

Feminist Research Institute Presents

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Friday 2/24/2017
12:00pm-1:00pm
SUB Cherry/Silver

“Miss Atomic Bomb and Atomic
Domestication in Cold War Era Las Vegas”



Within a few short years of the development of the atomic bomb, the visual aftereffect of its detonation had become detached from its original meaning; the mushroom cloud shifted from an image symbolic of the destructive power of techno-scientific progress and US military might to a pop culture icon used to advertise Las Vegas casinos and beauty pageants. My project explores how the tourist industry in Cold War-era Las Vegas contributed to the normalization of atomic testing using the mushroom cloud in beauty pageants to entice tourists to visit the city. With atomic beauty pageants, atomic cocktails, and all-night parties leading up to the atomic detonations in the early morning, Las Vegas hotels and casinos marketed the once terrifying atomic bomb as a cultural event and not to be missed performance. My research into the atomic beauty pageants held between 1952 and 1957 demonstrates the consequences of both the mushroom cloud's domestication as a commodity symbol and its ensuing connection with tourism and the female body.