



Swirling Bloom off Patagonia Argentina

Interesting art often springs out of the convergence of different ideas and influences. And so it is with nature.

Off the coast of Argentina, two strong ocean currents converge and often stir up a colorful brew, as shown in this Aqua image from December 2010.

This milky green and blue bloom formed on the continental shelf off of Patagonia, where warmer, saltier waters from the subtropics meet colder, fresher waters flowing from the south. Where these currents collide, turbulent eddies and swirls form, pulling nutrients up from the deep ocean. The nearby Rio de la Plata also deposits nitrogen- and iron-laden sediment into the sea. Add in some midsummer sunlight, and you have a bountiful feast for microscopic, floating plants known as phytoplankton, which form the center of the ocean food web.