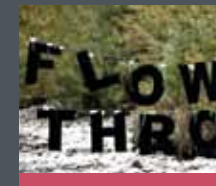
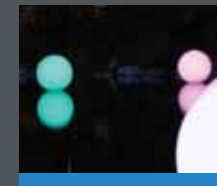
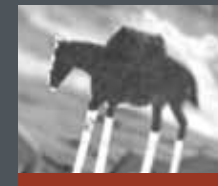
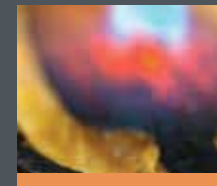


Celebration of the Bow River 2010

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Celebration of the Bow River 2010

a project of The City of Calgary Public Art Program and Utilities & Environmental Protection Department

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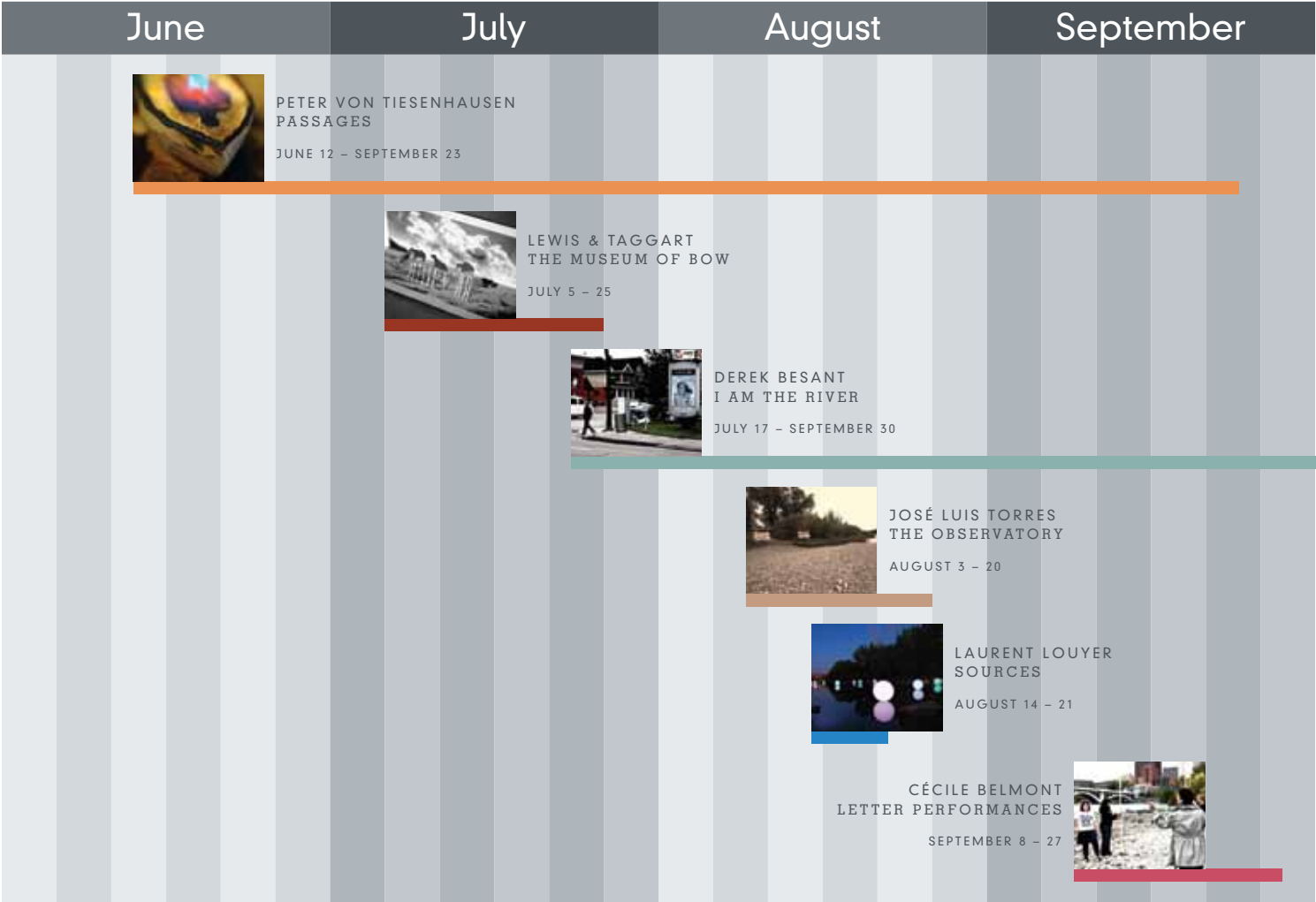
Catalogue Artists Biographies

Carlos Amat has photographed the Queen of England, documented the backstreets of London, Paris, and Prague, and flown with the Canadian Snowbirds while they demonstrated maneuvers over the Rocky Mountains. A 25-year veteran of newspapers and magazines with many commercial projects to his credit, Carlos is an independent photographer with a taste for diversity and a drive to capture the gamut of human experience.

Daniel Blais is a graphic designer who has a passion for projects with artistic values at their core. Self-employed since graduating from the Alberta College of Art and Design in 1999, Daniel's graceful integration of layout, typography, and message serves business, non-profit, and cultural sector clients alike. Daniel is a fan of live music and an enthusiastic collector of contemporary visual art.

Linda Hawke endeavours to put the richness of artists' visual expressions into words. She earned a degree in education at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design and applied it for close to 20 years working in public museums and art galleries. She sees her freelance writing as a way to extend her educational reach. Linda also teaches, pursues her art practice and is an avid sailor.

Timeline 2010



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Celebration of the Bow River 2010

Introduction

Summer of the Bow

“Every second, ninety cubic metres of water rushes by us in the river.” Paul Fesko launched *Celebration of the Bow River 2010* with this lively fact. Fesko heads The City of Calgary’s Strategic Services, Utilities & Environmental Protection (UEP). As a result of his vision, *Celebration* punctuated the Calgary summer with six contemporary art projects.¹ This collaboration between UEP and the Public Art Program proved powerful; it merged ecology, artistry and community to bring the river into public focus. On that particular June day the Bow tumbled past as artist Peter von Tiesenhausen orchestrated an eager crowd’s involvement. The spirit of exploration and plurality that defined *Celebration* was heartily engaged.

The projects were chosen from a pool of proposals submitted in response to an international call to artists. Linked by their common connection to the river, they spanned artistic and geographic boundaries. Performance art, interventions with nature, mobile photographic portraits and a narrative-based collection told the river’s story from creative and diverse perspectives. These works portrayed the Bow as both specific watershed and metaphorical presence, providing abundant opportunities for viewers to make emotional connections.

It was this end that came to mind for Fesko when The City introduced its Public Art Policy in 2003. The document presented an opportunity to communicate UEP departmental values in a way that would make them personally meaningful for Calgarians.² UEP Public Art Plan followed soon after, marking the start of an ongoing partnership between the UEP

and the Public Art Program.³ The plan not only embedded water awareness within the public presentation of art, it redefined public art in Calgary by including artworks of a non-permanent nature. The immediacy and excitement of time-sensitive works became central to *Celebration*. Tom Tittermore, chair of the Public Art Board, was in favour: “The memory of the spheres floating in Prince’s Island lagoon [during *Sources*] is part of people’s experience of that place,” and it will perpetually influence their relationship to the space.⁴

The presentation of temporary public art may be new for The City, but it is well-supported in Calgary’s contemporary community. A willing partner was found in TRUCK Gallery, a local artist run centre that holds its summer residency program in a 1975 recreational vehicle. *Contemporary Art Mobile Public Exhibition Rig* (CAMPER) is a studio on wheels dedicated to the development of new artworks, new ways of working and engaging the public. TRUCK director Renato Vitic saw *Celebration* as “proactive and engaging . . . and that is what CAMPER is all about. It was a natural fit.”⁵ Three of *Celebration*’s projects — *The Museum of Bow*, *The Observatory* and *Letter Performance* — were co-presented by TRUCK. The artists used the R.V. variously as a studio, gallery, workshop space and mode of transporting supplies. The creative process gained transparency as artists parked and worked in various public and riverside locations.

Reflecting on two and a half years of development, public art co-ordinator Heather Aitken observed that *Celebration*

“became so much more than [the project team] could ever have imagined . . . ” as the artists shaped their visions to include the community and the landscape of the Bow.⁶ The artists generously invited us to witness that process. The incredible commitment, risk-taking and insight this writer and photographer encountered as a result are documented in the following pages. We hope you enjoy our response to the challenge of capturing an ephemeral program in lasting form.

Endnotes:

- 1 Heather Aitken described Paul Fesko as the “visionary” for this project in a conversation with the author, Calgary, December 7, 2010.
- 2 Paul Fesko in conversation with the author, Calgary, November 29, 2010. Re Public Art Policy: “On May 27, 2003, City Council approved the fundamental principle of a Public Art Policy whereby one percent of all capital Upgrade and Growth projects over \$1 million would be designated for the commission, purchase, and installation of public art.” – From The City of Calgary website: www.calgary.ca > Public Art Program > About the Program. Council approved the Public Art Plan on January 12, 2004.
- 3 The UEP Public Art Plan was completed in 2007 and can be found on The City of Calgary’s website: www.calgary.ca/docgallery/bu/recreation/public_art/uep_public_art_plan.pdf.
- 4 Tom Tittlemore in conversation with the author, Calgary, September 8, 2010.
- 5 Renato Vitic in conversation with the author, Calgary, July 23, 2010.
- 6 Aitken conversation, December 7, 2010.



Peter von Tiesenhausen

Passages

Earth, Water, Fire, Community

The strength of community was clearly present in *Passages*. This project by Alberta artist Peter von Tiesenhausen culminated on a June Saturday on the banks of the Bow River in southeast Calgary. There, one hundred people launched one hundred hand-sized boats that the artist carved, charred, printed and painted, and filled with organic matter collected from one hundred spots along the Bow. The project exemplified von Tiesenhausen's dynamic and respectful relationship with nature, which permeates his work. The elements are his materials, his subject matter and his collaborators. His art, like nature, holds the possibility of countless interpretations. People are inseparable from von Tiesenhausen's understanding of the environment and they also collaborate — individually and collectively — as viewers and as participants. Community is an element in von Tiesenhausen's art as intrinsic as earth, air, water and fire.

On that Saturday, the artist explained that "a year's worth of work is going down the river." Then he carefully instructed participants about how to release their boats into the Bow as a ritual of river contemplation. To create a lasting vestige of this ephemeral process, an edition of three print impressions of each boat was made in advance. One set of prints was kept by the artist and the second was accessioned by The City of Calgary. The third print was given to the individual who launched that particular boat.

Thorough preparation enabled that moment of surrender. The artist planned and worked with key organizers throughout the process, especially in the days leading up to the launch of the boats. But every step was tempered by the artist's trust in the interconnected nature of the world we live in.

Von Tiesenhausen grew up near Demmitt in resource-rich northern Alberta. He lives there still with his wife and sons on his family's original homestead. The 325 hectare property is also home to an ever-evolving installation of his sculptures and site specific artwork. Von Tiesenhausen has copyrighted the land itself as a work of art. The oil and gas industry knows that this designation significantly increases the cost of doing business on his property and stays away. The artist's proactive stance demonstrates his commitment to the land — above and below the surface. His art is a testament to the belief that the earth's resources do not have to be extracted to serve a purpose.

In this remote environment, von Tiesenhausen read a story as a child that had great impact. *Paddle to the Sea* is a tale familiar to many Canadians.¹ It describes an imaginary three-year journey that begins when a boy carves a model of a man in a canoe. Melting snow carries the carving to the river; it continues on to the Great Lakes, eventually reaching the sea. "You will go with the water and you will have adventures that I would like to have," says the boy to his wooden paddler.² Von Tiesenhausen relates, "Growing up here in rural northern Alberta, that story and film were very significant to me. I could feel a connection to the whole world from this place through its waterways — even the spring run off. *Paddle to the Sea* captured the connectedness of things in a myth we can all relate to."³

That story echoes throughout *Passages*. Von Tiesenhausen's wooden boats feature a human figure carved in relief on each top horizontal surface. Rough hewn and with minimal



▲ Von Tiesenhausen carves one of his hundred boats.



▲ A rough figure is carved into each boat's upper surface.



▲ The relief surface is charred with a propane torch.



▲ The figure develops like a photograph under the flame.



▲ Water protects the crevice around the figure from burning.



▲ For a moment, fire infuses the figure with life.



▲ The torch leaves behind charred, accentuated wood grain.



▲ The wood's charred patina will be printed on paper.



▲ Each boat is branded with the artist's handmade iron.



▲ Boats are soaked briefly before they are printed.



▲ A hand-turned press is used to print the charcoal impressions.

detail, the figures recall the ambiguous outlines that populate von Tiesenhausen's oeuvre. But these boat figures are not the stationary observers we see in previous works such as *The Watchers*.⁴ Although they recline, they are also made to be on the move; figure and vessel are one, able to navigate waves and currents self-sufficiently. Their shapes remind us of the ship burial traditions of Norse and Anglo-Saxon cultures, and of seed pods about to sprout new life. Von Tiesenhausen enjoys the multiplicity of meanings his forms suggest and the diverse ways they resonate with others. But the artist admits that the figures might also be self-portraits. As an extension of him they enable extra reach. "We get one life as far as we know. These vessels allow me to have more because now I am able to interact with the people who encounter the boats long after I've let go of them."⁵ Like the boy in the book, von Tiesenhausen hopes at least one of his boats will reach the sea. He marked each with a handmade brand bearing the URL *pvt-passages.ca* so that those who encounter boats can learn about the project and report their finds.

Philosophically and physically, *Passages* stretches the length of the Bow and beyond. Starting at Bow Glacier — the river's source — and continuing to Ghost Lake just west of Calgary, the artist gathered samples of silt, sediment, rock and soil from the river basin. Friends and adventurers Leanne Allison and Karsten Heuer⁶ joined the collecting expedition and the trio travelled in car and canoe to gather one hundred samples — one for each hand-carved boat. They sought interesting colours and formations; they numbered and recorded the GPS location of each selection; they collected memories and experiences along with bits of earth. These fragments of sediment and memory from the upper Bow will travel downstream as far as the boats will carry them.

Each of the project's many facets came together as a cohesive whole over two intensive days at the Calgary home of printmaker Eveline Koliijn. With fellow printmaker Romy Straathof, Koliijn organized a makeshift studio that was a lively and purposeful place. Here, each boat was sequentially impressed with a number punch. Paper was torn to size and similarly numbered. To prepare the boats for printing, von Tiesenhausen added Bow River water to the negative space around the figure. The relief surface was then charred with a propane torch, with the water acting as a resist against burning. For the moment or two it was under the torch, the figure seemed to breathe as the yellow wood glowed red then died to black. The shape 'developed' under the flame like a photograph, exposing a blackened figure surrounded by the oval outline of the boat. Water shimmered against dry char. Through torching, the figure gained visual emphasis, the wood grain was heightened, and the surface acquired a charcoal patina. Symbolically, the figure was purified, like the phoenix reborn through fire.

Using a hand-turned book press, each charred boat was printed three times on dry, numbered sheets. The charcoal left a fragile, ghostly impression. Von Tiesenhausen then prepared the sediment samples for use and was reminded of the diverse history and geology of the upper Bow landscape. Distinctive yellow stones were crushed into a mustard-coloured pigment that made a beautiful paint. A fine black dust was instantly recognizable as coal from the abandoned mining community of Bankhead. The artist 'painted a meditation' on each of the three hundred prints using the correspondingly numbered sediment mixed with gum arabic. His fluid line encircled the boat's oval shape and grounded the floating figure in an earthy halo. The prints were hung to dry, to be signed later. The sediments were then mixed into slurries with wheat paste and loaded into the crevice around the figure in each boat. Numbered paper, boat



▲ Prints are individually number stamped.



▲ Von Tiesenhausen loads his brush with colour from the Bow.



▲ A hundred pigments are made from Bow River basin sediment.



▲ The artist encircles each print with a meditative brushstroke.



▲ Each pigment contains distinctive beauty.



and sediment were systematically processed in an organized hive of creative production. But all this order would soon be surrendered to the public and the beautiful, unpredictable flow of the river. Carried as cargo downstream, the hues of the upper Bow River would be mixed into the swirling palette of an extensive water system.

“The spirit of the thing transcends its worldly form,” von Tiesenhausen reflected on the project. “A boat may be caught in an eddy or a weir, but its intention gets through. Silt can be carried through a weir and the spirit of the project is carried with it, even if the wooden boat is stalled.”⁷

For von Tiesenhausen, art-making thrives on this same sense of surrender and belief. The original proposal for *Passages* was described in broad strokes with room for each stage to be treated with spontaneity and respect. The project became more profound as the embedded story played itself out through the chosen materials and processes. Von Tiesenhausen loves the fact that so much can evolve independent of his direct control. Chance brings richness to the work which he extends like an offering to viewers. “I now see a hundred different dimensions that I could not have imagined. I have a hundred new colours that I can pull out of my memory and I am conscious of a hundred different places these boats could be.”⁸

In keeping, the artist encourages as diverse a reading of the work as possible. The name *Passages*, for example, is a journey, a place, a handing over, and the transition from one stage of life to another — among other interpretations. Its many associations are felt consciously and unconsciously across communities. Von Tiesenhausen acknowledges that his work holds symbolism but instead of explanation he offers possibilities for adventurous viewers to explore.

◀ Peter von Tiesenhausen surveys the drying prints.

The river ran high and fast on the day the boats were launched. The lush greens of Fish Creek and Douglasbank Parks obscured the surrounding suburb. The sun was warm and bright. Gulls and pelicans drifted overhead. It was easy to imagine that the scene was set in some remote wilderness and that the tumbling river’s ocean destination was within easy reach.

Participants from all walks of life gathered and found connection with each other through the artist, their involvement in the arts, the river or the city. People chose their boats and chatted. Author and curator Mary-Beth Laviolette commented on the long history of art about the Bow and how *Passages* is a contemporary extension of that legacy.⁹ For those familiar with art history, von Tiesenhausen’s small figures might bring to mind Romantic Picturesque landscape paintings of the 19th century. Art created for the Canadian Pacific Railway for instance, characteristically emphasized nature’s grandeur by including a diminutive figure or manmade structure as contrast. *Passages* portrayed a more balanced vision — its small figures belonged in the landscape as integral elements, not mere devices. The work radiated a sense of unity that was felt by everyone who cradled the tiny forms.

“Rituals like this bring spiritual awareness. For these few hours our focus is on the river . . . We celebrate the elements, not just ourselves,”¹⁰ said participant Lynn Chazotsang, a Tibetan Buddhist and advocate for cultural equity and diversity.

In spontaneous procession, after brief introductions and instruction, participants stepped onto a footbridge spanning the river to launch their boats. Shoulder to shoulder, with backs to the upstream railing, they held their boats in cupped hands and quietly contemplated the journey their boats were about to take. June Hills, a participant who makes art about trees, reflected,



▲ Sediment mixed with wheat paste fills each boat's hold.



▲ Upper Bow River sediments are ready for the downstream journey.



▲ Numbered sediments and boats are systematically ordered.

“As I prepared to drop my little boat into the river, I thought about how important our natural resources are . . . it was a nice complementary meditation to think about the waterways that feed the trees that inspire me.”¹¹

In family groups, sometimes three or more sets of hands supported a single boat. Even restless children regained their focus as the moment of release drew near. Participants stepped forward on cue and looked down upon the rushing water. When signaled, over one hundred pairs of hands simultaneously parted and allowed boats to find the river. Eddies and currents became evident as some boats were swept quickly downstream while others remained momentarily still. The day's brightness made it difficult to discern reflected sunlight from yellow wood. Many people kept watch until their boats rounded the bend and rode the river out of sight. They were reminded of potential hazards, natural and not, as fishermen drifted by in skiffs and cast lines from shore. Bikers, runners and walkers on the riverside pathway observed the bobbing flotilla with curiosity. Participants, made buoyant by the morning's activities, similarly became caught up in currents of conversation and eventually dispersed. As children playfully tossed sticks in the water, a new recognition of the river's power seemed evident in their carefree game.

Participants collected their prints, compared images and related them to the boats just launched. These works on paper are impressions in more than one sense; made by the application of pressure, they also embody the feeling and memories of this shared event. But there is revelation in them, too. In the print, the figure takes prominence while the boat is visible only as a thin outline. The encircling painted meditation presents the possibility of a portal within which the figure seems to hover. There is a sense of other-worldly transition, of momentary

flux captured in static form. When the print is turned on its side, the figure suggests a shadow within an eye. As in all of von Tiesenhausen's art there is no definitive reading of these prints, nor any pre-determined symbolism. There is simply the certainty of possibility.



▲ A hundred pairs of hands surrender boats to the river.



▲ A hundred wooden boats begin their journey toward the sea.



Endnotes:

- 1 American author / illustrator H.C. Holling's 1941 children's book was the inspiration for a 1966 film by the National Film Board of Canada, directed by Bill Mason.
- 2 Holling Clancy Holling, *Paddle to the Sea* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co, 1941) 2.
- 3 Von Tiesenhausen, email correspondence with the author, June 18, 2010.
- 4 *The Watchers* is a series of larger than life carved wooden figures by von Tiesenhausen that he has transported across Canada. In conversation with the author on June 9, he indicated that they bear witness to the landscape and the natural and man-made changes it undergoes. See the artist's website for further information: www.tiesenhausen.net.
- 5 Von Tiesenhausen, conversation with the author, Calgary, June 9, 2010.
- 6 This is the same couple who, with their toddler, Zev, crossed Canada by canoe, sailboat and on foot to visit author Farley Mowat at his home in Cape Breton. The NFB film *Finding Farley* documents their journey through territory Mowat had made famous in his books.
- 7 Von Tiesenhausen conversation, June 9, 2010.
- 8 Von Tiesenhausen, conversation, June 9, 2010.
- 9 Mary-Beth Laviolette, collectors Lauren Raymore and Dell Pohlman, conversation with the author at the *Passages* launch event, Calgary, June 12, 2010.
- 10 Lynn Chazotsang, conversation with the author at the *Passages* launch event, Calgary, June 12, 2010.
- 11 June Hills, email correspondence with the author, June 19, 2010.

◀ Careful hands cradle a boat moments before its release.



Lewis & Taggart

The Museum of Bow

Objects for Honouring Bow River Lore

For six days in July, a unique fountain greeted people in a busy pedestrian area near Calgary's downtown riverfront. It stood outside a camping trailer in which an unusual collection of artifacts known as *The Museum of Bow* had taken up temporary residence. The trickling water was inviting on those hot summer days, but the fountain presented other reasons for pause. Its main feature, a plaid flannel shirt, was not out of place in the context of a camper, however here the shirt was not hung to dry. Quite the opposite, it was being continuously soaked as Bow River water cycled through it. Named *Baptism for a New Frontier*, the fountain stood as a witty and endearing sculptural tribute to early paddlers of the Bow whose stories attest to numerous unintentional river baths. It also whimsically invited viewers to imagine a new way of keeping the Bow close — literally. *Baptism*, and the *Museum's* entire collection, was created by interdisciplinary collaborative artists Chloe Lewis and Andrew Taggart, collectively known as Lewis & Taggart.

As residents of TRUCK Gallery's CAMPER program,¹ Lewis & Taggart used a 1975 recreational vehicle as their base for travelling artistic activities. They are Canadians living in Norway and they brought both insiders' and outsiders' perspectives to their exploration of the Bow River. During their first week, Lewis & Taggart pored over documents at the Glenbow Archives and the local history section of the Calgary Public Library. They discovered the bold undertakings of

figures such as lumber baron Peter Prince and adventurer R.M. Patterson. They read Bow River-focused writings by the luminary Rudyard Kipling and by the local Amelia Bannister, whose unpublished novel featured the Bow as both a setting and a personified presence. They found historical images of artists, canoeists, glaciers and horses, all linked in some way to our river. The artists gravitated toward lesser known stories that demonstrated the interconnection between people and the Bow. They focused on accounts rich in visual imagery with potential for sculptural interpretation.

Alongside their historical research, Lewis & Taggart scoured the Bow's banks on foot and bicycle, collecting items they would transform into artifacts to illustrate their found stories. They selected all manner of urban refuse including an inflatable raft, a bicycle helmet and cigarette packages. Wood, feathers and other natural items augmented the haul. Casually found yet precisely used, these castoffs were manipulated to illustrate figurative, poignant, humorous and often ironic ideas about the river and our evolving relationship with it. The small sculptures *Shoot the Weir No. 1* and *No. 2* are exemplary companion pieces. In them, cutout two-dimensional archival images of men paddling canoes sit atop horizontal grounds of found parking tickets — one crumpled and pink, the other smooth and blue. The contrast of past and present lifestyles and attitudes is embraced in this diptych that juxtaposes self-determined,



▲ The artists work outdoors at Edworthy Park.



▲ Found sculptural elements are jointly considered.



▲ Water drips from the sculpture called
BAPTISM FOR A NEW FRONTIER.



▲ Chloe Lewis builds the papier-mâché foundation for KIPLING DEVICE.



▲ Lewis & Taggart work together on all aspects of a project.



▲ The artists' hands layer newspaper over a found bicycle helmet.

KIPLING DEVICE (FOR NEVER LETTING THE RIVER OUT OF YOUR SIGHT) ►



risk-riddled journeys of an earlier era against evidence of the ubiquitous rules that regulate modern transportation. In the same graceful gesture the artists draw attention to the ongoing dangers of Calgary's weir. Like the parking tickets, the historical accounts featured in *The Museum of Bow* have been revived in a playful context where the visual and the narrative converge as equals.

Lewis & Taggart specialize in collaboration. They jointly completed their Masters of Art² in this subject after marrying in 2008. The nature of their art practice is steeped in their dedication to collaborative processes. Typically, the artists develop a constellation of starting points based on set parameters — in this case the theme of the Bow River and the goals of CAMPER.³ The plurality implicit in this method allows each artist to contribute according to personal strengths and interests. However all contributions are handled co-operatively and no individual ownership of ideas or objects is ascribed. The multiplicity of thoughts, skills and approaches manifests a third, distinct voice that guides the process.⁴ The artists work together on all aspects of everything with no prescribed division of labour. Their two pairs of hands worked simultaneously on the same sculpture with neither taking charge. They even partnered on single drawings. In similar egalitarian fashion, all parts of the project — from measuring the camper's interior to creating artwork — are seen as aspects of the same multifaceted piece and are treated with equal importance.

To create the *Museum* the artists maintained a lively pace. In just 21 days they proceeded from research stage to exhibition closing. In that time they completed 24 objects, 16 works on paper, a small image-based publication, and delivered a six-day exhibition complemented by public interpretation. Working in the camper without the usual gallery amenities at their

fingertips was a challenge that the artists met resourcefully. The end result, while grounded in professional practices, retained an intentional grassroots feel.

To create an appropriate cabinet for their collection of curiosities, Lewis & Taggart lined the living space of the camper with large sheets of corrugated cardboard. The result was a slick but earthy, slightly shrunken, visually neutral interior. The exterior however remained that of a functional, well-used recreational vehicle. Lewis & Taggart appreciated the dichotomy. The folksy facade embodied the universal appeal of travel and acted as an accessible entry point for the imaginative content within. The dynamic inside/outside tension cajoled viewers into letting fantasy usurp believability. Not entirely sure what to expect, we entered with curiosity in hand.

Kipling Device (for never letting the river out of your sight) embodies this tension. In reference to his 1907 Alberta visit, Rudyard Kipling's memoirs reveal his fascination with the Bow's unusual colours, particularly the greens. In homage, Lewis & Taggart fashioned a papier-mâché model of Bow Glacier, the river's source, upon a found bicycle helmet. They dangled a cerulean blue paint chip from a clothespin on the end of a branch protruding from the icy hat. Additional paint chips⁵ in assorted blues and greens were filed on an accompanying notched stick. The work's outlandish physicality combined with its whimsical intent had an interesting effect on viewers. Many were moved to imagine strapping on the helmet and clipping up a colour chip. This is what the artists refer to as 'performative sculpture' and it is manifest in other works such as the aforementioned fountain. A visceral connection is a powerful way to engage with art. It is more powerful, the artists believe, than physically interacting with the work because imagination links the experience more deeply in our consciousness.⁶

A variety of works on paper were neatly pinned to the camper's interior cardboard walls. Some demonstrated the artists' considerable drawing skills while others featured modified archival reproductions. One in the latter category references the progression of art movements in a thought-provoking, anachronistic work entitled *Prediction*. An altered photograph shows a landscape artist working en plein air circa 1930. The scene evolving on his canvas has been replaced by a flat green plane, giving us a glimpse of Colour Field abstract painting⁷ that would not emerge for another decade or two. One of the more intellectually playful works in the collection, it conjures up a rhetorical question: could this thirties-era artist or his contemporaries have envisioned art the likes of *The Museum of Bow*? It seems improbable, but stranger things happen in the world of Lewis & Taggart.

As they reworked history and objects, the artists similarly re-imagined the very construct of museums. Using a direct approach, Lewis & Taggart bypassed the multiple levels of intervention involved in conventional institutions and reclaimed the idea of the museum on a personal level. They undertook research, care of objects, curatorial processes, installation and public programming with integrity. Their training and skills are clearly evident in the multi-layered sophistication of their artworks and the expertise with which they engaged in the above disciplines. But the content of the work makes it clear that the artists also invite spontaneity and are motivated by a desire to connect with others, past and present, through story. Lewis & Taggart's practice explores poetic and sculptural truths hidden beneath the facts, truths that are exposed when humour and imagination do the digging. The work both honours collecting and questions its assumed veracity. *The Museum of Bow* demonstrates that collections recruit the imagination; collections

allow past and present to coexist; collections ultimately reveal the character of the collector. By inventing their own collection about our river, Lewis & Taggart validate an alternative way to connect with our past — through personal association.

While the *Museum* was on public display, the artists took turns in the role of docent and shared their re-imagined stories with everyone who entered. Children were particularly enchanted by a sculpture called *The Hawksworth Solution (Device for turning sewage into cash)*, intrigued that the Queen's eye on a genuine \$20 bill stared back at them.⁸ A long-time Calgarian was surprised to learn that a lumberman actually used dynamite to enhance the flow of log booms down the Bow.⁹ The blast turned a peninsula into an island that was later named after the perpetrator. This historical calamity is aptly 'honoured' in *Three Strikes for Peter Prince*, a matchbook containing a humble trio of battered matches. Another visitor noted that while the river is an unchanging part of our local history, Lewis & Taggart's collection illustrates how we constantly re-shape our relationship with it based on our needs.¹⁰

For diverse Calgarians, *The Museum of Bow* presented an opportunity to become immersed in the long tradition of Bow River storytelling. For many of us, it brought realization that we take much about our river for granted. Lewis & Taggart's example shows us that even the obscure stories are worthy of tribute. Upon entering the artists' world, we are invited to embrace the absurd alongside the didactic and recognize that our history is shaped from such conundrums. The stories we remember will not always be purely factual but they will be ones that reveal who we are.

THE MUSEUM OF BOW takes up residence in TRUCK Gallery's R.V. ►



TRUCK
CONTEMPORARY ART IN COLOR
The Contemporary Art in Color
Truck is a mobile public exhibition rig
for contemporary art in color.
It is a mobile public exhibition rig
for contemporary art in color.
It is a mobile public exhibition rig
for contemporary art in color.
It is a mobile public exhibition rig
for contemporary art in color.

CONTEMPORARY ART MOBILE PUBLIC EXHIBITION RIG

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T



▲ Sheets of cardboard are cut to line the camper's interior.



▲ The artists create a visually neutral space for their collection.



▲ Chloe Lewis and Andrew Taggart



▲ The artists complete DEVICE FOR TURNING WHISKY INTO WATER.



▲ Installation view with SHOOT THE WEIR NO. 1 and NO. 2 in foreground.



▲ HORSE STILTS FOR RIVER CROSSING whimsically alters an archival image.



▲ KIPLING DEVICE's colour chips keep river hues close at hand.



▲ Installation view showing PREDICTION at right.

Endnotes:

- 1 CAMPER is an acronym for *Contemporary Art Mobile Public Exhibition Rig*. For more information on the CAMPER program, see the Introduction.
- 2 Norway Academy of the Arts, Bergen, Norway, 2010. Each artist wrote an individual thesis and each received a Masters degree but all of their studio work was made together.
- 3 CAMPER is a vehicle for artistic exploration and public engagement with art that is both accessible and inclusive. Source: www.truck.ca/?maj=12camper&min=0camper.
- 4 Lewis & Taggart, conversation with the author, Calgary, July 23, 2010.
- 5 The paint chips bear the Disney Color logo, perhaps a reference to the 1967 animated Disney film based on Kipling's *Jungle Book*.
- 6 Lewis & Taggart conversation, July 23, 2010.
- 7 Colour Field is a style of abstract painting that emerged in the 1940s and '50s characterized by large areas of solid colour and a lack of figurative representation.
- 8 Anonymous day camp participants in conversation with the author, Calgary, July 26, 2010.
- 9 Anonymous visitor in conversation with the author, Calgary, July 26, 2010.
- 10 Anonymous visitor in conversation with the author, Calgary, July 26, 2010.

wicked
HOTELS
CALGARY

i am the river



CELEBRATION OF THE RIVER BOW 2010
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PATTISON



Derek Besant

I Am the River



Personal Geographies

Twelve photographic portraits are at the heart of *I Am the River*. For this project, Calgary artist Derek Besant recruited local individuals as models and drew support from his frequent corporate partner Pattison Outdoor Advertising.¹ These equally essential contributors served the project's needs while symbolizing its inclusive and accessible nature. *I Am the River*, with its highly personal images and their wide dissemination across the city, coaxed private truths to reflect universal ones. It echoed how the Bow River permeates Calgarians' lives — individually and collectively, physically and metaphorically, consciously and unconsciously. The Bow touches us all.

To create his portraits, Besant sought models from all walks of life who agreed to be photographed in water. They are your librarian, your real estate agent, your brother, your aunt. The photo sessions took place in March and April when it was too cold to shoot on location in the Bow River. Instead, Besant squeezed his photographic equipment into his models' own bathrooms while his subjects immersed themselves in the comfort of their home bathtubs. The artist established a level of trust in these usually private settings, making his models his collaborators. The artist was intent on capturing the mediation between water and air, two realms that sustain human life. After encouraging them to explore different postures and stages of submersion, Besant asked his collaborators to imagine their bodies were geographical features found in rivers such as rocks, islands and peninsulas. He wanted to portray his model-collaborators as themselves, being part of nature. Besant asked his models to mentally let go of the approximately 60 per cent



▲ Derek Besant studio proofs images.
Photos by Alexandra Haeseker (supplied by Besant)



▲ Pattison Outdoor Advertising donated display space across the city.



▲ Street level placement reaches people on foot and in vehicles.

of their bodies that is comprised of water and to consider what remains. The push and pull between flesh and water in the resulting photographs is palpable. Closed eyes and euphoric smiles divulge a sense of release. As heads, shoulders and arms interact with the liquid surface, ripples in the surrounding water make visible an energy we don't usually see.

Besant took approximately a hundred photographs of each model; each series demonstrates a progression of increased relaxation, confidence and control. Inevitably it was the latter images of each shoot that Besant selected. These captured the sense of empowerment confirmed verbally by his collaborators after the fact. The portraits revealed surprises even to their subjects — the models sensed something more than themselves in the images.² Besant's project extended this fresh perspective into the public realm so that the universal relationship between people and water might be recognized in the faces of fellow Calgarians.

When weather conditions allowed, Besant photographed the Bow River and digitally integrated the two sets of images. He selected calm and energetic water states to complement the facial expressions and body language of each subject. In this way his collaborators became virtually immersed in the Bow and a series of composite psychological portraits was created.

From mid-July to mid-September these poetic images flowed through every neighbourhood of the city on the interiors and exteriors of Calgary Transit buses and light rail transit (LRT) cars. The black and white photographs were accompanied by the project title printed in lower case, as if a casual hand was extending an open-ended invitation for reflection and personal connection. The images were also posted on billboards and four-sided pillar ads throughout the city. The combination of



▲ Besant's models imagine themselves as the river's geography.

stationary and mobile placement enabled pedestrians, drivers and commuters of all sorts to encounter these images daily. The support of Pattison Outdoor turned the entire city into *I Am the River's* gallery — the advertising company generously doubled the project's production budget and provided the display space at no charge. It is estimated that one million visual hits were achieved in two months.³

In an eloquent metaphor, the crisscrossing of transit routes and traffic arteries at street level mimicked the aquifer that lies beneath Calgary: all transit routes converge on the downtown core as does the network of groundwater tributaries that underlies our city. As Besant's images coursed through Calgary's diverse neighbourhoods they provided a visible reminder that the river is a source of connection for all citizens.

Appearing in spaces where advertisements normally do, *I Am the River* became an art experience ruled by chance. As with outdoor advertising, the public caught glimpses of imagery. Perhaps people perceived an emotion or recognized a classical pose as a photograph rushed by on a bus, or a billboard presented itself during a lull in traffic. Very different from the quiet, white-walled spaces often associated with viewing art, this context raised questions about the intersection of art and advertising and the role of each in urban life. Besant's extensive work in the realm of public art and unconventional installation situations suggests that he is interested in such questions. But he avoids providing answers, preferring that viewers consider the juxtaposition on their own terms and reach their own conclusions.⁴

A broad spectrum of the transit-riding public saw the images and a few shared their interpretations. "They look so relaxed!" said one regular bus rider with a hint of envy. An image

suggested the soothing murmurs of rippling water to a woman who invokes the sound when trying to sleep. The sun dappled waters reminded many passengers that the Bow is our responsibility as citizens to maintain and keep clean. At least one viewer reflected that "we are part of the cycle" of nature. Another elaborated: "... we are meant to be connected [to the river.] Many of us don't ever touch the river . . . This picture reminds us that we can connect personally." One man perceived a sense of joy which he understood as a metaphor for that which unites everyone.⁵ Like the transit system that links people to points all across the city, the river represents a network of shared experiences that connects us in unseen ways.

A selection of *I Am the River* images was given an extended run in Calgary's East Village in the autumn following *Celebration of the Bow River 2010*. Ten of Besant's portraits were installed along the RiverWalk, a newly revitalized pathway system that borders the Bow just east of the city centre. Four immense black and white portraits were adhered directly to concrete bridge abutments. Two of them face the river and adjacent walking paths; two others look out onto Riverfront Avenue and its passing traffic. At four metres high by six metres wide, the images boldly claim their spaces. Much larger than life-size, the figures confront viewers with closed eyes and a commanding presence. They seem to emerge from the concrete as if they are an intrinsic part of the built environment, even as they suggest a natural one. A cluster of service buildings further east on the walking path support six other portraits. Free of text and commuter distractions, the mural-sized works of art offer an opportunity for viewers to revel in nuances that may have been overlooked in the project's original form. We observe river details such as submerged rocks, see ripples in the water that look like road maps, and enjoy the poetic transition between skin and liquid surfaces writ large. Image size and the viewer's

proximity allow us to notice abstract fragments that encourage individual associations. This iteration of *I Am the River* is an initiative of the Calgary Municipal Land Corporation⁶ and will be in place for one to two years.

The installation adds to the diverse range of public artworks by Besant that are already part of Calgary's visual landscape. *Songlines* (2003), a series of fibre optic linear drawings on six buildings surrounding Calgary's Olympic Plaza, lights up nightly in electric, changing colours. His work in diverse media including etched glass, metal sculpture and sculptural text has created defining landmarks around our city.⁷ In Toronto, Besant's *Waterfall* (1988) places a life-size representation of Johnston Canyon's upper falls in the heart of that city's financial district at Scotiaplaza. The mural, depicting one of Banff National Park's most popular spots, is painted on 69 panels that stretch 15 storeys high. Pattison Outdoor provided space for the artist to create the massive painting. Like the East Village installation, viewers are confronted with nature on a grand scale. It is a further example of Besant's ambitious approach, his dedication to exploring water and his desire to intrigue observers with images that are simultaneously surprising and familiar.

Besant himself is a respected figure in Calgary. A long-time faculty member at the Alberta College of Art and Design, he was involved in the beginnings of the Calgary school's drawing program in the late 1970s and served as its head for 15 years. Over the last 20 years Besant has established a career as an international interdisciplinary artist. The materials, themes, sites and activities of the exhibitions and installation projects that take him around the world are remarkably varied.

I Am the River places him firmly at home. In this project he delved into the Bow River and made a gift of his refreshed perspective to Calgarians. In return he asks us to imagine how

we — as a community and as individuals — are the river: Are we the water that comprises more than half of our physical beings; are we the thoughts the river inspires; are we the places the river takes us? Besant has presented us not only with a new way to experience the Bow, but with a new context in which to consider ourselves.

Calgarians encounter the portraits where ads are normally seen. ►



▲ I AM THE RIVER images become semi-permanent murals



▲ They enliven buildings and bridges along the East Village river path.



▲ Larger-than-life, the figures invite a closer look.

4 HUNTINGTON



CELEBRATION OF THE BOW RIVER 2010
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▲ Images capture personal and universal relationships with water.

◀ Images move through the city, echoing the underlying aquifer.

Endnotes:

- 1 Pattison Outdoor Advertising is Canada's largest out-of-home advertiser. Besant began a partnership with the company 25 years ago.
- 2 Derek Besant in conversation with the author, Calgary, December 14, 2010.
- 3 Besant conversation, December 14, 2010.
- 4 Besant conversation, December 14, 2010.
- 5 All comments are from anonymous transit riders in conversation with the author, Calgary, September 1, 2010.
- 6 Calgary Municipal Land Corporation (CMLC) is a City of Calgary subsidiary established in 2007 to implement the Rivers District Revitalization Plan. www.calgarymlc.ca.
- 7 *Daydream* (1989) on the +15 pedestrian walkway system; *Homage* (1989) on The Mount Royal University Campus; and *Stroll* at various pedestrian sign poles, respectively. www.erekbasant.com.



José Luis Torres

The Observatory



Manifesting Metaphors

“Nothing is built on stone; all is built on sand,
but we must build as if the sand were stone.”

-Jorge Luis Borges

Calgary is a city driven by urban development. Traffic is persistently rerouted around building sites while makeshift walkways funnel pedestrians out of harm's way. José Luis Torres is an artist who uses the tools of construction to build metaphors. During his residency here, he saw a community determined to renew itself with bricks and mortar. Using the building boom as a thematic touchstone, he brought the concept of rebuilding into focus on a human scale. He introduced ideas of transition and displacement — which often haunt rapid growth — and assembled a trio of wooden 'interventions' at three distinct points on the Bow River's banks. Temporary structures made with basic methods, they stood in poetic contrast to developers' sweeping plans. Reverberations of the city's detours and bustle were mere background to the internal reflections his works inspired.

Torres understands the impact of displacement. In 2003 he left his native Argentina for Quebec where he and his wife are raising their two daughters. While he maintains contact with his homeland and kin, the physical and emotional break was profound and transformed his artistic practice completely. He concluded a 10-year teaching career in order to focus fully on making art. Working in solitude towards gallery exhibitions gave way to nonpermanent experimentation in public spaces that integrated his previously distinct expressions in architecture and sculpture. He rethought the idea of the studio and adopted a migratory, site-based approach. In 2010 alone he designed and built outdoor structures in response to environments in Fredericton, Calgary and Halifax. These works were created



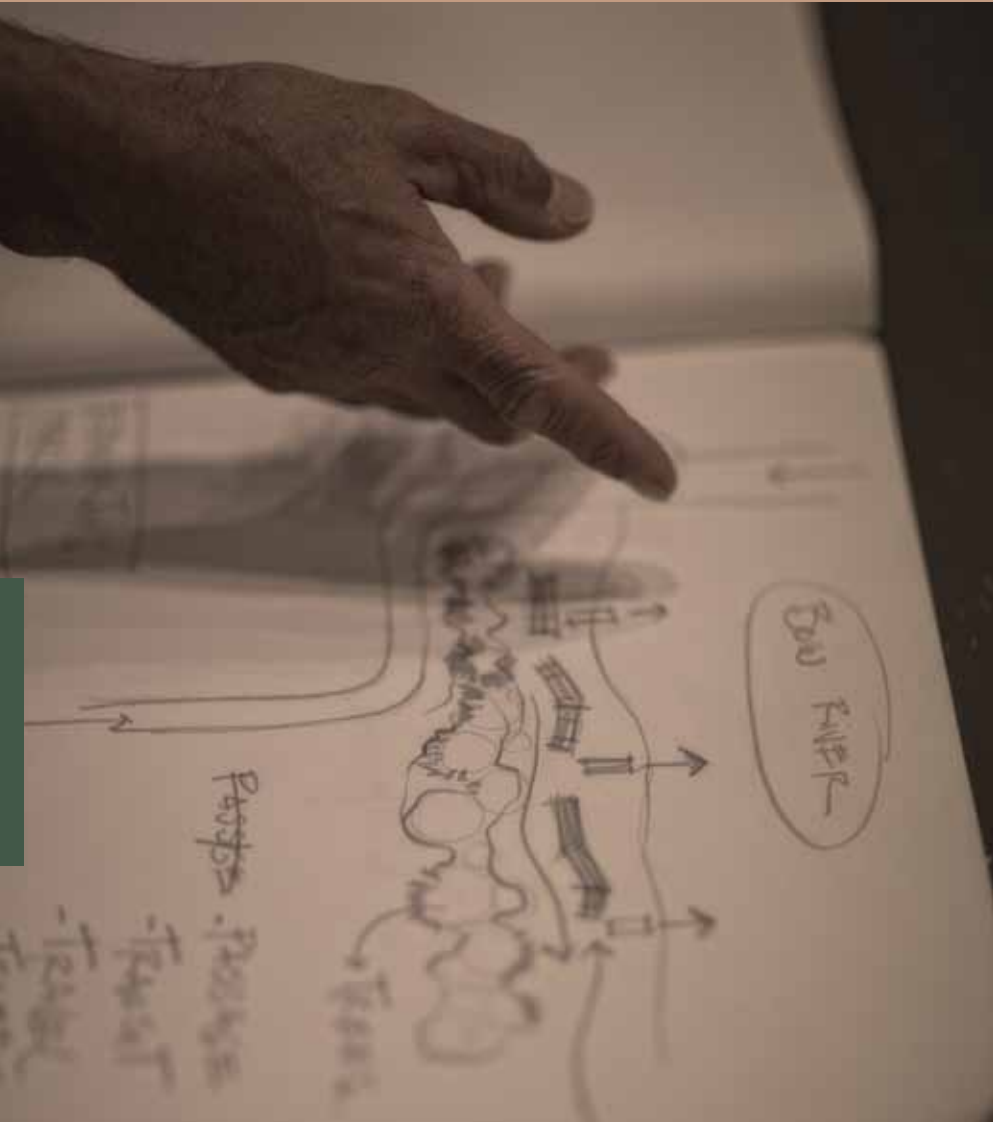
▲ The artist's first intervention offers a place for contemplation.



▲ José Luis Torres walks through his OBSERVATORY at Shouldice Park.



▲ A complement of eight benches stretch from woods to river's edge.



▲ The artist sketches his plans for the second OBSERVATORY site.



▲ TRUCK Gallery becomes a workshop where ideas are assembled.



▲ Torres uses common tools and materials to construct metaphors.



▲ Elements are considered from many angles.



▲ Calgary's many construction zones and detours influence the artist.



in situ in full view of anyone who cared to observe. Viewer interaction with the work became a key component. In Calgary, three separate sites comprised *The Observatory* — in essence, Torres asked his audience to become temporarily nomadic in order to see them all. With the immigrant experience now a persistent theme in his work, the artist explores transition as a permanent state of being.

Located along the Bow River about 10 kilometers west of the city centre, Shouldice Park offered a convergence of perspectives that intrigued Torres. There, where nature, community and city intersect, he constructed his first intervention. A series of eight benches created a meandering line from wooded path to riverbank. As visual research, the artist used the site to explore how the basic materials of construction — power tools, wood screws and two-by-fours — can co-operate with the natural environment. He positioned the benches to offer diverse views from within a small segment of the park — participants could variously contemplate and reflect on trees, field, river or each other. At the water's edge, viewers found that from one bench they watched the river come and from another, they saw it flow away. Beyond the opposite bank, the landscape rose in benches of its own with railroad tracks, thoroughfares and sprawling suburban residences layered upon each other. The lush greenness of an unusually damp summer softened the visual cacophony. The steep incline behind the riverside bench amplified the burble of the water and the calls of attendant birds but the presence of the city was never forgotten.

The benches themselves were comfortable and sturdy yet had a playful, off-kilter demeanor. Their two-by-four uprights reached beyond functional proportions, echoing nearby tree trunks — like a drawing in space. A sense of settling upon something not entirely settled interrupted the feeling of security that

accompanies sitting on an ordinary park bench. From a distance it looked like a friendly fort or impromptu fence had sprung up. This community of constructions engendered curiosity, but up close its intended purpose was abundantly clear.

Dogs and people frequent this site. The rocky platform at the water's edge is a perfect launching point for eager swimmers. Dog walkers treated the benches as a natural addition to their environment — they appreciated the artistry but never questioned the practical purpose. When a young man¹ clustered several benches together to create an overnight sleeping enclosure, Torres said it was “a sign of appropriation and of taking possession.”² The artist had the benches returned to their original position and cabled in place out of “respect for their basic function” and so that others could use them as they were intended.³ He knows that participants' ‘interventions’ come with the territory of working in public space. Without public interaction Torres believes that the work is meaningless.⁴

The Bow River connects all three of *The Observatory* sites. The entire project acknowledges the river's dual nature as a gathering point that unites and a border that separates. Settlements are organized around rivers; cultural territories are defined by them. Universally, histories are entwined with them. On a high bank overlooking fast flowing waters, Torres explored ideas of identity, boundary and passage in his second construction.

This installation featured a series of connected boardwalks that met walkers along a footpath parallel to the river at Edworthy Park. A section of platform lay directly over the path. Angled rails sporadically bordered either side like a symbolic fence and directed participants from one end to the other. The platform's hollow sound, slight flex and measured shifts in elevation lifted

◀ The structure intervenes with a path in the park's green expanse.

walkers out of nature and into an imaginary no-man's-land. The structure provided a singular point of reference in the park's green expanse. At right angles, another constructed walkway presented a crossroad, a dock, a diversion, a surprise ending. It led to the edge of the embankment and a view of the rushing river. The idea of passage was made visceral as participants absorbed the temporary feel of the structure, the mix of sensations it triggered and its suggestion of separateness. Like the artist, those who have made major transitions understand that a place of residence is "a consequence of inhabiting space"⁵ and home is a feeling you carry inside. Home is self-identified and inextricably linked to who you are. The paradox of leaving home while you carry it inside you is fundamental to understanding what it means to be an immigrant. And the very foundations of Calgary are built on immigration.

Torres constructs memory. When he says "My work is my life,"⁶ he means it literally *and* metaphorically. Each screw drives into layers of the past and attaches a new, momentary sense of place; each cut refines his understanding of home. So, Torres consciously builds his way to his next project. With tools and materials commonly used to erect homes, he assembles subtle metaphors about transience. He measures by eye and applies his circular saw to make fine adjustments the way a painter corrects a line on a canvas. The transparency with which he works is disarming — it is rare to have such an unmediated view of the creative process. Torres uses this public laboratory to investigate and build ideas, then offers it as a place for viewers to conduct their own reflections and discoveries. His works are left purposefully unfinished — no paint or stain protects the wood. Unlike builders of cities, he intends these works to be temporary. They will remain in place for a few weeks before they are dismantled, in keeping with ongoing cycles of life, memory and culture.



▲ A series of elevated boardwalks suggests ideas of passage.



▲ Angled walkways funnel pedestrians in distinct directions.



▲ Walking through the structure evokes a visceral sense of transition.



▲ Torres continues his second construction in situ at Edworthy Park.



▲ The artist's third intervention straddles indoors and out.



▲ Benches line opposite sides of the structure's two-level platform.



▲ Torres works in an open, public studio on St. Patrick's Island.

To complete his triptych, Torres sculpted a frame and composed city, nature and local history within it. A transitional space between indoors and out, the vestibule-like structure welcomed visitors into a viewpoint rather than a building. Benches lined opposite sides of its generous two-level platform. A suggestion of walls rose behind them: boards parallel and evenly spaced on one side; angled and random on the other. Torres drew architectural details from the horse stables of his boyhood. Buttresses and nonstructural additions sketched playful lines around the perimeter. Between overhead beams, sky invited passage from one open end of the platform to the other. A threshold to contemplation, the structure directed our gaze across the river where the landscape revealed complex layers of human experience.

This sculptural vestibule stood among the trees on St. Patrick's Island near the Calgary Zoo. From that spot just above the Elbow River, the Northwest Mounted Police (NWMP) crossed the Bow to establish Fort Calgary in 1875. In the foreground of his frame, Torres placed the reconstructed fort bordered by the two rivers. Themes shared by Torres and our city's beginnings hung in the air: the migration of the NWMP to Western Canada; the dislocation of First Nations peoples as result of Treaty 7.⁷ Reinforcing these connections, the simplicity of Fort Calgary's architecture echoed in the vestibule, reminding us that our city, like much of the developed world, was built on appropriation and displacement.

The middle ground of Torres's composition was Calgary's east side, where homeless populations congregate to access services.⁸ Ongoing attempts to gentrify this neighbourhood raise questions about further displacing the displaced. The district comes into focus against a busy background of new downtown construction dominated by a crescent-shaped building in

progress called The Bow. Its 58 storeys are unmistakably built on the promise of the new.

Torres's three-dimensional window is a richly textured vantage point that stimulates both objective and reflective observation. Our collective pivotal moments, current ambitions and consequent realities are pushed into the same frame much like the plurality of an individual's experience is layered in his life. Torres creates temporary spaces where these layers can be unfolded and examined in relation to the external world — a process that enables memory to become metaphor. It follows that the outcome of observation — the work of deep, profound, active looking — is the creation of metaphors.

Responding to Calgary, Torres made constructions about construction that expressed his experiences of transition and relocation. He believes in their transformative power because he has been transformed by art. The interpretation of collective experience through personal reflection is where meaning is made. Jorge Luis Borges, the Argentinean writer who influenced the consciousness of his country and inspires Torres, understood this when he wrote: "It may be that universal history is the history of different intonations given a handful of metaphors."⁹





▲ The final OBSERVATORY places past and present in one frame.

◀ Boards are parallel on one side, playfully angled on the other.

Endnotes:

- 1 "It was really cold last night. I saw these benches and put them together. They are comfortable. I had a good sleep."
– Anonymous man in conversation with Carlos Amat at the Shouldice site, August 11, 2010.
- 2 José Luis Torres, email correspondence with the author, August 11, 2010.
- 3 Torres email, August 11, 2010.
- 4 José Luis Torres, conversation with the author through translator Carolina Piedrahita, Calgary, August 17, 2010
- 5 Torres conversation, August 17, 2010.
- 6 José Luis Torres, conversation with the author, Calgary, August 16, 2010.
- 7 Treaty 7 was an agreement between Queen Victoria and Blackfoot First Nations, implemented by the NWMP and signed in 1877. It was also a collision of world views. The western concept of land ownership was imposed upon the aboriginals who ceded rights to their traditional territories in exchange for a government-administered reserve system.
- 8 Calgary Drop-In Centre is just one example. The largest homeless shelter in Canada, it operates at capacity providing beds for 1250 people per night.
- 9 Jorge Luis Borges, *The Fearful Sphere of Pascal*, trans. Anthony Kerrigan; reprinted in *Labyrinths: Selected Stories and Other Writings* (New York: New Directions Publishing Corp, 1964).



Laurent Louyer and Creatmosphere
Sources

Spheres of Engagement

When Laurent Louyer and his studio took hold of the Bow for a week in August, they made the river's complex and fundamental character spectacularly tangible. *River of Light*, an innovative nighttime event, loosed five hundred internally lit spheres into the Bow at Edworthy Park. As they free-floated toward a companion installation at Prince's Island lagoon, the river's multiple roles — force of nature, touchstone for community, transportation system, supporter of life and thing of beauty — became gloriously evident. With his dexterous grasp of light, his unwavering artistic vision and the tenacious support of his team, Louyer carved a space for insight and participation out of the Calgary night.

"Light is fundamental, like water and air," explains Louyer.¹ Using it as an artistic medium, Louyer invites us to appreciate it for its own sake and take a closer look at the spaces it illuminates. Artists who work with light tend to challenge perceptual norms. James Turrell, a pioneer in the artistic use of light and space in 1960s California, currently isolates light to investigate celestial phenomena in a crater in Arizona's Painted Desert.² Meanwhile, Olafur Eliasson in his Berlin studio manipulates light, colour and atmosphere to create environments that ground viewers in the present moment.³ Louyer counts both men among his artistic influences. Like them, he forges lasting impressions from an ephemeral substance.

Louyer founded and directs Creatmosphere, a studio in London, England dedicated to the exploration and presentation of light. His core team of dedicated professionals works

alongside project-specific contractors. For the Sources team, Louyer recruited studio manager Denice Dever, technical and production guru David Abra, software designer Hayden Anyasi, and data analyzer and visualizer Carmen Torrecillas. The studio's wide-ranging endeavours demonstrate how light can be manipulated to subtle and fantastical effect. Past projects include: *Breathing Trees*, a series of installations in diverse locations that visually transformed trees into the lungs of a city; and a one night commercial spectacle involving 3D mapping and laser drawing on the ruins of the West Pier in Brighton. In 2008, Creatmosphere originated *River of Light* on the River Thames at Windsor. It was the culmination of an outreach program for local school children and part of the launch of the four-year Cultural Olympiad leading up to the 2012 Summer Olympics in London.⁴

Spheres figure prominently in Creatmosphere's work. People collectively relate to them — we understand them as echoes of the familiar shapes of the earth and moon. The Creatmosphere team explores them as symbols of creativity. For Sources they coaxed magic out of heavy duty latex balloons and battery-powered light-emitting diodes (LEDs) as part of their most ambitious project yet. In comparison to the Thames event, the number of *River of Light* spheres doubled and the distance they travelled was extended to approximately eight kilometers. Stationary installations were added: *The Light Matrix* artfully transmitted data about the river at Prince's Island lagoon; five unlit clusters known as the *Daylight Spheres* were anchored between it and *River of Light's* starting point; coloured lights



▲ The LIGHT MATRIX forms a grid pattern on the lagoon's fluid surface.



▲ David Abra anchors spheres in Prince's Island Lagoon.



▲ LEDs and computer chips control the spheres' changing hues.



▲ The shifting colour patterns communicate data about the river.



▲ At night, THE LIGHT MATRIX pulses with glacier-inspired colours.

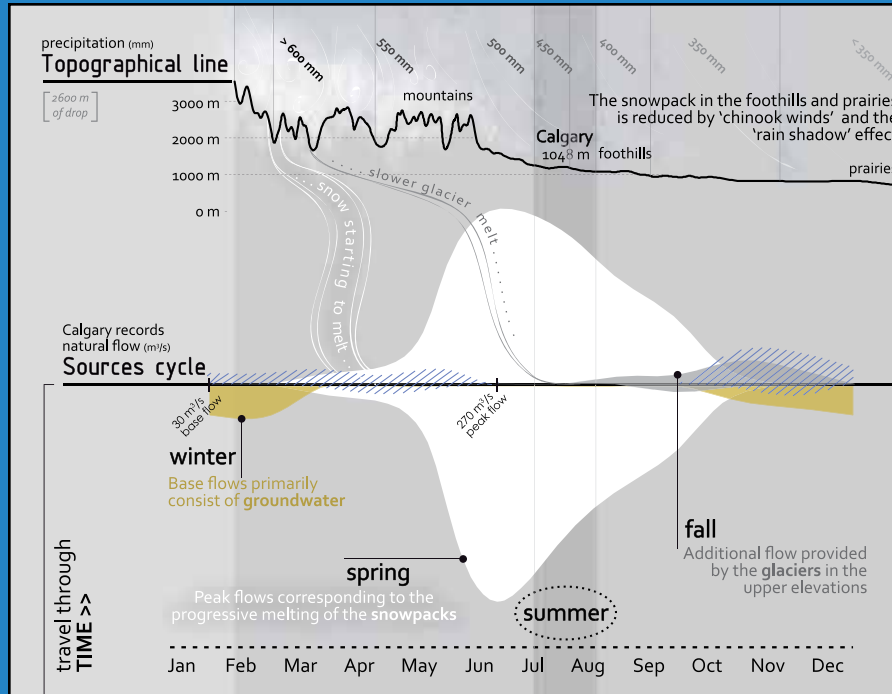
illuminated bridges and trees along the route. Together, the river transformations were called *Sources*. Preparing steadily for seven days, Louyer and Abra waded into the lagoon in wetsuits to lay out *The Light Matrix*. They troubleshooted technical issues and revised plans in response to the vagaries of Calgary weather, city construction and river conditions. They doggedly installed the *Daylight* clusters to mark where the shifting riverbed has formed islands while heavy rains, erratic winds and thefts deterred their efforts. Dever arrived in Calgary amid it all and preparations for the concluding event, *River of Light*, began in earnest.

Everything about this project was either new or bigger for Creatmosphere. The familiar layering of scientific data and visual art within a natural environment was tensioned by the unknowns of such a multifaceted program delivered on unfamiliar terrain. Trust among team members, their willingness to learn from trial and error, and belief in the project saw them through. "You start with a vision of what you want to see and you do what it takes to get there," an undaunted Louyer said. "Delivering the idea is 95 per cent of the work."⁵ Vision and hard work was in no short supply on this team of able light-smiths.

Creatmosphere delivered a powerful piece of mentorship through it all, demonstrating the commitment and practices required to orchestrate a large-scale public art event. Close to 100 local volunteers were involved at various stages. Four of them worked tirelessly alongside the artists. Barb Maier was one such volunteer and believes that this project has broadened Calgary's understanding of what public art can be. In return for sharing her time, considerable skills, and local knowledge, Creatmosphere provided her with "a crazy, once in a lifetime opportunity" to participate in the making of a grand experience that unified people around temporal beauty.⁶

Louyer's first visit to Alberta in August 2009 included a trip to Bow Glacier. He felt it was important to see the river's source. Experiencing the glacier and surrounding lake, mountains and sky crystallized his vision for the project. "I'd never seen colours like those before."⁷ Those colours inspired the ones he selected to light up the Bow. *The Light Matrix* featured 28 large spheres (1.2 metres in diameter) anchored in the lagoon's shallow waters in four orderly rows. In daylight its neatly arranged white pointillist dots of surreal proportions appeared both stately and other-worldly. At nightfall the scene became sublime. As the first blue and gold lights pulsed through the floating matrix, a spontaneous expression of awe rose from the gathering crowd. Subtle silver, vivid green and the occasional shot of magenta lit up the grid in changing patterns that conveyed a visceral sense of our river's dynamic character.

In addition to being objects of beauty and fascination, the spheres functioned as oversized, three-dimensional pixels that interpreted data about the river. Custom software controlled a computer chip installed in each sphere. The software synchronized the LEDs' colour changes with projections on nearby screens that displayed information about the Bow River in four categories: seasonal cycles, water quality, flow and usage. The matrix captured the data in its most basic visual form. 'Cycles' examined seasonal components of the Bow's water content. It showed that in summer, snowmelt contributes 80 per cent, while 10 per cent is rainfall, eight per cent is groundwater and two per cent is glacier runoff.⁸ Correspondingly, 22 of 28 spheres in the lagoon glowed white for snow, three showed blue for rain, two were yellow for groundwater and a lone silver represented glacial melt. As the projected schematic advanced through the year, the colour ratios in the matrix changed according to seasonal variances.



The Bow River as a large system that varies greatly SEASONALLY

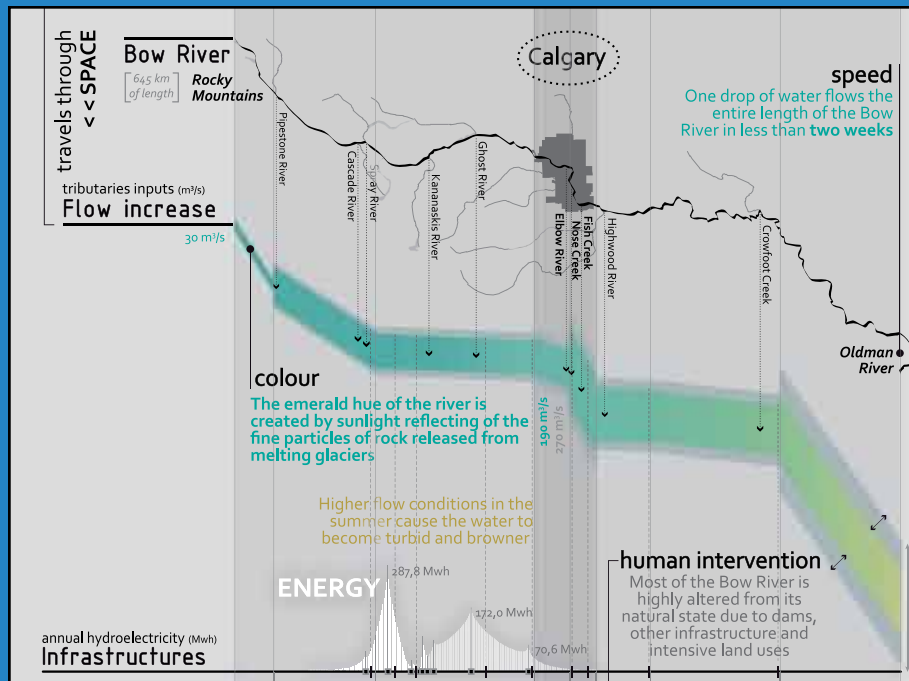
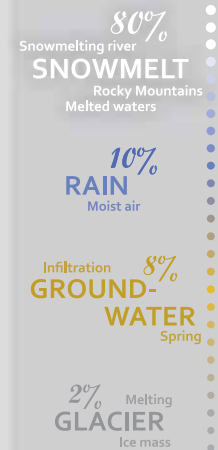
I. WATER CYCLE

the seasonal pattern of the Bow River

Although not obvious at first, snowmelt, rainwater, ground water, and glacier melt, together form the sources of the river that flows through Calgary. The ratios in which they combine, vary depending on the time of year.

The *Light Matrix* created a visual representation of the fluctuating ratios of the four sources. With each colour in *The Matrix* representing an individual source, animated patterns of colour reflected the river's changing make-up.

the light matrix



The Bow River as a large system that varies greatly GEOGRAPHICALLY

II. WATER FLOW

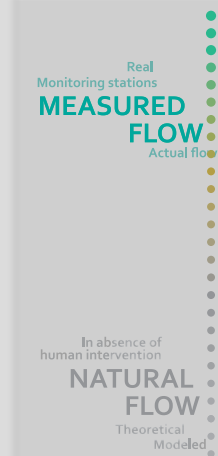
the increase of flow along the Bow River

The river's rate of flow increases as tributaries run into it. However rate of flow is also influenced by season and by man-made interventions, such as dams. This illustration describes the river's rate of flow, the impact of tributaries, and the variations in colour that result, over the course of a year.

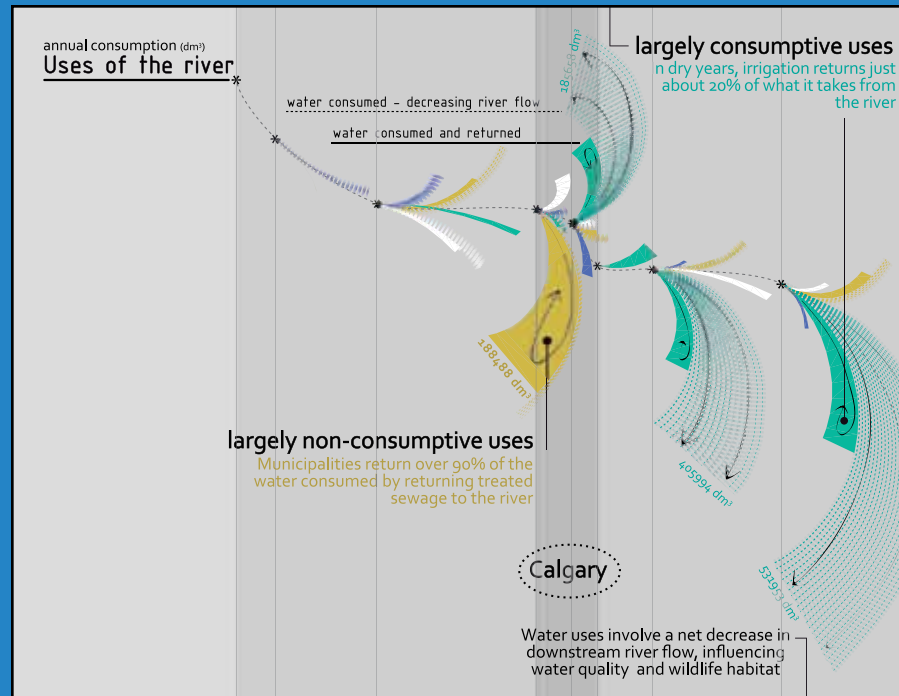
To represent this, the ratio of illuminated spheres in *The Light Matrix* fluctuated to reflect the rate of flow as it varied along the river's path.

The *River of Light* event further illustrated the river's rate of flow by visually mapping how the flow moves around islands and wetlands.

the light matrix



▲ Animated projections accompanied THE LIGHT MATRIX, sharing river data that informed the installation's changing patterns of light.



The Bow River as a large system that varies greatly **GEOGRAPHICALLY**

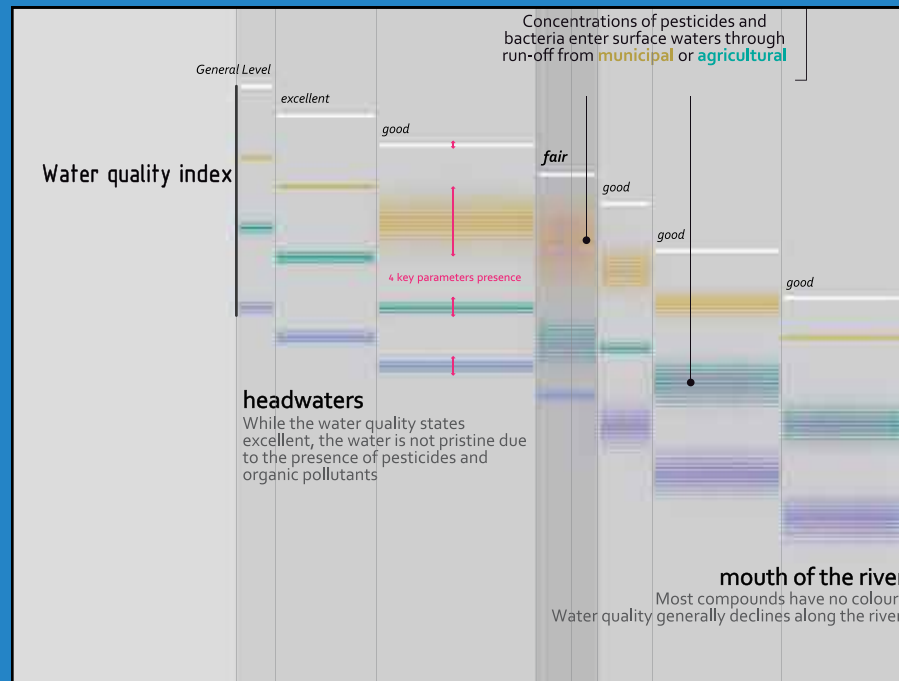
III. WATER DEMAND

uses and impacts on the Bow River

The changing topography of the river and the different climatic conditions throughout the year place a number of demands upon the river. In some parts, the river appears as the only dependable source of water in dry prairie expanses. Illustrated here are the different types of demands on the river, such as agricultural and municipal, and the volume of water that is consumed and returned, or simply consumed.

The Light Matrix represented how the Bow River is shared. Patterns of illumination showed how much water is consumed versus the amount consumed and returned. Colour was used to indicate the different types of demand.

the light matrix



The Bow River as a large system that varies greatly **GEOGRAPHICALLY**

IV. WATER QUALITY

the water quality along the Bow River

The water quality of the Bow River is a true indicator of its health. It is determined by measuring a sample of the physical, chemical, and biological characteristics of the water in different locations.

Plants, animals, and human activity (such as municipal and agricultural) influence the levels of metal, bacteria, pesticides, and nutrients (the 4 key parameters) that are present in water.

The Light Matrix illustrates the quality of the Bow River as it travels from the source to Calgary and beyond. Colour is used to make visible the changing levels of the four key parameters as the river moves along its course. Magenta is introduced when the quality of the water becomes deficient.

the light matrix





▲ Laurent Loyer readies hundreds of spheres for RIVER OF LIGHT.



▲ Volunteers perform sphere-launching practice.



▲ Forty volunteer kayakers will shepherd spheres to their destination.



▲ Spheres are launched at dusk from the Edworthy Park bridge.



▲ Kayaks glide alongside spheres as both proceed downstream.



▲ People line paths and riverbanks to glimpse the spectacle.



▲ Multi-coloured orbs emerge from the surrounding blackness.



▲ Five hundred glowing globes map the river's flow.

In the 'Flow' segment, a cursor moved along the onscreen diagram of the Bow from its source to its confluence with the South Saskatchewan River. The volume of water moving past a single point (described in cubic metres per second) fluctuated as the cursor met dams and other inhibitors.⁹ Simultaneously, emerald glowing spheres captured the distinct colour of glacier-fed Bow Lake;¹⁰ their bright tones shifted to earthy ones to reflect the turbulent waters of increased flow rates.

The four succinct onscreen messages represented a year's worth of research by Creatmosphere.¹¹ Already significantly condensed, the information was further distilled into coded impulses of colour and light which viewers were invited to interpret as art. The genius of the installation lay in its ability to reach people on multiple levels. "It's . . . art in a natural setting. It's beautiful and peaceful and it expresses the meaning of the Bow. But people can appreciate it without understanding all the information behind it," observed one woman on her third visit.¹² People engaged, whether with the ethereal beauty, the wealth of data, the relationships drawn among nature, science and art, or simply in sharing a quiet evening moment in community. The nature of light itself could also be contemplated: the colours of the visible light spectrum that together make white (not coincidentally the colour of snow) were seen distinctly, each in its own sphere. With these layered readings in mind, this viewer was prompted to reexamine how we perceive, understand and embrace information embedded in the world around us.

The Light Matrix ran for eight consecutive nights. It completed one full cycle in approximately 15 minutes and repeated continuously until midnight. People came and went, moving in closer as space became available. Returnees were seen explaining the piece to newcomers. This demonstration of community engagement was part of the plan. "Public space is

about people," asserts Louyer. "The park belongs to them. This project delivers a message about the space, for the people."¹³ The message was deceptively simple, wrapped up in an intriguingly elaborate design.

Creatmosphere's tour de force finale, *River of Light*, took place on a warm August night. By midday the center of operations at Edworthy Park was buzzing. Volunteers used electric air inflators to fill spheres — a template ensured a consistent 50-centimetre diameter. Crews had spent the previous two days assembling 500 light units. After river trials demonstrated that the air-filled orbs were highly susceptible to headwinds, each light was outfitted with an improvised drag system to hold the sphere in the current.¹⁴ A ring of foam encircled each light stem so that even if its sphere burst it would remain afloat for easy retrieval. Grouped in 10s on lines pegged to the ground, the spheres were assembled and laid out in a field on the river's south side. It appeared as if a herd of perfect moons had been corralled in the afternoon sun.

As daylight began to fade, a sense of anticipation energized the park. A fresh crew of volunteers was put through its paces in sphere-launching practice. Dozens of kayakers and canoeists paddled in from upstream. Their important job was to shepherd the floating herd safely to its Prince's Island Park destination. The public gathered on foot, on bicycle and in vehicles, lining the river banks and crowding every available spot on the pedestrian bridge. Eventually, each LED was individually switched on. Dusk descended and an unearthly glow permeated the night.

The inaugural orb was dispatched by *Celebration of the Bow River* project manager Heather Aitken and her City colleague Paul Fesko of Utilities & Environmental Protection. They inscribed





▲ RIVER OF LIGHT spheres drift into still waters near Prince's Island.
◀ Spheres, river, paddlers, and crowds stream toward downtown.



▲ Spheres are pulled from the water at RIVER OF LIGHT's conclusion.

it with the handwritten message “protecting what’s precious” and dropped it from the upstream side of the pedestrian bridge. It hit the water with an audible splash. One cluster after another of blue, green, yellow and ultra-violet glowing globes followed and were quickly pulled in by the power of the current and watched over by attendant kayakers. As the floating parade snaked around a bend the crowd dispersed to follow. A three-quarter moon lit the way through a smoky sky.

Upon leaving the park and following the river eastward, the universal appeal of this nighttime flotilla was clear. The pathways and riverbanks were full of people. Some settled in on lawn chairs with refreshments, as if at a sporting event. Others pedaled bicycles or abandoned them to perch right at the water’s edge. There was conversation but mostly there was stillness. A sense of wonder pervaded as the multicoloured constellation emerged from the surrounding blackness. Converging and dispersing, the spheres mapped the river’s topography as they disappeared behind islands and then rematerialized into view. Illuminating the river’s flow patterns, they symbolized water molecules on their journey from source to city. Part performance piece, part installation, this artwork cast the river as both setting and lead performer.

Kayakers actively kept the bright shapes flowing, retrieving them out of eddies and from gravel beaches. As if bound together, spheres, river, paddlers and land-bound crowds flooded toward the city centre and the night became dense with people and anticipation. It is estimated that several thousand people took part — families, groups of youth, couples and seniors among them. Many remarked on the unprecedented turn out of Calgarians, at night, by the river, for art. Downtown lights echoed the floating galaxy’s glow and stole some of the sparkle but the sight of the globes drifting through the city

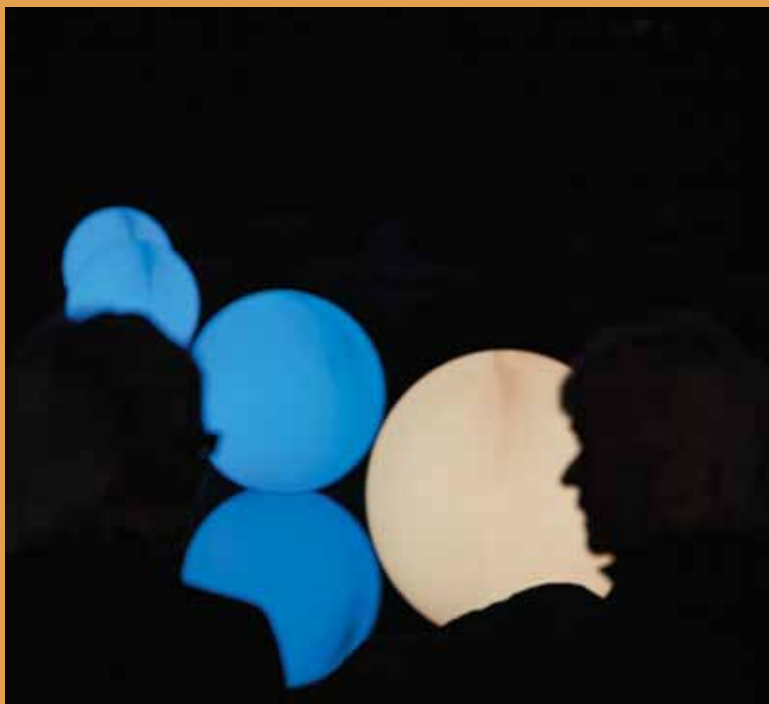
remained one of bewildering alien beauty. At Prince’s Island, a boom across the river diverted the spheres into still waters to the south of the park. Excitement built as people watched them drift in. Many clamored to claim one as a souvenir. A few metres away, others sat mesmerized by the quiet of *The Light Matrix*.

Our multifaceted relationship to the Bow swirls in the convergence of these two artworks. On one hand the river is ours to manage, as static and knowable as the man-made lagoon in which *The Light Matrix* rests. *River of Light*, on the other hand, shows us an elusive watershed, from which we might at best capture a small portion for our use as it wends its wild course. *Sources* suggests that our challenge is to treasure the river’s duality as both mysterious and quantifiable, knowing that the Bow is ours to keep and understanding that it will never be anyone’s to own.

Illuminated trees colour significant spots on RIVER OF LIGHT’S route. ►







▲ Light carves space for beauty and participation out of the darkness.

◀ Reflections create surreal impressions in THE LIGHT MATRIX.

Endnotes:

- 1 Laurent Louyer in conversation with the author, Calgary, August 18, 2010.
- 2 www.pbs.org/art21/artists/turrell/index.html.
- 3 www.artinfo.com/news/story/25573/olafur-eliasson.
- 4 www.creatmosphere.com/projects.html.
- 5 Louyer conversation, August 18, 2010.
- 6 Barbara Maier, conversation with the author, Calgary, August 21, 2010.
- 7 Louyer conversation, August 18, 2010.
- 8 Creatmosphere collected a large amount of data from the wealth of resources available at the Alberta WaterPortal website: www.albertawater.com/
- 9 Water travels the 587 km length of the Bow in less than two weeks. Average flow rate is 129m³/s. Source: www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bow_River.
- 10 As a glacier moves, it grinds the rock beneath it into fine particles called rock flour which are released with the melting ice into the lake. The distinctive colour of glacier-fed lakes is a result of the reaction of light upon the suspended rock flour particles.
- 11 Carmen Torrecillas was the main researcher and distilled the information to create the charts seen on the projection screens and printed in this book.
- 12 Anonymous audience member in conversation with the author, Calgary, August 18, 2010.
- 13 Louyer conversation, August 18, 2010.
- 14 Plastic drink bottles were systematically vented and attached to the light's stem.



WE WILL
TAKE OUR
CANOE
TO GO
WHERE

THE RIVER

TWO THROUGH
THE

Cécile Belmont

Letter Performance

(Calgary) #1, #2, #3



The Language of Public Space

“Languages are a shared part of a collective. But the need to alter and change languages is individual. [We] start from codes which are also law. But, like clothes, there is no law that really suits everybody. I think that is why we reinvent...”

-Tulio de Sagastizábal

Cécile Belmont is inventing a language that builds understanding about places. Boldly written in block letters and silently declared by individuals, her words are physical entities that are performed artworks existing briefly in public spaces. They spell out ideas of separateness and community, temporality and collective history. Written in the language of performance art, her ephemeral interventions in the urban landscape are transcribed into permanence by still photography. Her *Calgary Letter Performances* build on an experimental body of work.

Although the term ‘performance art’ was not coined until the 1960s, its roots go back to the World War I era and the interdisciplinary exploits of Bauhaus, Dada, and Futurism¹ that defied the conventions of both theatre and visual art. Distinct from theatre, performance art is a fusion of concept, visual presentation, and live action with its own lineage and intentions. Its primary mediums are present time, space and performer. Performance artists who use public spaces raise questions about a work’s relationship with its audience — viewers are often unwitting and artists sometimes play with this ambiguity. While Belmont considers her viewers, she is more concerned with the construction of the moment and its documentation; her camera occupies the prime viewing spot; her events begin without introduction; and only Belmont’s soft spoken directions to performers announce its conclusion.

Belmont studied textile design in her native France before traveling to Argentina to explore the intersection of painting and public space.² She maintains parallel practices in

embroidery, works on paper, limited edition clothing and public space performances. She has been living in Berlin since 2002 and has conducted residencies in Korea, Sweden, and Spain. Prior to this project, she had never been to Canada. “I was very aware that I did not know what to expect” in Calgary.³ For this reason Belmont’s process remained organic although logistics such as the three performance dates, general locations and partnering groups were determined in advance with TRUCK Gallery. Belmont’s firsthand impressions of Calgary infused the project’s conceptual development. She acquired a feel for the city while riding a borrowed bicycle to scout locations. She noted structures, landscapes and perspectives that helped her understand this new territory and the Bow River’s influence upon it. Three settings, one for each of her Calgary performances, were chosen.

The first *Letter Performance* took place in Olympic Plaza in the heart of downtown on a cold, rainy September day. In a preparatory workshop held two days prior at The City of Calgary Water Centre, Belmont guided a small group of staff in mapping their relationships to the river on hand-drawn schematics of the Bow. Participants focused variously on environmental concerns, recorded history and personal reflections. Then, Belmont suggested sentence fragments such as: *‘I’d like to live where...; We usually say that...; If I could fly...’* and participants completed them with the river in mind. From more than two hours worth of writing by several individuals, Belmont gleaned the phrase the group would perform: “*We glide over land of water.*” Her choice expresses how the river permeates one’s consciousness even when it is out of sight. The words are intentionally metaphorical and evocative rather than didactic — they are meant to set the imagination soaring. “I use poetry because I trust poetry.”⁴

For this first performance Belmont adapted an approach she had used previously. Each participant would wear a T-shirt bearing a letter that together, when properly arranged, would spell out the phrase. The 26 characters and spaces in this phrase equaled the number of expected participants. In addition to City staff, letter-wearers included a performance art class⁵ and some last minute on-site recruits including this writer. In a trial run we formed two equal rows against a backdrop of local cultural markers — the Calgary Tower, the Petro-Canada building and the Epcor Centre for the Performing Arts. Participants’ heights echoed the varied stature of the surrounding architecture and evoked the fluid lines of an imagined river. Once our placement was finalized and we were each assigned a letter, we cleared the performance area. When we entered it again it would be as performers.

When participants are ‘in performance,’ Belmont asks that they not talk to those outside the camera’s frame. The artist wants nothing to distract from the activities involved in communal creation. Shirts were distributed and letters were collaboratively pinned in place. In previous performances Belmont screen printed letters onto shirts in advance. This new method was more chaotic but also created opportunities for interaction and contributed to a sense of belonging.

As we formed the phrase, the artist called for minor adjustments. Without making it obvious, the final photos were taken. They are portraits of a group engaged in the moment, unconcerned with the camera, behaving as naturally as can be expected in this unnatural situation. Then, on Belmont’s cue, we broke the pose and left the frame. The signature image chosen by the artist is often one taken after participants think they are done.⁶



▲ The artist directs Letter Performance # 1 at Olympic Plaza.



▲ Letters are attached to T-shirts worn by each performer.



▲ T-shirts spell a phrase gleaned from workshop writings.



▲ Participants end the performance by leaving the frame.

Belmont, occupied with directing the performance itself, works with a photographer as an integral part of her process. She believes a series of static images is stronger than video because the moment, not movement or passage of time, is the essence of the piece. "Video would just be a simple documentation of the performance but photography is much more, it's a work in itself."⁷ So, her photography is both the record of a moment and a work of art. Belmont likes the conciseness of photographs — viewers can linger and find closure for themselves within the fixed, abstracted moment. The artist deftly selects about ten images from the dozens of photos taken during a single performance.⁸ She looks for an emotive quality that comes from the combination of place, people and poetry. "I have to be touched" by a sense of intimacy captured in the image.⁹

In some ways, the series of images becomes the artwork after the original performance is over. The compression of the live experience into two dimensions allows for the diffusion of a moment over time and across a broad audience. Each of the Calgary performance moments was translated into the durable language of photographic imagery and posters were distributed to participants and the public at a closing reception.

Belmont combined two forms of phrase presentation for *Letter Performance # 2*. Set on Prince's Island's north side, this was the only performance in which the river was visible. TRUCK Gallery's camper was parked nearby and served as the workshop space for the small group of gallery members who participated. Writings generated at the previous workshop papered the camper's interior. From them, Belmont had plucked the quintessential Canadian icon: the canoe. In the retro atmosphere of the camper, participants wrote myriad endings for a sentence beginning with "I will take my canoe to go where..." Then, at the site

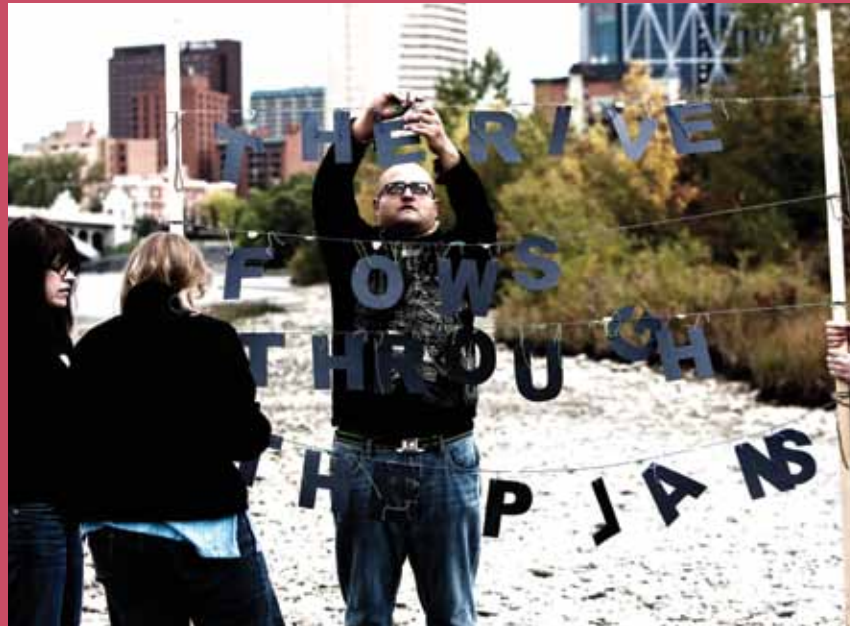
where the performance would take place the next day, Belmont described her plans. The group dispersed and the artist began the necessary materials preparation.

The following afternoon a brisk wind greeted participants at the river's edge. You could sense the poplar leaves turning from green to yellow in the fall air. In the near distance, downtown towers pushed into a grey sky and Centre Street bridge arched across the river. Belmont captured all of this within the camera's frame. The performance began as the six participants pressed two wooden poles into the rocky shore and strung four horizontal lines taught between them. They then tied letters to pre-marked spaces on the lines, fighting the elements with determination and focus. The phrase emerged in random chunks and when it was complete, one performer donned a sentence fragment crafted in fabric letters on a T-shirt. She stood to the left of the poles while the others took their places to the right. "*We will take our canoe to go where,*" her shirt announced, and the hanging phrase concluded "*the river flows through the plains.*" On this windy day the suspended letters stretched against the landscape seemed less proclamation than negotiation. At times they were tossed in unreadable directions in the relentless bluster. Artist and photographer waited while performers retied windblown letters in place. At last, a brief respite from the wind allowed the photographer to document the phrase. The performers laid down the poles and stepped outside the camera's static frame.

Belmont has likened her visual manipulation of text to a window that opens up a new dimension of meaning within the performance space.¹⁰ The two 'word treatments' in this piece offer different kinds of windows: one hard-edged and tangible like a hole pierced in rock; another through which the environment emerges and recedes, like curtains bellied by wind. Perhaps



▲ Performers prepare the support structure for the artist's phrase.



▲ LETTER PERFORMANCE #2 unfolds on Prince's Island's north bank.



▲ The artist combines two word treatments to create her sentence.

The sentence bridges urban and natural landscapes. ►



THE RIVER

FLOWS
THROUGH

THE PLAINS

WE WILL
TAKE OUR
CANOE
TO GO
WHERE

they represent contrasting notions inspired by the canoe: it is a practical vessel that delivers us to our destination; it is also a metaphor we ride into the fertile territory of the imagination. The river scribes a duality that is aptly performed in this work.

Movement was the focus of Belmont's third performance. The artist streamlined her process by choosing a phrase and preparing performance materials in advance of meeting the group. Local Library is an all-ages arts program where youth from a broad spectrum of the community engage in workshops, theatre and other creative endeavours at no cost. This is the first time they have worked with a performance artist.¹¹

Belmont explained how the performance would unfold but did not reveal her phrase. Since there were just seven people in the group, a shirt for each participant had been pre-printed with a full word.¹² Shirt size determined which word each would wear. The setting was the dry wading pool at Eau Claire's Barclay Parade with the windmill towering above.

To begin, the shirts were carried into the camera's frame. Random words appeared as participants put them on: ARE; A; LIKE; IDENTITIES; RIVER; and FLUID, — printed twice. As previously instructed, the two performers wearing the same word began to dance. The others easily found their order and formed a sentence Belmont had found in an Alberta magazine. "*Identities are fluid, like a river*" seemed a perfect summation of this residency. The first performer unfolded a paper image Belmont had given her earlier. It pictured a historical group portrait. She passed it on and struck a pose. As performers received the paper in turn, they too took physical clues from what they found there. Maintaining their positions in the phrase, the performers followed the same procedure with five paper images in succession while the dancing pair continued

its waltz. The action was slightly stilted but Belmont was after capturing 'life gestures' rather than the controlled movements of professional performers.¹³

Perhaps untrained performers better reflect "the fragile intensity"¹⁴ Belmont sees in humanity and explores in her work. The textiles she asks her participants to wear are thin protection, yet they enfold us in collaboration and strengthen our sense of community with a united voice. The language Belmont continually reinvents looks familiar but each iteration is intricately interwoven with the specifics of place, time and community, and each demands a new reading. Her language is a visceral, evolving vernacular that we build with our bodies and learn one sentence at a time.

Belmont explores a found sentence in LETTER PERFORMANCE #3. ►





IDENTITIES

ARE

FLUID,

LIKE

A

RIVER



▲ Performers gradually leave the frame at the Barclay Parade site.



▲ Dancers wearing the same word conclude Belmont's final piece.

◀ Wearing full words, performers move and dance within the frame.

Endnotes:

- 1 www.arthistory.about.com/cs/arthistory10one/a/performance.htm.
- 2 Belmont studied with Argentine painter and educator Tulio de Sagastizábal in Buenos-Aires, 1998-2000.
- 3 Cécile Belmont in conversation with the author, Calgary, September 27, 2010.
- 4 Belmont conversation, September 27, 2010.
- 5 Rita McKeough's performance art class, Alberta College of Art and Design.
- 6 Belmont conversation, September 27, 2010.
- 7 Cécile Belmont, email correspondence with the author, October 15, 2010.
- 8 A selection of Belmont's image series' can be found on her website: www.cecilebelmont.com.
- 9 Belmont conversation, September 27, 2010.
- 10 Belmont conversation, September 27, 2010.
- 11 Local Library program coordinators Eric and Dana in conversation with the author, September 22, 2010. The non-secular multi-disciplinary arts program began in March 2010 and meets at Central United Church.
- 12 Shirts were printed with the support of Alberta Printmakers Society in their Calgary studio.
- 13 Belmont conversation, September 27, 2010.
- 14 Cécile Belmont, Artist's Statement, December 2009.

Acknowledgements

The City of Calgary Public Art Program and Utilities & Environmental Protection department would like to thank the artists, staff, volunteers and communities that made *Celebration of the Bow River 2010* possible.