



la Réunion, east of Madagascar. Lajarte lives on Réunion, and veteran Brad Lewis' volcano images have been featured on covers of *Life* and *GEO*, and in scores of other publications. At a first flip through, *Red Volcanoes* gives the impression of an amped up *National Geographic* feature. But take a longer look. The collective effect of so many well crafted, wildly saturated photos of this frightening natural process, is a guided tour to the most primal force on our planet. Writing in his section of the introduction, on Réunion's Piton de la Fournaise, filmmaker Alain Gerente suggests that a volcano's majestic tirade "takes us right back to the creation of the world. Volcanoes lie at the origin of the continents, the oceans, the atmosphere...even at the beginning of life itself." To a student of the Earth as an ecosystem, there's another lesson in these captivating fires and molten rivers: it's the raw inevitability of all that physics, all that power. There's no redirecting its course, and there's nothing we can do except watch it, make the picture or get out of the way.

Canary in the Coal Mine

In his opening text for *Antarctica: The Global Warning*, photographer and environmental advocate Sebastian Copeland invokes a venerable mariner's adage about sailing in the world's southernmost oceans: "Below 40 degrees of latitude there is no law; below 50 degrees there is no God." The line actually refers to the fierce winds and sea states common to these waters. But Copeland gives it a darker meaning in this magnificent photographic study of a stunningly beautiful, but, in some ways, godforsaken wilderness. While he refers to much of his antarctic images as "surreal" and "otherworldly,"

what he's given us in this rich collection is very much an earthbound document. Among heart-in-your-mouth crystalline icescapes, Copeland includes the ominous, equally lustrous signs of a wicked destructive force: the shredding at the fringe of vast, collapsing glaciers, and the lonely spikes of broken bergs silhouetted against blue-black skies. These are not fantasy; they are powerfully real representations of a fragile ecosystem, and the warning they portend is that a dire climatic crisis is rapidly setting in across our world.

The Earth's polar regions are universally accepted as the "canaries in the coal mine" of global warming and Copeland's activism came about as he watched this notion become the crux of strident political debate. He allied with serious environmentalists, some of whom are represented in the personal essays that punctuate the lavish imagery throughout this book. One, veteran polar explorer Will Steger, recalls observing the early tangible evidence of climate change on a return visit to Antarctica's crumbling Larsen Ice Shelf: "an area larger than the state of Rhode Island [had] collapsed into the ocean. The loss of more than half the Larsen in little more than a decade heralds the seriousness of mankind's complacency."

Nobody's denying this grand coffee-table-grade collection is in part a strong political manifesto. But it is, first and last, a book of simply great pictures. Like all of Copeland's studio work and editorial portraiture, his exteriors are pure technical tours de force, practically all digital, and some with such extraordinary tonal range and theatrical chroma to suggest a few late night Photoshop binges (though Copeland insists everything was done in camera). The book is also a kind of multimedia orgy of commentary, interviews and behind-the-scene snaps, with a DVD slipped inside the back cover. One of the live-action subjects on this disc is a creation of the three-page foldout tryptic on page 155. It's a stagy shot, central to the whole experience of this remarkable book: an overhead image concocted by aerial artist John Quigley, showing a small berg, adrift in green water. On the surface, a group of team members have lain down end-to-end on the ice to spell out SOS—mankind's universal code for announcing that something is going terribly wrong.



For More Information

G. Brad Lewis and Paul-Edouard Bernard de Lajarte
The Red Volcanoes: Face to Face with the Mountains of Fire
Thames & Hudson, Inc.
(www.thamesandhudsonusa.com) 144 pp.

Sebastian Copeland
Antarctica: The Global Warning Earth Aware Editions
(www.earthawareeditions.com) 204 pp.

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