

*SOJOURN*, my first show of photographs, opens an exciting new chapter in my 20 years of Arctic work. These Russian Arctic and North Pole images document my interests, both historic and contemporary, in 'place' and the anthropogenic Arctic. They amplify my ongoing research about my grandfather John Colin Vaughan a medical doctor and sled dog driver who was marooned for two years on Franz Josef Land with the 1903 Ziegler Polar Expedition.

Until now, my visual ideas have come from the Expedition's many archival materials: photographs, early 35mm films, journals and ephemera. My previous installations ruminated on fragments revealed in glacial melt; or objects brought north for survival like lumber, coal and fawn skins; or stuff of personal comfort such as photographs, printing presses, china and pictures of family. When I asked myself about the psychological impact on the men of this harsh place, I knew I had to go there. To live on Franz Josef Land, however briefly, became a primary goal.

In 2018, the Russian Arctic National Park invited me for an artist residency at the Sedov Station, a Soviet Era weather station being restored at Bukhta Tikhaya (Calm Bay) on Hooker Island, Franz Josef Land. The station has its own powerful story. In 1929 Joseph Stalin sent ten scientists there to build House No. 1 (seen in my photos) and claim the Franz Josef Land archipelago for the USSR. Up to 60 scientists, male and female, lived at Bukhta Tikhaya between 1929 and 1959. I explored the detritus of the ruined buildings to imagine the scientists' quality of life through its reels of Soviet film, American batteries from the 1930's and paraphernalia for delivering babies. I hiked over a carpet of moss, up a steep talus and onto the vast plateau of an impossibly rocky landscape. By being there I discovered visible links between today's traveler and the historic explorer I knew from journals.

*SOJOURN* finds moments when I see travelers seek to comprehend or control their vulnerabilities in this exacting natural environment. For a few hours, a bride claims the North Pole as her own with a ceremony. A human in costume amuses us by diffusing our fears of the most powerful totem of the Arctic—the polar bear. Reels of Soviet films watched by the scientists and their families for comfort—or maybe even sanity—during the 24-hour long winter nights, now lie scattered, their deterioration by time and ice making new stories from the scenes. In the bay, the structural iceberg deceives us: it floats and charms while liquefying.

My experiences with the wind, light, and the same stubborn surfaces of Franz Josef Land that thwarted and amazed my grandfather John Colin Vaughan have enriched my years of historical research. I am privileged to have witnessed how humans interact with, and seek comfort in, one of the most defiant places on earth.