

significant information for the reference library, or both, include: Larsen (1978), Davids (1982), Mills (1986) and Bruemmer (1989).

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Response from the author:

The intent of *White Bear* is not to sensationalize, but rather to present the honest reactions of arctic workers who encounter polar bears and to record my own path to understanding these magnificent creatures. Thus the book moves from 1) the opening chapter detailing my emotions, including fear, when sharing the November icepack with these predators, through 2) the biology and behavior of polar bears reported by reputable scientists in refereed literature, and 3) the evolutionary history of polar bears and their interaction with Inuit hunters and early explorers, to 4) personal accounts of bear encounters and interviews with biologists and resource managers, and finally to 5) a plea for conservation and discussion of national and international measures adopted to preserve the bears and their habitat.

Your reviewer feels that "all authors should be striving to convey respect and understanding, rather than fear." I couldn't agree more. That is precisely why the book moves through the above sequence, but even at the start (p. 3) I wrote of my feelings for the polar bear: "More than fear, I respect it." I also made it a point to quote a wildlife biologist's comment that "there's no such thing as problem bears — only problem people" (p. 144), and that in encounters with humans, the bears are just behaving naturally. On page 175 I debunk a powerful image implanted in the minds of North American television viewers by well-known footage showing a photographer in a cage outside Churchill, with a polar bear shoving and biting the cage bars: "Absolute rubbish!" snorts a man who was present during the filming. 'Irresponsible reporting! The bear wasn't aggressive in the least. To enhance the action, the film crew lathered the steel cage with whale oil. The bear wasn't trying to eat the man — he was just licking the oil off the bars.' "

Through such anecdotes I emphasize that I don't feel polar bears are "out to get you" or "evil," as your reviewer suggests I must believe. I suspect the readers of *Arctic* would agree with my view, expressed on page 144: "Like humans, bears are gentle, expressive, and playful. Like humans, they can be aggressive killers. They're not malicious or evil, but they are dangerous predators, and deserve respect."

Other reviewers have appreciated the significance of the book's progression from fear to respect to admiration to concern. As one wrote, "While there are plenty of adventures, anecdotes, and personal observations included, this is not a *How I Survived a Polar Bear Attack* book. Rather, it is a readable, well-balanced, and

rational look at bear life in the far north. . . . Frequently he writes with the passion of a convert to conservation" (Buchholtz, 1991).

On the role of polar bear hair as a solar collector: while discussing this as an intriguing possibility (and the subject of investigation by solar-energy researchers), I also pointed out (p. 33) that it cannot be a significant component of a bear's energy budget because the sun shines on a bear during the months when he needs its energy the least.

The possibility of an oil spill in arctic seas is not a topic that I dismiss lightly. Rather, I agree with the biologist quoted on page 219 that it "would be uncontrollable and could be a catastrophe beyond anything we could imagine." And I never claimed that a spill the size of the slick from the *Exxon Valdez* would be easy to recover; my remarks (p. 217-218) concern the physical behavior of oil in the colder waters of the High Arctic compared to the waters of Prince William Sound.

As to my "objecting" to the language used by bear managers, I have nothing but respect for the professionalism of resource managers, but find their vocabulary, as with most specialties, too businesslike (or, as your reviewer suggests, non-anthropomorphic) for my readers to swallow without some measure of explanation or levity.

Far from trying to create a hysteria about polar bears that would lead to further human-bear confrontations, I present a balance among many viewpoints. The book (selected as one of the best books of 1990 by the editors of *Booklist*) quotes biologists, geologists, icebreaker officers, aircraft pilots, natives, explorers, oilmen, engineers, sea ice specialists, legal experts, zoo curators, and others in attempting to define what the white bear means to each. In disparaging my writing because of its perceived sensationalism, your reviewer does a disservice to those who graciously agreed to be interviewed, and whose voices I have tried to portray faithfully. Your reviewer may not care for the feelings these individuals express, but they are genuine, and accurately reported.

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- SYDNEY LAURENCE, PAINTER OF THE NORTH. By KESLER E. WOODWARD. Seattle: University of Washington Press, in Association with the Anchorage Museum of History and Art, 1990. 152 p., 120 illus., 90 in colour, notes, bib. Softbound. US\$24.95.

Kesler E. Woodward's exhibition catalogue *Sydney Laurence, Painter of the North* is an important contribution to the art history of the North. Unlike many exhibitions of regional artists, Laurence's work has been placed within the broader context of the aesthetics of its time.

The author tells us that Sydney Mortimer Laurence (1865-1940) is so well known to Alaskans as to need no introduction. Like the Group of Seven to Canadians, Laurence has defined the way Alaskans see their landscape. Living and painting in Anchorage, he was an artist of America's "Last Frontier" from 1903 until his death in 1940. It was a time of no galleries or art museums in Alaska, forcing the artist to rely on his own marketing wits. No wonder that Laurence appears to have embellished his "CV." A bit of a poseur, the unsubstantiated information seems to include a knighthood by England's King Edward VII, a royal commission to paint Queen Victoria lying in state, and acquisition of one of his paintings by the French government for the Louvre.

As with many pioneers in the Far North, whether artists or not, Laurence spun tales around himself, creating a web of glamor and fantasy that spilled over into his private life. There seems to have been another wife and two children living in England at the time he married in 1928 in southern California. Nor are humble beginnings part of his life story. His biography, written by his second wife after his death, is full of undocumented facts that Woodward wisely ignores in this volume, such as a grandfather who was first governor of Australia and the accreditation of his talent by the well-known American artist Edward Moran, who was "astounded" when shown the paintings of the ten-year-old Sydney. Lessons at Moran's studio soon followed (Laurence, 1974).

For the historian a lack of sound biographical information can have a devastating effect on analysis. By careful research Woodward has traced the roots of Laurence's style.

That Laurence knew Moran and many of the other well-known artists of the time is established by his years of residence in New York, where he studied at the Art Students League and exhibited at the National Academy of Design in the 1880s. Equally important to his development was his connection with the art colony of St. Ives, on the coast of Cornwall.

Laurence moved with his first wife to the English seaside art colony soon after their marriage. Here perhaps the greatest landscape artist of the 19th century, J.M.W. Turner, had worked, while in 1883 Walter Sickert and the well-known expatriate American James Whistler had spent the winter painting the town, harbor, and coast of "the picturesque town," as did Canada's Emily Carr in 1901. During these years in England, Laurence exhibited with the Royal Society of British Artists and the Royal Academy, as well as exhibiting at the Paris Salon in 1890. Woodward tells us that though Laurence was part of these established groups, he seems to have been more of a follower than a leader. By 1903 we find the artist alone in Alaska. Perhaps the responsibilities of two children and the promise of a pot of gold in the Far North were too strong a pressure to resist.

Though at first glance Laurence's paintings appear to have links with French Impressionism, there are major differences. Like Monet or Renoir, Laurence shares an interest in light, but the technique to achieve the effects are very different. The Impressionists juxtaposed dabs of color, such as blue next to yellow, forcing the eye to make the merger to green. With this seemingly disjointed approach to paint, a feeling of light fleeting over an object miraculously occurred, and with it a glowing illusion of the world. Even more surprising, this vision of an ephemeral moment in time had a solid base in scientific concerns with the prism. On the other hand, Laurence's paintings, though filled with incandescent color, achieve their unity of effect by a single overall tone: a subtle darkening and lighting of a particular hue mixed not on the palette, but directly on the canvas. The effect, like that of the Impressionists, is a unifying one, but the concept, rather than scientific, is one of poetic mood. Nature is perceived through veils of atmosphere and mist, creating a fountain of romantic sensibilities and a more personal reaction to the subject. Many beautiful examples are reproduced in the Laurence catalogue. Especially compelling are the paintings of Mt. McKinley, with blue and mauve suffusing the canvases.

For the reasons above, Woodward shows Laurence's style to be linked not to the Impressionists but to the Tonalists, a smaller New York school whose interests, rather than scientific, were "unashamedly poetic and subjective" (Corn, 1972). The Tonalists found their inspiration from the French Barbizon School, whose members painted *en plein-air* and enclosed their scenes in "envelopes of mist," as well as from John Constable, the revered English landscapist, the Dutch painting of the 17th century, and the 19th-century Americans John Whistler and George Inness. But not until two ground-breaking exhibitions in 1972 and 1982 were the Tonalists seen as a cohesive group, rather than as individual painters employing watered-down adaptations of various European styles. In his analysis Woodward has drawn extensively from two shows, Wanda Corn's *The Color of Mood, 1880-1910* in San Francisco in 1972 and

Tonalism: An American Experience (Gerds, 1982), mounted ten years later in New York City.

Until this Anchorage Museum exhibition, Alaska's geographical isolation has kept Laurence's reputation outside the mainstream of North American art. Even at home it was not until 1957 that his work was honored with a public exhibition. By then response was so enthusiastic that the building was renamed the Sydney Laurence Auditorium. Today in Alaska Laurence's paintings are found in the lobbies of banks and hospitals and many private collections, while reproductions are readily available.

Like Tom Thompson to Canadians, Sydney Laurence's art has a mythic power for Alaskans, a power that raises questions for the non-Alaskan lacking first-hand knowledge of the northern landscape. Mt. McKinley is a dominant theme for Laurence's paintings and seems to achieve a totemistic status. The non-resident may well wish to know why. What is its height? How much higher than the mountains around it? The artist's many depictions of the gorgeous snow-capped peak towering over the land below is reminiscent of the romantic exaggeration of Albert Bierstadt or Edward Moran, American artists whose canvases half a century earlier had captured the grandeur of the West. Yet except for the painting *Arctic King*, the titles are mainly factual labels. Is *Arctic King* Laurence's own term or that of all inhabitants? For other images, such as *Going to the Potlatch*, a lively scene of a boat charging through the waves under sail in a brisk wind, this viewer wishes more. What about the people, the time of year, a description of a potlatch? Even without documented evidence of Laurence's response to such questions, general geographical and historical information could be presented.

Woodward has provided the reader with a beautiful coffee-table book and a valuable analysis of the artist's contribution to the mainstream of art history. Laurence's work will now be enjoyed beyond the West Coast and the North. There is, however, a growing need to expand art analysis beyond the confines of stylistic concerns to a deeper understanding of the underlying context of the subject. A future exhibition will be able to do this by building on the sound base of this fine study of Alaska's "painter of the North."

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JOURNAL OF A BARRENLANDER: W.H.B. HOARE, 1928-1929. Edited and annotated by SHEILA C. THOMSON. Privately published, 1990. (Available from Sheila C. Thomson, Box 4435, Postal Station E, Ottawa, Canada K1S 5B4.) xii + 186 p., black and white photos, maps, bib., index. Hardbound. Cdn\$24.95.

Most tourists visit the Barrenlands during the short but relatively benign summer. They arrive and depart via charter airplane and travel with the aid of indestructible plastic canoes, accurate topographic maps, lightweight dried foods, and warm, waterproof synthetic clothing. Many carry high-frequency radios in case an emergency evacuation is required. Scientific researchers and government officials conducting field work in the Barrens generally