

*The High North* by Michael Miller

Opening Thursday March 1, 6 – 8pm

Exhibition dates: March 2 – 31, 2012

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The geographical extent of the high north is difficult to describe with certainty. The region's scale and diversity create an ambiguity when trying to explain or classify its boundaries. Much like the Australian ideal of outback, the high north is a phrase that can be shaped depending on its intended use. The more formal classifications that do exist generally tie the region to lands above the Arctic Circle, the extent of the Barents Sea and the Euro- Arctic countries of Russia, Norway, Sweden and Finland.

For me it is the remoteness that gives the north its allure. The arctic landscape seems expansive and overwhelming at times and it is often difficult to find a sense of scale amongst the endless plateaus and distressed rock outcrops, which drop dramatically into open sea and intricate fjords. There is a feeling of inadequacy when trying to come to terms with this space — the brutal terror of bleak expanse is hard to reconcile but the sublime and wrenching beauty forces an affection that is difficult to escape. Like all remote and isolated places, the high north instils a romantic notion of wilderness that is far removed from the contrived, cultivated and sometimes genteel landscapes of more inhabited temperate regions.

I arrived in the north during the autumn, at a time when the lichen, heath and short brushy trees turn from green to brilliant orange and red and then, finally, to tones of muted grey. The arctic climate intensely punctuates this landscape — it is grand and dramatic and forces everything that exists here to adapt. As an outsider it is hard to understand these adaptations or to understand the scale of an arctic winter before it arrives. The expectations of extreme cold and days with no sunlight are an abstraction, and bear little resemblance to reality. An arctic winter is humbling. It creates a sense of a tenuous existence that, for me, seemed to be a constant condition of living in the north. The images that I created are a response to this, and explore the impact of a difficult climate on people and their built environment, through the evidence of habitation and adaptation in the arctic landscape. - Michael Miller 2012

Michael graduated from RMIT with a Bachelor of Arts (Photography) in 2009. In 2010 he travelled to Europe where he collaborated with Mobile Kultur Byrå on an exhibition held at the Tromsø Kunstforening, Tromsø, Norway. His most recent exhibition was a solo show at C3 Contemporary Art Space in 2011 and he has an upcoming exhibition at Foto Freo, Perth. Michael received a 2012 ArtStart grant.

[michaelmiller.net.au](http://michaelmiller.net.au)

<http://www.colourfactory.com.au/gallery>