

Material+Visual Worlds
Transdisciplinary Area of Excellence
2025 Spring Semester

presents

Karen Holmberg

Clinical Assistant Professor and Scientific Director
of the Gallatin Wetlab
New York University

**Pre-Columbian Geoengineering
Meets 21st-Century Paleofuturism:
Apprehending Environmental Crises through
Art, Science, and Technology**

Thursday 20 March

6:00 P.M.

Fine Arts 258

This presentation utilizes “variantology” — a playful and critical mashup of archaeology, art, technology, and media — as a lens to consider paleofuturism as a predictive force. Volcanic lightning, a little frog, and various sizes and versions of cephalopods are all active agents in this context, binding pre-Columbian chiefdoms facing severe drought or violent eruptions and contemporary residents of New York City experiencing sea-level rise in real time. Through a wide range of times and places, humans have faced environmental crises with the best technology at their disposal to image and imagine environmental pasts and futures. We currently have advanced technology and data capabilities to image the paleogeology of a much younger Earth, the atmospheric conditions of a post-1.5 degree Celsius near-future planet, or a terraformed Mars. What are the impacts and responsibilities of this ability to envision different time frames upon those of us currently alive?

This talk is free and open to the public.