

ZARMA FOR

PHOTOGRAPHY BY | François
Lebeau and Jenny Nichols
CURATED BY | Sandra Evertson



Zaria Forman lives and works in Brooklyn, New York, just a block away from Prospect Park. She documents climate change with highly detailed, realistic pastel drawings. She travels to remote regions of the world to collect images and inspiration for her work, which is exhibited worldwide. She has flown with NASA on several Operation IceBridge missions over Antarctica, Greenland, and Arctic Canada. She was featured on *CBS Sunday Morning*, CNN and PBS. She delivered a TEDTalk and has spoken at Amazon, Google and NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center. Zaria has exhibited in Banksy's Dismaland and was the artist-in-residence aboard the *National Geographic Explorer* in Antarctica. Her works have appeared in publications such as *The New York Times*, *National Geographic*, *The Wall Street Journal* and *Smithsonian* magazine. She is represented by Winston Wächter Fine Art in New York, NY and Seattle, WA.

I grew up in Piermont, NY, about 30 minutes north of New York City. Piermont is a lovely small town right on the Hudson River. It was nice to have a relatively relaxed upbringing but still to have easy access to the city. From sixth grade through high school, I went to Green Meadow Waldorf School—a very small school with an alternative approach to education, suffused with art.

The inspiration for my drawings began in my early childhood, traveling with my family throughout several of the world's most remote landscapes, which

became the subject of my mother's fine art photography. I developed an appreciation for the beauty and vastness of the ever-changing sky and sea. I loved watching a far-off storm on the western desert plains, the monsoon rains of southern India, and the cold arctic light illuminating Greenland's waters.

I have very fond memories of our family trips and consider them a vital part of my upbringing and education. I feel very fortunate that I had the opportunity to see so much of the world and to learn firsthand about cultures so vastly different from my own. This myriad of experiences instilled in me a love of exploring and a need to continue exploring and learning for the rest of my life.

I've been drawing ever since I could hold a crayon, so it's really the years that have trained me. I majored in Studio Art at Skidmore College, graduated in 2005 and have been working as an artist since then. On my way I also taught yoga for ten years. Now I make large scale landscape drawings documenting climate change. I travel to remote regions of the world to collect images and inspiration for my work. Travel is necessary for my art and life experiences—one cannot exist without the other.



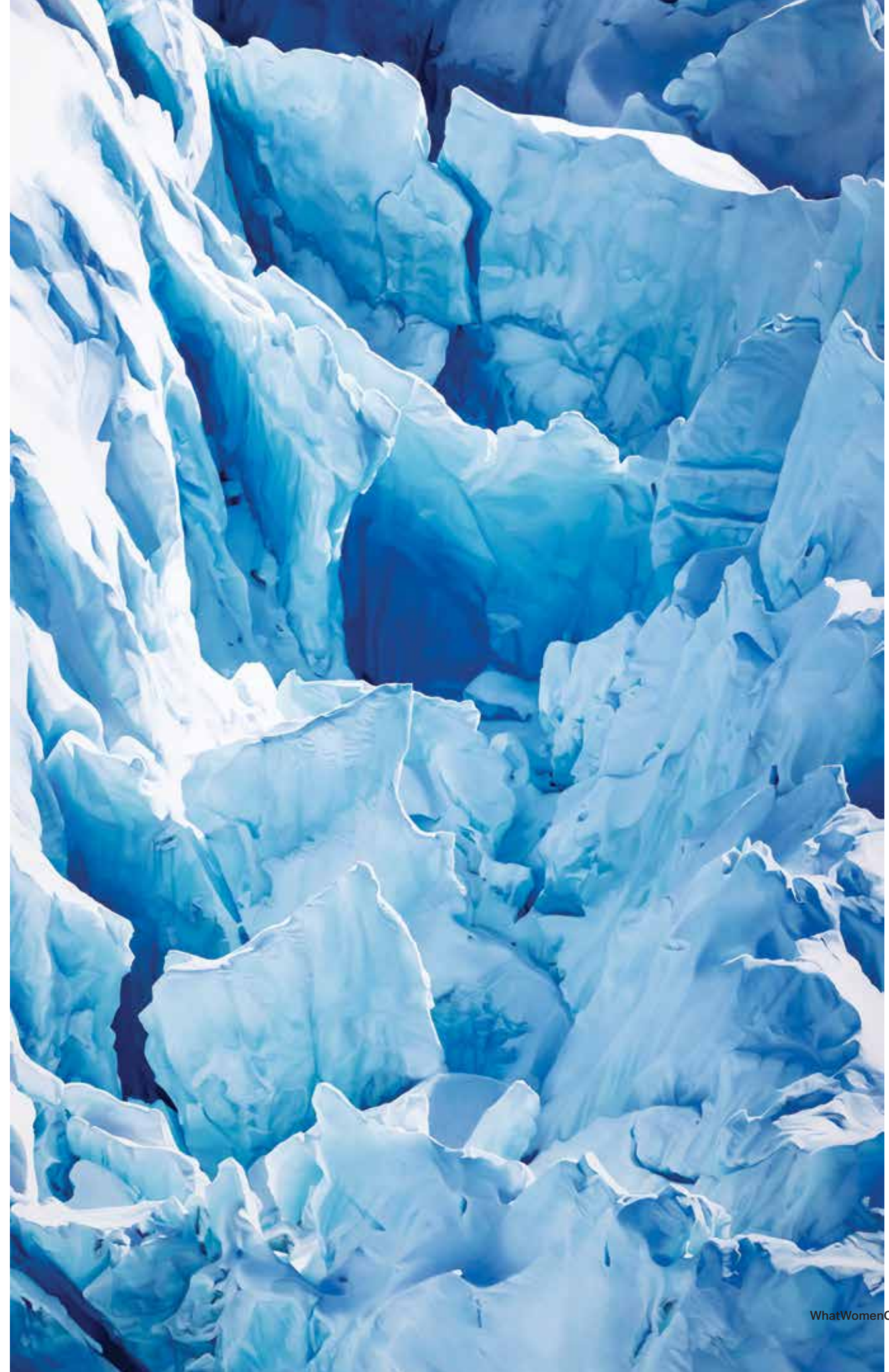


SUPRAGLACIAL LAKE
(BETWEEN HIAWATHA
AND HUMBOLDT
GLACIERS),
GREENLAND, 79°
6'59.05"N 65°15'54.99"W,
JULY 19 2017,
SOFT PASTEL ON
PAPER, 60 X 81 7/8
INCHES, 2018

My mother, Rena Bass Forman, dedicated her life to photographing the most remote regions of the earth. Her aesthetic has significantly influenced my work, or perhaps it is simply in my genes! The cold and isolated landscape of the Arctic consumed her interest from 2001 until her passing in 2011. She always said that she had been a polar bear in a past life, and watching her spend endless hours in the frigid winds, patiently and happily waiting for the moment when the light was right, gave me no doubts that this was true! She taught me the importance of loving what you do and carrying out projects full force, no matter what obstacles lie in the way.

Artists play a critical role in communicating climate change, which is arguably the most important challenge we face as a global community. I have dedicated my career to translating and illuminating scientists' warnings and statistics through an accessible medium, one that moves us in a way that statistics may not. Psychology tells us that humans take action and make decisions based on emotion above all else. Studies have shown that art can impact our emotions more effectively than a scary news report. My drawings explore moments of transition, turbulence, and tranquility in the landscape, allowing viewers to emotionally connect with a place they may never have the chance to visit. If people can experience the sublimity of these landscapes, perhaps they will be inspired to protect and preserve them.

JAKOBHAVN GLACIER, GREENLAND,
69° 4'51.58"N 49°28'24.41"W, APRIL 29TH, 2017,
SOFT PASTEL ON PAPER, 108 3/8 X 68 INCHES, 2018



CLIMATE CHANGE IS THE LARGEST AND MOST IMMINENT CRISIS
WE FACE AS A GLOBAL COMMUNITY THAT WE ALL NEED TO TAKE
ACTION ON IN ORDER TO SOLVE



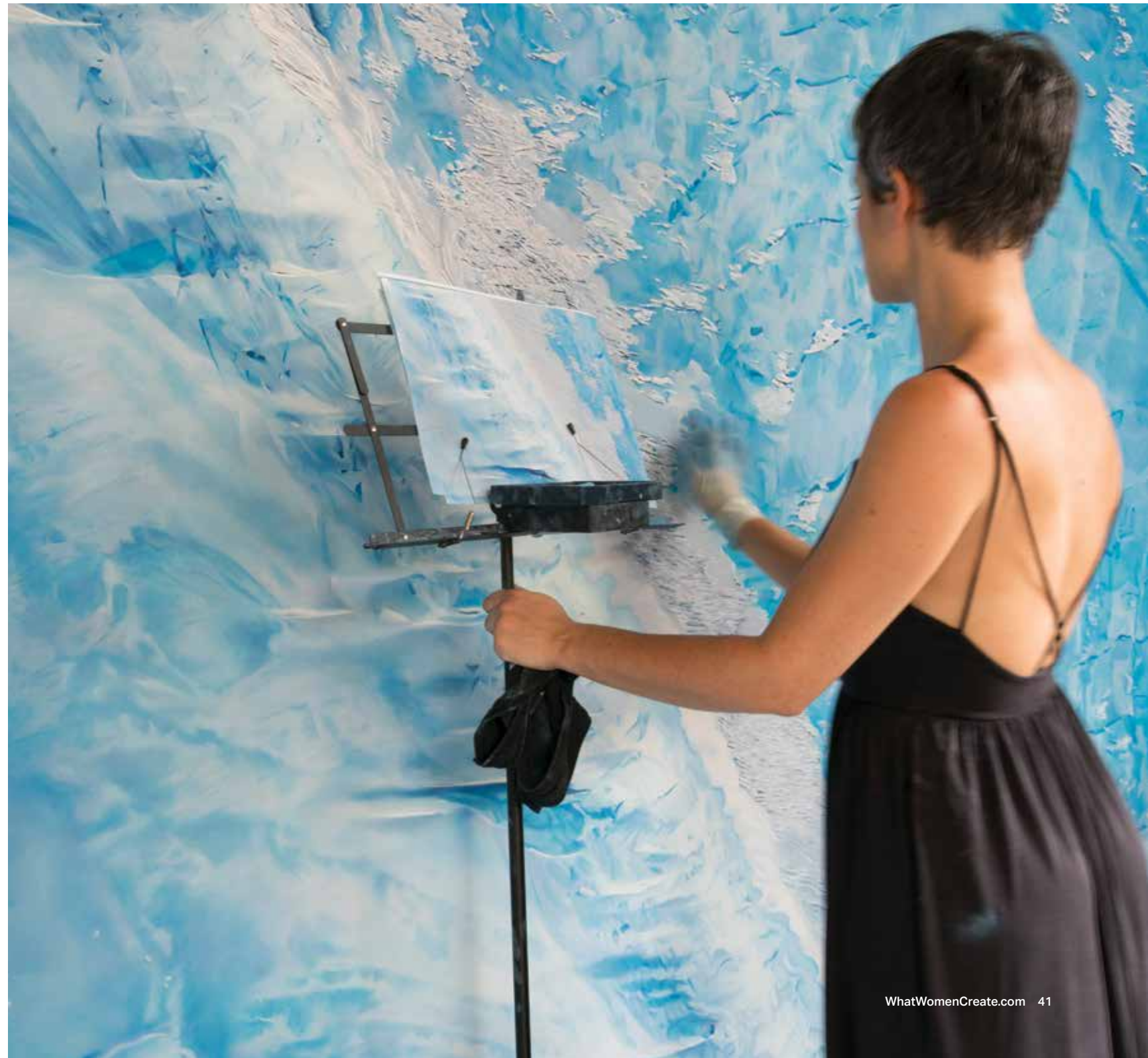
SKETCHING

THE MATERIAL DEMANDS A MINIMALISTIC APPROACH, AS THERE ISN'T MUCH ROOM FOR ERROR OR RE-WORKING; THE PAPER'S TOOTH CAN HOLD ONLY A FEW THIN LAYERS OF PIGMENT.



I CHOOSE TO CONVEY THE BEAUTY AS OPPOSED TO THE DEVASTATION OF THREATENED PLACES.

I begin with a very simple pencil sketch so I have a few major lines to follow, and then I add layers of pigment onto the paper, smudging everything with my palms and fingers and breaking the pastel into sharp shards to render finer details. The process of drawing with pastels is simple and straightforward: cut the paper, make the marks. The material demands a minimalistic approach, as there isn't much room for error or re-working since 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, and it has taught me a great deal about letting go. I become easily lost in tiny details, and if the pastel and paper did not provide limitations, I fear I would never know when to stop, or when a composition is complete!





PHOTOS TAKEN, SKETCHES MADE.
PASTEL TONES PREPARED

My process is very basic—when I travel, I take thousands of photographs. I often make a few small sketches on-site to get a feel for the landscape. Once I return to the studio, I draw from my memory of the experience, as well as from the photographs, to create large-scale compositions. Occasionally I will reinvent the water or sky, alter the shape of the ice, or mix and match a few different images to create the composition I envision.

Pastel on paper is the medium through which I feel I can best convey the message behind my work. I have always preferred soft pastels over the myriad of other materials I've experimented with. I want my drawings to look realistic. Whichever drawing I'm working on at the time is my favorite. The works are like my babies, they mean more to me than anything else I possess!



BREAKING THE PASTEL INTO SHARP SHARDS TO RENDER FINER DETAILS

MY DRAWINGS SERVE AS RECORDS OF LANDSCAPES IN FLUX, DOCUMENTING THE TRANSITION AND INSPIRING OUR GLOBAL COMMUNITY TO TAKE ACTION FOR THE FUTURE.



ADDING LAYERS OF PIGMENT



I ATTEMPT TO PORTRAY THE LANDSCAPE AS I EXPERIENCE IT. MY PERSONAL AND EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCES INFLUENCE THE COMPOSITION.

I hope my drawings can facilitate a deeper understanding of the climate crisis, helping us find meaning and optimism in shifting landscapes. One of the many gifts my mother gave me was the ability to focus on the positive, rather than dwell in the negative. I would like to continue to spread the word about climate change and share my work with as many people as possible.

Art is my process, and I live it every day. That doesn't necessarily mean that I work in the studio every day, but my "down" time is also fuel and inspiration for my process. I try to be on, in, or in sight of water as much as possible. As an artist, I am a visual person, so I fill my home with "visual nutrition," things I enjoy looking at and living with. I think it's important for all of us to find what inspires us most, and figure out a way of incorporating it into daily life. It's a constant practice, though—like yoga and art; there is never a point of "arrival." Instead, there is always more to learn and room for growth.

ZARIA FORMAN

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JAKOBHAVN GLACIER, GREENLAND, 69° 47' 31.092"N 49° 47' 31.7076"W,
APRIL 29TH, 2017, SOFT PASTEL ON PAPER, 68 X 102 INCHES, 2018

