



“Shapes of Time:: Painting with sunlight in the arctic”

In Ny Ålesund we had to come up with a special plan. This town is closed for regular visitors, it is a science town only. Cruise ships pass by and tourists can briefly visit, but it is merely a place for field work. The Dutch polar station is situated in this town and is run by Maarten Loonen. Maarten offered to help me out so I had to make life as easy as possible for him. When I saw the strainer hanging in

our kitchen I immediately saw a plan for a construction that could hold a number of 12 or so cameras. This I prepared and send it to Spitsbergen where Maarten climbed up onto the highest building and installed it. Polar bears could not reach that high, and still the only ones that found this an interesting object were Arctic terns. After two months Maarten closed the shutters and gave the cameras to me.



BEHIND THE SCENES

UDO PRINSEN

My mother was born a city girl, my father a country boy. As a child I grew up on a farm in the east of the Netherlands, in my spare time drawing and dreaming of a cultural vibrant life in the city. I knew the country life was not for me.

While still in school, I had the opportunity to do an internship in a big animation studio in Vancouver called Rocketship Ltd., run by filmmaker Marv Newland. It was a dream come true to travel to Canada where so much knowledge was gathered under the umbrella of an animation studio with a zany name. I loved it. I started out the traditional way, sitting behind a desk with a light box to see through a layers of paper.

Over the years this light box transformed into Apple Performa, then to imac, Apple Pro, laptops, and just when I started to feel a bit numb from using a mouse and small wacom pad, the Cintiq brought back that feeling of the late nineties, I was finally back behind a drawing table.

Solar tracks can be directly recorded through a lensless pinhole camera and 'written' onto light sensitive paper. The exposure time can be months, years. The images in this project have been exposed from several hours to just over 2 months.

Evolving nature

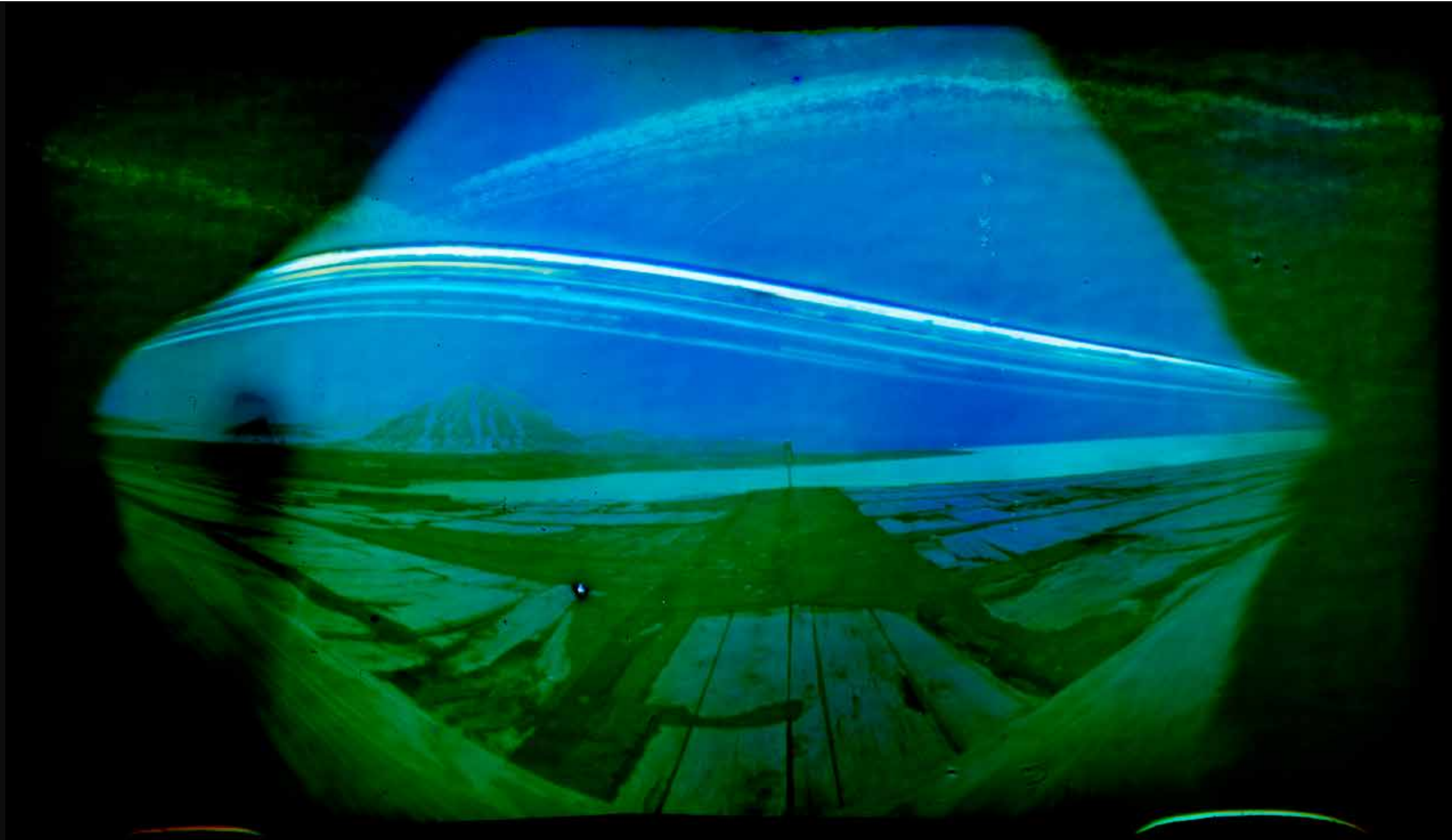
Many of the projects I could direct or help create were and still are very fulfilling, such as working for international and national institutes, help creating cartoons, imagery, informative and educational films for health care and each year producing an independent project. Luckily, often the theme of nature is part of client work, but still involves sitting behind a desk. This lifestyle was getting to me after awhile, and I started to dream of a working life that could involve me going OUT into that nature a bit more often, because I had a secret longing for country life. People started to help me find projects like a literary sound walk in Amsterdam Forest and films and trailers that took me away from my desk for a bit.

Eureka

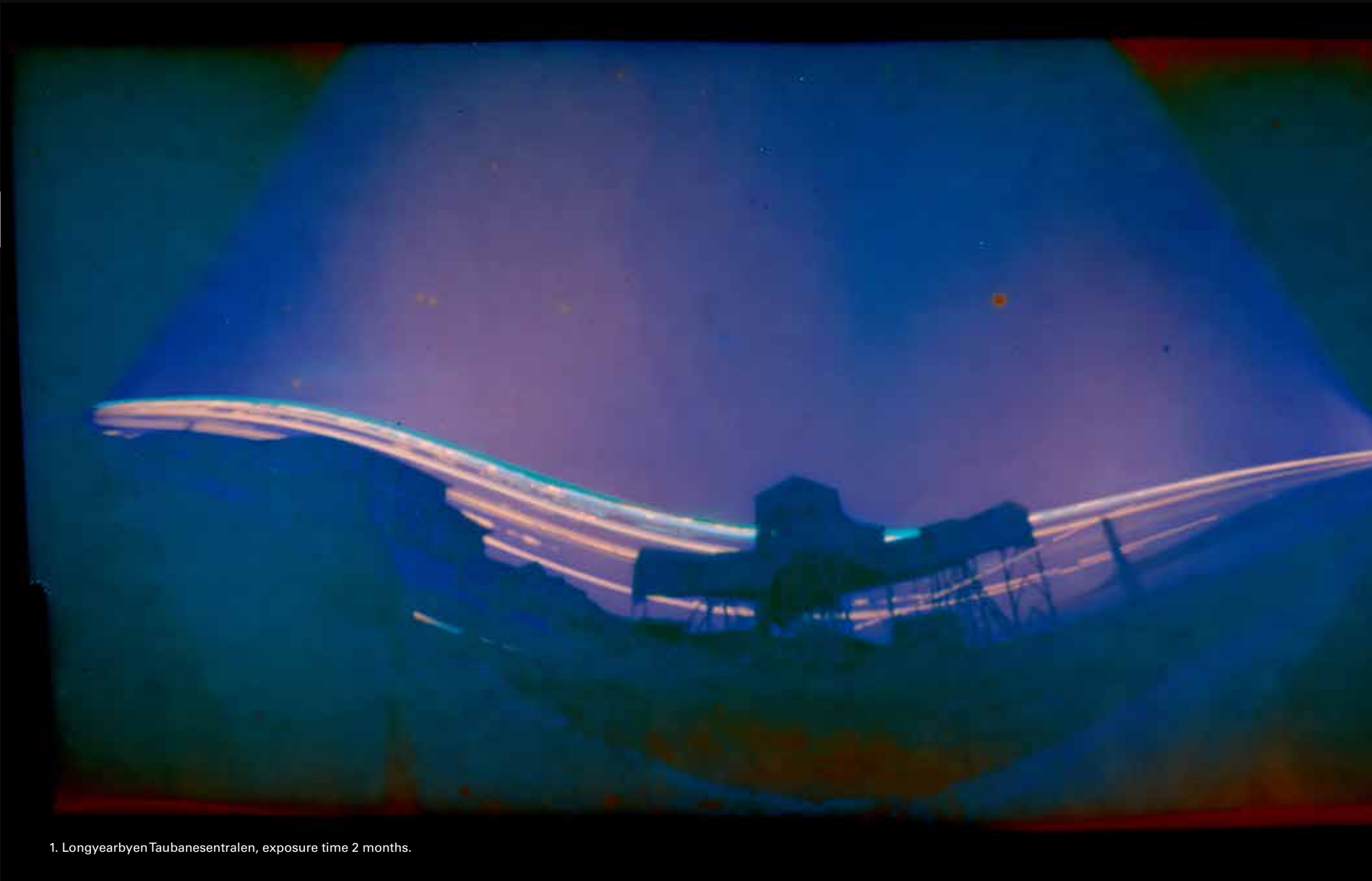
And then I found a request for artists to become part of a large Dutch scientific polar expedition. It took only a minute and I was signed up. The expedition leaders wanted artists who could write, draw or film about the work that scientists do on board and ashore. So in that respect I could help inform the general audience through art. In my mind it was a fantasy of working on board an old creaky vessel sailing through pack ice, whales and belugas to the right, polar bears to the left.

Take off expedition SEES NL

It took a while for the expedition to take shape, but I started to think about what sort of visual experiment could suit this type of field work. The expedition would be looking at landscapes that had been studied in the 1960's, which was of great interest to me. I began to wonder, how could I capture his historical perspective? Browsing through different types of analog techniques, solargraphy was the way forward. It would allow me to capture days, weeks, and months of solar tracks into one image, a powerful tool to visualize and symbolize time. The sun would become my object of study, because it never sets in the arctic summer and is important for sustaining life. In the mean time, the conversation with the expedition had been fruitful and I found finance to come aboard the project.



Photos Maarten Loonen



1. Longyearbyen Taubanesentralen, exposure time 2 months.

“UNFORTUNATELY SOME OF THE CAMARAS WERE LOST TO ENTHUSIASTIC GEO-CASHERS.”

Solargraphy takes time

My own work on Spitsbergen had already begun in June, just before the sun reaches it's highest point. I had installed many small pinhole cameras around Hotel Polarriggen and throughout the town of Longyearbyen. The shutter of each camera was open and the sun could start doing its work, etching its track on the light sensitive photo paper inside. A similar procedure was followed by Maarten Loonen in the town of Ny Ålesund. This small settlement is only inhabited by scientists, and Loonen runs the Dutch Polar station situated there and he helped place my cameras. The shutters would stay open for 2 months, allowing the recording of a solar track each day when it is visible.

Picking up the camera's

I left the cameras for the summer, and now I am back. I have to get busy collecting some of the cameras I had set out. The expedition will be taking us away from Longyearbyen and there is not much time afterward to work. I look for the cameras in the mountains throughout Longyearbyen. The cemetery, the mine ruins on the slopes of the hill, the bridge, most of the cameras are still present. I close the shutter, write down where I put them and what date I picked them up. Unfortunately some of them were lost to enthusiastic geo-cashers. I run to the post office to send the first batch of pinhole cameras to Holland so they can be stored for further processing later on, and to avoid the risk of losing them.

Embarkation

Taxi is here! Finally we can all go to the harbor and board Ortelius, the expedition's vessel. We board the zodiacs and are taken to the ship. There the zodiac slides next to a small platform with a stairway that brings us to a third deck, where we can enlist at the reception. The bags are already in my room when I enter it. I can get started right away, creating long exposure photographs from my windows. I have a lot of space to work on my project and the bathroom can operate as photographic dark room so I can create new cameras while we are on the water. After permission from the captain, I begin my sunlight painting experiment onboard the ship.

A living breathing sea creature

The ship sails out of the main Isfjorden, turns left onto the open ocean and we 'hit' a beautiful rolling swell that makes some people feel a bit seasick. I had no idea how I would respond to this as it is my first time on such a vessel. Luckily, apart from 'feeling drunk' while not drinking, there is no motion sickness present, I am actually noticing how much I like it. The sound of the

ship is something that adds to the experience. I love the creaks and squeaks around me when I move around on deck and through the halls and corridors. The mixture of wood and metal combined with the constant soft boiling of the engine make it sound as if the ship is alive. A living breathing sea creature that is protecting her cargo, a group of eager scientists that lie deep in her belly, rocking back and forth on the rhythm of the arctic ocean. My own sleep is fairly good that night.

A lonely gull is drifting towards the sun, side by side with Ortelius. ❖

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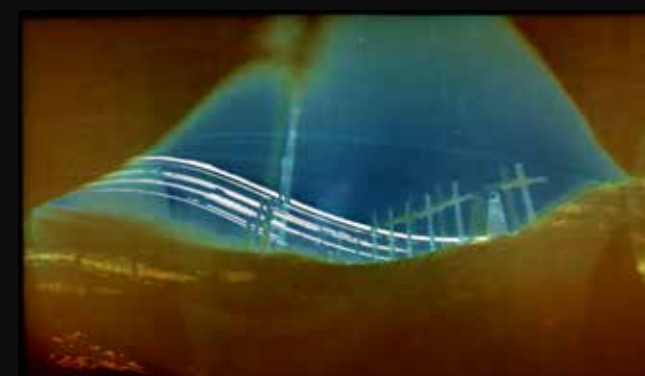


2. Ny Alesund, Mellageret (the bar on weekends) exposure time 2 months



The artist would like to thank the following for their support: Music to the video: Gates of Dawn by Heartless Bastards, from the album Restless Ones Buy on iTunes Creative Industries Fund, the Netherlands

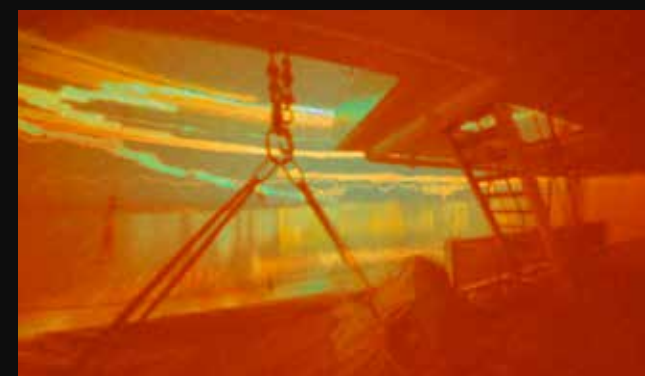
Sees NL Expedition University of Groningen Willem Barentsz Polar Institute Ocean Wide Expeditions Hotel Polarriggen



3. Longyearbyen, cemetery, exposure time 2 months.

Note for curators :This project has been on display in exhibits in the Netherlands. Please contact the studio if you are interested in the full story and all the images.

The art prints are available through the artist's website Follow on Facebook |Twitter: @carambolafilms or The full story with pictures, films and audio is available through the artist's **personal logbook**



4. Ortelius deck 5, exposure time 7 days.



5. Ortelius deck 7, exposure time 7 days.