

Erika Yarrow talks to the artist and Director of Cape Farewell.

Image: David Buckland, *Ice Texts*, 2004–2005

DAVID BUCKLAND ON THE RECORD

The brainchild of David Buckland, Cape Farewell was established eight years ago.

Since its inception the organisation has led five expeditions to the High Arctic that have brought together artists, writers and scientists to gain a better understanding of climate change and to find positive solutions. The works created as a result of this immersion into the wildest and most vulnerable of landscapes have been exhibited across the world. The organisation has recently published its first book, *Burning Ice - Art and Climate Change*, a publication which showcases David's work and that of many

of the artists who have voyaged, including Heather Ackroyd, Dan Harvey and Antony Gormley, and features extracts from the expedition journals of the novelist Ian McEwan and an essay by Robert McFarlane.

'When it started I was, and still am, an artist,' explains David. 'You sometimes follow a curiosity and I came across the climate models of the Hadley Centre. I went to see the maker of the models, Dr Richard Wood, now the centre's Senior Climate Scientist. The models are extraordinary. They are pretty robust and so can predict the future fairly accurately

and I was interested in this.'

David's contact with scientists led him to realise the role that art could have in communicating climate science. 'Back then the scientists I spoke to were concerned that they couldn't get the media to speak to them at all and they were unable to get the public interested in science. Culturally we don't embrace science. I realised that we needed to create a new bank of thinking and communicating, and that was how Cape Farewell came about. So I put a group of

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scientists and artists together on a schooner and sent them to the Arctic. The aim was to create a new bank of imagery to engage with the public. By putting together the two cultures of arts and science we have found that we actually work in very similar ways.'

'I realised early on that the scientists were doing a great job, but it isn't science that is creating climate change, it is human activity. We currently live in a carbon economy and we need to re-jig that.' Cape Farewell has joined forces with the Eden Project, engaging in a three-year partnership, which launched in December 2007. The winter project includes an installation by artist Clare Twomey featuring thousands of ceramic flowers made of unfired china clay. 'Because they are not glazed they will change with the elements,' says David. 'It demonstrates that things change, we are all part of a delicate cycle.'

It is David's passion and the integrity of

the Cape Farewell project that has drawn an impressive collection of high calibre scientists, artists and writers to voyage to the Arctic to witness climate change at first-hand. 'To engage people in conversation you have to be truly inspired,' says David. 'At Cape Farewell we don't do faking. If artists are not happy with their work they do not have to show it. The scientists are the same. We are not about just putting it out.'

The voyages themselves are not to be taken lightly. On a recent expedition David felt real moments of fear when his team's ship was trapped by ice. 'At one point we were trapped and fighting for our existence. Ice was being taken south by the Greenland current. The environment is changing fast there and it will have consequences for us all. We are being asked to re-look at ourselves,' he concludes.

Education is an important element of Cape Farewell's work, culminating in a

recent youth expedition that brought together students from across the world. Twelve students were given the opportunity to travel to Svalbard in the High Arctic. During the expedition the teenage students worked with scientists and sent reports back to their schools. 'This year we plan an even bigger youth expedition,' David confirms. 'We will be going to Canada, round Cape Farewell to Baffin Island, which has an indigenous population.' In addition to Cape Farewell's Arctic expeditions, teams will also be venturing to another climate change pulse point, the Amazon.

But Cape Farewell is not just about encouraging people to think about environments far from home, it is also about communicating an important message of hope. David concludes: 'Many of the solutions are at home. We need to understand that we are right in the middle of the solution.'