

Lesson Title:	“Denali Highway:” Examining Iditarod Photographs Using Elements of Art
Background Information	
Created By:	Kate Newmyer, Seabrook, TX, 2024 Teacher on the Trail™
Grade Level/ Subject:	K-12 Art with Cross-curricular applications
Background Information:	<p>At this time of year, mushers train on the Denali Highway, a stretch of mostly unpaved road between Cantwell and Paxson. The scenery on this 150-mile road is spectacular. It is a paradise for adventure, wildlife viewing, and photography. The road is open to motorists in the summer and used by mushers and snowmobilers in the winter. You can learn more about the Denali Highway from the Bureau of Land Management.</p> <p>Jeff Schultz, Dave Poyzer, and Siri Raitto are accomplished photographers who have been capturing Iditarod and Alaska scenes for decades. They depict images of snowy wilderness, musher portraits, the amazing sled dogs, and scenes of life at race checkpoints. These photographs are perfect source material for students to practice the vocabulary of formal analysis and composition. Using these principles, students discover nuances of the race that perhaps can only be shown through the language of art. Students will then be able to use the elements of art to create their own Iditarod artwork.</p> <p>“Formal analysis” is the term used to describe the process of analyzing artworks according to the elements of art, such as line, shape, form, color, value, texture, and space, and composition elements like movement, balance, and emphasis. Artists use these principles to help determine what their composition will be, and thus, what they want to say about the subject of their artwork (what is depicted). Depending on the nature of the elements and compositional principles present in the artwork, the image can convey different meaning according to the viewer’s interpretation.</p> <p>Visual communication is all around us. When we examine Iditarod images more closely through the lens of formal analysis, we can discover a world of meaning that we hadn’t noticed before. This lesson will help students become better at paying attention to their visual environment and help them appreciate The Last Great Race in new ways.</p> <p>Important notes:</p> <p>I. This lesson can be a cross-curricular learning experience. Formal analysis using art and compositional elements is the foundation. Once this work is done, students can use the photographs as a jumping-off point for investigating other academic subjects. For example, one-point perspective connects to math and geometry; science principles are brought to life visually, and of course the photographs can be used for writing inspiration. See Enrichment suggestions below.</p>

	<p>2. Formal analysis is a pathway to self-discovery and thus can be used for social-emotional learning. What kinds of images are you drawn to (serene/exciting; colorful/neutral; people or dogs; natural or human-made)? Describe the emotional responses you may or may not have to the image? It is important for students to also notice the images they don't like. Why or why not? Dive deeper into these questions by continuing to ask, why? in order to elicit authentic responses from students (and yourself).</p>
<p>Learning Objectives/ Essential Questions:</p>	<p>Content Learning Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students can define the elements of art and composition and identify them in Iditarod photographs. • Students can use formal analysis of art to discern meaning in Iditarod photographs. • Students apply the elements of art to their own Iditarod-inspired artwork using two-dimensional media. <p>Language Objective</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students describe Iditarod photographs using the vocabulary of formal analysis, and include their own conclusions about meaning, orally and/or in writing. • Students utilize speaking, listening, reading, and writing in whole class and group settings. <p>SEL Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students identify and talk about what visual elements of Iditarod photography most appeal to them, generating self-discovery.
<p>Standards Addressed</p>	<p>Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS)</p> <p>Visual Art, I. Foundations: observation and perception. The student develops and expands visual literacy skills using critical thinking, imagination, and the senses to observe and explore the world by learning about, understanding, and applying the elements of art, principles of design, and expressive qualities. The student uses what the student sees, knows, and has experienced as sources for examining, understanding, and creating original artworks. The student is expected to:</p> <p>Elementary Art</p> <p>(B) identify the elements of art, including line, shape, color, texture, and form, and the principles of design, including repetition/pattern and balance, in the environment.</p> <p>2. Creative expression. The student communicates ideas through original artworks using a variety of media with appropriate skills. The student expresses thoughts and ideas creatively while challenging the imagination, fostering reflective thinking, and developing disciplined effort and progressive problem-solving skills. The student is expected to:</p> <p>(A) create artworks using a variety of lines, shapes, colors, textures, and forms;</p> <p>(B) arrange components intuitively to create artworks.</p> <p>Middle School Art</p>

	<p>(A) identify and illustrate concepts from direct observation, original sources, personal experiences, and communities such as family, school, cultural, local, regional, national, and international;</p> <p>(B) understand and apply the elements of art, including line, shape, color, texture, form, space, and value, as the fundamentals of art in personal artworks using art vocabulary appropriately;</p> <p>(C) understand and apply the principles of design, including emphasis, repetition/pattern, movement/rhythm, contrast/variety, balance, proportion, and unity, in personal artworks using art vocabulary appropriately; and</p> <p>(D) discuss the expressive properties of artworks such as appropriation, meaning, narrative, message, and symbol using art vocabulary accurately. High School Art</p> <p>High School Art</p> <p>(A) consider concepts and ideas from direct observation, original sources, experiences, and imagination for original artwork;</p> <p>(B) identify and understand the elements of art, including line, shape, color, texture, form, space, and value, as the fundamentals of art in personal artwork;</p> <p>(C) identify and understand the principles of design, including emphasis, repetition/pattern, movement/rhythm, contrast/variety, balance, proportion, and unity, in personal artwork; and</p> <p>(D) make judgments about the expressive properties such as content, meaning, message, and metaphor of artwork using art vocabulary accurately.</p>
Materials Needed:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. “Formal Analysis Using Iditarod Photographs” (teaching guide)—included. 2. Selected images, included with permission. Use a projector, make accessible digitally, or print in color as you determine. 3. Jeff Schultz <i>Faces of Iditarod</i> web site: https://faces.iditarod.com/ 4. Jeff Schultz Iditarod photography web site: https://www.schultzphoto.com/iditarod/ 5. Dave Poyzer Photography web site: https://www.davepoyzer.com/ 6. Iditarod Photo Gallery: https://iditarod.com/photo/ 7. Siri Raitto Photography: https://www.siriraitto.com/ 8. Grade-appropriate 2D art materials. Suggestions: pencil, watercolor or tempera paints, colored pencils, pastel crayons, ink pen. 9. Art paper.
Procedure	
Engagement:	<p>Note: Depending on your level of familiarity with the elements of art and composition, review the teaching guide prior to teaching the lesson.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Share a few Iditarod images with your students. You can use the images included in the lesson or visit the Iditarod photo gallery. Have a discussion with your students asking them what they noticed. What common elements are included in these images? What do you think the artist wanted us to understand? It’s ok if the discussion is basic at this point. You will go back to these images after students have learned how to do formal analysis. 2. Explain the vocabulary terms <i>formal analysis</i>, <i>elements of art</i>, <i>composition</i>. Formal analysis is the process of noticing and naming artistic elements to discover deeper

	<p>meaning. Elements of art are things like line, space, form, texture that help give the work visual interest. Composition means how the different things in the image are arranged.</p> <p>3. Explain that artists use certain elements in their work on purpose to help their photograph or artwork convey or show a meaning that they want the viewer (us) to understand.</p>
<p>Lesson Procedure:</p>	<p>1. Teach students about how to analyze Iditarod photography using the formal analysis guide. Depending on the needs of your students, you can introduce one or two concepts at a time. If your students are already familiar with the elements of art, then they should apply them specifically to these Iditarod photographs to refresh their understanding.</p> <p>K-5: Show one photograph at a time. Create a chart or visual with the vocabulary words to help students understand each concept. Help students look for lines, shapes like triangles, organic shapes, squares, etc. Students can name the colors, talk about how dark or bright they are, etc. Students can also determine if a composition is balanced, and what they think the most important part of the image is. Students will have lots of great ideas about what the artist’s message is. Remind students that they are not just naming the “things” in the photograph—although they should start with that, but studying how the artist chose to show those things.</p> <p>6-8: Consider breaking the class into groups and having them study one element, then teach it to the rest of the class.</p> <p>9-12: In high school art classes, students may already be familiar with analyzing art and creating their own with conscious use of the elements of art and composition. In this case, have a discussion centered specifically around how artists capture the Iditarod. Then post the guide as a reference when analyzing the art of Iditarod photographers.</p> <p>Non-art classes: Teach formal analysis as a pathway to greater visual understanding of the world around you, whether to be better at including details when writing, creating visual images as we read, noticing scientific phenomena, or being aware of certain messages in the visual images we see in our environment.</p> <p>2. When you are confident students have a grasp on the elements of art and composition, use the included images to give to students for their practice. Again, images can be printed, projected, or posted online being mindful of copyright. Remind students they will not find all of the elements present in each image—that would make the artwork too complicated and hide the artist’s message. They will find certain ones working together to convey a strong message about the Iditarod, its people, dogs, places, and culture.</p> <p>Some teaching strategies I like to use:</p>

	<p>a. Create a gallery walk where student groups move and discuss each image. Give students the formal analysis checklist and have them look for the different elements in each of the images.</p> <p>b. Give each student one image to analyze. Then after five minutes or so, find a partner with the same image and compare what they found, adding to one another’s understanding.</p> <p>c. Give each student one image to analyze. Have them study the image and then find someone with a different image to compare and contrast. How are the lines the same or different? How are the colors the same or different? (etc.)</p> <p>d. Project two images side by side that you have chosen—it can be by the same artist or two different Iditarod artists. How does the photographer use the elements in the same or different ways in each image?</p> <p>3. When students have finished practicing formal analysis using the images, have them visit the different web sites of the Iditarod photographers to find other images that they want to analyze. Students can analyze the photos individually and include a written paragraph, depending on grade level. Students can also write about what they learned about the Iditarod after applying formal analysis to the photographs.</p> <p>4. Students create their own artwork. Using the checklist, have students choose one principle of design and two elements of art that they feel particularly drawn to. For example, a student might choose a balanced composition where shape and color are emphasized. Another example might be that students choose to depict movement using diagonal lines and contrasting color values. For an extra challenge, have students roll a die or pull elements out of a container. Narrowing parameters often results in increased problem-solving and creativity!</p> <p>5. Using an art medium that you and your students are knowledgeable about, have students apply the elements to create their own Iditarod artwork. Students can depict the same or similar subjects in their composition as they found in the artists’ photographs. Give students time to think, plan, and work. They can use a photograph they like for inspiration or create their own.</p> <p>6. When finished, have a showcase of student work. Students can write an artist statement describing what they wanted to show. For example, “I wanted to show the calmness of the winter by making a balanced composition using horizontal lines and cool colors,” or “I wanted to show the excitement and movement of the dogs by using bold colors, lots of diagonal lines, and an unbalanced composition.” You can even invite other classes, parents, or have a digital showcase.</p>
<p>Conclusion & Reflection:</p>	<p>Students may already know of concepts like color, balance, texture, etc., but maybe not how artists apply them to convey certain messages. Reflect on the lesson with the following questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How has studying Iditarod photographs through the lens of formal analysis helped you understand the race better? 2. What specific aspects of the race have you learned about through this process? 3. Which photographs were your favorite, and which ones were not? Use formal analysis terms in your reflection. 4. Which photograph would you choose to show someone else what the Iditarod is all about, and why?

	<p>5. How has studying Iditarod photography helped you become better at making art? 6. How will you apply formal analysis to all the images that surround you in life?</p>
<p>Assessment:</p>	<p>K-5: Have students select a favorite image from the group provided and explain why they like it, and what they notice. Share the artwork they made with the class and explain what elements they used.</p> <p>6-8: Students can write or present to the class about their artwork, both the image they chose from the Iditarod gallery and also the one they created. Students name two or three elements of art and composition, and then talk about how they incorporated these into their own work.</p> <p>9-12: Have students select an image from one of the photographer's Iditarod galleries, or the Iditarod web site. Use the Feldman model of art analysis. This includes Description, Analysis, Interpretation, and Evaluation. Students can first describe what they see, then apply formal analysis, interpret the art in terms of meaning, and then evaluate the art by asking, is the image successful?</p>
<p>Notes</p>	
<p>Enrichment/ Reinforcement Suggestions:</p>	<p>I invite you to connect this art lesson to other content you may teach.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use formal analysis as an entry point for making visual images in students' minds as they read. They can translate the art images to being even more specific when they read for understanding by creating pictures in their mind. 2. Use the photographs as inspiration for all kinds of writing. 3. Connect the elements of art to elements of literature, poetry, and nonfiction, so that students can become better at noticing elements of the text for better comprehension. For example, students can look for, name, and evaluate graphic features of nonfiction text (diagrams, subheadings, sidebars, etc.) or elements of poetic language such as metaphor or onomatopoeia. 4. Connect noticing elements of art to scientific observation. Students can describe in detail the elements of an experiment, biology examples or images, notice movement, or apply formal analysis to help observe properties of elements used in science or of natural phenomena. 5. Formal analysis helps in analyzing maps and geologic photographs. Use the elements of art to notice lines, shapes, and colors to help understand the earth. 6. Apply elements to geometric principles: measure angles, calculate curves and lines, measure and calculate the area or volume of shapes and forms. 7. Students can apply the principles of formal analysis to looking at the world around them. Students can notice media images, body language, clothing, and other aspects of our culture or other cultures.

Formal Analysis Guide using Iditarod Photographs

Elements of Art include Line, Shape, Form, Space, Color, Value, and Texture. Principles of Composition are Balance, Emphasis, and Movement. The elements and principles work together to create meaning. The process of analyzing artwork according to these concepts is called formal analysis. The more you notice what is in the photograph, the more you can understand what the artist wants to say about the Iditarod, its people, dogs, cultural values, and landscapes.

Line

Lines have a beginning and an end. They can be thick or thin, curved or straight. They can be zigzag or diagonal, horizontal or vertical. Lines lead our eye around a composition. Horizontal lines suggest tranquility. Vertical lines suggest stability. Diagonal lines suggest excitement and energy, while curved lines suggest softness.



In this image we can see diagonal lines of trees, snow, the path, and the dog team converging on a point in the distance. Diagonal lines convey movement, helping us imagine the line of sled dogs about to move through the scene.

(Photo: K. Newmyer)



The curved lines of the vet's arm and leash suggest a gentle and intentional connection between dog and human. Our eye also perceives a line between the dark outline of the jacket and the white snow.

(Photo: K. Newmyer)

Shape

Shapes are two-dimensional areas and can be described as geometric or organic. Outlines create shapes. Artists use shapes to help convey emotion.



The strongest shapes in this image are the organic shapes of Ukulele's head, ear, and muzzle. Organic shapes suggest life and the natural world. In this image the shapes softly blur into one another.

(Photo: K. Newmyer)



The geometric shapes of fencing, dog boxes, and tables dominate this image. Geometric shapes suggest human-made elements, strength and sturdiness. The viewer is separated from the scene of Linda Fenton and the puppies by the stark steel outline.
(Photo: Terrie Hanke)

Form

Form is three-dimensional shape. Forms can be geometric or organic. In order to convey a three-dimensional form on a two-dimensional surface, artists use perspective and other tools to help your eye see three dimensions.



This image of volunteer Peg Stout cutting an apple contains many examples of three dimensional forms. Peg's face and hands stand out in detail, while her arms are foreshortened (they look shorter than they are) to convey how she takes up space at the table. The circles of the plate and bowl shorten to ovals. This image suggests solidity within an intimate space in which the viewer can participate.
(Photo: Terrie Hanke)



In this photo of drop bags, the rounded shapes sit against a background that is almost abstracted into two dimensions with flat planes of color. The bag in the foreground is clearly defined while the bags in the background are less distinct. The long line of bags stretching to the horizon suggests the enormity of the task.
(Photo: Terrie Hanke)

Space

Space is what lies between or around an object. In some images, there is very little space between objects, while other images have a lot of space. The placement and size of objects in the composition can give the impression of space.



This image of Meredith Mapes repacking her sled is a great example of overlapping elements, with little to no space between, while the entire scene of her gear stands out against the emptiness of the background. The tree line at the top of the composition is blurred, suggesting enormous space between the foreground and background.
(Photo: Terrie Hanke)



Our sense of space is distorted in this image because we expect the structure, which is farther away than the icicles, to be at the top of the image. Instead it is in the foreground, while the icicles and tree loom huge and heavy next to it in the flat white background. The structure looks abstract in the disorienting winter landscape.

(Photo: K. Newmyer)

Color

We see color when light is reflected into our eyes. Rods and cones send signals to our brains to let us know what color we are seeing. A color wheel is a useful tool for understanding different color combinations. Primary colors are blue, yellow, and red. We can't create them using mixing techniques. Secondary colors are green, orange and purple, which can be created by mixing primary colors together. Different colors suggest various moods.



This closeup of Cain Carter's vet book has two dominant, primary colors, the blue of the sled bag and the yellow of the vet book. These bright, intense colors convey a sense of importance and dominance. Iditarod insiders also know that the vet book must stand out and be easily located. Look for different types of symbolic colors in Iditarod photos. (Photo: Terrie Hanke)



Color in this image is again significant—the rich, dark brown fur of the dogs contrasts with the bright snowy ground. The only bright color is in the foreground--the salmon the dogs are snacking on—so it becomes the focal point of the composition.

(Photo: K. Newmyer)

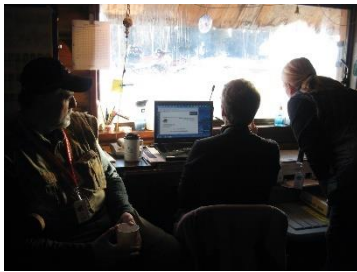
Value

How dark or light a color is determines its value. Value works together with color to allow us to see three dimensionality or contrast.



The colors in this photo of Race Marshal Mark Nordman and musher Nic Petit are saturated and bright. Sunlight washes over the entire composition, leaving very little in shadow, and flattening the three dimensional shapes. This image suggests the necessity of openness and transparency when talking with the race marshal.

(Photo: Terrie Hanke)



High value contrast is present in this photo of the comms booth at Skwentna. Dark values predominate, with the brightly lit window in the background. While we may want to know what is happening outside the window, the photographer has given us the real story--the abstracted, shadowed and thoughtful figures in the foreground.

(Photo: Terrie Hanke)

Texture

When we touch something, we can describe how it feels—smooth, rough, soft, sharp. We can perceive texture with our eyes too. Some artists call it visual or surface texture.



A sled dog's paw in the snow gives us so many textures to see with our eyes. Soft fur, hard toenails, wet and powdery snow, the dull hardness of the box. (Photo: Keeli Cullen)



This image of a teacher booting a dog at the Iditarod summer conference is a study in contrasting textures. The soft fur of the dog contrasts with the smooth slipperiness of the jacket. The pebbly foreground contrasts with the lush green of the landscape in the background.

(Photo: Terrie Hanke)

Composition: Balance

When artists want to imply stability, they may create a balanced composition. Balance means that all the elements are equally distributed. The visual weight of colors, forms, lines, and shapes are balanced, like on a scale.



The composition of this image of puppies training on a trail is balanced. Equal amounts of greenery appear on either side of the dark shape of the dogs. In addition, the subject of the composition, the group of dogs, is in the shape of a triangle with the base at the bottom and the point at the top. This type of composition suggests solidity and stability. While the composition of color suggests balance, the riot of diagonal legs and bodies of the puppies suggests movement within the triangle. (Photo: Terrie Hanke)



This composition is unbalanced, with dark forms of dogs moving toward the bottom right. The dark line of spectators creates heaviness at the top of the image. (Photo: K. Newmyer)

Composition: Emphasis

Emphasis means the part of the composition that captures the viewer's attention. Emphasis can be achieved through use of color, shape or form, value, or any of the art elements. When an artist emphasizes a particular aspect of an image, we understand that this is where the important message of the image lies.



At the Ceremonial Start, a sled dog waits patiently. The dog's face and front legs are lit by the sun, while all the other elements in the composition are in shadow. The dog's light-colored fur stands out in the sun also. The contemplative canine face, pop of red in the collar, and the dog's powerful shoulders and forelegs as the most important part of the composition. (Photo: K. Newmyer)

Composition: Movement

Movement means the path the eye takes through the composition, often to a focal point. Artists most often use single-point perspective to lead the eye toward the most important part of the image. Our eye wants to travel down these lines to find the important point in the scene.



This image of spectators in downtown Anchorage has strong perspective lines that converge on a single point. The lines are formed by the people, the buildings, the snowy road, and even the figure in the foreground. The significance of the focal point is clear: the direction from which the racing teams will come. The area of blue sky at the top is in balance with the scene at the bottom.

(Photo: K. Newmyer)

The Elements of Art and the Principles of Composition Work Together

In the above examples, you can see many of the elements of art working together. Each photo illustrates one example of the elements of art or composition, but in fact, they contain several different aspects working together. Notice how color and texture work together or appear in contrast; notice how lines create perspective, or how a triangle composition may be present. The fun of learning the elements of art and composition makes you a better “noticer!”


Cards for you and students to use when working on formal analysis.

Formal Analysis of Art

 Line

 Shape


 Form


 Space

 Color

 Value

 Texture

 Balance

 Emphasis


 Movement

Formal Analysis of Art


 Line

 Shape


 Form


 Space

 Color

 Value

 Texture

 Balance

 Emphasis

 Movement

Iditarod artist images for practicing formal analysis.



@ David Poyzer



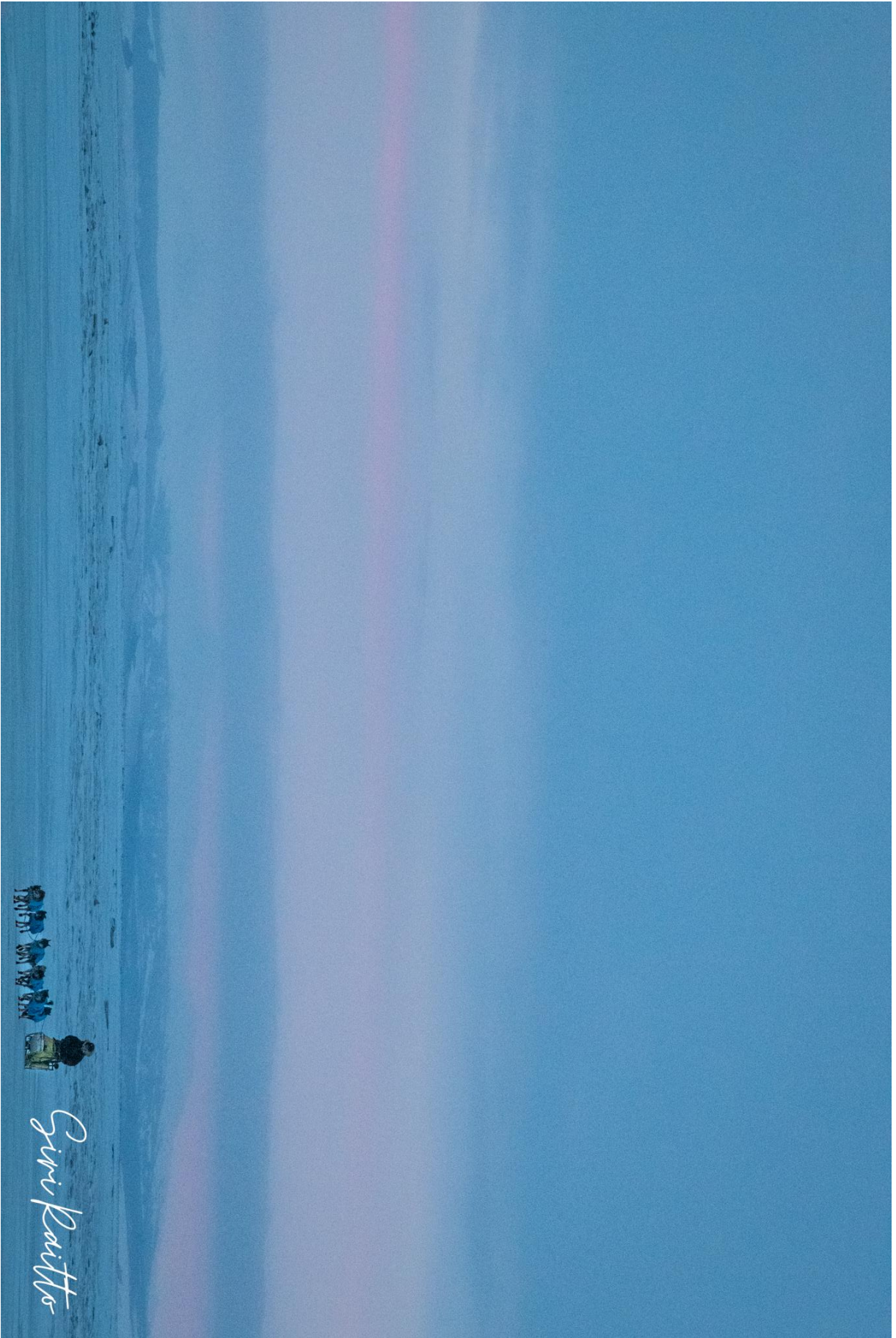
David Proger



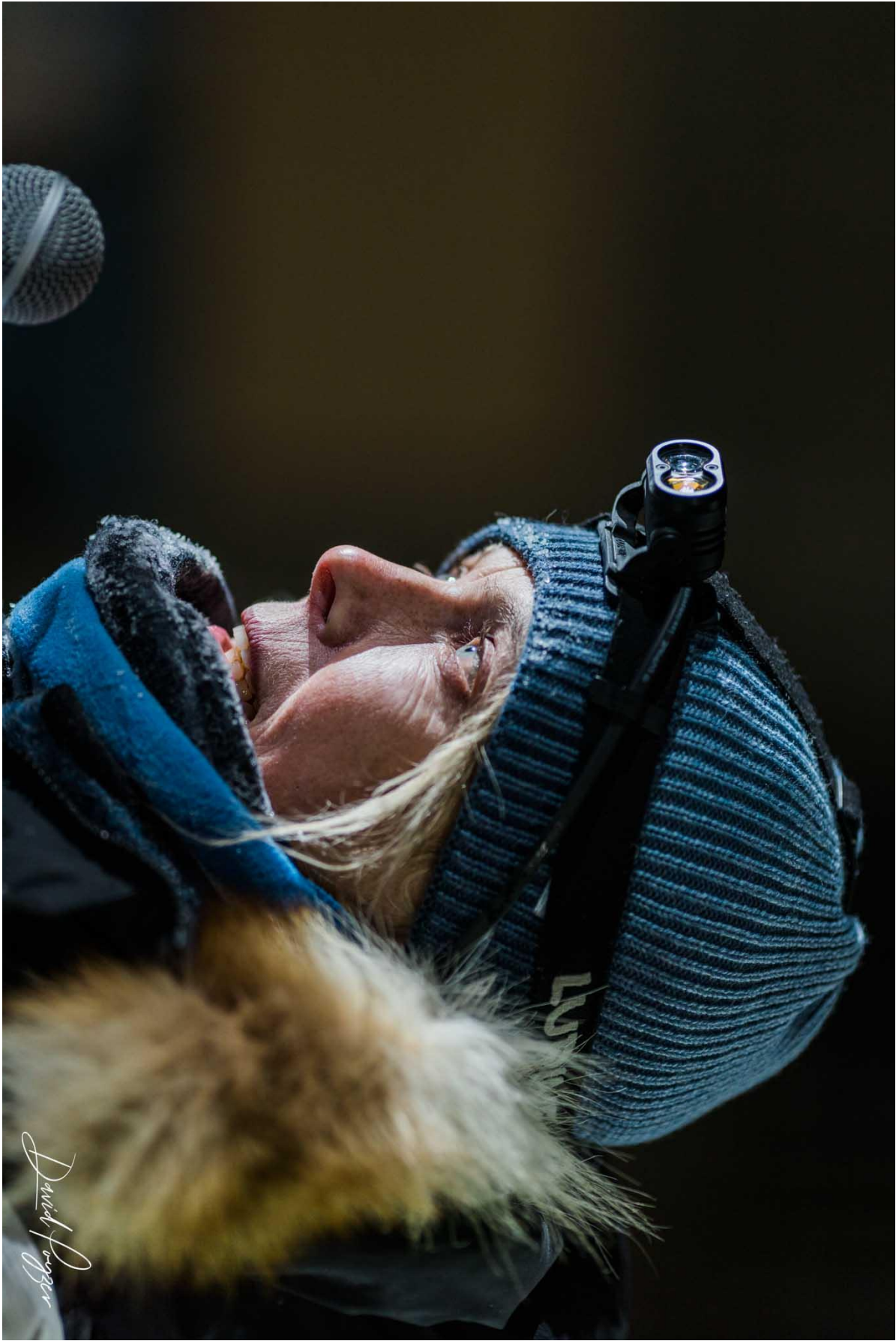
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Simi Paitto



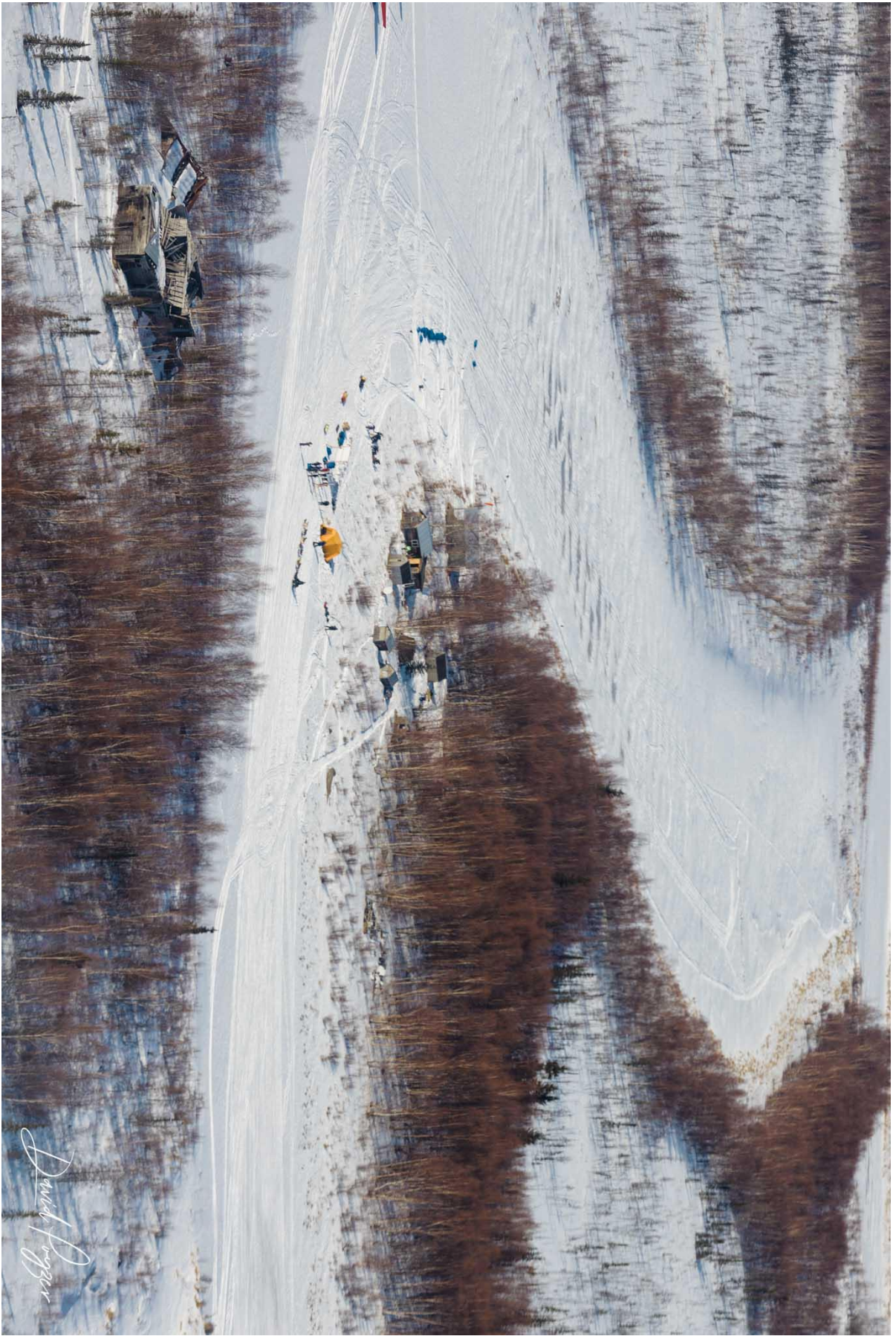
Sivri Kavitta



David Rogers



Grim Kautto



David Rogers



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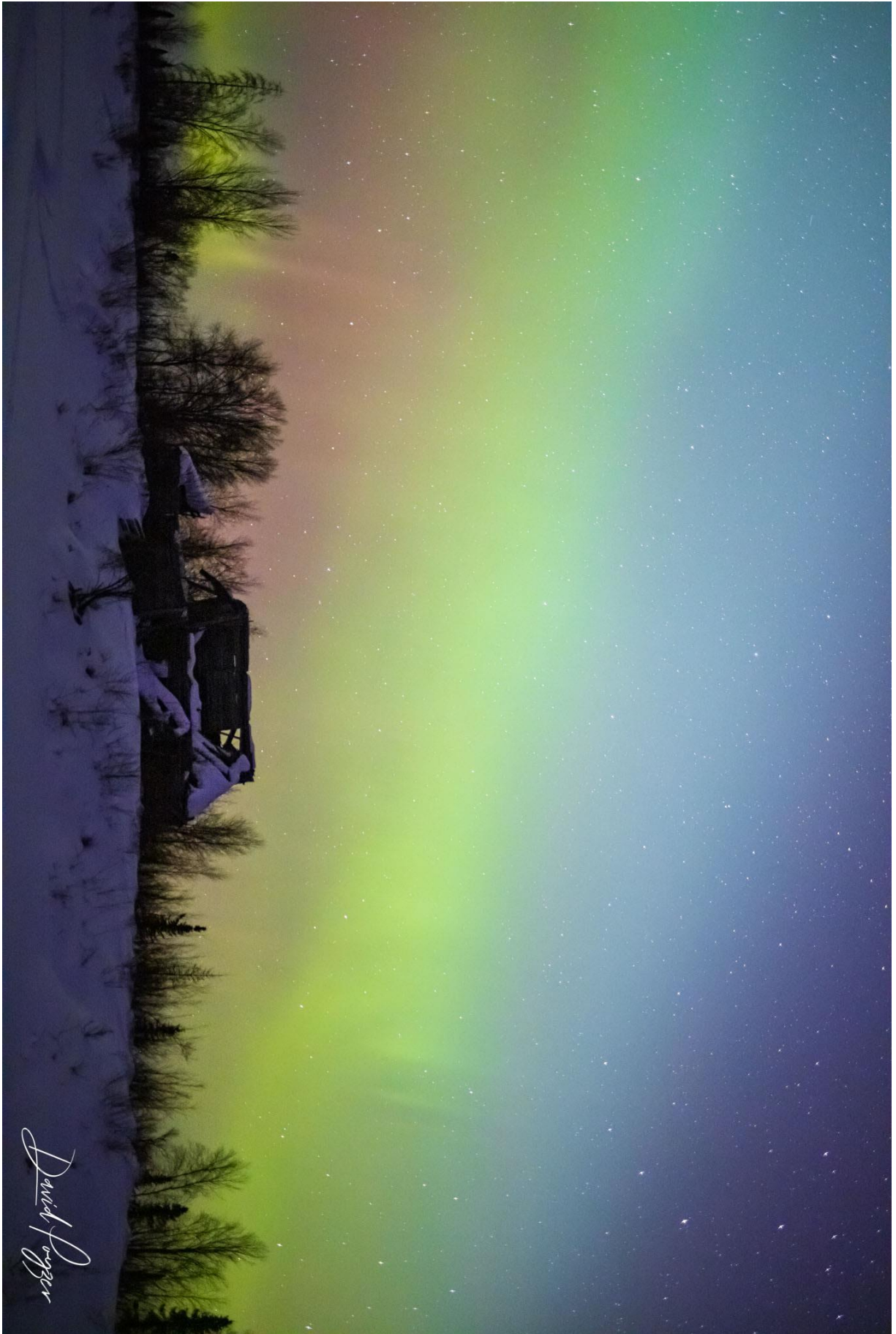


Janet Ryan



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David Foyner



PHOTOGRAPHY
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