



## WILDWINGS

### Artist in Residence – Antarctica, The Falklands & South Georgia

November 22nd – Dec 10th 2013

When painting and sketching, no amount of photographic references and copying the natural world filtered through a camera lens, will be as vibrant as the few scribbles and marks on a piece of paper that happen after a period of direct observation of birds, animals and wild landscapes. To my eye, one is about depicting static moments detached from a sense of tension and immediacy, an impersonal two-dimensional record of something frozen in place and time. The other is about fleeting moments and snatched interpretations of the more significant hidden truths of three-dimensional species and places - movement, the relationship between colours, forms and lines, or a sense of tension that suggests something is about to happen, for example. The starting point for me has to be the field experience; pure observation of landscape and wildlife is the raw material that starts every creative journey.

Well, that is the theory; so how would it apply to being invited by One Ocean Expeditions to join the expedition ship Akademik Sergey Vavilov as ‘artist in residence’ on a recent 18-day voyage to The Falkland Islands, South Georgia and Antarctic Peninsula? The result was an artistic journey way beyond all my expectations - either working with the enthusiastic amateur painters onboard, encouraging them on different creative adventures and suggesting ways to see the natural world in a new and challenging light, or sitting for longer with others who were picking up a pencil and seriously drawing for the very first time. At other times we gathered for communal art events, formally announced throughout the ship as ‘for anyone wanting to have a go’. So whenever the opportunities arose, we sat in the lounge with sketchpads and pencil exploring the mechanics of penguin and albatross wings, completing impressions of the effortless flight of seabirds and swimming penguins. When the weather was clear and the sea calm, we sat on the upper deck and painted seascapes and tried to understand the colours of the ocean. Ashore, among the snow and penguins, we painted the wildlife and vast frozen landscape of rock, mountain and ice. Sometimes a handful of passengers gathered for the ‘art club’, and at other times there were only just enough sketch pads and pencils to go round! And for the lecture *Artists in Antarctica – 1770 to Contemporary*, the presentation room was almost full.

At every other opportunity, I sketched and painted on my own gathering new sketches and ideas for developing work later in the studio. Sometimes I had all my kit laid out on the heaving aft-deck under a continuous faint rain of salt spray and mist; other times out of the wind under the shelter of the port or starboard lifeboats. There were times when I worked close to the lounge door opening onto the deck, benefitting from the frequent blasts of warm air every time someone came or went; sometimes the views from high on the bows of the ship were what I wanted, where two huge mooring points served as tables. At other times I was trying to capture the colour and motion of towering waves, and noting the plumage characteristics of passing albatrosses and petrels. Sometimes painting on huge sheets of paper as the ship nudged through fragmented icebergs, or at other times in Zodiacs with a tiny sketchbook and a handful of coloured pencils ready, as we manoeuvred almost silently towards seals or whales.

The next voyage? Perhaps a few more pencils, some additional charcoal and plenty more large sheets of drawing paper. However, just like the last voyage, what there is sure to be enough of is an enthusiastic mix of artists with a range of talents prepared to have a go. But however many of us gather onboard, we will almost certainly be outnumbered by photographers!

**Bruce Pearson**  
**December 2013**

The next voyage with Bruce onboard (and the wildlife photographer Tui de Roy) sails on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2014. Please see our website for all the details, plus some of Bruce's fantastic images from this voyage!

[www.wildwings.co.uk](http://www.wildwings.co.uk)