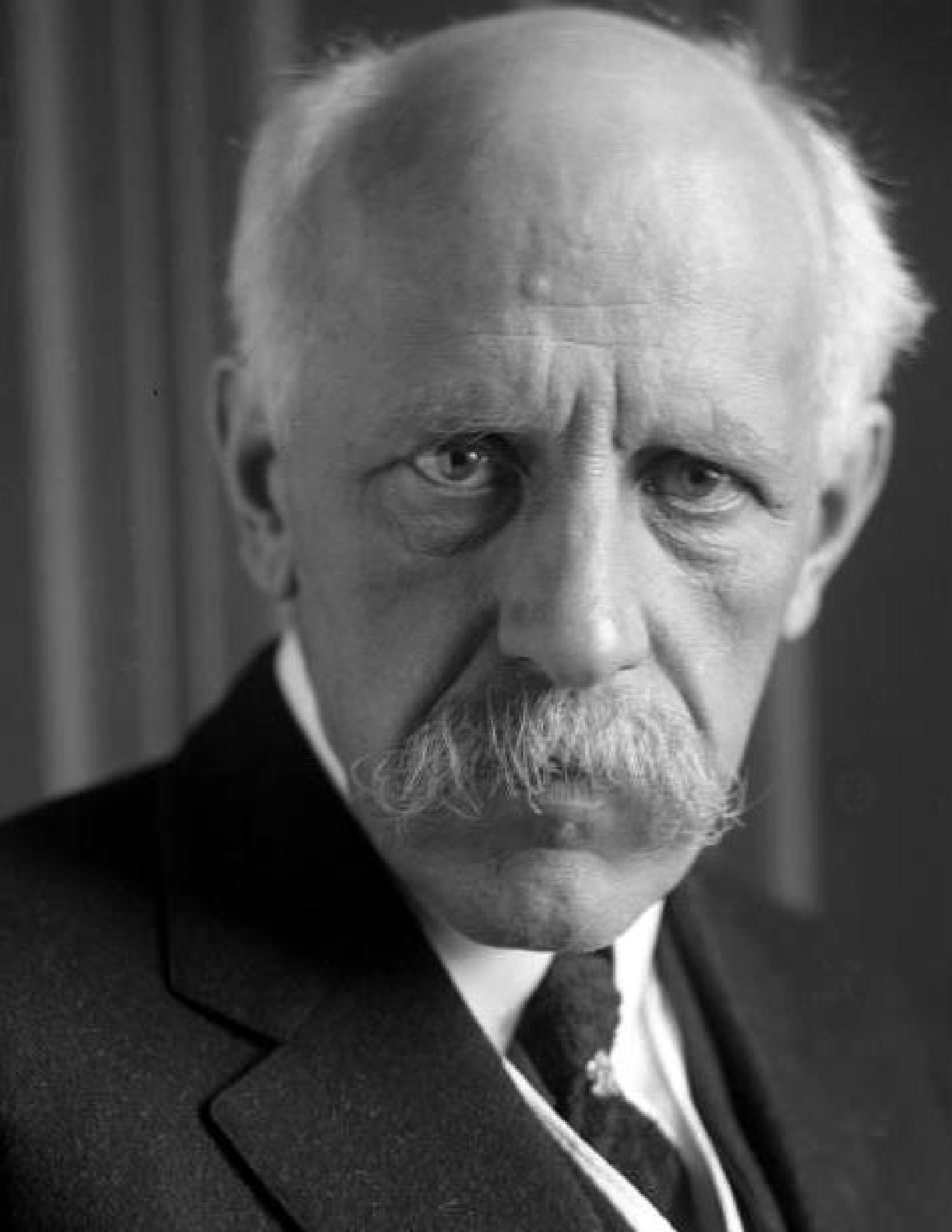




*Portrait of Fridtjof Nansen (Public Domain)*

# FORWARD (DRAWROF) BY XAVIER CORTADA



# ABOUT NANSEN

Fridtjof Wedel-Jarlsberg Nansen was a Norwegian explorer, scientist, diplomat, humanitarian and Nobel Peace Prize laureate. He led the team that made the first crossing of the Greenland interior in 1888, traversing the island on cross-country skis. After his triumphant return from Greenland, he spent more than 3 years preparing for the journey and constructing new ship "Fram" (Forward) that was supposed survive harsh weather and iced seas.

On October 9 1893, Fram had her first experience of ice pressure. The ship's design was quickly vindicated as the ship rose and fell, the ice being unable to grip the hull. Otherwise the first weeks in the ice were disappointing, as the unpredictable drift moved Fram in gyratory fashion, sometimes north, sometimes south; by 19 November, after six weeks, Fram was south of the latitude at which she had entered the ice.

Based on the uncertain direction and slow speed of the drift, Nansen calculated that it might take the ship five years to reach the pole. In January 1894 he had first discussed the possibility of making a sledge journey with the dogs, from Fram to the pole, though he made no immediate plans. Nansen's first attempts to master dog-driving were an embarrassing failure, but he persevered and gradually achieved better results. He also discovered that the normal cross-country skiing speed was the same as that of dogs pulling loaded sledges. Men could travel under their own power, skiing, rather than riding on the sledge, and loads could be correspondingly increased. This, according to biographer and historian Roland Huntford, amounted to a revolution in polar travel methods.

On 19 May, two days after the celebrations for Norway's National Day, Fram passed  $81^{\circ}$ , indicating that the ship's northerly speed was slowly increasing, though it was still barely a mile (1.6 km) a day. On 16 November he revealed that he and one companion would leave the ship and ski for the pole when the  $83^{\circ}$  mark was passed. After reaching the pole the pair would make for Franz Josef Land, and then cross to Spitsbergen where they hoped to find a ship to take them home.

The crew then spent the following months preparing for the forthcoming dash for the pole. They built qamutit that would facilitate fast travel over rough sea ice terrain and constructed kayaks for use during the expected water crossings. There were endless trials of special clothing and other gear. After the excitement, it was noted that Fram had drifted beyond Greely's Farthest North record of  $83^{\circ}24'$ , and on 8 January was at  $83^{\circ}34'$  N.

In their dash to the pole, they noted they averaged nine nautical miles a day, which put them ahead of schedule, but uneven surfaces made skiing difficult and slowed their speed. On April 7, Nansen recorded their latitude as  $86^{\circ}13'6''$  N, almost three degrees beyond the previous record and decided to turn around and head back south.

Fridtjof Nansen's legacy is a story of perseverance in extreme conditions. In the 20 years after his return from the Arctic, he devoted most of his energies to scientific work and writing his account of the voyage.

**"Now have all ways of retreat been closed. Now remains only one path, the way forward..."**

- Fridtjof Nansen on Norway's Constitution Day on May 17, 1905 in Christiania



Map of the Arctic Ocean showing the routes taken during the 1893-96 Nansen's Fram expedition: (red) Fram's route eastward from Vardø to the Siberian coast, turning north at the New Siberian Islands to enter the pack ice. July – September 1893; (blue) Fram's drift in the ice from the New Siberian Islands, north and west to Spitsbergen, September 1893 – August 1896; (green) Nansen and Johansen's march to Farthest North, 86°20'N, and their subsequent retreat to Cape Flora in Franz Josef Land, February 1895 – June 1896; (purple) Nansen and Johansen's return to Vardø from Cape Flora, August 1896; (yellow) Fram's voyage from Spitsbergen to Tromsø, August 1896. (credit: GFDL, CC-BY-SA)



Lars Jorde's (1865-1939) depiction from a photograph of the snow-covered hut in which Nansen and Johansen spent the winter of 1895-1896 (credit: Public Domain)

# THE PERFORMANCE

**EXERPT FROM CORTADA'S LOG FROM HIS TRIP TO THE NORTH POLE  
DAY EIGHT: WEDNESDAY, JULY 2, 2008 | VISIT TO CAPE FRANZ JOSEFS LAND: CAPE NORWAY**

"Performance planting the DRAWROF flag at the site of Fridtjof Nansen's hut:

Today, I visited Cape Norway. Didn't get to read the inscription the Norwegian Government mounted alongside a log and some rocks assembled in a rectangular pattern. I didn't need to. I already knew where I was.

I was standing before the ruins of the hut Fridtjof Nansen erected in August 1895, on his way back home from his failed attempt to reach the North Pole. He slept there for seven months, knowing that he had reached the highest point (86°14'N) man had visited on the planet. He did so because he thought unconventionally. At a time when others would want to fight and conquer nature, he allowed nature to work for him. The meticulously planner had a ship built to not crush as he intentionally had it set on the ice, which would effortlessly move them westward and towards the Pole."



Xavier Cortada is an artist and Professor of Practice at the University of Miami Department of Art and Art History. Cortada's work is intended to generate awareness and action towards issues of global climate change. Using the power and elasticity of participatory art to engage, Cortada educates and inspires community members to work together and learn together to solve our community's problems.

Cortada has created art installations at the North and South Poles to help address environmental issues at every point in between. His work is also in the collections of Pérez Art Museum Miami (PAMM), the Patricia and Philip Frost Art Museum, the MDC Museum of Art + Design, the NSU Museum of Art in Ft. Lauderdale, the Whatcom Museum in Washington, and the World Bank and is the Artist-in-Residence at Pinecrest Gardens.

To learn more, visit [www.cortada.com](http://www.cortada.com).



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