



**Esker Foundation Proudly Presents: *Legends of the Trans*
a Solo Exhibition of New Photographic Work by Vivek Shraya**



Image: Vivek Shraya, *Legends of the Trans*, 2021. Courtesy of the artist.
Additional high-res imagery available on request.

Wednesday 22 September, Calgary.
For immediate release:

**Vivek Shraya: *Legends of the Trans*
18 October 2021 to 6 February 2022**

In the Esker Project Space, at street-level on 9th Ave SE
Safely accessible from public sidewalk & atrium

This new photographic work, inspired by the 1994 film *Legends of the Fall*, continues Vivek Shraya's queering of performance, photography, and storytelling to reflect an open-ended and ever-evolving notion of herself and the immense value of non-conforming role models.

For Shraya, whose combined practices blur the arbitrary and limiting boundaries between music, literature, visual art, theatre, and film, making is a way to disrupt these hierarchies and break the rules.

Tristan Ludlow, the central character in the original film and the inspiration for Shraya's photographs, is an unpredictable and unreliable rule breaker. For a young Shraya, just 13 when the film came out, Tristan's flaws, his free-spirit, emotional depth, enviable long hair, and incessant lovability made a deep and lasting impression. While at first glance the filmic Tristan can be dismissed as a cis-gendered tragic hero whose toxic masculinity does only damage, Shraya's reading shifts this character into a nuanced fluid light. The re-imagining of him through her brown trans body celebrates the gender and socially non-conforming aspects of this character that a standard reading of this film misses, making Shraya's Tristan a more contemporary icon worthy of devotion.

"Ever since I watched *Legends of the Fall* as a teenager, I have felt a strong pull to the movie—its melodrama, stunning landscapes, and its protagonist Tristan Ludlow. On the surface, I was obsessed with wanting his hair, but I think I was also captivated by the ways that he was a rule breaker. It's been strange to find myself back in Alberta, where the movie was originally filmed, and finally have Tristan hair (which truthfully hasn't been the goal in recent years!). *Legends of the Trans* explores the ways that the influences we have in our youth imprint upon us in ways that we don't even realize."

– **Vivek Shraya**

Produced in part with support from the Esker Foundation Commission Fund.

Creative direction: **Vivek Shraya**

Photography: **Zachary Ayotte**

Styling, makeup & hair: **Alanna Chelmick**

Set assistants: **Adam Holman & Shauna McMartin**

The artist would like to thank Shemeena Shraya, Trisha Yeo, Shauna McMartin, Leanne Tomanek, Tomanek Farms (and the generous horses Judy and Twin Cyty), Morgan Vanek, Jacquelyn Cardinal and Naheyawin, and Canada Council for the Arts for the support.

Vivek Shraya is honoured to acknowledge the Indigenous lands that shared in the stewardship of this work, including those of Treaty 6 and the Métis Nation of Alberta.

NOTES FOR EDITORS:

1: Vivek Shraya and Naomi Potter in conversation

Wednesday October 27, 7pm, free.

On-line or in-person – to be confirmed.

Join artist Vivek Shraya and Esker director/curator Naomi Potter in a conversation about photography, music, storytelling, hair, devotion, queering both Brad Pitt and Tristan Ludlow, rule breaking, and being loved.

2: Exhibition credit:

The photographic essay is inspired by the 1994 film, *Legends of the Fall*, and is produced in part with support from the **Esker Foundation Commission Fund**.

3: About the artist:

<https://eskerfoundation.com/artist/vivek-shraya/>

BIOGRAPHY

Vivek Shraya is an artist whose body of work crosses the boundaries of music, literature, visual art, theatre, and film.

Shraya's visual art practice includes the internationally acclaimed photo series *Trisha*, featured in *Vanity Fair*, *Village Voice* and *India Today*, and in solo exhibits in New York City and the Southern Alberta Art Gallery, as well as her recent photo series *Trauma Clown*, featured on the cover of *Now Magazine* and in the Patel Gallery. Her album *Part-Time Woman* was nominated for the Polaris Music Prize, and her best-selling book *I'm Afraid of Men* was heralded by *Vanity Fair* as "cultural rocket fuel." She is also the founder of the award-winning publishing imprint VS. Books, which supports emerging BIPOC writers.

A seven-time Lambda Literary Award finalist, Vivek was a Pride Toronto Grand Marshal and has been a brand ambassador for MAC Cosmetics and Pantene. She is a director on the board of the Tegan and Sara Foundation, an Assistant Professor of Creative Writing at the University of Calgary, and is currently adapting her debut play, *How to Fail as a Popstar*, for television with the support of CBC.

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Press kit, including high-res images, is available for download here:

<https://eskerfoundation.com/press-release/>

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