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Pages from the Book of the Unknown Explorer

Based on my current work with scientists in Antarctica as well as on extensive research on the history of polar exploration I use narrative in my work to reflect on the history of Antarctic exploration and science from a feminist perspective. By inventing a fictitious unknown woman explorer and scientist, and inserting her character into real historical events, the project is a commentary not only on the absence of women from the history of Antarctic exploration until the late 1960s, but also on the consequences of the erasure of women from the history of polar science. The intimate relationship of the unknown explorer to microscopic creatures in this landscape is a subversion of the large, heroic and masculine projections of her day, and ironically more relevant to current work in polar science, such as recent scientific research that studies how planktonic snails are affected by ocean acidification at a moment when global warming is precipitating rapid change in the food chain and the ecology of the oceans.