

of the first signals of climate change.

There are also short biographies of individuals who have made a lasting contribution, such as Vladimir Zworykin, the Russian-born physicist who patented the use of magnetic fields to guide cathode rays to produce fluorescent images on a screen.

The dictionary lacks a table of contents,

which means that the page after Zworykin's entry is both a surprise and a real delight: it is a collection of energy-related quotations (both funny and serious) from the past two centuries. Winston Churchill, Homer Simpson and Zaki Yamani, Saudi Arabia's former oil minister, all make an appearance here. So too does Golda Meir, Israel's formidable prime

minister in the early 1970s. "Let me tell you something we Israelis have against Moses," she is quoted as saying. "He took us 40 years through the desert in order to bring us to the one spot in the Middle East that has no oil." ■ Ehsan Masood is a freelance journalist and editor (with Daniel Schaffer) of *Dry: Life Without Water* (Harvard University Press, 2006).

Artists on a mission

An exhibition in London reflects on the dangers of climate change.

Colin Martin

The more the media bombard us with news of climate change, and the warmer the planet becomes, the greater is our nostalgia for the colder, whiter winters of the past. Peter Høeg's characterization of types of snowfall in his novel *Miss Smilla's Feeling for Snow* (Harvill, 1993), for example, captivated contemporary readers.

But the bigger picture — the social and global implications of accelerating climate change — has higher stakes. This is reflected in the output of the Cape Farewell project, in an exhibition called *The Ship: The Art of Climate Change*, which opens this Saturday (3 June) at the Natural History Museum in London. It runs until

3 September, after which some of the artworks can be seen at the Liverpool Biennial until November.

Over the past five years, Cape Farewell has organized three Arctic expeditions on the schooner *Noorderlicht*, bringing groups of artists, architects and writers, together with scientists and educators, to the Svalbard archipelago at 79° north. The objective is to raise public awareness of climate change by generating art installations and creative writing to complement and enliven the coldly objective data and dry scientific vocabulary of polar scientists and meteorologists.

"We intend to communicate through artworks our understanding of the changing climate on a human scale, so our individual lives can have meaning in what is a global problem," says David Buckland, artist and project director. Writer and participant Ian McEwan, a former Booker prize winner, has coined a memorable phrase, "the hot breath of our civilization", which pinpoints the problem as effectively as reams of scientific data and may stimulate more thought and action by individuals to try to halt climate change.

Some of the artists' responses to their Cape Farewell experiences were previously



Ice Towers by Peter Clegg and Antony Gormley could be seen in *The Ice Garden* in Oxford last December.

exhibited in *The Ice Garden*, an installation staged during four cold nights last December in the Clarendon quad next to the Bodleian Library in Oxford. Illuminated by a huge Moon, the setting evoked a seventeenth-century frost fair, like those held on the frozen Thames in London. Scrolling text by McEwan, projected onto an upper storey of the library, highlighted our man-made problem in lucid prose. Among other works were the sentinel-like *Ice Towers*, constructed by architect Peter Clegg and artist Antony Gormley. Each 0.54-cubic metre block of ice used in the piece represents the volume occupied by a kilogram of carbon dioxide at atmospheric pressure.

Soundscape, recorded by Max Eastley on land and under the sea at Spitsbergen, resonated eerily throughout the quad, providing an aural context for the visual works. Heather Ackroyd and Dan Harvey recreated their *Ice Lens* sculpture, concentrating artificial light through it to create a hot spot, recorded by thermal imaging. Their earlier attempt in the Arctic to scorch a sheet of paper by directing the

Sun's rays through a prototype had failed because the autumn rays were too weak.

Ice does not last long in urban summers, so in London Ackroyd and Harvey will exhibit a six-metre-long sculpture created from a Minke whale skeleton encrusted with alum crystals. Buckland will exhibit his photographs of text projected on to glacial ice, *Burning Ice*, *Sadness Melts* and *The Cold Library of Ice*. The Cape Farewell message remains the same, even though the artworks shown in London will not use ice as a physical medium.

The Cape Farewell project is a call for action, as well as a wake-up call. Coinciding with the London exhibition is a four-day conference over 11–14 July, Student Summit 2006: Climate Change, which aims to increase awareness and inspire advocacy among young adults, acknowledging that they represent our best chance of reducing carbon use. "On our side we have our rationality, which finds its highest expression and formalization in good science," says McEwan. "And we have a talent for working together — when it suits us."

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