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Art among the penguins: inaugural Antarctic Biennale to launch next year

By Gareth Harris



Russian artist Alexander Ponomarev warms up for the Antarctic Biennale

The first Antarctic Biennale – an exhibition of contemporary art in one of the most remote places on the planet – is due to launch next spring, the organisers say.

Around 100 artists and scientists will travel for 12 days aboard the Akademik Ioffe ship, creating works that will be “temporarily installed and exhibited in different locations on the Antarctic continent”, according to a press statement. The ship will sail from the port of Ushuaia in Argentina to the Falkland Islands and then pass through the Drake Passage. The list of participating artists is due to be announced around two months prior to the expedition.

The commissioner of the biennial is the Russian artist Alexander Ponomarev. He says on his website: “During the landings, the artists participating in the project will make objects, installations, performances and stage actions. Their constructs are to be portable, designed to withstand relevant weather conditions and cause no hazard to the environment.” Every landing will be documented on film.

After being displayed on the Antarctic Continent and on nearby islands, the works created on the expedition will go on show in museums and exhibition halls across the world, according to a spokesman. The biennial is funded by sponsorship donations.

Nadim Samman, the independent curator who is co-organising the biennial, wrote last year: “But

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every two years? Who will go? Do we really have the resources? And even if we do, isn't our plan just another assault on the last great wilderness? Fear not. Ours is a topsy-turvy biennale, so perhaps we will only go once."

Ponomarev says: "Antarctica is pure, remote and mysterious—like art itself! This sublime continent is like a white sheet of paper on which artists from different countries and nationalities will try to write the new rules of cooperation."

The first phase of the initiative, the exhibition *Antarctopia*, was staged in the Antarctic Pavilion at the Venice Architecture Biennale in 2014.