
From the Selected Works of Matthew Ryan Smith, Ph.D.

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Amber Church: Yukon Artist in Action

Matthew Ryan Smith, Ph.D.



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Yukon Artist in Action



CELEBRATING SWANS, 2014, 20" X 24", MIXED MEDIA (ACRYLIC, INK, CUT PAPER)

Amber Church is a writer, artist and climate change researcher who lives in Whitehorse and still believes she can change the world.

Matthew Ryan Smith: How does the place you call home, Yukon, figure into your art?

Amber Church: A large portion of my work is influenced by the Yukon – there aren't a lot of places like it left in the world. We have an almost mythic cultural history in many people's eyes but when it comes to the reality they often have an imperfect view. I like to express elements of that reality in my work.

You're involved in your community through your art, fundraising and environmental activism. Why?

It's vital. We are living in a time when we are bombarded by environmental

and social issues and where apathy and disengagement are easy options. The best way to combat this is to engage with your community. And it's also really fun.

Your mixed media works are fantastical visions of nearly impossible places.

I use my work to challenge the status quo and traditional institutions – especially the representation of women in history and current environmental issues. If I can create a scenario where the audience sees the world in a new light, I feel like I have succeeded.

Water figures into many of your works.

Water has always played an important part in my life, from living in Yoho National Park to my master's degree in glaciology and climate change to my current work with the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society

to protect the pristine Peel Watershed in northern Yukon.

Can you tell me about teaching in Antarctica?

Teaching in Antarctica was amazing. I was there as part of the education staff of Students on Ice, a group that brings high school and university students to the Polar Regions and helps them foster a new understanding and respect for the planet. I'm lucky to have taught in both the Arctic and Antarctic.

You were also involved in the negotiations for the United Nations Climate Change program.

I attended three sets of UN climate negotiations. First in Montreal in 2005 with the International Youth Delegation. I then led the Canadian Youth Delegation to



THE JOURNEY, 2011, 11" X 14", MIXED MEDIA (ACRYLIC, INK, CUT PAPER)

Copenhagen in 2009 and Cancun in 2010. I was part of the team who helped to draft the text for Article Six, which deals with public participation in the process. I stepped back in 2011 to focus at a more grassroots level in the North. The UN process is draining and it can easily disillusion you. I needed an outlet where I could inspire others and myself and re-foster my belief that we can solve the issues we face. **AV**

Interviewer Matthew Ryan Smith is a freelance writer, independent curator and educator based in London, Ontario. His writings have appeared in several Canadian and international art publications.

Amber Church is having a solo show of her work in May 2015 at the Artists at Work Gallery, 120 Industrial Road, Whitehorse, Yukon.



MILES CANYON, 2013, 20" X 24", MIXED MEDIA (ACRYLIC, INK, CUT PAPER)