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Dibbs in her art studio-cum-gallery, where she currently has 15 works of various genres on display

## FEATURES

## Arctic Dreamscape

By Susan Benner

 Photography by Shawn O'Connor  
 02.10.17

*Artist Tania Dibbs finds new inspiration in snow, ice and polar bears.*

**Tania Dibbs** heard about The Arctic Circle Tall Ship artist residency from William Morrow, who was then the associate curator of contemporary art at the Denver Art Museum. For an artist whose life and work increasingly address environmental crises, the opportunity to spend weeks with other artists sailing above the Arctic Circle around the islands of Svalbard, Norway, in one of the world's most fragile and beautiful landscapes, to make work that further entwined her artistic and scientific sensibilities, was one she could not pass up.

The boat, she wrote in her blog, felt "like a space station." The portholes let in little light. They saw Beluga whales "close enough to hear the hiss" as the whales breathed. "We are floating in a giant bowl of blue ice and water," she wrote. "The air feels melty and wet. We can hear the ice chunks clicking and clacking as they bump against each other."

Although Dibbs had not drawn for 20 years—she is known for work in oils, encaustic and sculpture—she started doodling. “Once I started, I couldn’t stop. To use a pencil again after so many years of painting was a homecoming,” she says. “The doodles are inspired by the cracks in the glacial ice; by the surrender to the rhythm of our days on the ship; by boredom; by nature; by physics; and by the slow, creeping perseverance of life.”

The effects of global warming, evidenced in the landscape, left an impression on the artist. “I had not realized how sad it would feel to have such uncannily warm weather in the Arctic. To see white arctic foxes, white ptarmigans, reindeer and white polar bears standing out like flags on the dark, brown hills,” she says. “Climate change is more extreme at the poles. Glaciers calve regularly—loud, thunderous crashes as they dismantle into the sea.”

That sadness finds its way into Dibbs’ work. The Arctic work is, so far, a series of ethereal doodles. The drawings begin with graphite on paper. Some are mounted on boards and layered with encaustic. Some are tinted. The colors are Arctic dreamlike—the pale blues and ivories of ice, sky, water, clean polar bear fur. That work, Dibbs says, is just the beginning. *Tania Dibbs Studio & Gallery, 227 Midland Ave., #17A, Basalt, 970.948.4075*



OBJET D’ART Tania Dibbs, “Life Laughs” (2016, resin, beads, jewelry, found objects), 13 inches by 31 inches by 13 inches

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