

ERIKA BLUMENFELD—BIOGRAPHY

Erika Blumenfeld (b. 1971, USA) is an artist, researcher and writer who seeks engagement across the arts, sciences, and humanities to cultivate artworks and dialogue exploring the material and poetic origins of our relationship with the natural world. She approaches her work like an ecological archivist, driven by a passion to trace and collect the evidence and stories of connectedness across the cosmos. Examining entanglements between natural phenomena, ecology, geology, astronomy, and cosmochemistry, her work intends to study the notion of an embodied relationship with the cosmos—that we are, in our very chemistry, of and from the stars. Both a Guggenheim and Smithsonian Fellow, Blumenfeld’s studios include laboratories, observatories, and extreme environments, and she has collaborated with scientists and research institutions, including NASA, Scripps Institution of Oceanography, McDonald Observatory, and the South African National Antarctic Program.

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 works with 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 experiences under the starry night sky, intending to link the natural night as part of our cultural heritage. Blumenfeld’s ongoing project in collaboration with NASA, *Astromaterials 3D*, is a recently launched interactive virtual library of NASA’s Apollo Lunar and Antarctic Meteorite collections to bring a personal encounter with these space rocks and their stories of our solar system to researchers and the public worldwide. In her ongoing project *Encyclopedia of Trajectories*, Blumenfeld is re-enacting every meteor event that occurred over a one-year period, 5763 in total, as a single-stroke performative drawing in 24 karat gold.

Blumenfeld is the recipient of many awards including the NASA Johnson Space Center Director’s Innovation Award (2021); Island Press Artist-in-Residence (2021); 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, SANA E 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 in *National Geographic*; *NASA.gov*; *Art in America*; *Nature*; *ARTnews*; *New Scientist*; *Seisma Magazine*, *Arts + Culture Texas*; *Camera Arts*; *Denver Post*; and *The New York Times*, among others. Her work appears in many book publications, including *Polaroid Now* (Chronicle Chroma 2021); *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; Lunar and Planetary Institute, 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.

(Current as of 14 August 2022)