

BEDFORD + BOWERY

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DAWN GRAVES

GALLERY SCENE

Journey Through the Blizzard to See This Expedition Exhibition



(photo courtesy of apexart-nyc)

What exactly is an expedition, who goes on them, and why? That's what curators Shona Kitchen, Aly Ogasian, and Jennifer Dalton Vincent set out to explore in *Setting Out*, their exhibition of expeditions (say that five times fast) large and small, real and imagined.

The show, which opened last night at apexart in Tribeca, is arranged in such a way that you have to examine nearly every inch of the gallery to experience everything. Tiny videos project onto sections of the floor, peeking at the display on a small iPhone in a slightly hidden spot, and poring over a table filled with piece upon piece of research and archival material and books and even a Stereoscope, which Ogasian tells me is a kind of "early virtual reality device."



(photo courtesy of apexart-nyc)

Ogasian tells me she and her fellow curators were "interested in not just expeditions but the technologies that support them," such as photography and videography. Take, for example, Katie Paterson's video piece, *Ancient Darkness TV*. Consisting of news clips from the pretty recent past made black-and-white and fuzzy, it shows the broadcasting of "ancient darkness" for a few moments on New York's MNN news station. Characterizing this as ancient is no hyperbole:

Paterson worked with Hawaiian astronomers to collect darkness recorded and transmitted from "the furthest point of the observed universe," making it 13.2 billion years old.



(photo courtesy of apexart-nyc)

Much of the archival material in the exhibit was sourced from the Museum of Natural History, and largely focuses on Arctic exploration and expeditions. Other pieces that could be seen on the long table were documents and photographs on space explorations, photographic pioneer Eadweard Muybridge's *The Horse In Motion*, chunks of metal labeled as "sharp objects," and even a leaflet from the exhibition itself, labeled as a "research document."

Rather than just presenting a polished final product or images of only those who have succeeded, Kitchen, Ogasian, and Vincent are more interested in the entire process of an expedition. Most of the time, says Kitchen, "What we're presented with is images of men with their flags, but all the other images in these [Natural History Museum] files were everything else. With this, we wanted it not to be a clean-cut thing."



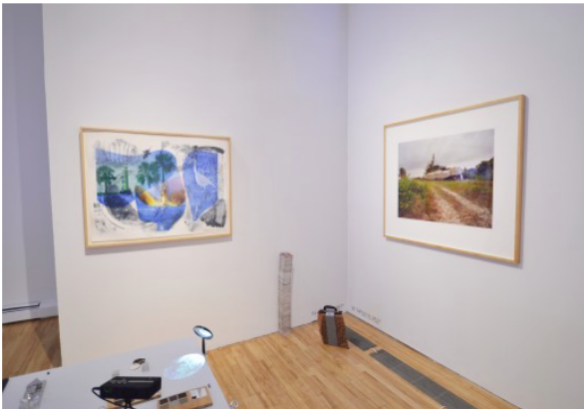
Peter Merlin and Tony Moore, *X-Hunters* (photo courtesy of apexart-nyc)

"On a lot of these expeditions, they didn't know what they were doing," adds Ogasian. "Especially with the early Arctic expeditions, it's really gruesome. A lot of people didn't survive. We were kind of interested in what the drive is that would push someone to go risk their life to explore

apexart

somewhere they've never been and have no personal connection with. It seems pretty crazy."

Interestingly, there are no wall placards by the works explaining who made what or the stories behind the pieces. This has a multifaceted effect, as it creates an air of mystery to all the works and blurs the line between reality and fiction even further. While much of the work on display is inspired by real events or is even tangible material from those events, some are centered around expeditions that are fictional or surreal.



from L to R: Robert Rauschenberg, Drew Ludwig, Tacita Dean. (photo courtesy of apexart-nyc)

It's not always easy to tell which is which. On the back wall, for instance, are two large photo prints by Tacita Dean. Initially, I perceived the photos' slightly decrepit, abandoned-looking subject to be potentially a boat, potentially an imagined spacecraft of sorts, thinking that perhaps the ambiguity was purposeful.

Later, Kitchen and Ogasian told me that it was actually the abandoned yacht of sailor Donald Crowhurst, who disappeared during a late-1960s boat race while aboard his custom yacht, rife with navigational inventions of his own creation. Something went wrong (as homemade inventions are wont to do) and he found himself stranded on an island. He falsified his log books in an increasing state of desperation and upon the realization he could end up bankrupt if he won the race due to his fabricated records, he decided to simply leave his boat behind. The boat was found but he never was, and his log books (ultimately totaling over 25,000 words) revealed an increasingly distressed psychological state. Guess that tends to happen when you're alone out on a boat making up details about your journey and you've lost the ability to comprehend time because your clock broke.

In a matter of minutes, my perception of Dean's photos went from possessing an intriguing sci-fi-esque ambiguity to an even more intriguing (and fantastical) reality. In the more literal sense of that is Agnes Meyer-Brandis's video piece, *Moon Goose Analogue*. Meyer-Brandis takes on the rather impressive task of turning a early piece of fiction into an instructional manual of sorts, using the 1638 science fiction novel *The Man In the Moone*.



Agnes Meyer-Brandis (photo courtesy of apexart-nyc)

The novel tells of space travel facilitated by a colony of "moon geese" that fly to the moon and back. Meyer-Brandis sets out to train a gaggle of geese to return to their celestial roots, "imprinting" them to see her as their mother, hanging out with them while wearing a space suit, and walking them while holding a glowing moonlike orb. Of course, geese will never actually fly to the moon, but Meyer-Brandis's dedication to bringing this centuries-old novel to life is both charming and impressive. It's one of those videos in galleries that you actually want to stay and watch all the way through.

This may seem like a lot, and it is. To fully distinguish and understand the stories and the nature of all of the pieces in this show, I suppose you'll have to go on an expedition of your own, navigating the various literature, maps, and diagrams provided by the gallery and curators as well as doing outside research. I personally left with only a taste of the histories behind these works, and felt hungry to seek out more information. And hey, because of all the folks who risked their lives going on perilous journeys to learn and explore, we can now access that information within the comfort of our Internet-equipped home. Thanks, guys.

'Setting Out,' organized by Shona Kitchen, Aly Ogasian, and Jennifer Dalton Vincent with graphic design by Gabe Melcher, is on view until March 5, 2016 at apexart, 291 Church Street, TriBeCa. Gallery hours are 11am-6pm, Tuesday through Saturday. More info [here](http://bedfordandbowery.com/2016/01/journey-through-the-blizzard-to-see-this-expedition-exhibition/).

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