolitical issues of colonization and pollution, as well as aesthetic notions of the sublime.

Drawn largely from the permanent collection of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, *True North* focuses on elegiac imagery by a group of international artists who have lived in or produced work about various northern locations, including the landscapes of Canada, Iceland, and the Netherlands.

**Stan Douglas (b. 1960)**

Stan Douglas frequently utilizes film and video to examine various historical events marked by sociopolitical repression. In his video installation *Nu•tka•* (1996), Douglas uncovers conflict in the wilderness of western Canada by pairing a polyphonic soundtrack performed by voice-actors playing two opposing colonizers with two staggered films of this remote region. Foregrounding the North as a site of traumatic loss, Douglas presents a landscape seemingly shattered by human strife.

**Olafur Eliasson (b. 1967)**

Olafur Eliasson is known for his large-scale installations that stage natural phenomena in architectural spaces. To produce his photographic work, he regularly returns to Iceland to record natural and artificial elements such as waterfalls, bridges, and lighthouses. In *The glacier series* (1999), he presents a serial grid of 42 images of vast glaciers documented from the high altitude of a prop plane.

**Elger Esser (b. 1967)**

Elger Esser's photographs of diverse European locales often draw out the starkness and austerity of his chosen landscapes. In *Ameland-Pier X* (2000)—one work in his Netherlands-based *Ameland-Pier* series—a thin, delicate horizon line remains one of the only visible features in Esser's dematerialized, white landscape.

**Thomas Flechtner (b. 1961)**

Working in series, Thomas Flechtner has documented a number of cold and remote regions in the northern hemisphere. For his *Walks* (1998–2001) series, Flechtner traced the topography of various snow fields with his skis, utilizing long exposures to “freeze” his laborious act in photographic records of a temporary, fragile performance.

**Roni Horn (b. 1955)**

Roni Horn has returned to Iceland consistently over the last 30 years, viewing the island's inhabitants and varied topography as a source of inspiration. In her large-

scale installation *Pi* (1997–98), a circular horizon of photographs points to various overlapping cycles that take place in and around Iceland: a couple and their habitual viewing of the daytime soap opera *Guiding Light*, the life cycle of eider ducks, and the tidal conditions of the North Sea.

**Armin Linke (b. 1966)**

Armin Linke has photographed countless locations both remote and urban, documenting the intersections of nature and artifice from China to the North Pole. In *Ski Dome, Tokyo, Japan* (1998), he pictures skiers enjoying the artificial North of a now-demolished ski slope in the suburbs of Tokyo.

**Orit Raff (b. 1970)**

Utilizing both photography and video, Orit Raff has investigated objects of domestic life—soap, bathroom floors, drains—in a search for traces of the bodies that come into contact with them. This highly self-reflexive practice often results in what appear to be vast, austere landscapes. In her looped video/performance *Palindrome* (2001), a female protagonist obsessively stacks felt within the domestic structure of an igloo in a fraught allusion to the attempt to keep warm. This futile gesture is made all the more absurd by its juxtaposition with footage of a coyote comfortably navigating a frigid landscape.

*True North* was organized by Jennifer Blessing, Curator of Photography at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York. A catalogue, published in both German and English editions, will appear on the occasion of the show with an introduction by Jennifer Blessing and an essay by Rebecca Solnit. The book (29 Euros) will also include individual entries on each artist represented in *True North*.

The exhibition is accompanied by a series of Artist's Talks, featuring several of the artists included in *True North*: Stan Douglas, Elger Esser, Thomas Flechtner, Armin Linke, and Orit Raff.

For further information:

Contact: Julia Rosenbaum  
Phone/Fax: +49-30-202093-21/ -20  
e-mail: julia.rosenbaum@db.com  
Internet: www.deutsche-guggenheim.de

Photo material can be downloaded directly from the Internet at  
[www.photo-files.de/guggenheim](http://www.photo-files.de/guggenheim).