

LOST AND FOUND IN ICELAND

Though my soul may set in darkness, it will rise in perfect light; I have loved the stars too fondly to be fearful of the night.— Sarah Williams, from *The Old Astronomer to His Pupil*

PROLOGUE: Why an Iceland Artist Residency in Winter?

1. I wanted to continue my exploration of darkness and its associated fear.
2. I had heard that the 24-hour darkness of Finland's Arctic Circle made the world appear upside down: dark in the sky; light on the ground. I had also heard that there were seamless moments of monochromatic navy blue of sky and earth.
3. I wanted to experience the void of darkness that I might brush up against AWE.

THE REALITY AND THE ENSUING ART

To experience 'The Great Alone,' I accepted an Artist Residency on far North Island of Iceland. The idea of 24-darkness in a sparsely populated place at the end of the Earth seemed like the perfect environment in which to discover both the beauty and mystery of darkness. It would also be a catalyst for me to confront my childhood fears of the dark. My menacing perception of darkness was softened by the cycle of normalcy maintained in darkness by the people, even the children, who lived in the small village where I resided.

I awoke in darkness, went to my studio in darkness and returned home in darkness. After a while I became knowing and unafraid. The clear nights with overhead stars and Northern Lights gave me a deep appreciation of cosmic beauty that is unseen in the lit skies of city life.

There were no trees obstructing the land's lines that enabled me to see the horizon's curve. Iceland's vulnerable landscape of volcanic bumps, fissures and tectonic plate slippage that causes the Island to separate and subsequently fill-in was other-worldly. This gave my graphite paintings their visual forms and titles. There are many layers of primer and paint on these pieces. They were sanded and burnished many times with a slow zen-like sensibility. This made me feel like I was participating in Iceland's history of creating and refining a millennium of nature and weather.

The various shades and nuances of the white snow and ice defies the myth of white not being a color. Slowly but surely the whiteness would yield sparingly to the underlying black volcanic rock in a compatible marble cake co-existence. Thus my dark graphite landscape paintings called out for their counterpart and my white acrylic paintings complied while letting the black show through enough out of deference. These were done with a squeegee in an improvised calligraphy.

With this work I am hoping to seduce viewers with beautiful art reflecting my impressions of the land I experienced and the perhaps they will contemplate the planet's wonders and want to preserve that. Further to think of the fragile future of our nether regions melting causing our oceans to swell and overtake our shores. Earth's heartrending beauty could be changed and forever subsumed without our voices.