

Artists Issue Passports to Antarctica, the Final Borderless Frontier

by [Allison Meier](#) on January 25, 2016



Lucy + Jorge Orta, "Antarctic Village – No Borders, Drop Parachute" (2007-08), coated polyamide, steel armature, various textiles, nation flags, kitchen utensils, objects, silkscreen print, webbing, Red Cross crate (all photos by the author for Hyperallergic unless indicated)

A century ago, the [Endurance Expedition](#) to Antarctica was stranded on the remote, frigid continent, their ship shattered and hope for rescue slim. Led by explorer [Ernest Shackleton](#), the expedition crew managed to survive through an 800-mile journey on a small 22-foot ship. The experience is considered the end of the [Heroic Age of Antarctic Exploration](#), which included international competitions to reach the South Pole, and work across country borders to research the unexplored landmass.



Installation view of 'Lucy + Jorge Orta: Antarctica' at Jane Lombard Gallery

Antarctica remains a powerful place of international collaboration for survival in one of the planet's most extreme environments. To encourage public awareness of the ongoing role of Antarctica in global cooperation, especially in the scientific research on climate change (this is where the Ozone Hole **was discovered**), France-based artist duo **Lucy and Jorge Orta** launched the mobile *Antarctic World Passport Delivery Bureau* in 2008 where anyone can pledge citizenship to the southernmost continent. The Bureau is currently in operation at Jane Lombard Gallery in conjunction with *Antarctica*, their first New York City solo show. (You can also request a virtual passport **online**.)

You don't actually **need a passport** to visit Antarctica, as the 1959 **Antarctic Treaty**, now signed by 53 nation states, affirmed it as a peaceful territory free from country ownership. The **Antarctica World Passport** is completely symbolic, an advocacy tool to engage people around the world in the importance of a remote place most of us will never visit. Before Jane Lombard Gallery, the Bureau was **at the Grand Palais** in Paris alongside December's COP21 UN Climate Summit.



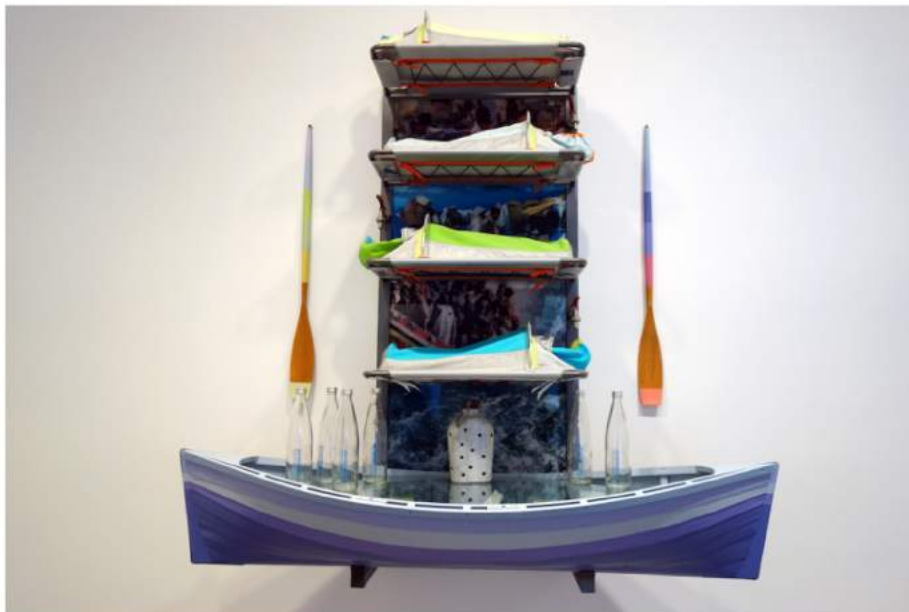
Antarctica World Passport (courtesy the artists and Jane Lombard Gallery)



Lucy + Jorge Orta, "Antarctica World Passport Delivery Bureau" (2016), bureau construction in reclaimed materials, chair, vinyl, various found objects, Antarctica World Passports, passport stamps, ink pads

Lucy and Jorge Orta made their own expedition to Antarctica in 2007 for the first **End of the World Biennial**, a collaboration between the Patagonia Arte y Desafío Foundation and the Parlamento Latinoamericano of San Pablo Memorial Foundation in **Ushuaia**, Argentina, considered the world's southernmost city. Much of the *Antarctica* exhibition focuses on the temporary "Antarctic Village – No Borders" they constructed on that expedition, including one of the 50 dome tents adorned with the flags of nations that signed the Antarctic Treaty. During the 2007 journey, the Ortas raised an "Antarctica Flag" designed with all these vibrant flags merged together.

There are also preparatory drawings for the "village" and colorful "survival kits" from 2008, with life vests adorned with objects like water flasks, children's shoes, cooking utensils, and various other survival items. There isn't much explanation for their meaning alongside the less conceptual passports, but they feel like totems of the same optimism driving that project. If you peek at the purple striped canoe on the assemblage "OrtaWater – Antarctica" (2006), you'll discover a model of a human heart is riding in the vessel.



Lucy + Jorge Orta, "OrtaWater – Antarctica" (2006), wood, diverse textiles, steel, laminated Lamda photograph, 1 water flasks, 6 OrtaWater bottles, Royal Limoges porcelain, 2 oars, 59.06 x 59.06 x 23.62 inches 150 x 150 x 60 cm



Lucy + Jorge Orta, "OrtaWater – Antarctica" (detail) (2006), wood, diverse textiles, steel, laminated Lamda photograph, 1 water flasks, 6 OrtaWater bottles, Royal Limoges porcelain, 2 oars, 59.06 x 59.06 x 23.62 inches 150 x 150 x 60 cm

In the utopic vision of the Ortas, Antarctica is a last refuge from global conflict and its rigid borders, where anyone can belong, and the only way to survive is through collaboration. Come 2048, the 1991 **Madrid Protocol** that prohibits mining in Antarctica will be up for review, and the resources buried beneath the icy surface may be too enticing for corporations. Climate change, like this distant, southern tip of our world, can often feel abstract, but Lucy and Jorge Orta are hoping to engage people with its importance, one passport at a time.



Lucy + Jorge Orta, "Antarctica World Passport, Mobile Delivery Bureau" (2008), wooden shelf, spade, chair, 10 plasma bottles, fragments of clothing, 2 flasks, first aid box, passport valise, various aluminum utensils



Lucy + Jorge Orta, "Antarctic Village – No Borders, expedition diary" (2006-07), pencil, pigment ink, water color, fabric samples on Fabriano paper (photo by Christine Pan, courtesy the artists and Jane Lombard Gallery)



Lucy + Jorge Orta, "Life Line – Survival Kit" (2008), steel frame, 2 taps, piping, various textiles, silkscreen print, webbing, rope, 2 floats, ring, horn, various water flasks and containers, 59.06 x 31.5 x 5.91 inches



Lucy + Jorge Orta, "Antarctica – Drop Parachute" (2008), pencil, pigment ink, fabric samples on Fabriano paper; "Antarctica – Life Line" (2008), pencil, pigment ink, fabric samples on Fabriano paper (photo by Christine Pan, courtesy the artists and Jane Lombard Gallery)



Lucy + Jorge Orta, "Life Line – Survival Kit" (2008), steel frame, piping, 5 taps, various textiles, silkscreen print, webbing, children's shoes, float, warning light, rope, 59.06 x 31.5 x 5.91 inches



Lucy + Jorge Orta, "Antarctic Village – No Borders, Dome Dwelling" (2007), coated polyamide, various textiles, nation flags, silkscreen print, second hand clothes, webbing, clips, 3 telescopic armatures



Installation view of 'Lucy + Jorge Orta: Antarctica' at Jane Lombard Gallery

Lucy + Jorge Orta: Antarctica continues at Jane Lombard Gallery (518 West 19th Street, Chelsea, Manhattan) through February 20.