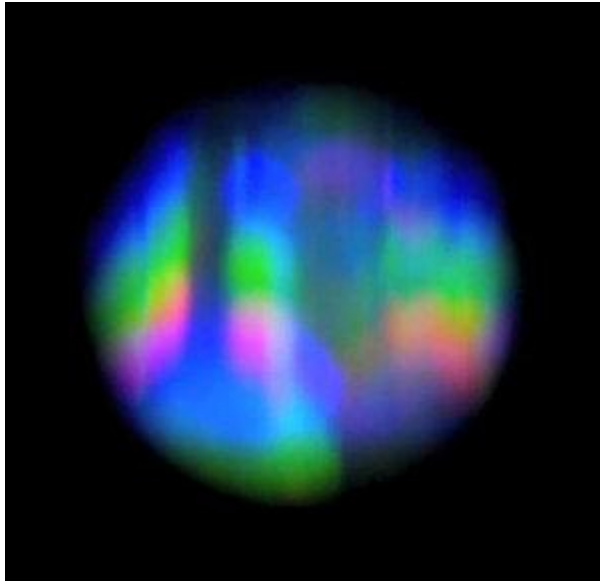


# The art of exploration at Paragraph Gallery

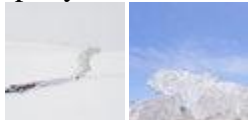
**From the frozen Arctic to the vastness of space, artists find the beauty in hostile environments.**

By DANA SELF

Special to The Star



Hillary Wiedemann's single channel video, "Sans Soleil (Diffracted)" (2011), manipulates the eponymous 1983 French film about memory.



the exhibit

“Re-Search: Three Projects by Thea Augustina Eck, Erika Lynne Hanson and Hillary Wiedemann” continues at Paragraph Gallery and Project Space, 21-23 E. 12th St., through Jan. 7. Hours are noon-5 p.m. Wednesdays, Fridays, Saturdays and 11 a.m.-6 p.m. Thursdays. More information at 816-221-5115 or [charlottestreet.org](http://charlottestreet.org)

If you are suspicious of an exhibition whose title suggests you need to work hard to understand it, then you can rest easy, sort of.

The three artists of “Re-Search,” whose work is history- and science-based, contemplate Romantic notions of exploration.

Michigan-based artist Thea Augustina Eck is the group's heavyweight, capitalizing on 19th-century Romantic heroism. The foundation of her inkjet digital prints is the 1845 Franklin expedition to find the Northwest Passage to the Arctic.

That expedition and all its men were tragically lost. American and British rescue missions ensued in the years after, while an enthralled public followed it all through that era's media.

Eck creates highly dramatic narrative photographs that embody isolation and loneliness. Solitary people traverse a hostile, yet eerily stunning, snow-covered landscape. The figures look out across angry gray water, they navigate a frozen environment pulling strange instruments or stagger along with black balloons attached to their bodies.

The terrifying skies above this frozen land suggest a hostile environment in no uncertain terms. Yet the images are fantastical and alien and vibrate with this historical event and its emotions, which still captivate more than 150 years later.

Californian Hillary Wiedemann's enigmatic works emerge from the science of perception. In "Sans Soleil (Diffracted)," Wiedemann manipulates the 1983 film about memory, "Sans Soleil" (French for sunless), strips it of sound and displays it in its entirety as if through a prism, so the only image is a circle of moving rainbow lights projected on a wall. For Wiedemann, her version becomes a memory of a memory.

"8:18" is audio recordings of the sun. According to the artist, if the sun's rays (which take about 8 minutes to reach the Earth, hence the title) made a sound, this is what you'd hear. The disquieting sound — the visible made audible — is an apt theoretical companion to "Sans Soleil."

Unfortunately, Wiedemann's ideas are more exciting than the work.

In fairness, the gallery contributes to the work's shortcomings. The space allocated to her work ironically allowed for too much ambient light for "Sans Soleil (Diffracted)" to show properly, and the sound from "8:18" seemed like street noise from outside. In a different setting, the works would be much more successful.

Kansas City artist Erika Lynne Hanson's work functions like conceptual middle ground between Eck and Wiedemann. Using a predominance of natural materials including linen, cedar, living plants and ice, she examines impermanence, suggesting time's passage made visible through her changing materials.

Ice melts, plants may die, and yet in Hanson's work, all change can be seen as positive and natural. But, in case change leads to instability and anxiety, Hanson adds her weavings, which represent order in a chaotic world. The weavings don't telegraph stability, per se, but their homespun quality does make visual sense with her other materials.

Hanson's most engaging works are two diminutive video projections based on paintings by the Hudson River School Romantic painter Frederic Edwin Church. "Glacial Observation: 3 and 4"

are tiny projections, down by the baseboards of the gallery, of rocks and sea based on two paintings made in 1859 by Church during his voyage to Newfoundland and Labrador in Canada.

Like Eck's photographic essay on isolation, these video images are hypnotizing (although they needed to be in a darker room), pulling us into their vastness, which is nonsensically accentuated by the small size of the projection.

Hanson's and Eck's works become companion pieces, visually reverberating together. Unfortunately, Wiedemann's gallery placement almost excludes her from the group conversation. Her exploration of how the visual is made visible by light, a simple yet profound concept, is mostly lost in this iteration.

**Posted on Thu, Dec. 08, 2011 01:00 PM**

Read more: <http://www.kansascity.com/2011/12/07/3304674/the-art-of-exploration-at-paragraph.html#ixzz1fy4geKUD>