



Less than Zero

Fluid motion, frozen in time. Time capsules, hibernating till release. Less than Zero explores the cycle of life seen through water (H₂O) as Ice.

Water is the rock, the foundation for our existence – transforming through a kinetic reaction from solid to liquid to gas, releasing captured energy. It feeds our Earth, it fills our body. It permeates. Water covers 75% of the Earth's surface and fills 60% of the human body. Its state defines Earth's and our condition. Perhaps H₂O is Earth's soul, or perhaps H₂O represents our human self and by looking at it we can better understand our planet and ourselves.

In the dead of winter 2004, I traveled 120 miles north of the Arctic Circle in Sweden in search of self and in search of ice. It was there that I met some ice sculptors. They had harvested humungous blocks of ice from a frozen river. Taking a closer look at these blocks, I discovered a dynamic record of frozen actions - captured bubbles, textured cracks. They were like spontaneous ideas and emotional scars. These frozen moments represented memories and experiences to me, and ice became a metaphor for the "self". With these crystal clear blocks illuminated by spotlights at night, I began photographing portraits of ice as portraits of "self".

To explore the more metamorphic nature of ice (and self), I have continued this series in San Francisco. I am collaborating with an ice manufacturer to create 300 lb blocks of ice. Shooting at room temperature, rather than at sub-zero Arctic conditions, I am witnessing the ephemeral nature of ice - photographing ice as it gradually melts and morphs. My next step is to introduce "experiences" to ice such as pain and warmth, through tools and heat – keeping a visual diary of expressions and change.

While researching ice, I discovered that glaciologists and climatologists also view ice as an embodiment of experience and condition. Ice is a natural recorder and indicator of climatic state - capturing atmospheric gases to volcanic ash. Ice cores, recovered from as deep as two miles and as old as 400,000 years, act like tree rings. By studying these cores, scientists are reading a visual and chemical journal about our planet and finding indicators of global climate conditions. I hope to travel to Antarctica to photograph portraits of Antarctic ice. In June 2006, I applied for a grant from the National Science Foundation to join their Antarctic Artists and Writers Program.

The complex role that H₂O plays on Earth and in our lives fascinates me. Perhaps H₂O is not only our fuel, but the essence of Earth's and our being - with ice as the physical self and memories, water as actions, and vapor as reactions, emotions and thoughts. And like one's self, H₂O can be paradoxical – especially as Ice. It is motionless, yet can move. It remembers, yet later forgets. In a period of self-reflection and change, I am fascinated by this paradoxical and metamorphic nature of water. Regardless of its state, it is always its core self, H₂O. My goal is to create a body photographs that explore this cycle of life as seen through H₂O as ice and capture, as Edward Weston describes, its "essence."

Less than Zero is the first part of a three-part series investigating the states of H₂O - solid, liquid, and gas.