

Paul D. Miller (DJ SPOOKY)

Forthcoming Project

TERRA NOVA: THE ANTARCTIC SUITE



Paul D. Miller's next large scale multimedia performance work will be an acoustic portrait of a rapidly changing continent. *The Antarctic Suite* transforms Miller's first person encounter with the harsh, dynamic landscape into multimedia portraits with music composed from the different geographies that make up the land mass. Miller's field recordings from a portable studio, set up to capture the acoustic qualities of Antarctic ice forms, reflect a changing and even vanishing environment under duress. Coupled with visual material from Getty Images' vast collection, *The Antarctic Suite* is a seventy minute performance, creating a unique and powerful moment around man's relationship with nature.

The Antarctic Suite follows Miller's highly acclaimed video and performance work, *New York is Now*, and *DJ Spooky's Rebirth of a Nation*, which he has performed in Athens, London, Rome, Paris, Sydney, Auckland, New York, LA, Chicago, Atlanta, Dartmouth College, Harvard University, The University of Michigan, and at numerous other festivals, universities and theaters. The DVD of *Rebirth of a Nation* will be released by Starz Media in early 2008.

ARTIST'S STATEMENT:

In 1949 the British composer Ralph Vaughn Williams created a metaphorical portrait of Antarctica entitled *Sinfonia Antarctica* that he began with a poem adapted from the poet Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*:

To suffer woes which hope thinks infinite.
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night,
To defy power which seems omnipotent,
Neither to change, nor falter, nor repent:
This... is to be
Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free,
This is alone life, joy, empire and victory.

As the only uninhabited continent, Antarctica has no government and belongs to no country. Various countries claim areas of the landmass, but essentially, the area between 90°W and 150°W is the only part of Antarctica, indeed the only solid land on Earth, not claimed by any country. In the era of satellites, wireless networks, and fiber optic cables, its ever harder to see the vision that Vaughn described for his orchestral work. What DJ Spooky's *Antarctic Suite: Ice Loops* portrays is a land made of complex ecological interactions. Instead of a metaphor, the composition aims to go to Antarctica and record the sound of the continent.

More than 170 million years ago, Antarctica was part of the supercontinent Gondwanaland. Over time Godwin broke apart and Antarctica as we know it today was formed around 25 million years ago. Using digital media, video, and high tech recording equipment, DJ Spooky will go to Antarctica and paint an acoustic portrait of this rapidly transforming environment. In the steps of environmentalists like Al Gore, or even films like *March of the Penguins* and *Happy Feet*, he aims to bring Antarctica to the contemporary imagination by digitally reconstructing it: historical maps, travelers journals over the last several centuries, crystalline ice's resonant frequencies, and the Earth's magnet poles - will all be paints for the audio palette he will work with. Essentially, he will go to the continent and create a recording studio that will be portable enough to move all over the territory. Think of it as sampling the environment with sound - something that Vaughn could only do with metaphor in 1949. The difference is that Miller approaches the task with a technological background that fosters a direct interaction with the territory that inspires the composition.

For most people, thoughts of exploration in Antarctica typically center on dogs, skis, snowshoes, and people in fur, not paintbrushes or sketch pads. Actually, art has always had a prominent place in the exploration of Antarctica. Photography began in the 1830's and only in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was it possible to take photographs in cold environments.

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Therefore, it was common for explorers of polar regions to be accompanied by artists to visually record the sights and phenomena for research and for popular distribution in books and articles. In the modern era, artists continue to venture to Antarctica. Their intent is not simply to record but to provide visual interpretations of the continent, based on direct observations combined with artistic talent. The Antarctic has many faces: it's usually thought of as a huge pile of ice that somehow stays afloat at the bottom of the world. In different ages, before humanity had mapped out the world, it would have simply been beyond most maps and most ideas about what made up the geography of the world.

As such, the Antarctic is one of the most unknown territories in the world today. The term "Antarctica" comes from the Greek term "antarktikos" meaning, simply "opposite to the Arctic." For the purposes of this project, the idea of looking at the places beyond the realms of everyday life in the industrialized 21st century world puts the continent front and center into the idea of making a map of the continent in sound. There have been several recent project's that reflect artists interest in Antarctic and Arctic regions: Pierre Huyghe's *A Journey That Wasn't* for the Whitney Biennial 2006, and Isaac Julien's *True North* multimedia installation that focused on the African American Polar explorer, Matthew Henson, who accompanied Robert Peary, and who was one of the first people to reach the North Pole. Miller creates a separate scenario from those envisioned by these artists by focusing on the acoustic qualities of ice and its relationship to geography.

The Antarctic Suite will be an acoustic portrait of a rapidly transforming continent made of ice and condensation. In many ways, because there is little rain, the interior of the continent is technically one of the largest deserts in the world. What *The Antarctic Suite* proposes to do is explore the realm of fiction and ideas that underlie almost all perceptions of Antarctica – from the interior desert plains, to the Transantarctic Mountains that divide the continent, the Suite will take samples of the different conditions, and transform them into multi-media portraits with music composed from the different geographies that make up the land mass.



Paul D. Miller (DJ Spooky)
at the Herod Atticus Amphitheater,
The Acropolis in Athens,
for performance of *Rebirth of a Nation*