



National Science Foundation  
WHERE DISCOVERIES BEGIN



## ARTISTS AND WRITERS



An ice cave near Palmer Station, Anvers Island, Antarctica. (NSF/USAP photo by Zee Evans)

## Overview

The National Science Foundation's (NSF's) Antarctic Artists and Writers Program makes it possible for the humanities (painting, photography, writing, and history) to be part of the U.S. Antarctic Program. Artists and writers work at U.S. stations and camps, often with science groups but sometimes on their own, to create works that portray the region or the activities that take place there.

The Antarctic Artists and Writers Program contributes to NSF's goal of advancing discovery while disseminating results broadly to enhance scientific and technological understanding. The program helps record the Nation's antarctic heritage, responding to White House direction that the U.S. Antarctic Program support the range of U.S. interests in the region. Application procedures are available on the NSF Web site at [www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm\\_summ.jsp?pims\\_id=12783&org=ANT&from=home](http://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=12783&org=ANT&from=home) and a list of past participants can be found at [www.nsf.gov/od/opp/aawr.jsp](http://www.nsf.gov/od/opp/aawr.jsp).

The selection process for the Antarctic Artists and Writers Program is comparable to the one for science projects in that a peer-review panel meets at NSF annually to evaluate the applications; this panel's advice heavily influences the selections. The applicants who are chosen receive field support (including air travel from the United States), but no direct NSF funding. The program, while intended mainly for U.S. citizens, considers requests from artists and writers who live in other Antarctic Treaty nations but whose applications demonstrate that their works will reach a significant U.S. audience. The next application deadline for participation will be June 2008.

## ANTARCTICArt.

### Xavier Cortada

Miami artist Xavier Cortada will travel to Antarctica to develop three art projects that will raise awareness about the continent, its activities and their relationship to our world. In depicting this, the artist seeks to demonstrate how interconnected we as people are to each other and to our planet.

One mural, the Antarctic Message Mural, will be created in collaboration with scientists and researchers in the Antarctic. A second, the Longitudinal Message Mural, will be a South Pole installation of replicas of other message murals the artist has created around the globe. For the third project, entitled "The 150,000 Year Journey," the artist will plant an artistic replica of a mangrove seed (made from a yet-to-be-determined noninvasive element) on a 3-kilometer-thick glacial ice sheet at point of the Earth's exact geographic center. Embedded in the moving glacier, the mangrove seed will begin sliding downhill (9.9 meters every year) in the direction of the Weddell Sea, 1,400 kilometers away. The seed will thus begin its 150,000-year journey toward the sea. The project exploits the terrain of the South Pole to address a sociological concern of the artist: the travails of an immigrant's journey—the displacement, the solitude, the struggle to simply integrate into society. In a more universal way, the journey explores humankind as it evolves through time. (W-217-M; NSF/OPP 05-38105)

## Works and days: An antarctic chronicle.

### Anne Aghion

No one gets to the antarctic by accident: there has to be a real motivation. What makes people choose the physical and emotional exile of this area? Anne Aghion's film, *Works and Days: An Antarctic Chronicle* will explore the human experience of being a scientist today in the extreme environment of Antarctica by looking more closely and more slowly. Spanning a whole season in Antarctica, the stories of three teams of scientists will focus on living in the same conditions at McMurdo Station, Dry Valleys, and in a remote camp and their relationships to their work, to the extraordinary environment that surrounds them, to each other, and to themselves.

By focusing on the relationship of scientists in the Antarctic to their surroundings, both real and imaginary, Ms. Aghion will make the continent a full-fledged character in the film. At the same time, the film will enable the audience to truly experience the atmosphere of the place by allowing them to identify with the protagonists living in an environment that is so extreme that it is difficult to imagine.

All the narrative tension of the film, both in the larger arc, and in the smaller stories that will emerge, will revolve around transmission of knowledge and lore: from old to young, from experienced Antarctic to neophyte, from scientist to layperson, from winter-over to everyone else. With stunning images and sound, the film will be at once compelling, instructive, moving, poetic, and cinematic. Intended for a wide general audience, it will be ready for release in late 2007 to coincide with the International Polar Year (2007–2008). (W-218-M; NSF/OPP 05-37954)

## **Antarctica: The inner landscape.**

### **Werner Herzog**

Popular art film director Werner Herzog will make for The Discovery Channel the first poetic, feature-length film on Antarctica, antarctic science, and scientists, featuring up-to-date science and images that have not been captured on film before.

Going beyond the cute penguins that figure prominently in almost all the films on Antarctica, Mr. Herzog will spend two austral summers filming the crater of Mount Erebus and the activities in and around McMurdo Sound. The film will capture the continent's inner landscape (climate, volcanic activity, geological history, evolution, and survival of life forms) and the less-documented strange forms of life and the scientists who study them. As in all his films, Herzog will attempt to reach a deeper stratum of truth, an "ecstatic" truth.

Because Mr. Herzog will be allowed more creative control and freedom than is usually allowed network TV filmmakers, better and more sophisticated science will be featured in the film, as well as more unusual and unexpected imagery. The film will be useful in classrooms and other educational forums and will generate a tremendous amount of print, radio, and television press coverage. (W-219-M; NSF/OPP 05-38072)

## **Antarctic Ice: Sculpture in cast glass.**

### **David G. Ruth**

David G. Ruth's casting glass work is inspired by the dramatic geologic formations of Antarctica, particularly the ice formations. After seeing a picture of blue ice floating in an arctic cove, he realized that naturally formed ice could extend the dialog his work has had with water over the past 7 years. Mr. Ruth will continue his interest in the textures of natural objects and how they could translate to cast glass.

In this project, he will study the geology of the continent with the hope of seeing some dramatic ice forms in the glaciers and flows, the sea ice, as well as rock and ice together. The ultimate goal is to translate these observations into a body of work consisting of a series of large-scale molded glass sculptures for exhibition in galleries or museums in the United States. (W-220, NSF/OPP 05-55502)

## **Stellar Axis: Antarctica.**

### **Lita Albuquerque**

South Pole Stellar Axis: Antarctica, an installation built on the McMurdo-area sea ice, involves mapping stars on the ice directly to the skies above. Blue reflective disks of various sizes will be used to create the star map. The size of the disk will correspond with the brightness of the stars, and the shadows will demonstrate the motion of the sun. This two-part project includes a similar installation created at the North Pole. The project will offer the public a glimpse of the realities of time and space on a human scale, will develop a visual language that brings the stars to Earth, and will celebrate our connection to the cosmos. The artist will spend 2 weeks in the McMurdo area creating and recording the installation with her crew. This installation will "symbolically link the terrestrial with the celestial" by creating a large-scale "earthworks" installation.

The artist, an arts educator, teaches graduate and high school students and designs and teaches courses that integrate science into art. When the antarctic project is completed, the artist will develop a course about Antarctica and science for the Art Center College of Design (Pasadena, California) that will allow students to assess their impressions of Antarctica by translating scientific concepts through art. She will also exhibit photographs taken during and after the construction of the project to be shown in galleries and discussed via public lectures. A website detailing the creation of the project will also be made available to the public. Accordingly, many high visibility institutions and media outlets have expressed an interest in supporting and publicizing the project. For more information about the artist and her work, visit: [www.litaalbuquerque.com/home.html](http://www.litaalbuquerque.com/home.html). W-221, NSF/OPP 05-37948)



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