

APRIL SURGENT

Bio

April started working with glass in 1997, at open access hot shop studios in her hometown of Seattle, WA. She went on to study at the Australian National University, Canberra, Australia where she earned a BFA with honors majoring in glass and graduating in 2004. In 2003, Surgent met master Czech engraver Mr. Jiri Hrcuba (who later became her mentor) at Pilchuck glass school and changed her focus from blown to engraved glass. After completing her studies in Canberra she moved back to the U.S. where she set up an engraving studio. Surgent exhibits, teaches and lectures internationally and has received many accolades for her work. In late 2013, the artist travelled to Antarctica with the National Science Foundation and is now focusing on a body of work expressing her experiences of the Antarctic.

Statement

The beginning of the 21st century has arrived with fast-moving technologies and a perpetual barrage of inconsequential information. We now live in a world directed by smart phones, social media and an increasing 'need' to be 'connected'. Yet the alienating nature of contemporary existence grows. Our rapid technological advancements are transforming our very fundamentals as we shift away from the traditions and knowledge we have accumulated over our existence. Being of one of the last generations to know life before cell phones, home computers and the internet, I ask myself what life will look like in 50 and 100 years and how much of mankind's essence and ingenuity and the world as we know it, will continue on into the future?

Regarding the past, my work strives to challenge the 21st century's move away from tradition by sustaining an age-old craft and integrating it with contemporary themes and technologies, the very act of engraving becoming a confrontation of our times. Using the photographed image as inspiration along with the antiquated technique of cameo engraved glass, I make archival records of contemporary life. My engravings symbolize my collective experiences and observations and are one portrayal of what life looks like. In an age of rapid change and when many traditional crafts and skills are being lost, I feel it especially important to record and document life through visual art, so as to be learned from and not forgotten in the rush of the 21st century.

In the Austral Summer of 2013, I travelled to Palmer station, Antarctica, where I was an artist in residence for 8 weeks with the National Science Foundation's Artist and Writers program. The goal of my project was to gather information about the scientific research and unique biology of the Western Antarctic Peninsula, thought to be the fastest winter warming place on earth, and use

that information as inspiration for a body of work aimed at conveying a new understanding of the Antarctic and the confounding research happening there. In an ancient place where changes in climate are suddenly occurring on a decadal time scale, and in an age where everything is digitally stored, my engravings serve as a physical and archival record of the Antarctic Peninsula at the beginning of the 21st century.