

31st IAA SYMPOSIUM ON SPACE AND SOCIETY (E5)  
Contemporary Arts Practice and Outer Space: A Multi-Disciplinary Approach (3)

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A VISION OF THE FUTURE: REPRESENTATION THROUGH ILLUSTRATION

**Abstract**

We, humans, are continually influenced by our surroundings and the people we interact with. Gender identity provides a lens through which we see the world and those influences. To help share that view, artistic expression opens a window through another's eyes to unveil an alternative perspective of the world around us.

Erin Bonilla, an illustrator with a career in aerospace, found herself with a unique opportunity to explore this concept with a space twist. Erin was invited to participate as the Vice Commander in a 14-day Mars simulation mission at the Hawai'i Space Exploration Analog and Simulation (HI-SEAS) habitat. The mission, aptly named SENSORIA, was comprised of a diverse group of scientists, engineers, and educators with a passion for art.

Through illustration, Erin hoped to provide an expression of her life on Mars as an educator, an artist, a woman, and a crew member. Before entering the simulation, she drew inspiration from Diego Rivera's "Man at the Crossroads", Norman Rockwell's "Behind Apollo 11," and the ethereal nature of Jeremy Geddes' "Foundation." During the mission, she documented her experiences through photography and writing. She cataloged everything from the mundane routine activities to the extraordinary mystique of lava tube exploration. Everything was important in her vision and became part of the final illustration.

Erin's final illustrative work titled "A Vision of the Future," demonstrates her Mars analog experience and the importance of including the female perspective in the future of space exploration. During this session, Erin will describe the artistic process before, during and after the Mars simulation with first-hand visual and oral reflections on how it contributed to the overall mission's success.