

Conference: The Global Antarctic

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Title of presentation: "From the Heroic Sublime to Environments of Global Decline"

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"From the Heroic Sublime to Environments of Global Decline" describes the new ecological art in the era of the Anthropocene as an aesthetic and sensorial phenomenon that refuses the physical spectacle afforded by the old flag-planting heroism of polar explorations to "the ends of the earth." It discusses contemporary art from Antarctica to rethink ecology and aesthetic practice together to challenge political and social assumptions of an earlier epoch promoting imperial entitlements and unbridled capitalism. The artists create works that counter heroic colonial fantasies of endless exploration and escape and instead find solace and even hope in more modest local phenomena. The work is embodied, situated, and earthbound, addressing every day materials. It foregrounds justice-attentive aesthetic and research practices that incorporates art to conceptions of beauty, troubling environmental truths and ethical challenges that come with living in an unstable and contingent finite world.

The paper investigates the way contemporary artists and activists are devising a new polar aesthetics that challenges the dominant narrative of mainstream media that equates climate change with apocalyptic spectacles of melting ice and desperate polar bears, and green capitalism with masculinist imagery of sublime wilderness and imperial heroics. It addresses the call for papers on Colonialism, Postcolonialism, and Antarctica by arguing that the contemporary peace-and-science era that followed the 1958 Geophysical Year, often seen as distinct, was in many ways informed by the same intertwined ideologies of masculinity, colonialism and exploration of this earlier period of modernity. This can be seen in the continuing politics and practices of maintaining exclusive claims: the flags planted, the maps drawn, and the bases built by framing their colonization efforts as objectively scientific.

Lisa E. Bloom is the author of many feminist books and articles in art history, visual culture, and cultural studies including *Gender on Ice: American Ideologies of Polar Expeditions* (University of Minnesota Press), *With Other Eyes: Looking at Race and Gender in Visual Culture* (University of Minnesota Press) and *Jewish Identities in U.S. Feminist Art: Ghosts of Ethnicity* (Routledge). More recently, she is currently completing her latest book, *Climate Change and the New Polar Aesthetics: Artists Reimagine the Arctic and Antarctic* (Duke University Press, forthcoming 2022). She has taught at numerous universities and art schools over the years and is currently at the University of California, Berkeley, as a research scholar at the Beatrice Bain Center in the Department of Gender and Women's Studies.