

PAN

AMSTERDAM

FLAT // LAND



Ours polaire endormi (Solitudes)

Wildlife photographer Vincent Munier (1976, Vosges, France) has always been surrounded by and part of nature. Ever since his early childhood when he bivouacked in the forests on the lookout for the tiniest creatures and his first magic moments to his later adventures experiencing thrilling encounters with larger hunting animals such as lynxes, brown and polar bears and wolves. As a winner of many international photography awards and nominees, – Munier won multiple times the acclaimed BBC Wildlife photographer of the year award – something particular is setting the works of Munier apart from other wildlife photography. In 2021 Vincent Munier co-directed the film *The Velvet Queen*, about snow leopards (*Panthera uncia*), which received the César Award for Best Documentary Film.

Munier took six expeditions to capture the wolves in the Arctic where he encountered polar bears and wolves. One of the most fascinating miracles in fauna is how animals can adapt constantly, to each other, to the circumstances. The polar bear (*Ursus maritimus*) is the largest bear species. With their white appearance they can blur in with their surroundings of the polar Arctic. Having their living habitat in sea-ice covered areas, they use the 'ice covered sea' as a platform for hunting ringed and bearded seals, but also for mating, resting and travelling.

To indicate the cryptic role of the colour white against the icy white background, scientists came up with the colour 'snow white'. Yet, when more explorers of the 19th century set out for the Arctic, the whites they found were manifold and more richly textured variations of whites. For instance, when observed more closely, the fur of the polar bear

ranges from strikes of yellowish white to rusty brownish white and in different sun settings, even towards a reddish white. One 'white' that was visible on the fur of the polar bear was not a white, but even Straw Yellow, one of Abraham Gottlob Werner's (1749 - 1817) original yellows. It was a sulphur yellow mixed with much greyish white and a little ochre yellow.

Moving forward to our century, it has been discovered that the fur of the cryptic, elusive, geographically remote species of Polar Bears, is a pigment-free fur that gives them the appearance of being white. In fact, its hairs are transparent and hollow, bouncing back sunlight, giving a luminescence effect.

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