

Liz Powell and Dr Denise Rall – Guardian of the Southern Convergence

The Southern, or Antarctic Convergence is a zone of sharp transition where the polar ocean sinks below warmer surface waters, forming a current that moves in an endless circle around the continent of Antarctica. The Convergence is the place where the Antarctic begins.

Antarctica is unique. Guarded by its climate and the Southern Convergence, human beings never accessed this land during the great planetary migrations of *Homo sapiens*. Ships didn't venture there until the early 1800s and it was not until the start of the 20th century that adventurers walked on the ice flows, where many met their fate. The Convergence outlines the edges of this unique biosphere: a hydrological boundary that varies between the 48th and 61st parallels of south latitude extending across the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian Oceans. Wave heights can be 30 metres high and ice bergs calve off the edge of glaciers in huge flat topped forms, islands in their own right. Creatures that live in the Southern Ocean are highly adapted and the waters are fertile.

The basis of our work is the spirit of this vast unoccupied space, remote and unsympathetic to humans. The life there remains under threat from environmental changes, but we also reference, through the Guardian, the alliance of countries protecting this pristine place from exploitation, where Australia was one of its 12 original members. In 1978 the Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources established one of the world's first conservation agreements which seeks to manage the whole ecosystem. Australia hosts this convention where member states meet in Hobart, Tasmania.

The Guardian is robed in a mixture of commercial kozo paper, hand-dyed with indigo using clamping and stitching shibori techniques, and hand-made kozo paper mixed with Cumbaji (native bulrush). This dyeing technique allows for darks and lights to play across the garment's surface, referencing the ice cliffs and glaciers that form the edge between the continent and the sea. Strong diagonal forms within the garment's construction reflects glaciation and iceberg formations. Resist hand stitching remains in key places to give contour and volume to the jacket's extended collar, which recalls the protective oilskins of the 19th and early 20th century.

Surface embellishments include applique as a manipulation of a quilting technique in paper, photo silk-screen images of Antarctic ocean lifeforms, krill, diatoms, and detritus on the ocean floor such as, radiolarian skeletons and whalebones. Through joomchi, a traditional Korean technique akin to paper felting, other papers and motifs are employed to impart a depth to the jacket's surface. The Guardian's fishermen-styled trousers recollect the early contact between whalers and sealers with Antarctic waters. Geographic information, latitude and longitude of the Southern Convergence and the boundary of the Antarctic circle adds to the complexity of the garment's surface, with details presented in drawing, stitching, beading and printing.

The photo silk-screen was provided by Anne Leon Designs from drawings by Liz Powell.