

Ian van Coller

2018 Guggenheim Fellow

Professor, Montana State University, 2006-2018

www.ianvancoller.com

The Last Glacier Statement

At the time of its founding in 1910, Glacier National Park (GNP) in Montana contained more than 150 glaciers; today only 25 remain, and the USGS predicts that these will be gone by 2045. *The Last Glacier* project seeks to capture the fading majesty of the remaining glaciers in the park.

For the past 4 summers I have hiked (along with 2 other artists) many miles into the backcountry of GNP to get close to the retreating masses of ice. My intent is to situate the viewer *within* the terrain. Many of the photographs are intentionally minimalist, often eliminating the horizon and sky so that we have to engage with the piece to decipher the depth and scale of the landscape.

Though the works are aesthetically beautiful, *The Last Glacier* series is intended to invoke a contemplation of wonder and loss in the face of seemingly powerful and pristine landscapes, ones that have revealed themselves as inherently fragile and more responsive to human impacts than we had imagined.

The work in *The Last Glacier* project challenges passive perceptions that glaciers are remote and irrelevant, or merely obscure curiosities as the last remnants of a distant ice age. The artworks created by Anderson, Crownover and van Coller are poignant tributes, rather than scientific documentation or political bludgeon. The works effectively translate our understandings of the impacts of global climate change into a comprehensible human scale. This work allows us to contemplate the glaciers' waning grandeur, and why it is that we should care about their fate.