



delight

When, at the start of February, London ground to a halt in the heaviest snowfalls for 18 years, it brought home to the populace how unprepared they were for the white stuff and its consequences. Yet what passes for a blizzard in London would be shrugged off in the Alaskan city of Anchorage as a mere dusting. Here, snow lies feet thick and winter daytime temperatures oscillate between -15°C and -1°C . But Alaskans are resilient souls and recently celebrated their subarctic climate through *Freeze*, a month-long programme of conferences, performances and exhibitions exploring aspects of a hyperborean (extremely northerly) existence. People have lived in the Arctic regions since the last ice age (around 20,000 years ago) but polar regions are now coming under new pressures through the effects of climate change.

The most photogenic aspect of the programme was a series of installations erected along Anchorage's Delaney Park Strip involving teams of designers, artists and architects from Alaska and around

the world. Shown here is *Ice Fracture*, by Canadian architects Kobayashi + Zedda, working with Polish-born artist Ana Rewakowicz. 'The piece transforms the winter phenomenon of shifting ice into an urban experience that explores the physical relationship between movement, light and landscape,' explains the website. Humble traffic cones are used as casts for spiky ice sculptures and lights embedded in the frozen ground are triggered by motion sensors, so visitors walking round the site create their own light patterns.

Hosted by the Alaska Design Forum in association with the International Gallery of Contemporary Art and the Anchorage Museum (now being extended by David Chipperfield Architects), the diversity of work and the public response to it echoes the hardy conviviality of Anchorage's winter carnivals, which date back to 1918. The spirit of the north lives on. CATHERINE SLESSOR
www.freezeproject.org/alaska