

# 20 + 20 at Canada House Gallery



Artist Dominik Modlinski

**By Corrie DiManno, The Banff Crag and Canyon, April 27, 2011**

Helicopter landings on icebergs, spending weeks at a time living in tents in the mountains, and hiking through the wild safari all have one thing in common, and it's not what would first come to mind.

Rather, it's en plein air painter Dominik J. Modlinski, whose methods constitute a new genre of oil painting, which should be called something along the lines of extreme painting. This intense way of creating art is currently on display at Canada House in his newest show called 20 + 20, where 20 en plein air paintings are showcased, and 20 larger studio paintings hang alongside the original en plein air sketches.

Having lived in the Yukon for more than 15 years, Modlinski has made his mark in documenting the isolated terrain of Canada's far north. And he thrives off of these harsh conditions.

"I paint outside in extreme conditions, in very isolated places in mountain regions, and will sit for three weeks in very challenging environments. So for me, each painting is like a journal, because it brings me back to a trip and to an experience I had," Modlinski said. "That's the beauty of painting outside. When you paint outside, there is an emotional connection. I tell my students, if you want to be a good painter — paint outside. If you just paint from a photograph you'll never be a good painter."

Locations depicted in 20 + 20 include Patagonia, Antarctica, the Yukon, and Japan, and while the original sketches are done en plein air, he doesn't like the idea of putting a timeframe on a painting, whether he's made it inside a studio or outside in below-zero temperatures.

"It took me 40 years," he said about asking how long each painting took to create. "That is a question that doesn't really mean anything. The majority of artists put a value on time, but to make a perfect stroke would take me two seconds."

For Modlinski, the price he pays to make his paintings is how he decides the dollar amounts on the placards beside his work.

"After three weeks, I feel exhausted. My hands are raw. People have no idea what it takes to be in the mountains painting every day," he said. "I lose like 20 pounds. It takes a humongous amount of effort."

Modlinski's next adventure takes him to South Africa at the end of the month, where he's excited to paint in the elements there: sun, heat, and dust. He also has a few ideas for different works.

"I want to do paintings of elephants. Very rarely do I paint animals, but there are things that simmer in my brain for years. This will be big, different work for sure."