



'Penguin Huddle' Lithograph, 42cm x 28cm

Painting Penguins - Not As Black And White As It Seems

On World Penguin Day, Annie Broadley explores how a trip to Antarctica proved a painting revelation and inspiration



'Penguin Sketches' in Annie's sketch book

Antarctica is the world's highest, driest, windiest and coldest continent. Its record low temperature is -94°C. But it doesn't actually snow much – the Antarctic is so dry it's classed as a polar desert. At the south pole the sun doesn't rise above the horizon and there is total darkness for several months of the year!

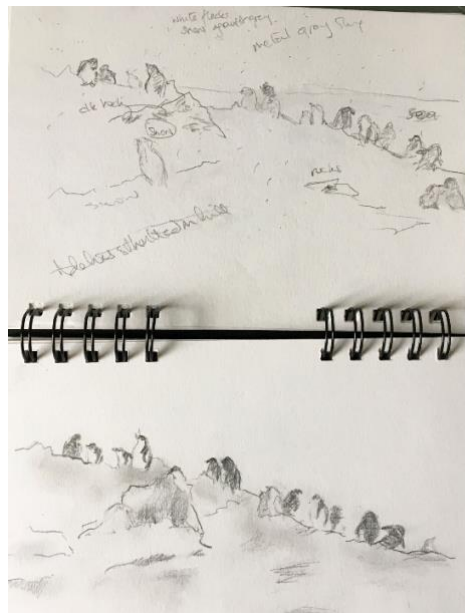
It gives you a strong impression what it's like for the wildlife that live in this wilderness and who spend their winters in total darkness.

It would be a strange place to go to paint but not so for Annie. *'I was taken to Edinburgh Zoo by my parents at the age of 5. The Zoo is famous for its king penguins and I remember being fascinated by the penguin parade which took place once a day. When it came to going home out of all the animals I had seen, the small model I chose from the Zoo shop was - of course - a penguin.*

So when I visited my first penguin colony in Antarctica I was absolutely thrilled'

In undertaking this unusual Antarctic adventure, Annie had to think about how best to work in temperatures that hovered around zero or below.

'I used a sketchbook and pencil or pen to make quick notes as I could only sketch for short periods without gloves and although I did work while wearing them it was a bit cumbersome. When it was windy I used clips to hold the sketchbook pages but when it snowed, the lack of shelter made sketching impossible Add to that the occasional skirmish between individual penguins or chicks and the sliding down on tummies and jumping from rock to rock, sketching and capturing the unique penguin characters and body shapes was not easy. Sometimes I would work my sketches up back on the boat. The detailed drawings and paintings were done when I was back in the studio, using the sketches for reference'.*



Example of Annie's Antarctica sketchpad

In her paintings, Annie wished to explore the ability of the penguins to survive in the coldest climate on Earth. She wanted to capture the discrepancy that exists between our image of penguins as engaging rather comical creatures, and their extraordinary ability to survive in the frozen cold. In a painting like *'Fortitude'* Annie tried to convey a sense of the cold reality of a penguin's life.



'Fortitude' 79 x 73cm, oil on canvas

Annie explains the development of the initial 'Rookery Neuk' sketch drawn in situ to the finished painting *'This is the sketch which Rookery Neuk developed from. Although the grouping of penguins is similar, the composition changed as it progressed. I did the pencil drawing and the painting in the studio. I didn't really have any expectations I just went with it but I am pleased with the result although it is very different from my usual style. The orange and yellows on the rocks are lichens - another example of the fact that Antarctica is not just white! The title is borrowed from 'Rookery Nook' a play by Ben Travers. As with rooks the term rookery is used for the place where penguins breed and nest, and 'neuk' is the Scots word for corner'*



The Initial in-situ sketch of 'Rookery Neuk'



The pencil drawing developed in the studio



The finished painting - 'Rookery Neuk' 65cm x 54cm, oil on board

For Annie painting in Antarctica was an experience of a life-time and something she will never forget. *"I loved the remoteness - the silence and the vast distances where there was nothing but sea, snow, ice and sky spreading far as the eye could see. That there are creatures too which have managed to make such amazing adaptations in order to survive in these extreme conditions fills me with wonder and makes me feel how very insignificant human beings are by comparison. I have tried to convey these feelings in both my landscapes and in the more intimate studies of the Antarctic wildlife."*



'Gentoo Chick' 21cm x 26cm, pastel on paper

Annie concludes *"I am so excited that my work in Antarctica has also brought about collaboration with a wonderful Antarctic charity; the Antarctic and Southern Ocean Coalition, known as ASOC. The health of our planet depends upon keeping Antarctica stable and ASOC work tirelessly to protect Antarctica, the world's last unspoiled wilderness and all the species that call it home. My paintings of penguins will be used in support of a special penguin painting competition for World Penguin Day with a signed print as a prize. You couldn't find a more worthy cause if you love penguins and if, like me, you seek to keep the beauty of wild Antarctica and its wildlife safe for generations to come"* **For info on ASOC view [here](#)**

Annie is currently exhibiting in the Spring Exhibition being held at the contemporary Glasgow Gallery, Bath Street, Glasgow <https://glasgowgallery.co.uk/> And also in the Spring Exhibition at The Torrance Gallery, which is Edinburgh's oldest contemporary art gallery, founded in 1970, and still going strong 50 years later! Now under new ownership, and enjoying an injection of new artists over the past year, including the beautiful work of Annie's <https://www.torrancegallery.co.uk/>

-ENDS-

NOTES TO EDITORS

For more information, please visit <https://anniebroadley.com/>

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ANNIE BROADLEY: After graduating from the University of Stirling Annie worked for many years as a theatre electrician designing lighting and sound for productions and taught theatre sound and radio production to drama students at the University of London Goldsmiths' College. She then studied art at Blackheath Conservatoire and the City Lit in London before joining the Painting Course taught by Paul Martin at Leith School of Art in Edinburgh. Annie has exhibited in London, the Scottish Borders, McTears in Glasgow and in galleries in Edinburgh which include the Doubtfire Gallery, Leith Gallery, the Torrance Gallery and also at the Arthur Conan Doyle Centre where she has her studio.

Annie works a lot from sketch books which formed a vital point of reference for her Antarctica paintings.



Annie Sketching in Antarctica

Paul Martin, Artist and former Head of Painting, Leith School of Art, Edinburgh says:

“There is a profound and beautiful intensity to Annie Broadley’s painting which reflects a genuine sympathy for, and understanding, of the life of matter and the movement of things.

There is a deep-down richness to her grasp of the life of a plant or animal, or the ungraspable force and grandeur of towering ice, or the mysterious energy of wind or rain.

All this is achieved through an exploration of primal pigments and equally characterful mediums such as egg tempera, varnishes or oil, which shine and coalesce as a ripple or dew on the surface of a stone, and glow with light like bird's plumage. It makes you look and think, and it makes you re-consider what you thought you saw or remembered”