



Media Contact:

Antonie Evans, Design & Digital Resources | Blaffer Art Museum

Phone: (713) 743-9635

Email: acevans5@central.uh.edu

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Houston artist Erika Blumenfeld in residence at Blaffer Art Museum this summer

HOUSTON, TX — The University of Houston’s Blaffer Art Museum is proud to announce a collaboration with Houston-based artist **Erika Blumenfeld**—**the artist will be in residence at the museum from June 2 – August 1, developing new work in advance of a major survey exhibition at the Blaffer.** *Erika Blumenfeld: Sky Stone Cycle* is the first iteration of the *Artists in Research* initiative launched by Director & Chief Curator, Dr. Laura Augusta.

While on-site, Blumenfeld will be working on a new print edition that charts the orbital paths of selected meteors—including meteorites that have fallen to Earth—and explores their connection to the building blocks of life. The print edition, which uses a pigment custom-made with ground meteorites, will be published by the Blaffer and printed by Hare & Hound Press in San Antonio. "If stones hold memory, then meteorites that have been picked up by human hands have a particularly unique and intricate story to tell, one that spans remnant stellar chemistry, the forming and collision of planets out of nebular dust, and human curiosity," Blumenfeld writes.

Two galleries on the Blaffer’s ground floor will become Blumenfeld’s studio during the residency. Visitors will be invited to observe the artist’s work in progress and research methodologies. Select related works will also be on view, including Blumenfeld’s *Encyclopedia of Trajectories* in which she re-enacts every meteor event that occurred over a one-year period (5763 total events) as a series of performative drawings in 24-karat gold. The presentation also includes a print from her *Tracing Luminaries* print edition. Published by Island Press, *Tracing Luminaries* preserves astronomical notations made on photographic glass plate negatives by the “Women Computers” who measured and mapped the stars at Harvard from the late 1800s

to the mid-1900s. On Thursday afternoons throughout the run of the exhibition, the artist will welcome visitors to share an informal tea with her and chat about the ongoing project.

For more than two decades, Erika Blumenfeld's practice has included a research- and wonder-driven focus upon natural phenomena. As an "ecological archivist," Blumenfeld has produced work about a wide range of ideas and natural events, including atmospheric and astronomic phenomena, bioluminescent organisms, wildfires, and the landscapes of Antarctica. In a uniquely interdisciplinary practice, Blumenfeld works closely with scientists and research institutions, including the Scripps Institution for Oceanography, the McDonald Observatory, and the South African National Antarctic Program. She has been an artist in residence at NASA Johnson Space Center since 2016 as the Science-Principal Investigator and Project Lead of her Astromaterials 3D project, the Creative & Photography Lead of the Advanced Imaging & Visualization of Astromaterials (AIVA) team, and the Artemis Sample Imaging Lead. Blumenfeld has been awarded the Guggenheim Fellowship, as well as grants from the Creative Capital Foundation, Land Rheinland-Pfalz Kultusministerium, Polaroid Corporation, and a Purchase Award from the New Mexico Museum of Art. Blumenfeld is represented by Inman Gallery, Houston.

Part of the Blaffer's newly-launched program *Artists in Research*, Blumenfeld's presentation in the galleries makes visible the process of investigation, imagination, and project development that is part of her studio practice. Alongside established work, visitors are invited to talk with the artist and learn about how artistic research unfolds; in Blumenfeld's example, in dialogue with scientists, poetry, and the natural world. The program underscores the Blaffer's commitment to supporting artists—both in Houston and beyond—with significant resources, time, and space for the development of new projects. Further, the program invites artists in various moments of their practices to engage deeply and meaningfully with the unique conversations, industries, and natural events that make Houston a singularly important city of the future. "The Blaffer Art Museum is committed to connecting artists with the imaginative ecosystems of the city we serve," says Dr. Laura Augusta. "We envision the museum—integrated within a Tier One public research university—as a site for making artistic research visible and for connecting the rich complexities of Houston and the Gulf Coast with the rigorous experimentation and proposals of contemporary artists."

The residency-exhibition will be accompanied by public conversations with scientists who specialize in meteorites and space rocks, among other subjects. Thursday afternoon "Lo-Fi Tea" with the artist will also be free and open to the public every Thursday afternoon through the run of the exhibition.

This exhibition and related programs are generously supported by the Cynthia Woods Mitchell Center for the Arts, the Brown Foundation, and the John R. Eckel Foundation. *Erika Blumenfeld: Sky Stone Cycle* was commissioned and curated by Dr. Laura Augusta.

About Erika Blumenfeld:

Erika Blumenfeld 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. An Emerson Collective, Guggenheim, and Smithsonian Fellow, Blumenfeld’s studios have included 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. Blumenfeld’s research and inquiry have resulted in interdisciplinary artworks in multiple mediums, including interactive 3D computer graphics and 3D modeling, digital media, photography, video art, painting, drawing, sculpture, writing, and printmaking.

Blumenfeld is the recipient of many awards including an Emerson Collective Fellowship (2023); NASA Johnson Space Center Director’s Innovation Award (2021); Arthur L. & Sheila Prensky Island Press Visiting Artist (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, 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), among others.

Blumenfeld’s work has been exhibited widely in museums and galleries in the US and abroad, including the Asia Society (Houston, TX); Buffalo AKG Art Museum (Buffalo, New York); Fondation EDF Espace Electra (Paris, France); Madison Museum of Contemporary Art (Madison, Wisconsin), 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); Kunsternes 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.

Blumenfeld's works are in the public collections of the Baltimore Museum of Art; Buffalo AKG Art Museum; Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics; Houston Museum of Fine Arts; Maier Museum of Art; New Mexico Museum of Fine Arts; Philadelphia Museum of Art; Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art; University College London; University of New Mexico Art Museum; University of Texas at the McDonald Observatory; and Wesleyan University. She has given talks for the Clay Center for Arts & Sciences, Charleston, WV; Idea Festival, Louisville, KY; Lunar and Planetary Institute, Houston, TX; Madison Museum of Contemporary Art, Madison, WI; Moody Center for the Arts, Rice University, Houston, TX; Moon Village Association, Cultural Working Group, Vienna, Austria; NASA Johnson Space Center, Houston, TX; New Mexico Museum of Fine Art, Santa Fe, NM; Portland Institute for Contemporary Art, Portland, OR; TATE Modern, London, UK; UNESCO Headquarters, Paris, France; University of Hartford, Hartford, CT; and University of Houston, TX, among others.

Blumenfeld holds a BFA in Photography from Parsons School for Design and an MSc in Conservation Studies (with Distinction) from University College London. In 2022, the artist was elected as Full Member of the Sigma Xi Scientific Research Honor Society for her artistic practice's contributions to science.

Blumenfeld lives and works in Houston, Texas. She has been an artist in residence at NASA Johnson Space Center since 2016 as the Science-Principal Investigator and Project Lead of her Astromaterials 3D project and the Creative Lead of the Advanced Imaging & Visualization of Astromaterials (AIVA) team. She is represented by Inman Gallery in Houston.

Program Details:

What: *Erika Blumenfeld: Sky Stone Cycle*

When: On view from June 2 – August 1 in the Blaffer Art Museum's High Ceiling Gallery and Joanne Guest Wilson Gallery

Where: Blaffer Art Museum

About the University of Houston

The University of Houston is a Carnegie-designated Tier One public research university recognized with a Phi Beta Kappa chapter for excellence in undergraduate education. UH serves the globally competitive Houston and Gulf Coast Region by providing world-class faculty, experiential learning and strategic industry partnerships. Located in the nation's fourth-largest city and one of the most ethnically and culturally diverse regions in the country, UH is a federally designated Hispanic- and Asian-American-Serving institution with enrollment of more than 49,000 students.

About Kathrine G. McGovern College of the Arts

The University of Houston's Kathrine G. McGovern College of the Arts is a premier institution for education, scholarship, and innovation in the arts, where every day we are cultivating the next generation of creative professionals and unlocking the potential of the arts to impact society and change the world. Our students are forging new frontiers and advancing the arts through academic excellence, innovative programming, and— together with our world-renowned faculty—ascending to the highest level of contemporary professional practice. Houston is a first choice for the arts. Houston is a city of culture and diversity, a quintessential arts destination, and a gateway to the international arts community. Steeped in the richness of diverse cultures, Houston and its engaging community network provide a citywide laboratory for research, education, and practice in the performing and visual arts.

About the Blaffer Art Museum at the University of Houston

Founded in 1973, the Blaffer Art Museum endeavors to further the understanding of contemporary art through exhibitions, publications, and public programs. As the gateway between the University of Houston's Central campus and the City of Houston, Blaffer Art Museum is a catalyst for creative innovation, experimentation, and scholarship. Its exhibitions and programs are always free and open to the public, create community through dialogue and participation, and inspire an appreciation for the visual arts as a vital force in shaping contemporary culture.

www.blafferartmuseum.org

120 Fine Arts Building
University of Houston
Houston, TX 77204

infoblaffer@uh.edu

713-743-9521

Museum Hours

Tues-Sat, 12:00pm-5:00pm

Sun & Mon, Closed

