

Ice and a slice

New work in paper is as dazzling as snow, reveals *Sara Urwin Jones*

ARTIST PROFILE

RACHEL HAZELL; WIDE WHITE PAGE

Scottish Poetry Library
5 Crichton's Close, Edinburgh
0131 557 2876
Until September 28
Mon-Fri 11am-6pm; Sat 1pm-5pm

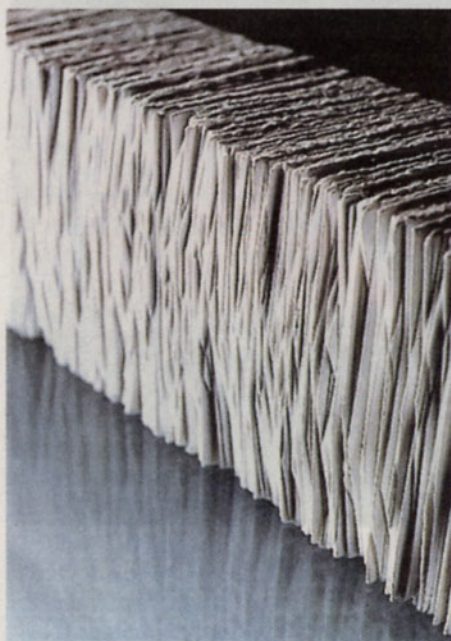
Rachel Hazell is a book artist, a woman who makes art out of what most people make books from – paper. Her current exhibition, and also her first independent exhibition, is at the Scottish Poetry Library, the result of a journey late last year to Antarctica on HMS Endurance, a month spent teaching sailors to bind books, while they taught her to tie knots. She came back with hundreds of photographs and experimental ideas for paper sculptures, as well as a certain hardness in the face of cold.

For some, one visit to this phenomenal landscape might be enough; it's not for nothing that scientists and other support workers for the British Antarctic Survey have to go through such radical fitness tests before being stationed South. But Hazell has done it before. In 2004, she took a place on a cruise ship circling Antarctica, charting the first moments of her subsequent fascination with the similarities between paper and ice formations.

"There are such affinities between snow, ice and paper: icebergs seem like libraries, crevasse lines on snow fields are mysterious hieroglyphs, wind corroded



Rachel Hazell's new works – including *Ross Ice Shelf*, above, and *Splice Cliff* – bring together the artist's twin fascinations with the craft of book making and the glacial beauty of Antarctica, where she has recently taken a job that involves franking mail and monitoring penguins



ice cliffs could be ripped edges of paper." Her work at the Poetry Library is a delicate yet robust series of paper-ice metaphors, including sculpture, installation and bookworks using maps and words from HMS Endurance and the Scottish Poetry Library itself.

These are evocative pieces, from her subtly political *The Cost of Tourism*, in which she has attached tiny books made from an early twentieth-century Italian ledger to one of four Admiralty maps given to her by the captain of HMS Endurance, to the framed *Tissue Ice Cliffs*, a delicate sewn paper concertina, which creates a ribboned effect, reminiscent of Antarctica's cliffs. In one small frame, she positions a photo of a melting ice cliff overlain with the word, *Unthinkable*.

Hazell graduated in printmaking from Edinburgh College of Art in 2001 and has since mainly concerned herself with writ-

ing, making, binding and creating book-related work, including large scale paper installations. Her work has appeared at the Edinburgh Book Festival, where in 2004 she created its anniversary sculpture, and ranges from large scale installations to tiny works such as the very tactile book necklace, a series of sheets of paper laced together using traditional book-binding stitch, presumably for making notes on the move.

But her main interest lies in the light and textures of the South. She has not yet tired of Antarctica, and has a rather active way of getting herself back on the continent. In a few months she will return to live on a remote island stamping tourist mail and looking after the wildlife, while gaining inspiration for further artwork. Her job title? Assistant post mistress and penguin monitor. Now that's one for the CV. ■