

# THE ARCTIC

**Janne Breinholt Bak**

**Opening: Friday 18.01. 2019 5-7 pm**

Duration: 18.01. – 16.02. 2019

The Arctic is a magnet. Especially the area around the North Pole has at all times had an imaginary, mythical and cultural value. Scholars and North Pole adventurers have tried to map this part of the world with their lives at stake. For the Arctic peoples, including the Inuits, Arctic nature is something that must be respected. They have lived there for so long that they count it as theirs.

As the ice disappears, the circle of countries and organisations who are interested in the Arctic expands.

The natural resources underneath the seabed and the potential riches, that can be brought up from the underground, have led to an adventure of conquest. In the latest decades, the major powers' battle of the Arctic and the North Pole has been played through great scientific expeditions and new lines drawn on the map.

Because of its status in the Danish Realm, Denmark is a major power in the Arctic. In 2014, the Danish Kingdom claimed the seabed under the North Pole; an area twenty times larger than Denmark. It happened after a series of expeditions where teams of scientists had examined among many other factors how far Greenland's continental shelf reaches out in the Arctic Ocean. Meanwhile Russia and Canada also claim their right to parts of the same area around the North Pole. The Lomonosov Ridge in particular is a subject of investigation. All three nations claim that the Lomonosov Ridge is connected to their continental shelf and that they therefore should be assigned the rights to the underground's potential resources; oil, gas, minerals or others.

In August 2007, a Russian mini-submarine planted the Russian flag on the seabed by the North Pole during an expedition. This expedition also collected small amounts of sediments for the documentation material on which Russia has founded its claims. Later, the Foreign Minister Sergej Lavrov stated that the Russian flag on the seabed was to be compared with the American flag on the Moon in 1969.

The climate changes affect Arctic greatly. As a major power in the Arctic, Denmark can partake in the development of the area. So far, Denmark has invested 350 million kroner in the project. In 2019, Canada is expected to claim an area around the North Pole that overlap with the claims of Russia and the Danish Kingdom. Opposed to the Arctic, Antarctica became environmentally protected as a result of an international agreement in 1991 where the continent was designated as 'a sanctuary of nature devoted to peace and science'.

The relationship between the new lines drawn on the Arctic map, Arctic myths, countries' and individuals' urge for conquest, and the national self-understanding are investigated in this exhibition. At the same time, the exhibition points to the fact, that the lines drawn on the Arctic map these years also can be seen as a provisional expression for the time in which the lines are drawn. The Arctic is changing.

**Janne Breinholt Bak** holds an MA in History of Literature and History of Art. Since her father was a land surveyor, she grew up with land surveyor sticks and cadastral cards. Through her work as editor at Gyldendal, she has been engaged with Denmark's role as a former colonial power and present major power in the Arctic. She is a member of the advisory board in Mind the Earth; a company that communicates knowledge about climate changes and sustainable development. In 2017 she flew over the North Pole. This is her first exhibition.