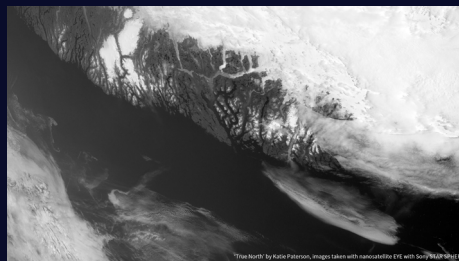
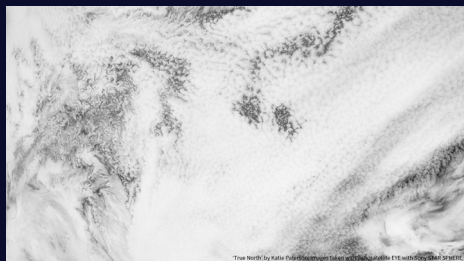


## True North: A Work Capturing the Arctic Light

Katie Paterson, who co-created "Art from Space Perspectives," has produced many artworks that capture the vastness of the universe and its timeline. Her art often explores the relationship between Earth and space, as well as deep space, the Moon and stars. In her pursuit to understand the relationship between humanity and the non-human world — the profound vastness that transcends human comprehension — she has incorporated ideas such as dying stars (*All the Dead Stars*, 2009), the moon (*Earth-Moon-Earth (Moonlight Sonata Reflected from the Surface of the Moon)*, 2008), and cosmic dust (*A Place That Exists Only in Moonlight*, 2019).

For this project, she used Sony's nanosatellite "EYE" to observe Earth from various angles, contemplating the Earth's horizon, the oceans, and the relationships between Earth and the Moon. Eventually, she focused on the Arctic region, photographing Greenland, the Svalbard archipelago, and the Canadian Arctic. She also paid close attention to the melting ice floes and glaciers and the sunlight reflecting off them. In creating this work, she attempted to capture the "Arctic light." In June 2025, she visited Svalbard with photovoltaic panels to collect the light reflected from the glaciers. She used this energy to develop photographs of the Arctic. Her work 'True North' captures the Arctic landscape in photographic form and projects the actual light emanating from the Arctic, encapsulating a scene that may disappear in millennia.



©'True North' by Katie Paterson, images taken with nanosatellite EYE with STAR SPHERE

### Interview with Katie Paterson

True North captures the Arctic landscape and light. This interview reveals the thoughts and behind-the-scenes stories of its creation.



[Read the full interview here](#)

#### **Engagement with space in past works**

I first became really interested in space, time, and the universe when I lived in Iceland for nearly a year. Even though I'm from Scotland, where there's expansive nature, it took going to Iceland to really feel what it means to be on a planet that's revolving around the Sun. I felt close to nature in a new way — a kind of proximity to deep time that I hadn't experienced before.

In Iceland, there's so much wilderness, so much sky. In summer, there's 24-hour daylight — you can watch the midnight sun dip and rise, and sometimes experience all the seasons in a single day. That was the first time I truly opened my eyes to the sky above, to the cycles of day and night, and to deep space. I was living there just before I began studying at art school, and it had a huge influence on me. Since then, I've made so many different artworks connected to that early experience.

I've always been fascinated by the very deep beyond — the mysterious, the unknowable, that which we can never fully grasp, but which we all come from. We're all born from this vast cosmos. The Earth itself is part of this enormous recycling process of the universe, forming our home and every one of us who lives here.

My fascination with space and deep time is often about how we relate to this immense, expansive universe, which is also our home. In that way, it can make us feel even more connected to the Earth, to our homeland, and help us understand where we've evolved from. It opens up an awareness of the vast depth of cosmic and geological time, and of the brief, extraordinary moment that humans are a part of.

#### **STAR SPHERE, this new experience.**

For me as an artist, to be invited to work with a camera in space felt like a dream, to be one of the very first people given this uncommon view of Earth. In my work up until now, I've often been looking outward, deeper and deeper into the cosmos, but I've never had the opportunity to look back — back to us, to our home, to this vast planet Earth. It's been the most extraordinary experience to be given the tools, and the freedom, to use imagination in any way I choose with Sony's camera. I've really been able to wander in my imagination, to dream about what I'd like to do, what I'd like to see.

The more I looked at the Earth, the more I became drawn to this view back to us, rather than the view out. How is the Earth seen from elsewhere? How are we seen from this very deep beyond? And how does that make us feel, as humans, to have access to this vast perspective?

One of the things that struck me most was the sheer beauty of it: seeing everything — the clouds, the rivers, the deltas, the deserts, the forests — all of it as one whole. There are no borders. Countries don't exist anymore. You might see some outlines, but really, for the first time, you see how a sense of oneness takes over your view of the Earth. It isn't divided in the way humans are used to thinking. It's one whole, part of an enormous, harmonious universe.

#### **What inspired the creation of *True North*, and its underlying concept**

What struck me so deeply was a sensation of being able to see all of it at once, to take in the Earth as a whole, and to begin to understand its deep, ephemeral nature — how everything is constantly in transformation. I love the idea of being able to look from above, to take in the entire Polar North from afar, and to witness it in a state of both flux and change, but also still and suspended in this one precise moment of time that will never exist again.

Eventually, I became more and more drawn to the Arctic, to the Polar North. It's a place I've been working with for a long time. One of the first artworks I created involved placing a microphone inside a glacier in Iceland. People all over the world could dial a phone number and listen live, in real time, as the glacier melted — a one-to-one experience. It was almost like creating an intimate connection with a vast, remote place. A place that is melting. A place that might seem far away, but is deeply connected to us.

As I looked at Earth from different angles, I was struck by the fragility of the Arctic ice. The threats it faces now are so great that the photograph I take might last longer than the place itself. The Arctic ice and water may transform within our lifetime, and its light could also change beyond recognition. In just the past decade, we've seen glaciers and ice caps melting at an alarming rate, and the pace is only increasing.

#### **The creative process behind *True North***

I felt that taking an image from above could almost crystallise this moment in time — a moment and a landscape that might soon be gone. But my idea wasn't only to photograph the Arctic. I wanted to capture the light from the glaciers and actually use that light to create the photographs.

Using the satellite camera, I've been imaging the North Pole, Svalbard, the Canadian Arctic, and areas all across the Polar North, taking photographs of this incredibly vulnerable, icy landscape, with clouds drifting overhead and the sea visible beneath. But it's melting — rapidly.

I travelled to the Arctic with a solar battery, and while I was there, I collected the light that was shining and bouncing off the glaciers. I stored that energy and used it to develop the photographs. So in a way, the photos are made of Arctic light. When you look at them, you're seeing a record of that moment in time, but the images are also infused with the polar light as it was then. And perhaps, in a millennium or even sooner, that light may no longer exist in the same way.

I had so much fun watching the moment when the photographs would load on the screen and I could finally see what the satellite had captured. It was always special. The images constantly surprised me. We would choose the locations, and we had some sense of what we might see — but it was only when the image appeared on the screen that we could really understand what we were looking at. There was something beautiful in that moment — often it was waves and clouds over a very white, powdery landscape.

#### **The perspective gained through this experience**

It was such a unique experience — very few people, apart from astronauts on the space station or those in highly specialised fields, have had the chance to look down on the Earth from space. So for me, as an ordinary person and an artist, it was incredible to be able to choose exactly where to look. And then, to be surprised by what the satellite sent back — that was such a special moment. Opening the images for the first time and thinking, wow. I still look at them now, and every time, I notice something new.

#### **A perspective beyond human presence**

What I loved about this view from above was that it felt almost like seeing the world as a human — but without seeing humans. You're watching the ice, watching the sea, and it's so far away that we're not visible. It could be a view from before humans ever existed, or a view from long after we're gone.

#### **A perspective that sees the Earth as a single, unified whole**

It also gave me this feeling that, although there are something like eight million different species of life on Earth, from above it's as if everything is merged together. That sense of connection became much stronger for me personally while looking through the camera — feeling the presence of everything that's ever lived, and everything that will ever live, all right here on this one planet. What a joy and a privilege to be alive at this moment in time, and to be able to witness the whole Earth.

#### **What This Experience Revealed**

For me, it's been an incredible experience. Almost like gaining a whole new vision of our relationship to Earth. I've never had an experience quite like this, one that allows me to truly imagine the oneness of everything. It's more than just the image — it's the experience, the sense of relationship and connectivity.

It's made me reflect on who we are as humans in the context of this ancient planet that has existed for billions of years. You can really feel that depth of time when you start to look at Earth from afar. It gives you a much wider perspective. Often, we tend to shrink things into a smaller, more human viewpoint. But from this distance, it opens up the possibility to think more expansively — in our awareness and in our imagination.

I've worked with deep space, and I've worked with the Earth. But this is the first time they've come together in this way. It's the first time I've been able to engage with space, the Earth, the ice, and the polar regions all at once. And the first time I've been able to truly bridge the two.