

ERIKA BLUMENFELD—BIOGRAPHY

Erika Blumenfeld (b. 1971, USA) is a transdisciplinary artist whose practice is motivated by the wonder of natural phenomena and the relationship between nature and culture. A Guggenheim and Smithsonian Fellow, Blumenfeld approaches her work like an archivist, driven by a passion to trace and collect the evidence and stories of connection across the cosmos. Her non-traditional research-based practice has led her to examine a range of subjects including astronomy, geology, planetary science, ecology, the environment, anthropogenic climate disruption, natural night sky preservation and light in its many forms. Blumenfeld often works in collaboration with scientists and research institutions, including NASA, Scripps Institution of Oceanography, McDonald Observatory, and the South African National Antarctic Program. The photo and video-based works, installations, paintings, drawings, sculptures, writing and data science visualizations that result from her artistic investigations are the artifacts that express her inquiries' reflections and weave an equally conceptual and formalist intent.

In her *Light Recordings* series, Blumenfeld documents solar and lunar light, building her own lensless cameras to directly record the subtle incremental changes that natural light makes throughout our daily and yearly astronomical cycles. In her series, *Living Light*, the artist documents bioluminescent dinoflagellates, the wondrous single-celled organisms that glow in our oceans, reflecting on how phytoplankton populations are linked to our global respiratory cycle and ocean health. In her work, *The Polar Project*, the artist captures the natural environment of the polar regions to preserve their image for future generations and inspire awareness of the peril they face with increased climatic change. In her *Wildfire* series, the artist documents the blackened remains of the recent, increasing wildfires, examining the impact of shifting water patterns due to anthropogenic climate disruption alongside issues of natural resources and land ownership. In *Sky Scrolls*, Blumenfeld is collecting personal stories of people's direct experience under the starry night sky for a project-in-progress that intends to link the natural night as part of our cultural heritage. Blumenfeld is currently an artist-in-residence at NASA where she is leading a team to create a 3D interactive virtual library of NASA's Apollo Lunar and Antarctic Meteorite collections for researchers and the public. Tandem to the NASA project, several new bodies of work are in development, including new video and photo-based works, large-scale sculptural works, a series of essays, as well as a large series of performative drawings in progress titled *Encyclopedia of Trajectories*. These new works as a whole intend to study the notion of an embodied relationship with the cosmos—that we are, in our very chemistry, of and from the stars.

Blumenfeld is the recipient of many awards including a Public Art Award from Houston's Mayors Office of Cultural Affairs & Art League Houston (2019); Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Artist-in-Residence (2018); NASA ROSES PDART Grant (2016-2019/Sci-PI); Smithsonian Artist Research Fellowship at the National Museum of Natural History (2015); Cape Farewell's Scottish Islands Expedition Residency (2011); Purchase Award from the New Mexico Museum of Art (2010); Artist-in-residence with ITASC Research Team, SANAE Research Base, Antarctica (2009); John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship (2008); Ballroom Marfa's Inaugural Artist-in-Residence (2004); Land Rheinland-Pfalz Kultusministerium Exhibition Grant (2002); Creative Capital Award (2000); Three Polaroid Corporation Film Grants (1999, 2000 & 2001); and a Special Editions Fellowship from the Lower East Side Printshop (2000).

Blumenfeld's work has been exhibited widely in museums and galleries in the US and abroad, including the Albright Knox Art Gallery (Buffalo, New York); Fondation EDF Espace Electra (Paris, France); New Mexico Museum of Fine Arts (Santa Fe, New Mexico); Ballroom Marfa (Marfa, Texas); DiverseWorks Art Space (Houston, Texas); Färgfabriken Norr (Östersund, Sweden); Galerie der Stadt Mainz-Brückenturm (Mainz, Germany); Kunstneres Hus (Oslo, Norway); OCA (Sao Paulo, Brazil); Portland Institute for Contemporary Art (Portland, Oregon); Rice Public Art, Rice University (Houston, Texas); Women & Their Work (Austin, Texas); Stadtgalerie (Kiel, Germany); TATE Modern (London, UK); Willem de Kooning Academie (Rotterdam, Netherlands); among others.

Her work has been featured on *NASA.gov*, *Arts + Culture Texas*; *DAMn Magazine*, *Paddle8*; *ScienceBlogs: Universe*; *Art in America*; *ARTnews*; *Camera Arts*; *Nature*; *Arkrush*; *New Scientist*; *Austin American Statesman*; *Denver Post*; and *The New York Times*. Her work appears in many book publications, including LUX (Archeology of Photography Foundation/Poland, 2016); Art and Ecology Now (Thames & Hudson/UK, 2014); Klima Kunst Kultur (Steidl/Germany, 2014); Arte da Antarctica (Goethe Institut/Brazil, 2009), which includes her essay "What is White"; The Polaroid Book (Taschen/Germany, editions 2005 & 2008); and Photography: New Mexico (Fresco Fine Art Publications, 2008).

Blumenfeld's works are in the permanent collections of the Albright-Knox Art Gallery; Lannan Foundation; Houston Museum of Fine Arts; New Mexico Museum of Fine Arts; The Polaroid Collection; Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art; University College London and the University of Texas. She holds a BFA in Photography from Parsons School for Design and an MSc in Conservation Studies (with Distinction) from University College London.

The artist has given talks at NASA Johnson Space Center, Houston, TX; UNESCO Headquarters, Paris, France; Moody Center for the Arts, Rice University, Houston, TX; Clay Center for Arts & Sciences, Charleston, WV; Idea Festival, Louisville, KY; TATE Modern, London, UK; University of Hartford, Hartford, CT; University of Houston, TX; Portland Institute for Contemporary Art, Portland, OR; New Mexico Museum of Fine Art, Santa Fe, NM, among others.

Blumenfeld lives and works in Houston, Texas.

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