

gallery@calit2
First Floor, Atkinson Hall
9500 Gilman Drive
University of California, San Diego
La Jolla, CA 92093

April 4, 2016-June 3, 2016

SPECULATIVE LANDSCAPES: THE PHOTOGRAPHY OF CONNIE SAMARAS

CURATED BY
LISA CARTWRIGHT

Opening Friday, April 15, 2016
4:00pm Calit2 Auditorium
Panel Discussion with Lisa Bloom,
Ken Gonzalez-Day, Anna Joy Springer,
Connie Samaras, Lisa Cartwright
6:00pm Reception



QUALCOMM INSTITUTE

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Gallery Hours
April 4, 2016-June 3, 2016
11am-5pm, Monday-Friday

FREE ADMISSION

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SPECULATIVE LANDSCAPES: THE PHOTOGRAPHY OF CONNIE SAMARAS

Works from V.A.L.I.S. (2005-07), gallery@calit2, Atkinson Hall, UCSD, April 4-June 3, 2016

Works from Edge of Twilight (2011-13), SME Gallery, UCSD, April 4-22, 2016

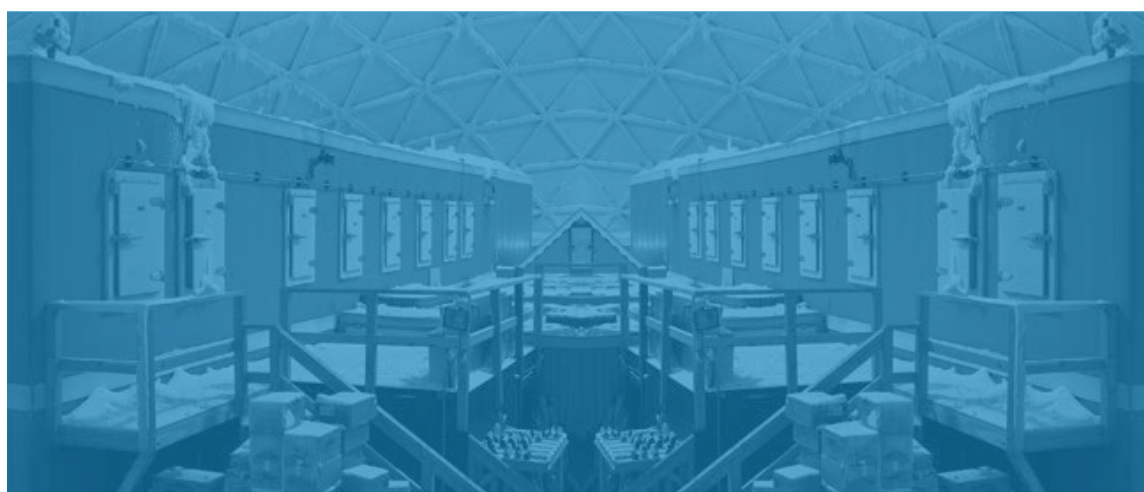
Opening panel and reception, April 15, 6-8pm, Calit2 Auditorium, UCSD, and gallery@calit2

For more than two decades, the Los Angeles-based artist Connie Samaras (born 1950), Professor Art at UC Irvine, has explored disquieting technoscientific landscapes in locations such as Las Vegas, Dubai, and Antarctica, using photography and video to apprehend built environments of late modernity that are at once visionary and dystopic. Works of photography and video from two of the speculative landscape series by Connie Samaras will be featured this season in two exhibitions at UC San Diego organized by UC San Diego Visual Arts Professor Lisa Cartwright. These exhibitions are sponsored by the Qualcomm Institute and Visual Arts Department, UC San Diego.

V.A.L.I.S., a series from 2005-07, was shot by Samaras at a US South Pole scientific research station with the support of a National Science Foundation Antarctic Artists and Writers Grant. Samaras took the acronym V.A.L.I.S. (which stands for Vast Active Living Intelligence System) from the title of the science fiction novel of 1981 by Philip K Dick in which VALIS is a node of a satellite network that uses "disinhibiting stimuli" to communicate, its symbols triggering recollection of intrinsic spiritual knowledge. Works from *V.A.L.I.S.* on view include architectural photographs, landscapes, and a durational video that trigger recollection of a techno-utopian past and evidence of an anthropogenic present and future. Samaras's photographs show development that occurred in three phases: a stark new particleboard station is propped on pylons; a 1970s New Age geodesic dome sinks into the tundra; and an apparent landscape bearing the title "Buried Fifties Station" holds subtle evidence of an active structure now all but completely submerged in ice. In "Night Divide and Contrail Pollution" (2006) the apparent cloud formation is in fact the fleeting trail of aircraft, evidence of anthropogenic impact. "Untitled: Ross Ice Shelf" is another speculative video landscape in which the camera is trained on an uncannily still plane of ice, its tension broken by the



V.A.L.I.S. (vast active living intelligence system), 2005-07
Underneath the Amundsen-Scott Station, Connie Samaras



V.A.L.I.S. (vast active living intelligence system), 2005-07
Dome Interior (now dismantled), Connie Samaras



V.A.L.I.S. (vast active living intelligence system), 2005-07
Dome and Tunnels, Connie Samaras

luminous eyes of a seal coming up for air, reminding us that nonhuman active living intelligence systems are beneath these deceptively minimal surfaces too. On view at g@calit, Atkinson Hall from April 4 through June 3, 2016. Also on view elsewhere in Atkinson Hall: *Magic Planet* (2009), a multichannel video installation in which workers from a vast United Arab Emirates labor camp, ferried day and night to work sites, labor to support the economy of Dubai's opulent landscape of consumption. April 4-June 3, 2016. Sponsored by the Qualcomm Institute, UC San Diego.

For the series *Edge of Twilight* (2011-13), Samaras shifted her focus from the institutional structures of late industrial capitalism that occupied her in earlier works to the modest utopian communal visions of a future built by making do together with what is at hand. Samaras made repeat trips to a lesbian rv retirement community in the inland desert of the American southwest, discreetly shooting the community's personalized rv home exteriors under the mercury vapor lights that line the streets of the remote community. The photographs' surfaces glow yellow-green, suggesting floating plasma screens and making unassuming domestic space the stuff of science fiction. Taking the series title from the pre-Stonewall pulp fiction use of "twilight" to signal lesbian content, Samaras, as modest witness to the community's life form, signals the content of the mundane homes, invoking the sexuality of the women who are all but missing from the photographs, but who loom larger than life in the two portraits included in this selection of works from the series. On view in the SME Gallery, UCSD, April 4-22, 2016. Sponsored by the Visual Arts Department, UC San Diego.

The April 15 opening of *Speculative Landscapes: The Photography of Connie Samaras* will be preceded by a panel discussion with Lisa Bloom, Ken Gonzales-Day, Anna Joy Springer, and the artist, on April 15 at 6pm in Atkinson Hall Auditorium, UCSD.

Connie Samaras, Professor of Art at UC Irvine, is a Los Angeles based artist working primarily in photography and video to consider political geographies and psychological dislocation in the everyday through speculative landscapes and architectural narratives. Her work has been shown widely with solo exhibitions at venues including Franklin Furnace, the California Museum of Photography, LACE, the Queensland University of Technology, the Armory Center for the Arts, and the San Francisco Art Institute. A writer and researcher as well as an artist, Samaras has lectured and presented her widely at venues including the ICA (London), the Hammer Museum, LACMA, the Eaton Science Fiction Conference, and the Ontario College of Art and Design. She is the recipient of numerous grants and fellowships from organizations including the National Science Foundation, Creative Capital, the Andy Warhol Foundation, and the Getty.

Lisa E. Bloom is a scholar of art, science, and visual culture currently teaching at Stanford. She is the author of *Gender on Ice: American Ideologies of Polar Expedition* (1993); *With Other Eyes: Looking at Race and Gender in Visual Culture* (1999); and *Jewish Identities in American Visual Art: Ghosts of Ethnicity* (2006). She is completing a book on anthropogenic landscapes, contemporary art and climate change.

Ken Gonzales-Day, Professor of Art and Humanities at Scripps College, is a Los Angeles based artist who considers the historical construction of race and the limits of representational systems ranging from the lynching photograph to museum display. His works include the photographic series *Erased Lynching*; the book *Lynching in the West: 1850-1935* (Duke 2006); *Profiled*, a series and book that brought new attention to the racial history of previously overlooked objects, typologies, and memorials; *Searching for California Hang Trees*, a series that critically examines the legacies of landscape photography; the *Walking Tour of Los Angeles Lynching Sites*, and the short film *RUN UP* (2015).

Anna Joy Springer, Associate Professor of Writing at UC San Diego, is the author of *The Birdwisher* (Birds of Lace Press, 2009) and *The Vicious Red Relic, Love* (Jaded Ibis Press, 2011). Springer received her M.F.A in Literary Arts from Brown University. Her interests include graphic texts (sculptural poetry, intermedia installations, digital literatures, and comics), punk rock, feminist ethics, non-traditional literary structures, and radical literary arts pedagogies.



V.A.L.I.S. (vast active living intelligence system), 2005-07
Day/Night Divide Polar Plateau, Connie Samaras