

# Zernike Colloquium

April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2025

16:00h

NB4 5111.0080

## Scientific Fraud in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

by Eugenie S. Reich



EUGENIE REICH LAW LLC  
**ER** REPRESENTING  
WHISTLEBLOWERS

Whistleblower attorney specializing in science, technology, healthcare and the pharmaceutical industry

Scientific fraud was once considered a rare pathology, but in recent years the academic community has seen a growing number of credible reports of many different forms of data misrepresentation. This talk will identify the factors that are driving these cases and trace their roots back two decades. My 2009 book, *Plastic Fantastic*, documented how, in 2000, managers at Bell Laboratories in New Jersey began to regard scientific discovery claims as a form of publicity to impress investors, contributing to the escalation of a major research fraud in the field of organic electronics. At Bell, the scientific culture was still strong enough that observations of unrealistic data duplications led to a swift and transparent investigation and a dozen coordinated retractions in the journals *Nature* and *Science*. The case was an outlier at the time, but today the same problems: including an attitude to data as fungible, the ease of making extraordinary claims compared to checking them, and a continued taboo around whistleblowing, remain. Now we also have a full-blown attention economy in which every scientist is under pressure to promote data that confirm the scientific hypotheses that have brought money into their institution, or that can drive the right kind of clicks online. We are also seeing an increasingly cynical calculus among top institutional and journal leadership. The result is a waste of community time and resources following up on results that are unlikely to replicate. There are some signs of a shift to try to combat these problems and we can discuss how audience members can get involved in that effort.

Coffee from 15:30h  
Drinks & Snacks after



university of  
 groningen  
 faculty of science  
 and engineering