the task's existence within its moment is reinforced by the temporal and ephemeral impact of its gestures. For a performance on Kalkriale Beach, some ten participants were required to sweep the length of the beach with large brooms according to a text score including the following instructions: "Begin at one "end" all together roughly span the sand's breadth your own pace as a current there is no obligation to finish the distance … end when you have finished with sweeping …"

For Echo Logo, another of the Polar Projects, an actual team of Antarctic scientists are recruited for a ritual-like performance staged beneath a 30 metre high glacial ice-face. In exploring the scenic qualities of this setting, their awareness of this environment is evident. The scientists pursue their tasks in a purely functional manner on a sentiment that is prim- ary populated by workers who are there to pursue pragmatic and ecological activities. Asisten and algae specialists, Dadson's companions tread warily in a curious dance, observing the protocols of their profession to preserve the environment. Not only does this continue the epistaurian philosophies of the Scratch Orchestra, it utilises components and participants in their natural setting. Another subtle resonance exists between the Polar Projects and an earlier series of works. In Triad 1 – 7, polar opposites are reconciled in often witty or ironic ways. In Triad #3 (1979), Dadson uses an image of a polar bear paving in a repetitive loop pattern, kicking a leg at the right and left extremes of the walk to trigger images of body gestures that reference pairs of opposites. In Polar Projects, Dadson himself mediates between literal polar extremes, pacing to and fro and producing surprisingly sonic ways of seeing. As always, it is Dadson's play on polarities that amplifies our awareness of a kinetic world. He recontextualises environments by combining opposing forces with whimsical juxtapositions of sight and sound. Polar Projects engages the environment and its workers as active participants to transform the simplest experiences into unique possibilities.
A quiet revolution: towards ecological and egalitarian listening

Can you imagine a landscape with no trees, no flowering plants, no insects of any visible sort, no animals, no birds, no history of human occupation aside from visiting explorers, scientists, surveyors and artists in the 20th/21st centuries; in essence a prehistoric primitive condition, synonymous with the origins of organic life. In these Dry Valleys, the living communities consist of stone and ice. The sound continuum is silence, broken into by the birth of a rock onto a surface littered with jutting boulders, rocks, stones, gravel and sand.

Throughout his career Philip Dadson has engaged in a playfully investigative exploration of the environment through sound and image. With an acute sensitivity for the landscape, his simple gestures create a world of wonder and wit. He has paired stones from across oceans, swept beaches and, with his group From Scratch, invoked the shifting of tectonic plates.

In January 2003 Dadson’s explorations took him to the remote and extreme region of the Antarctic dry valleys. Rather than returning to present us with grandiose generalisations typical of portrayals of sublime experiences, he leaves us to ponder the details as if evoking more graspable experience through haiku rather than epic portrayal. Neither does he impose his work onto the environment. Acting as a conduit, Dadson offers his eyes and ears to viewers to mediate fragments of his experience, resulting in a take-only-photos-and-leave-only-footprints process.

The tools and strategies that Dadson employed in Antarctica are typical of both his practice and that of the post-object art-making era he participated in during the 1960s and

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PHILIP DADSON POLAR PROJECTS
29 September - 13 November 2004

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[notes]
1 Philip Dadson, extract from diary written while in Garwood Dry Valley, Antarctica, January 2003.