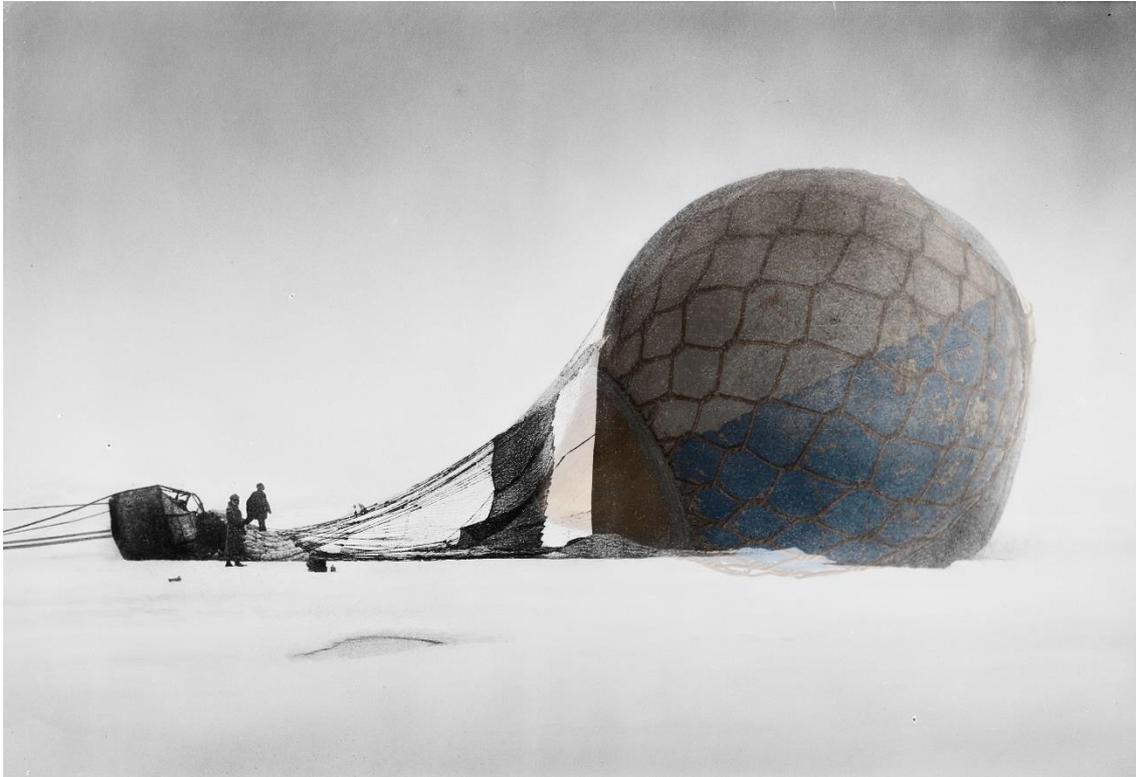


Float

Axel Straschnoy



Short Description

For *Float*, I will launch a buoy into the Norwegian current in honour of S. A. Andrée, hoping that one day it will make it to the North Pole, Andrée's unattained destination.

Context

In 1897, S. A. Andrée set out to reach the North Pole on an aerostatic hydrogen balloon. After traversing a few hundred kilometres, he was forced to land on the ice and died on his way back to civilisation. Still, he is one of Sweden's explorer-heroes and a museum in his honour was built in his birthplace, Gränna.

At the invitation of Nya Småland, I undertook a residency at the Polarcentrum in September 2018. From that residency, the current project emerged.

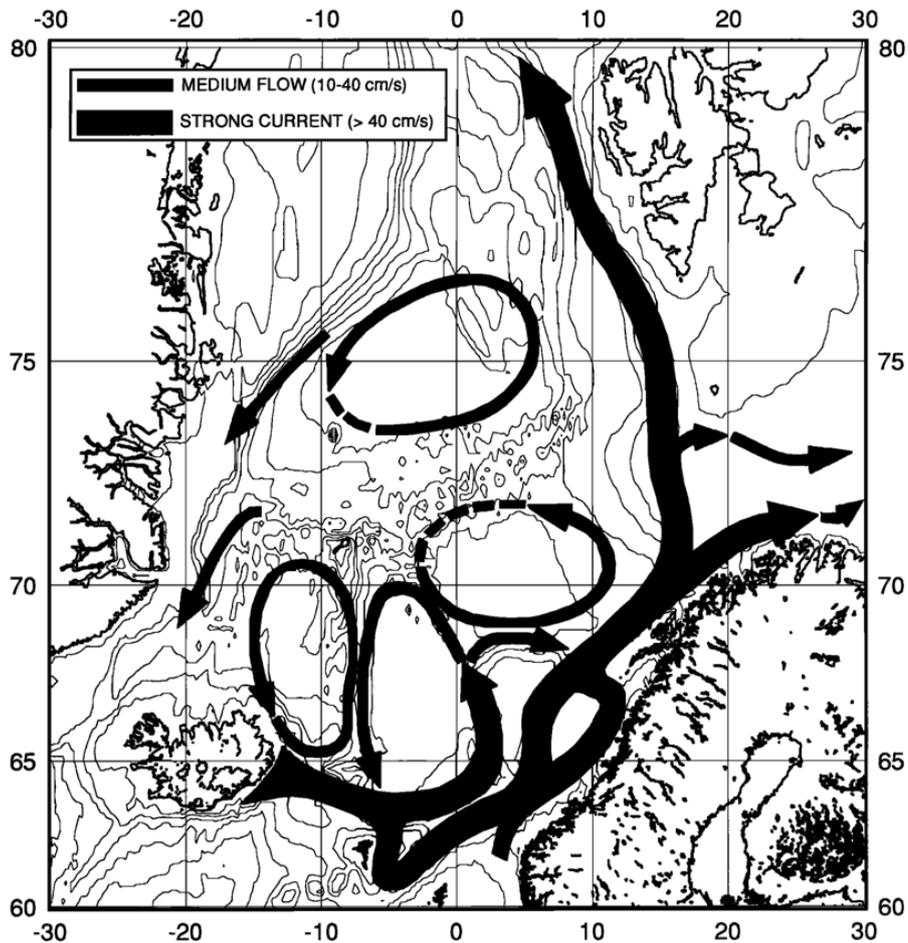
Conceptual framework

Andrée's expedition marked a change in scientific exploration. Before, these were led by explorers: tough men who were ready to brave the elements and put their lives at risk in direct contact with an overbearing nature. Andrée replaced demonstrations of manliness by technical solutions, eschewing standing on the pole all together by simply dropping a buoy from his hydrogen balloon. His expedition marked the first step towards the space probe, a machine that travels through space instead of humans.

His other breakthrough innovation was a control system for an uncontrollable transport method. This tension, between control and lack thereof, recurs throughout the expedition plans. At the same time as he created a very detailed program, he willfully ignored the fact that he had no reliable information on the winds in the area

around the pole. While he checked his gear thoroughly, he did not ever test it and never did the three explorers fly together on a balloon before they took off from Svalbard.

Even if Andrée had achieved his objective and arrived at the North Pole, the buoy he meant to drop there would only have stayed fixed in place in respect to the floating ice. In practice, it would have left the area immediately, moving around like the buoys he dropped en route, like his balloon, without much control. Marking the North Pole was more about the act than about any permanent record of their achievement.



Project Description

For *Float*, I will launch a buoy in honour of Andrée and his expedition. I will drop the buoy off the Lofoten islands, into the Norwegian current, which carries water along the west coast of Norway, towards Svalbard. Some part of this current continues towards the Arctic. Thus, a buoy let loose into it has some chance to make it to the Arctic. Once there, there is a non-zero chance of it getting frozen-in in the Arctic ice. Once part of the Arctic ice, there is a non-zero chance it will one day be over the North Pole. The possibilities are slim, yes, but so were Andrée's.

The new buoy is inspired by the one Andrée was planning to drop on the North Pole from his balloon. It is made of cork, covered with fibreglass and epoxy paint, and bronze. On it there will be written a text, indicating that it is journeying to the North Pole in memory of the Andrée expedition.

The buoy will be a sort of Voyager probe, placed on the water with the hope that it will get to its destination. The chances of it getting to the North Pole are higher than of Voyager encountering anything or anyone on its trip in Outer Space.

Borges writes in *Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote* about a man who set down to write a book and rewrote Quixote by chance. In this spirit I am launching the buoy, in the spirit of the improbable but possible act—a spirit that marked Andrée’s expedition, if not on a conscious level on a very real one.

The piece is being developed for and in collaboration with the Polarcentrum, as an intervention into its collection. A buoy replica will be presented in its exhibition space accompanied by pictures of its launch and a schematic of its intended path.

Timetable

Residency in Gränna	September 2018
Concept Development	October 2018- January 2019
Technical Design	February – March 2019
Buoy Production	April – June 2019
Buoy Launch	August 2019
Production of exhibition materials	September 2019
Opening in Gränna	October 2019