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WISH YOU WERE HERE: Journals, Journeys, and Expeditions

June 7 through August 17, 2018, opening reception: Thurs. June 7th from 6 to 8pm.

A summer exhibit dedicated to armchair travel, vacations, and adventures elsewhere; this exhibit features the work of 12 contemporary artists in conjunction with selected travel books, atlases and other vintage materials from the library's historic collection.

NEW HAVEN, CT, June 7, 2018 – Please join the Institute Library on Thursday, June 7th from 6:00 to 8:00 pm for the opening reception of our summer art exhibition featuring work by Fran Antmann, Leila Daw, Ed Dionne, Roberta Friedman, David Guy, James Lancel McElhinny, Isabella Mellado, Maryann Ott, Abigail Reynolds, Rob Rocke, Scott Schuld, and Lisa Seidenberg, curated by Martha Willette Lewis.

The urge to voyage, to “get away” and the image of lazing at a distant sunny beach are a staple of the idealized version of summer. This is of course at odds with our American work schedule, which gives scant vacation time, yet the “what I did on my summer vacation” essay is a trope of the fantasy of lazy, warm days, endless play, and transformative foreign adventures in our collective consciousness. Travel IS luxury: being away from home, phones, obligations, work, and, importantly, work clothes.

Journeys and expeditions are another matter: They are work, they are about trade, colonization, charting, scanning for natural resources, opportunities for wealth, and the expansion of borders. More positively, they are about learning, cultural interaction, scientific inquiry, testing physical boundaries, being an ambassador to one's home culture, and enduring through difficult and wild conditions. In our fully-charted world, travel has changed considerably since western explorers and colonizers began their first forays. Artists were an essential part of any expedition, providing images for a public eager for stories, a glimpse of elsewhere, paradise. Of course, to the people being explored and exploited, it was these new visitors who were – welcome or not – the exotic item in the mix, creating for interactions which ran the gamut from wonderment to horror.

Holiday or Expedition: either way, attention to the landscape and locating humankind's place in it is the core subject matter. This is bitter-sweet stuff, heady, and sad. Issues of representation, of nostalgia, of cultural loss and the change engendered by time, invasion, colonization, and the steady march of “civilization” through history echo within the very different works on display here. This exhibit features an audio track, beadwork, calligraphy, collage, carving, digital animation, drawing, embroidery, film and video, installation, notebooks, painting, photography, postcards, printmaking, poetry, sculpture, specimen boxes, travelogues, watercolors, and writing, all about places far and near, places extant, and places that have disappeared. Come journey with us, armchair travel the globe, all without leaving the comfort of the library stacks...

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