TRUE

Artist book containing 80 photographs in the Polar Regions from The North Pole to The South Pole.

Submitted by Thomas Joshua Cooper
Output No. 3
Why TRUE is a double-weighted Output

TRUE contains the first body of artists’ photographic work to negotiate such a vast surface of inaccessible geography. The project considers the question of whether the intangible is linked to geography and how.

Within two years in the field and one year in production, TRUE’s photographic materials were pushed beyond their predictable limits. Logistically, it took five years to gain access to the various sites on these solo expeditions. Cost was prohibitive but obtained through multiple foundation support.

The project pursued difficult qualities and characteristics of the colour white in it’s making, and is considered creatively unique in its result.
The geographical importance of the Poles and their Circles is well documented and researched, yet these places are very rarely presented in actual terms.

The ambition of TRUE is not to provide illustration of an unusual, but notable and important landscape, but to work with specific (historical, anthropological, cultural) aspects of the locations and to utilize them as ‘canvas’ for the presentation of aspects of the human condition \textit{in extremis}.

These pictures aim to propose through the gathering of the collective sea-spaces described, a contemporary terra incognita.

The Project is expansive and extensive. Through a period of three years, two in the far field and one in the darkroom studio, qualities of space and materials were investigated in relationship to each other and the colour ‘white’.
North - to the Pole
South - from the Pole
Marmo nis...
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Thomas Joshua Cooper – The South Pole
Is it possible to turn ideas of the Imaginary and the Invisible into the Tangible and the Physical? Is it possible to make photographic work that investigates problems of geography and emotional condition in the extreme environment and location of the North and the South Pole and the two Polar Circles that surround them? Is it possible to do this whilst pursuing the notion of the ‘sea picture’ further? Finally is it possible to locate, map and describe places through photography by avoiding literal description and illustration?
What a strange old book it was. How oddly holiness situated itself among the things of the world, how endlessly creation wrenched and strained under the burden of its own significance. “I will open my mouth in a parable. I will utter dark sayings of old, which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us.” …. God lets us wander, so we will know what it means to come home.

Marilynne Robinson - *Home* 2008
The investigative methods were based on historical geography and cultural cartography and contemporary photography. The ‘Times Comprehensive Atlas of the World’ was the main general consultation document, followed by ‘The Arctic Pilot’ for precision site location.

Through consulting these maps, specific locations were identified to be empirically investigated by a photographic camera in direct field-based, site-specific research. By making a single picture in each place, a register of points of view emerges and collectively culminates both geography and condition.

By making work in the cardinal extremes – the most possible ‘north’ and ‘south’ and the invisible circles that support and surround them, I aim to discover and establish the emotional condition that is situated and mirrored.

TRUE is a practice-based project.
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METHODOLOGY

Using an Agfa Camera made in 1898, a single picture is made from each extreme site in the Polar Regions of both the Arctic and the Antarctic.

This research methodology was used to collate a number of pictures from very specific historical and geographically important Polar sites, in order to pursue issue sand concerns surrounding the relationship the relationship of spatial extremity as a metaphor to the human condition as well as to pursue a very particular of physical and conceptual problems surrounding the extent of the possible delineation of the colour ‘white’ using traditional black and white photographic materials.

Maps / PILOTS
THE ARCTIC
The Wandering - from one Circle to another
Prof. Thomas Joshua Cooper
Artist
**DISSEMINATION**

**SOLO PUBLICATIONS**


**CRITICAL REFERENCES**


**SOLO EXHIBITIONS**

• 2010 - CDAN – Centro de Arte y Naturaleza. Fundacion Beulas. TRUE and Early Works by Thomas Joshua Cooper. Selected by Maria Pallas, Director, CDAN and Ben Tufnell, Chief Curator, Haunch of Venison. Huesca, Spain.
• 2009 - The Lannan Foundation. Selections from True – Photographs by Thomas Joshua Cooper. Curated by Christie Mazuera Davis from the Lannan Foundation Collection. Santa Fe, New Mexico, U.S.A.
Haunch of Venison London continues its exhibition programme at its new venue, 6 Burlington Gardens, with True, an exhibition of new work by Thomas Joshua Cooper. Charting a two year journey to the polar regions of the Atlantic basin, the exhibition presents new works from the series, The World's Edge - an ongoing work that seeks to map the extremities of the land and islands that surround the Atlantic Ocean. The 79 works in this exhibition include images made in the North and South poles, at the northern most land points of Norway and Greenland, and the most northerly point of the Antarctic Peninsula, Prime Head, which has had fewer human visitors than the Moon. Haunch of Venison and the Royal Academy Schools will co-host a talk by Thomas Joshua Cooper to coincide with the opening of True. The talk will take place on Friday 1st May from 4.30 - 6pm in the top floor galleries. Thomas Joshua Cooper has recently been awarded a fellowship from the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation. Guggenheim Fellows are appointed on the basis of stellar achievement and exceptional promise for continued accomplishment.

For the past 30 years, the artist has travelled to some of the most isolated and far-flung locations across the globe, making images with his 19th century Agfa camera and specially made photographic plates.

The World's Edge was initiated in 1990. Each work begins as a location found on a map, researched and tracked down, and after often difficult journeys by air, sea and land, only one photograph is made per location on Cooper's arrival. The Worlds Edge began with trips to chart Europe and Africa, and the last outstanding journey along the Atlantic coast of North America from Labrador through to Cape Cod and on to Key Largo is planned for spring 2010.

The exhibition True required some of the toughest journeys for Cooper to date: over three months at sea, sailing into areas marked as 'uncharted dangers' - territories where rescue teams never venture and in which insurance companies are not able to provide cover - and treacherous weather conditions, including extreme storms caused by the El Nino and being snowed into the South Pole for 13 consecutive days.

Constructed only and always of the landscape, Cooper's images are devoid not only of figures and animals, but all human trace. Using the chiaroscuro technique - the use of long exposures and low lighting to create distinct areas of light and darkness - the resulting images describe the darkness of cold water, white voids of fog, submerged rocks icebergs and the geology of rocks.
TRUE
Haunch of Venison Gallery,
London
Promotional video from
CDAN - Centro de Arte y Naturaleza

http://vimeo.com/16311451
DISSEMINATION

RELEVANT PUBLICATIONS

• 2013 – Photography and Travel. By Graham Smith, Critical inclusion in an essay plus two photographs, pp.149-151.
• 2010 – Spanish language insert for text of TRUE, CDAN. Translation of English critical text by Ben Tufnell into Spanish with five photographs. Centro de Arte y Naturaleza, Huesca, Spain. No publication number.
• 2009 - Alpinist, 28, Autumn. On Belay, “Light and Dark”, co-featured in article by Greg Landreth. Pages 14, 16, 18-19. ISSN?
• Worlds – Scottish Photographers. One picture selected and with introductory text by Sandy Sharp. Pages 6-7. Lillie Art Gallery, Milngavie, Scotland. No ISBN.
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