

BONNIE LAMMAR

Ship and Rope, 2015
Archival pigment print, 12 x 12 in



COURTESY: THE ARTIST

ALAN FELDMAN

A Voyage

I can't even take my glass of grapefruit juice for granted, after reading about the voyage of the *Endurance*,
twenty-two men with nothing to eat but penguin meat, after they'd eaten their dogs,
their ship, by then, long gone, crushed to splinters by implacable ice,
their cozy home for a year reduced to trash buried by snow.

I'm locked in my chair, staring at their young faces. Of course, they're all dead
but from other causes—the Great War, or alcoholism (due to boredom?), or simple old age—
their leader determined not to lose one of them, even the ones he didn't like.
In fact, the worst ones he put in his own tent, lest the other men kill them.

Frozen to my chair, I stare at their faces in a hundred photos, young men, all dead now. How they put aside their quarrels and saved each other, though the world couldn't save itself. They are sitting around the night watchman's stove, back when they still had a ship.

Sitting by the stove on a ship trapped in Antarctic ice, in their rough sweaters and watch caps,
they are staring into the fire, as real as any of us,
that is, for as long as any of us can be real,
as if Rembrandt had arranged them, asymmetrical,
ready to pose, lit by one source of light.

Alan Feldman is the author of *Immortality*, published in 2015 by the University of Wisconsin Press, and other collections. He lives in Massachusetts but spends part of the winter in the Southern Hemisphere on a ship teaching poetry writing, while his wife, the painter Nan Hass Feldman, teaches art. They hope to pass through the Straits of Magellan next year.