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TRILOGY—REFLECTIONS ON FRANKENSTEIN, THE ARCTIC CIRCLE, AND THE HISTORY OF SCIENCE

In this body of work I am reflecting upon Mary Shelley's novel, *Frankenstein*, from a contemporary perspective. I have chosen three areas of investigation in order to see the novel in an imaginative and multifaceted way.

PART I—FRANKENSTEIN (HUMAN MACHINE INTERFACE)

I have made a series of photographs of contemporary Frankensteins. The Frankensteins are machines found in various Institutions engaging in scientific research. These ultra-high vacuum chambers are used in related experimental facilities for high-energy physics and synchrotron radiation research.

There is a sense of beauty in the human quality of these machines while the photographs also reveal monsters with multiple arms or numerous sets of eyes. Just as *Frankenstein* was admired and feared, these machines embody the same complexity associated with contemporary technology. These Frankensteins are the essence of high-tech/low-tech; the machines are wrapped in household aluminum foil to maintain heat in a process called 'baking out'.

PART II—THE ARCTIC CIRCLE

Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein* (*The Modern Prometheus*) opens with a series of letters written by Arctic explorer, Robert Walton, who was engaged in a personal quest to expand the boundaries of the known world. It is Walton who first encounters Victor Frankenstein in the Arctic desperately searching for the monster he had created. The explorer becomes the only person to hear Victor Frankenstein's strange and tragic tale.

“Encountering Robert Walton aboard his ship, the monster expresses overwhelming remorse for his frightful catalogue of misdeeds, the deaths of William, Clerval, Elizabeth, and his creator. The creature informs the explorer that he will destroy himself in the frozen North, and disappears in the icy waves. The tragedy of *Frankenstein* and his monster is complete.”

In conjunction with the suite of contemporary *Frankenstein* images, I made photographs in the Arctic Circle. The work confronts the Arctic space with its specific set of conditions, its vast sense of scale, and its systems of order. The myth of the Arctic landscape as a pristine and untouched land is conflated by evidence of science and technological research. While these photographs appear to celebrate the phenomenological landscape, on closer inspection evidence of science and technological research is revealed: from experiments in process, scientists at work on the frozen Arctic sea, and architectural evidence of laboratories, observatories, and other institutes of science/technology.

PART III—HISTORY OF SCIENCE

The photographs of scientific models from the 1950s refer to how we have learned about science; technology was informed by visible information. The cabinets store the basic foundations for the discovery of life and the mastery of the physical universe. Today's technology allows us to literally see through matter on a molecular level, revealing what would otherwise be invisible to the human eye.

Frankenstein endures not only because of its infamous horrors, but for the richness of the ideas it asks us to confront-- human accountability, social alienation, and the nature of life itself.