

***There is Always Something More Important.* 2012**

text/notes for a catalogue

Lamentations or: the escape from the 'grid'

(some notes from, a month long trip in North West Greenland in May 2012, at times alone and also with writer Gretel Ehrlich, Inuit subsistence hunters Mamarut, Mikeli und Gideon Kristiansen, Berta Dalager, around Qaanaaq, Hvalsund - Ikerssuaq and Siorapaluk: and later with painter Rosie Snell - around Ilulissat, Disko Island and Uummannaq.)

When travelling to and in the Arctic, the experience is one of heightened awareness of our limitations of seeing, perceiving and getting a *full view*. The light, the open space the sense of being 'up'... above the highest and maybe steeper bend of the globe, is unfamiliar and overwhelming.

On day one of my arrival in Qaanaaq I was told: you'll either love it or hate it here.... people get addicted to the open space or frightened away and never come back. I long to go back.

There won't be any 'Northern Lights' to look out for – it's the wrong time of year and anyway: we are too high up North. I am not too worried. I am already paranoid that I come back with Arctic 'calendar' pictures....

Somehow the sockets of my eyes suddenly seem to be too small, close, too tight and deep. I want to have 360-degree vision. Needless to say: my camera lens frames and crops everything way too small and too tightly.

I wanted to come this far to find and see a 'nature', beyond landscape. Do I? Did I? Was it not inhabited and cultured, continuously since 4000 years, and therefore no longer 'untouched'? ... and it takes a while to adjust, to take in how people live in extraordinary ways, as they seemed to have done forever. Then I realize that, of course, I wanted to see human relationships to the 'landscape' and nature. The people up there are indigenous Inuit, occasional Danes, and international teams of scientists or camera crews (most likely making documentaries on climate change).

Nature shows its real power with the weather, and the climate, and the changes in both. The Inuit cope, they still live a hunting culture, subsistence hunting might not be 100%, but still, there is a life style that is hardy, resilient and reluctant to 'give in' to certain things (like snowmobiles), as much as a willingness to adopt technologies such as mobile phones and digital cameras.

Before I went on my Arctic trip, I had exchanged a few emails with a scientist on a marine expedition - on board the RRS James Cook, in the South West Indian Ocean near Antarctica. After I got back from the hunting trip in Greenland, I learned that even Mt Everest has G3 mobile reception since October 2010. There are only a few places on this planet that are not 'wired up', where the air might be free of communications and signals. This was one of those places and maybe that was my incentive to go.

In this sense I truly managed to get away, for five days anyway... and there was six of us. No reception, no grid, no charge. was it really *just nature*? They used to hunt on

the sea ice for several more months per year in the past, and since years they can not so ... something is wrong... and getting worse.

I am encouraged to speculate even more about what defines the line between nature and landscape, and my contemplations on how to define the *contemporary sublime* are ongoing.

Perhaps it was a romantic act of breaking my own tradition of research that is looking at representations, photographs, paintings and other data. Maybe this time I was seeking the *subjective experience* that was so fundamental to the Romantic Sublime of the 19th Century.

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October 2012