

Giant Pastels Magnify Science

By [Christopher Volpe](#) | February 26th, 2024



Zaria Forman at work on one of her large-scale soft pastel paintings. Source: artist's website.

At five and a half feet wide by seven and a half feet long, Zaria Forman's pastel paintings are hard to ignore. Within them, art, science, and beauty mingle in equal measure.

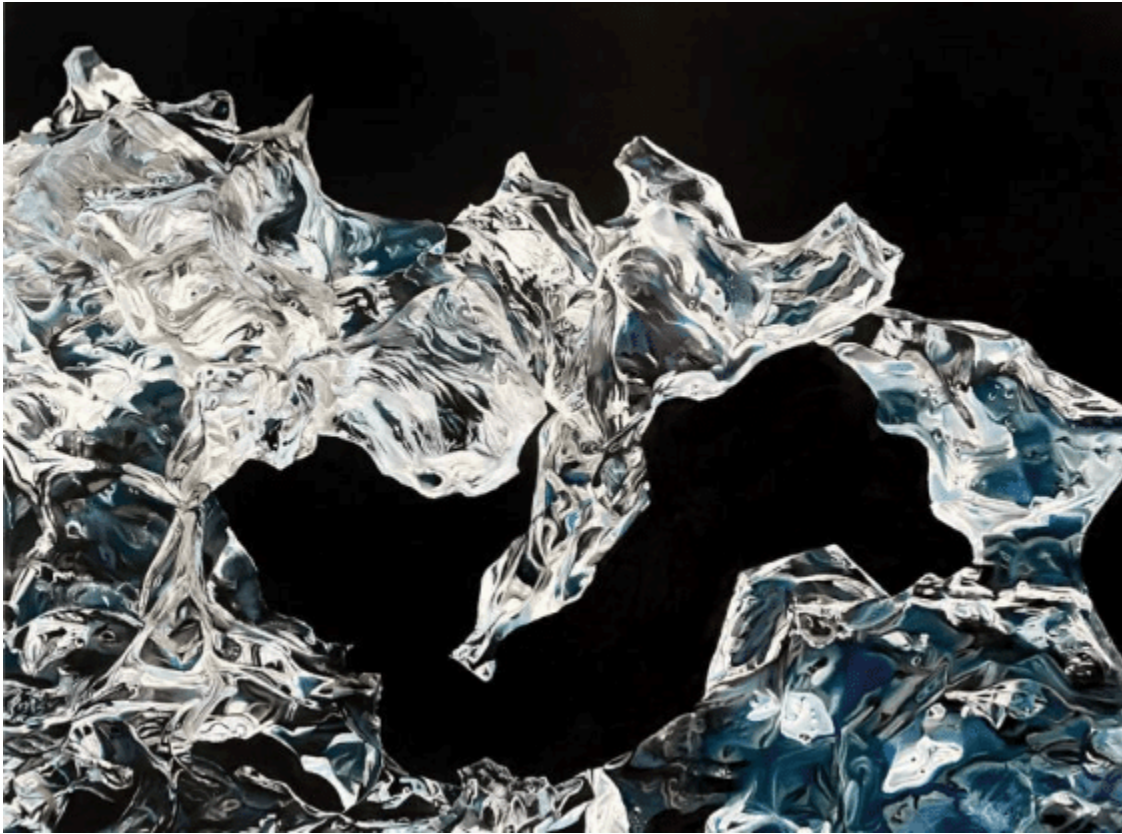


For two decades, Forman has traveled with and without scientists to remote regions all over the world collecting images and inspiration for her work, which is exhibited worldwide. Her highly detailed pastels meticulously document and bring attention to these rapidly changing landscapes.



Zaria Forman, Svalbard #33, 60" x 90," soft pastel on paper

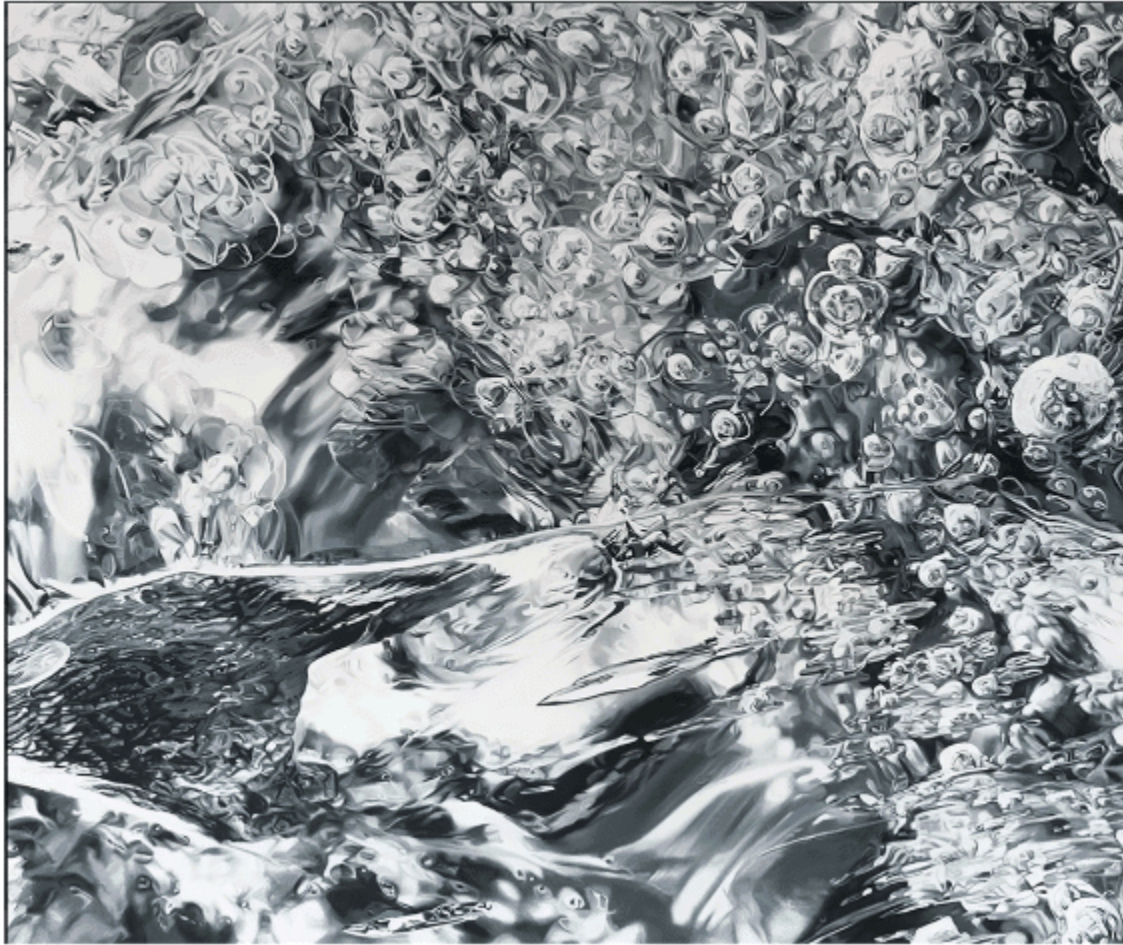
For her latest show, *Fellsfjara, Iceland*, opening in March at Winston Wächter Gallery in New York City, Forman traveled to the edge of a dramatic and beautiful Icelandic lagoon known as “diamond beach” among travelers. Here, ancient chunks of compressed glacial ice glisten against black volcanic sand.



Saria Forman, Fellsfjara, Iceland no.3, about 4 x 7 feet

With brilliant clarity, Forman amplifies the ice's character and complexity. By rendering each crack, bubble and distortion, Forman aims to let the ice tell the story of its journey from its prehistoric formation to today.

"My mother was a fine art landscape photographer, and she was obsessed with finding the most remote places she could possibly get to," she told Vogue Magazine in a recent interview. "From an early age, I was instilled with this deep love of landscape. We would take months at a time to explore a place that nobody had ever heard of."



Zaria Forman, Felisfjara, Iceland, No. 10, April 22, 2022, 60 x 71.325 inches, soft pastel on paper

In 2016, she joined Nasa's scientific missions flying over Antarctica, Greenland, and the Canadian Arctic, to map ice changes at both poles. The resulting large-format pastel works have been exhibited in museums and galleries around the world. She has flown with NASA on several Operation IceBridge missions over Antarctica, Greenland, and Arctic Canada. She was featured on CBS Sunday Morning, CNN, PBS, and BBC. She delivered a TEDTalk, and spoke at Amazon, Google, and NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center, exhibited in Banksy's Dismaland, and was the artist-in-residence aboard the National Geographic Explorer in Antarctica.



“When I graduated from college, I was making large-scale works – big skies, tornadoes, hurricanes – talking about the creative power of nature and how that can put things into perspective for our own emotional well-being,” Foman says. “And then in 2007, I went to the Arctic for the first time, and everything changed. I started focusing on climate change because you can’t ignore it when you’re in a place like that.”



Zaria Forman, Wihelmina Bay, Antarctica November 23rd, 2018, 40 x 64 inches, soft pastel on paper, 2019

The new Iceland works zoom in for close-up views of ancient glacial ice set against the velvety richness of churning Arctic waters and black sand. These works add to Forman’s career-long contemplation of light and ice; of humanity and nature; of time spent and time left. By making the date she photographed each subject part of the title, Forman adds a subtle clarion call, encouraging viewers to notice, appreciate and protect the earth’s most vulnerable landscapes.



Her works have appeared in publications such as Vogue, The New York Times, National Geographic, The Wall Street Journal, and the Smithsonian Magazine. Forman currently works and resides in upstate New York, and is represented by Winston Wächter Fine Art in New York, NY, and Seattle, WA.



Zaria Forman, Felisfjara, Iceland, No. 5, April 22, 2022, 60 x 71.325 inches, soft pastel on paper

Winston Wächter will be hosting a panel discussion on April 27th at 2pm in New York with Zaria Forman, Artist; Jen Schwartz, Scientific American; Samantha M. Thompson, Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum; and Karl Burkart, One Earth.

If you're interested in painting snow and ice as well as warmer landscapes, there's a special bundle of two videos by [Dave Santillanes available here](#).