

Juxtaposition: Argentina's pastoral Entre Rios and China's bustling Shanghai are on exact opposite sides of the world, as *!Vivan las Antipodas!* highlights.

Life's rich tapestry

Covering everything from performance artists to polar landscapes, this year's crop of documentaries at the Christchurch International Film Festival offer many interesting insights.

JAMES CROOT selects 10 well worth seeking out.

Ai Weiwei: Never Sorry

Excellent primer on the controversial Chinese artist who was detained for 81 days by his government for his continued criticism of the ruling Communist Party. While his work is certainly provocative and his skills undoubted – he worked on part of the design of Beijing's "Birds Nest" Olympic Stadium (something he now disowns) – what really will fascinate local viewers is his challenging of the government's official response to the 2008 Sichuan earthquake.

Chasing Ice

When all the stats and power-point presentations failed to move middle America, *National Geographic* photographer James Balog decided there was only one way to highlight global warming –

a series of stark images. Jeff Orlowski's film captures his painstaking and dangerous efforts to put together the extremely impressive Extreme Ice Survey project, which uses a battery of cameras to produce irrefutable time-lapse images of retreating glaciers.

Diana Vreeland: The Eye Has to Travel

Presaging Anna Wintour by decades, the former *Harper's Bazaar* and *Vogue* editor is credited as the first to recognise fashion photography as an art form.

Using audio recordings made with her biographer George Plimpton and archival interviews, her granddaughter-in-law Lisa Immordino Vreeland's documentary highlights her

unconventional sense of style and thirst for a challenge, which potentially raises the stakes – and the stress.

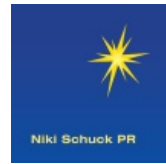
First Position

Ballet gets the *Spellbound* treatment in American director Bess Kargman's enlightening film which follows the fortunes of six gifted students from disparate social, regional economic and ethnic backgrounds as they prepare for a competition attended by the world's top dance companies. Unlike many of the other entries in this genre, the goal is not necessarily to win but to earn a shot at a career.

The Last Dogs of Winter

Kiwi director Costa Botes





travels to the wilds of Churchill, Manitoba, for this touching tale about the dwindling Qimmiq (Canada's indigenous Eskimo dog) population and the efforts of a few humans to save the breed. They include the wild and wildly charismatic Brian Ladoon (whose methods polarise opinions in the town) and transplanted Kiwi actor Caleb Ross.

The Last Ocean

New Zealand's involvement in one of the current great environmental scandals comes under the microscope in local documentarian Peter Young's film. Fishing in Antarctica's Ross Sea has exploded since it was first allowed in 1996, with our nation leading the charge. Now the world's last pristine marine ecosystem is threatening to collapse as governments and commercial fishing companies attempt to increase quotas. After watching this you'll never look at Chilean Sea Bass on a restaurant menu again.

Marina Abramovic: The

Artist is Present

One of the highlights of the festival, this stunning documentary profiles the sexagenarian performance artist as she prepares for her 2010 retrospective at New York's Museum of Modern Art. As well as recreating all her most famous provocative pieces, the show includes an extraordinary new work – one that requires her to have one-on-one interaction with visitors throughout the entire three months.

Tatarakihi: The Children of Parihaka

Natty little Kiwi road movie which follows the adventures of a group of North Island school children who retrace their transported ancestors' footsteps south to where they were incarcerated in caves at Dunedin's Andersons Bay. Their stop in Christchurch to visit the former Addington jail and a certain Anglican cathedral is particularly poignant.

Undeclared

A surprise winner at this year's Academy Awards, Dan Lindsay and T J Martin's sports documentary focuses on the efforts of American Football volunteer coach Bill Courtenay to steer an impoverished, predominantly black north Memphis high school team to credibility and the players to potential career opportunities.

!Vivan las Antipodas!

Building on the childhood fantasy of digging a hole in the earth to the other side of the planet, Russian documentarian Viktor Kossakovsky's beautiful-looking film brings together four antipodes. Dialogue-lite, its main aim is to showcase the juxtaposition of locations, the best of which is the pairing of Argentina's pastoral Entre Rios and China's bustling Shanghai. New Zealand's Castlepoint's appearance is brief.

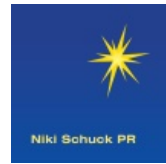


Ever present: Performance artist Marina Abramovic spent every minute of her three-month show interacting with patrons.



Diana Vreeland: The first fashion editor to recognise fashion photography as an art form.





Undefeated, above: And you thought school rugby rivalries were fierce. **Wild life, below left:** Kiwi actor Caleb Ross is one of the human stars of *The Last Dogs of Winter*. **Under threat, below right:** Peter Young's documentary *The Last Ocean* highlights the plight of the Ross Sea.

