

# Stunning Photos Capture An Icy Landscape That's Rapidly Disappearing

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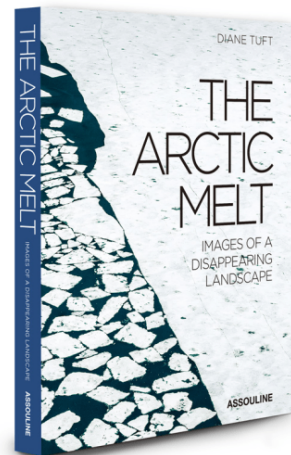
Meg Miller

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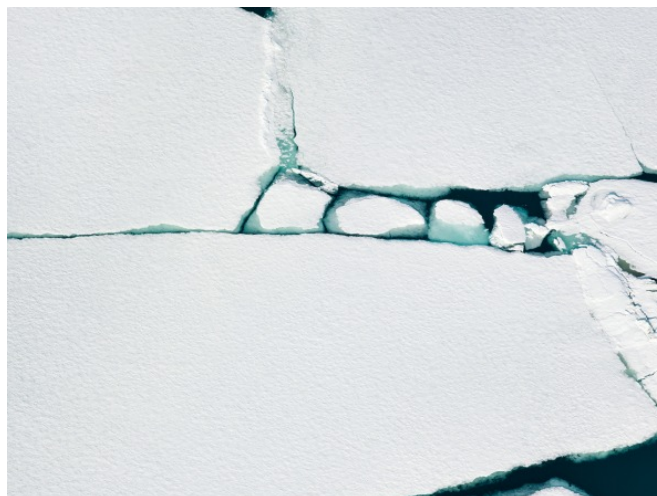
*By Meg Miller*

Scientists predict a sea level rise of 3 to 6 feet or more by the end of this century, a shift that is projected to displace tens of millions of people and devastate coastal cities. Two major factors of that rise are the melting mountain glaciers in the Arctic Ocean, and Greenland and Antarctica's ice sheet.

“Will the Arctic ice become a ‘new wonder’ of the world—a natural phenomenon that existed for a short period of time and then finally disappeared?” photographer Diane Tuft wonders in her new photography book, *Arctic Melt: Images Of A Disappearing Landscape*. A longtime documenter of ice-y landscapes and the sculptural qualities of frozen water, Tuft had visited that surreal landscape in 2007. Returning to the Arctic 2015, the question of disappearance framed her trip: the iced-over terrain, giant icebergs, and blocks of sea ice were drastically reduced compared to eight years prior.



[Photo: © Diane Tuft/courtesy Assouline]



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Tuft embarked on her trip in June 2015 and traveled to Norway, Greenland, and Svalbard, an archipelago in the Arctic Ocean located halfway between mainland Norway and the North Pole. While in the latter, she could “hear the thunder of calving glaciers releasing chunks of ice into the sea.” On a journey from Murmansk, Russia to the North Pole, polar bear sightings were few and “sporadic snow paddies were a clue to the difficulty the bears have in living and navigating the Arctic waters.”

Most striking was her ability to even travel through the Arctic Ocean so easily. Her path to the North Pole, for example, had for centuries and centuries been impassable. She writes:

For thousands of years, the sea ice during the Arctic winters through the month of June was always too thick for surface vessels to access the North Pole. But now, because of climate change, our vessel was the third earliest to ever reach the Pole, and the only vessel to arrive during summer solstice. With a balmy temperature of 32 degrees Fahrenheit, the ice at the North Pole was too thin to disembark.

In Ilulissat, Greenland, where in 2007, she had photographed the icebergs, glaciers, and an ice sheet so massive she had to fly over it to photograph it, was drastically different when she returned. “The majestic Eqi glacier, which I had photographed in 2007, had retreated so much that it was now almost entirely on bedrock,” she writes. On the ice sheet, “snow and silt that were studded with hundreds of meltwater ponds, some so large that they could be considered lakes.”



[Photo: © Diane Tuft/courtesy Assouline]

The photographs in the book are still breathtaking, though upon closer look they reveal the devastating details that had made such an impact on Tuft on her return trip. The vast ice fields are broken up into fragmented blocks. Spreads of what looks like red clay and dark silt are jarring in their interruption of the spreads of white landscapes. There are signs of melt everywhere. “This book is a visual testimony to the fragile and shifting landscape of the Arctic,” Tuft writes. Our refusal to handle it with care will result not only in the Arctic’s disappearance but dire effects for the rest of the planet.

