



My greatest pleasure is to sit on the most exposed precipice, over the s-bends where the clear water reflects green light, and eddies swirl 50 or 60 feet below. Here I sit and draw, my focus moving from the intricate brilliant orange and yellow zantharia lichen on the rocks beside me to the impossibly folded black and white striped rocks across the canyon.

I begin to draw the shapes in the rock walls but get distracted by wondering how they came to be. The canyon feels alive but ancient, with the twisted folds of layered colour that bend their way along the canyon edge. The scent of pines, and musky old soapberry bushes brush by now and then as I crash along the shrubby canyon edge.

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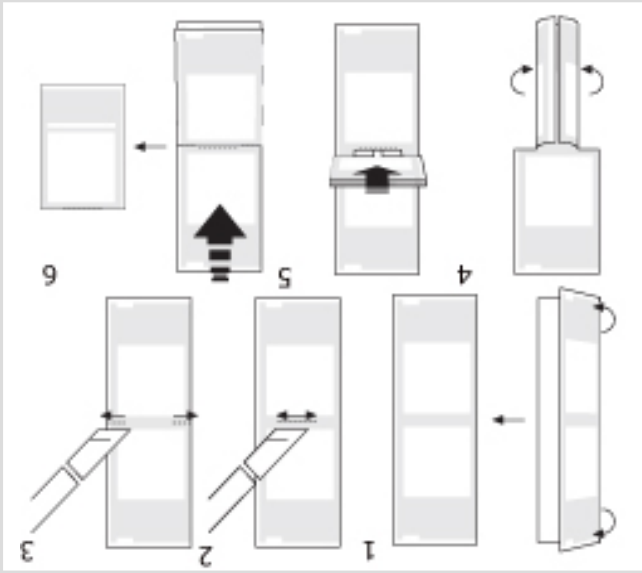
Juxtapositions and reflections...

Based on a long term collaboration with Alice Angus for our project Topographies and Tales, this e-Book contains a collection of images, reflections and current thoughts regarding journeys we made for the project and those that have arisen as a result.

Journal notes from Ivvavik National Park, northern Yukon Territory, Artist in the Park Project

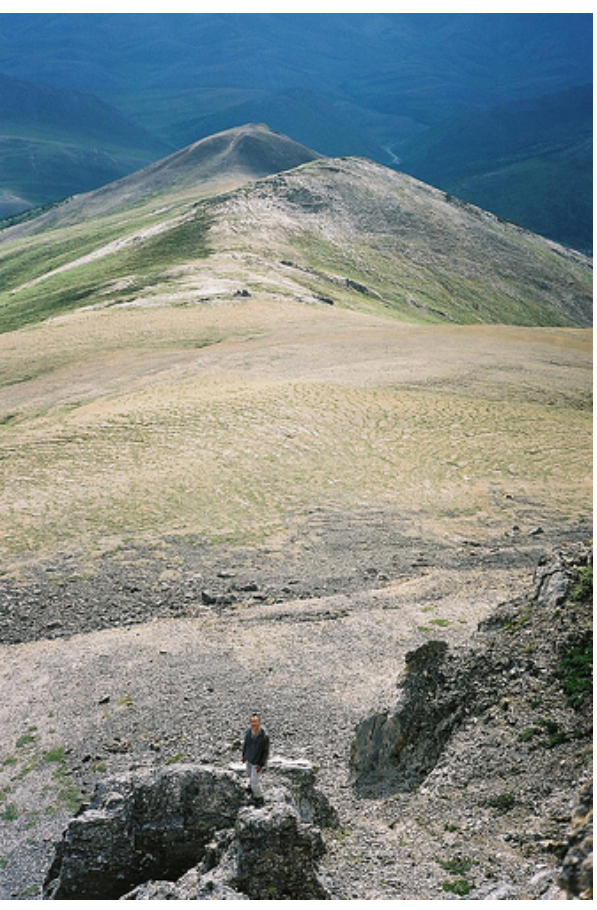
Juxtapositions and Reflections Part 2

Joyce Majiski



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Juxtapositions and Reflections Part 2
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I climb the long hills daily to visit the tors. The weather-resistant rock outcroppings lining the ridges enchant me, beckon me to visit. They remind me of dinosaur armour, giant stegosaurus plates sinuously marching along in parallel lines as far as I can see. This is a strange and surreal landscape, its rounded hills untouched by the last glaciation. I am not fooled by the deceptively soft quality of the landforms as there is a harsh reality in the arctic, short intense summers followed by long months of darkness and bitter winter conditions.

Since my initial visit in 1990 I have had the privilege to return to Ivavavik National Park several times, in different capacities: as a guide, as an artist and on personal trips. With each visit I try to see this area with new eyes. This means exploring a different aspect of the environment, walking new terrain and remaining childlike, open. As a result, I can revel in widening my sense of what is familiar when noticing things I hadnt seen before. Learning to know a place over time is so much like building a long term friendship.

You can't take anything for granted, and you have to pay attention.



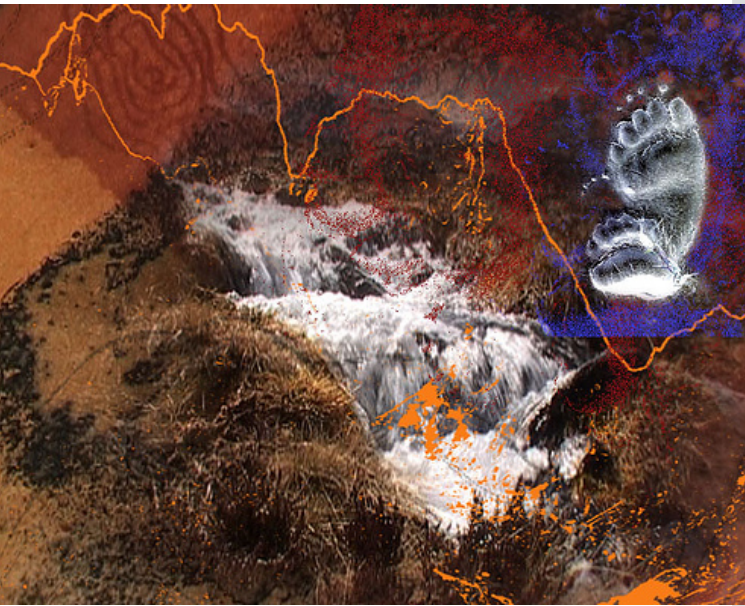
During a hike in Ivavavik, a friend and I watched a grizzly barreling full tilt down a long slope towards a cow caribou and her new calf. In no time the calf was flung into the air, the cow still running for her life. We gazed at one another, each with a bear spray in hand wondering at the immediacy of life and death, suspecting that the bear spray wouldnt be effective if a bear came charging at us that fast. Silently, we shrugged and carried on.

Today, however, the delicate yellow poppies wave in the breeze and tiny clumps of delicate moss campion, forget-me-nots and hawksbeard spring up in the talus slopes. Saxifrage, the tiny rock breakers cling to the most miniscule bits of soil between rock cracks. This species of plants is my favorite, tenacious, spiny and characteristic of high alpine and arctic environments. Kinnickinnick, all three species, exist here as well.

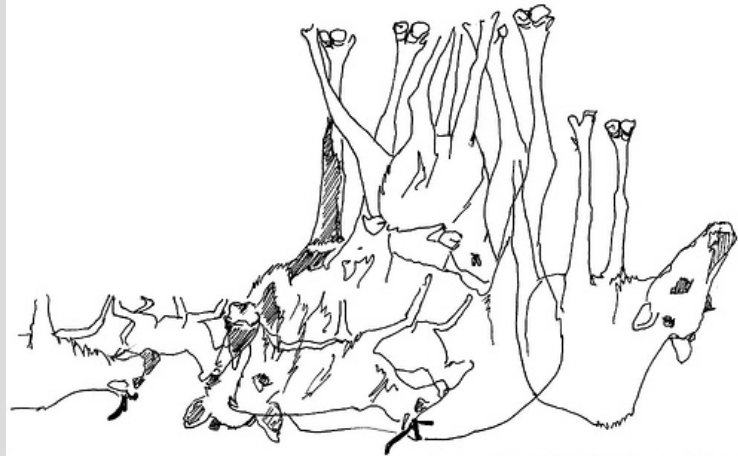


From my perch I watch dark clouds move overhead creating dramatic shadows across the valley. Streaks of rust and ochre appear and disappear flanked by intermittent purple valleys in this changing palette of a landscape. A streak of light highlights a dark ridge against light grey and I catch my breath as I see a Caspar Freidrich landscape, romantic and grande. Suddenly the light is gone and the landscape loses definition, becomes flat again. The quiet and grandeur washes over me and I can feel it settling into my bones. Each day the weather is different but the one thing I can always count on is that a cloudy sky is a gift. The range of pastel colours and weather worn shapes manifests the incredible sense of history and process that went into making this place. Can you ever stop staring at a place that is constantly in flux?

eye can see. The ghosts of those memories flirt with me. Twice I have followed these ancient caribou pathways, a heavy pack on my back in search of the herd. Long treks through the north slope walking from spring to summer witnessing change as the arctic bursts into life. There is such a tenacity and fragility of life there.



If I close my eyes and focus on the sounds of the water rushing in swirls against the convoluted cliff and the whisper of winds in the pines, I can recall the spectacle of seeing thousands of caribou rushing past. Caught in the cacophony of chaos, I have witnessed this snorting, grunting, barking, tendon clicking maelstrom of life caught in the instinct to migrate from one place to another. This need has existed for as long as their DNA strands have existed. Migration over the millennia, movement across this land evidenced by the delicate lines criss crossing the hills as far as the



Following my skyline foray I am pulled towards the Firth River canyon. The churning rapids rise and fall as I watch from the cliffs above, assessing eddylines and strategies for navigating the river. As a rafting guide I have scouted these rapids many times with the anticipation of a river run ahead. Wearing my artists cap I am content to indulge in the dalliance of how I would run it this time for a few moments and then turn to the simple pleasure of watching the water flow. This



stretch of canyon captures my imagination with each convoluted twist of rock below.

It is easy to be lost in reverie here, sucked into the green. When I can negotiate the steepness of the cliff, I make my way to the rocky shore, running my hand over soft time-worn rock. Here, erosion by time and water has left worn lines like contours which make good rock rubbings. I meander slowly, picking up bright red rocks or brilliant green ones and dipping them into the water to see their true colour. A gasp of surprise and appreciation with each one. It turns out I can do this for hours as my pockets grow heavy.

