

# Click

FOR THE MODERN PHOTOGRAPHER

SEPTEMBER / OCTOBER 2014

## +MAGIC WOMAN

The wild world  
of Brooke Shaden

## +SKIN DEEP

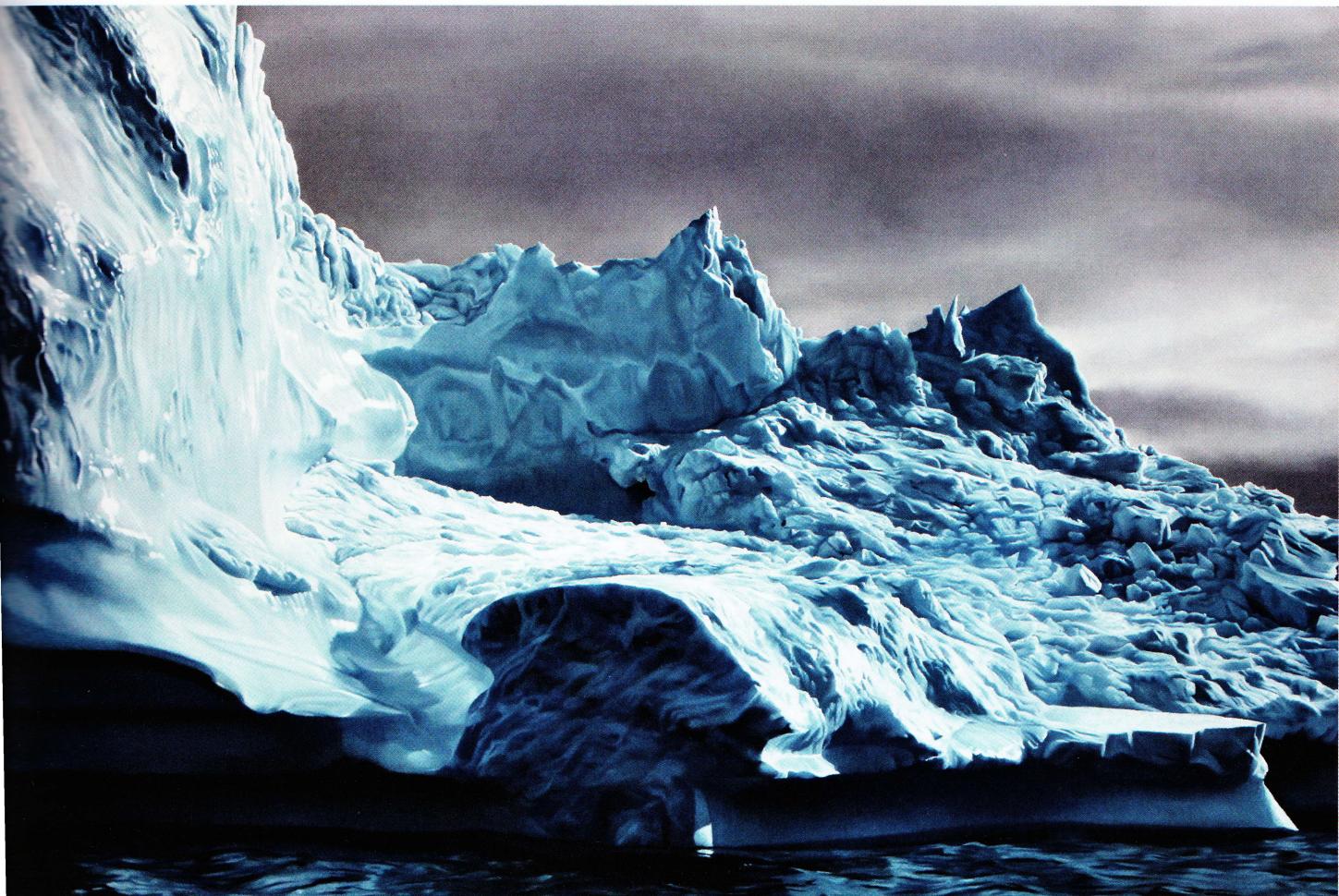
Photo experts  
share their best  
skin secrets

{*the best of 2014*}

## PHOTOS *of the* YEAR

• Photograph by Katy Wehbeh





## MEET CREATIVE PEOPLE

VISION  
QUEST

Zaria Forman's photorealistic, hand-painted landscapes were created to inspire change

BY LORNA GENTRY

FOR AS LONG as she can remember, New York artist Zaria Forman traipsed behind her mother, fine art photographer Rena Bass Forman, to some of Earth's most remote places. The experience helped define her as a person and as an artist. In 2012, her mother became terminally ill while planning a photographic project in Greenland, and Zaria completed it in her stead.

She'd been to Greenland in 2006, and the effects of global warming since were startling. That experience prompted Zaria to travel to another country starkly affected by climate change, Maldives, geographically the lowest nation, whose very existence is threatened. Zaria has produced a body of work from her journeys that she hopes will show the connection between melting ice and disappearing land to raise awareness about global warming. Zaria's pristine, photorealist artwork of the ocean and remote, icy landscapes are painted by hand — quite literally she uses her fingertips and palms to render marks in soft pastels. In her Brooklyn studio, she creates large-scale compositions — up to 50 x 66 inches — based on photographs and memory. Her work is exhibited internationally and was featured on the TV series "House of Cards" and on stage as set designs for a Swiss ballet company.

# Adore

"I scattered my mother's ashes amidst the MELTING ICE OF GREENLAND"



**Click:** What's your process on location and back in your studio in Brooklyn?

**ZF:** When I travel I take thousands of photographs, and I often make a few small sketches on site. Once I return to the studio, I draw from my memory of the experience as well as the photographs. Occasionally I will reinvent the water or sky, alter the shape of the ice, or mix and match a few images to create the composition I envision. I begin with a very simple pencil sketch so I have a few major lines to follow, add layers of pigment, smudging everything with my palms and fingers and breaking the pastel into sharp shards to render finer details.

The process of drawing with pastels on paper is straightforward: Cut the paper; make the

marks. The material demands a minimalistic approach, as there's not much room for error or reworking because the paper's tooth can hold only a few thin layers of pigment. I rarely use an eraser. I prefer to work with my mistakes, enjoying the challenge of resolving them with limited marks. I love the simplicity of the process; it's taught me a great deal about letting go. I become lost easily in tiny details, and if the pastels and paper did not have limitations, I fear I'd never know when to stop or when the composition is complete!

**Click:** What's behind the large scale of your work?  
**ZF:** In my work I explore moments of transition, turbulence and tranquility in the landscape and their impact on the viewer. This process reminds

me of how small we are when confronted with the powerful forces of nature. The act of drawing can be a meditation for me, and my hope is that the viewer can share this experience of tranquil escape. To that end, I find that working large scale is most effective for conveying vast spaces and transporting the viewer to them.

**Click:** Were you as aware of climate change before the Greenland expedition?

**ZF:** The first visit in 2006 was perhaps what inspired me to question and explore the critical role that art can play in any disaster. Art can facilitate a deeper understanding of a crisis, help us find meaning and optimism in shifting landscapes. My drawings invite viewers to share



the urgency of climate change in a hopeful and significant way, so I convey the beauty, as opposed to the devastation, of these threatened places. Perhaps if people can experience the sublimity of the landscapes, they will be inspired to protect and preserve them.

**Click:** What shifting landscapes in your personal life have challenged you?

**ZF:** My mother's sickness and passing was by far the most challenging experience of my life. I had never before faced such tremendous loss. The mourning process I went through, and continue to go through, shaped and paralleled the concept of the trip I led to honor her, which in turn had significant effects on my art. The

work I went on to create addresses the concept of saying goodbye on scales both global and personal. I scattered my mother's ashes amidst the melting ice of Greenland.

**Click:** Do you think the Greenland and Maldives projects have defined your career?

**ZF:** I think of fulfilling my mother's dream to retrace the route that American artist William Bradford took through Greenland in 1873 as one of the most meaningful gifts my mother gave me. Evolving the project to include the Maldives was a breakthrough for what I hope will be a very long career, which at this point has yet to be defined.

To see more of Zaria's work visit [zariaforman.com](http://zariaforman.com).

## UPCOMING EXHIBITIONS

Brookgreen Gardens, Murrells Inlet, S.C.,  
Jan. 31 – Apr. 26, 2015

Paul and Lulu Hilliard University Art Museum, University of Louisiana at Lafayette, May 16 – Aug. 16, 2015

The Art Museum, SUNY Potsdam, Potsdam, N.Y.,  
Sept. 1 – Oct. 31, 2015