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"Capturing the Midnight Sun: Ernst Herrmann's Film and Photography of Svalbard in the 1930s"

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The German geographer Ernst Herrmann was the first explorer to make a colour film of the Arctic while on an expedition to Svalbard in the summer of 1937. The following year, he returned to conduct a series of flights above the archipelago and to further explore the Arctic Ocean. Returning home to Germany, Herrmann brought his film and thousands of photographic images back to present to audiences. This paper explores the impact of Herrmann's visual work on the development of polar imaginaries. Capturing the midnight sun for the first time in colour, Herrmann utilized new technologies in search for knowledge. Adopting ecomedia analysis, the inextricable link between media and the environment in Herrmann's work is explored. It is argued that Herrmann was a forerunner to more recent environmental documentaries, at a volatile time during the rise of National Socialism and on the eve of WWII. Finally, the paper makes a case for rephotography to retrace Herrmann's steps and to identify changes in some of Svalbard's physical landscapes. (Abstract)

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