

## The Antarctic Peninsular 2003 – A Tourist Eye View

### The Work

These small (20x10 or 10x20) gouache paintings on paper are a visual diary of the Antarctic Peninsular landscape, taken from photographs after the event. Date and time of day give an idea of the intensity of photographically recording the experience. The rapidly changing weather conditions were part of the thrill – contrasting clarity, crisp focus, and sharp edged colour with cloud, mist, and white-out.

### Observations

There is a diabolical edge in being an eyewitness, however briefly, to the visual reality of a part of Antarctica.

It is extraordinary to be there in a perfectly beautiful landscape, and yet somehow discomfoting. The juxtaposition of cruising, wanting for nothing, and the ‘frontier’ reputation of the destination is rather surreal.

Pristine in parts, and certainly very earthy in many ways. One iceberg’s ice is fit for a gin & tonic, the next may be covered in the blood & gore of a sea lion’s catch. Strict rules concerning the environment, flora and fauna are observed conscientiously by crew, guides and passengers and this helps to appease consciences. International Antarctic regulations and treaties do exist for the benefit of the environment.

Here and there, are relics of early exploration and whaling, as well as currently inhabited stations who welcome visitors. Not all are up to ‘over-wintering’.

Passengers do have sightings of other ships, yachts even – we assume the Captain and crew have the drop on who and what are in the vicinity and avoid sightings assiduously. Isolation/exclusivity is part of the ambience. We hope those other visitors uphold the same rules we do. Sightings of wildlife, whales in particular, inspire detours and ‘circle work’ for best viewing. There’s a helicopter aboard the ship to reconnoiter best safe passage – the flexibility of our route is certainly an advantage.

Facts – Dry climate – very little snowfall per annum and a short summer season December to February means very little change to the landscape. Ancient pressure creates the pale aqua to deep turquoise colour intensity in the ice.

### Dilemma

To support, by participating, the tourism that raises awareness of the fragility of these areas, and that promotes understanding of the issues among eco tourists so they may become ‘champions’ for preservation,

or

To discourage visitors of a ‘superficial’ nature to this wilderness not only because of the costs in terms of fossil fuels, but also as a protective safeguard for these areas.