

A Winter Wonderland, a World Away: Holly Gordon



In 1999, on the cusp of the New Year and the new millennium, photographer Holly Gordon, a Bay Shore resident and longtime member of Huntington's fotofoto gallery, heeded a whim and embarked on a voyage of discovery to the most southern corner of the world, Antarctica.

Although she originally believed that the "pursuit of adorable and amusing penguins" would be the primary focus of her picture-taking, very early on, Holly said that "they became upstaged by the visual splendor of the Antarctic landscape of which I am still daunted."

"Antarctica, the white continent, is the harshest, coldest, windiest, driest, most mountainous place on earth...truly a land of extremes," Holly reported of the continent which is coated with a mile-thick icy blanket.

A double steel-hulled 'icebreaker' brought her and the other tour members within almost touching distance of icebergs, huge frozen monoliths whose tips loomed from the water with a stark yet ethereal beauty.

Winter in Antarctica is diametrically opposed to that in the United States, and during her stay in the land of the 'Midnight sun,' light prevailed for almost 24 hours a day, Holly said.

"I was most surprised by the brightness of the light," said Holly, adding that she also felt that the lack of pollution in the atmosphere enabled her to capture nature in its most pristine form.

The results of her photographic endeavor reveal a landscape imbued with an unparalleled luminosity, and images which resonate with a rhapsody of blues and whites.

"Nowhere on Earth have I traveled, where I discovered a greater clarity and purity of light than in Antarctica. For two magical weeks my camera and eye danced in unison as I documented, simultaneously, the beauty and fragility of our planet," Holly said.

And, as for the march of the penguins that had ignited her adventure, Holly encountered several delightful and intriguing species, including the Adélie, the Gentoo, the Chinstrap, and the Rockhopper.

The Adélie penguin is the smallest, most, common and well-known of all Antarctic penguin species, the stereotypical penguin," Holly said. "With its tuxedo shirt front and white rings around its eyes, it is most endearingly handsome and comical. They can be found forming colonies on coastal beaches throughout Antarctica. Scientists use the Adélie penguin as an indicator species to monitor the abundance of krill, which is



essential to the web of Antarctic life."

Holly's images also convey a chilling message about the devastating impact of global warming, not only on the Antarctic region and its animal population, but for the ecological well-being of the world. The air quality of one of the purest habitats on earth is being compromised as pollution from the Northern Hemisphere steadily drifts towards Antarctica, where the level of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is rising.

"Over the past twenty years, the annual ice-melting season in the Antarctic Peninsula has increased by two to three weeks. The Adélie penguin population has declined, substantially, due to the loss of sea ice habitat! A similar trend has occurred with the polar bear in the Arctic," Holly explained.

Holly's image of an Adélie penguin, perched forlornly to a small morsel of an iceberg that probably once served as the home for colonies of these diminutive birds, speaks volumes about the dangers of global warming.

This poignant image was awarded first place by National Wildlife Federation in the global warming category of their annual competition.

Holly's extensive travels around the world have provided inspiration for many of her exhibits. To see more of her work, visit www.hollygordonphotographer.com. Her images can be purchased via her website, at fotofoto gallery in Huntington, the Long Island Photo Gallery in Islip and at the Village Art and Frame Shop in Babylon.



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Elise Pearlman, an arts and leisure journalist, has been reviewing photography and art exhibits, theater and restaurants for nine years. Her work has appeared in Newsday, Dan's Papers and Long Island Pulse Magazine as well as local newspapers. She creates the popular 'There's No Place Like Northport' calendar with her husband. She can be reached at LotusElise1@aol.com.