

ESKER FOUNDATION
Summer/Fall 2021



WELCOME

We are thrilled to be working with PHI Foundation for Contemporary Art and Cheryl Sim, the Managing Director & Curator at the PHI Foundation and the curator of *RELATIONS: Diaspora and Painting*. Like Esker Foundation, the PHI Foundation for Contemporary Art is a private art foundation in Montréal that supports artists, exhibitions, and programming. Since opening in 2007, it has positioned itself as “a gathering place, committed to nurturing convivial exchanges that celebrate art as part of our everyday lives.”

Featuring 27 artists living and working across Canada, the US, and the UK, *RELATIONS: Diaspora and Painting* explores the multiple and complex meanings of the idea of the diaspora, its condition, and its experiences as expressed in painting. Cheryl Sim notes in the catalogue that accompanies the exhibition, “I also wanted to acknowledge the diaspora experiences across countries that experienced a major influx of people of colour, as the realities of racialization added a significant dimension to the experiences of living in and through difference, where questions of kinship are sought and redefined as strategies for survival.”

First presented at the PHI Foundation in 2020, we are proud to be able to extend the life of this important exhibition and bring the work of these exceptional artists to Calgary.

Endless thanks to Cheryl, Jon Knowles, and the entire team at the PHI Foundation for their professional calm, integrity, and care.

We are also grateful to all 27 artists, their studio managers, commercial galleries, and the collectors who all generously agreed not only to lend work, but to extend the dates of these loans several times. Thank you to everyone for this generous and important work.

In the Project Space until 10 October is Molly JF Caldwell’s *With One Hand Tied Behind My Back*. This textile-focused installation celebrates the power of female perseverance and enduring strength and highlights the pervasive and systemic devaluing of feminized labour.

Programs and Engagement offerings continue to shift and respond, and this next season proves to be exciting as we push the boundaries of authorship and collaboration by inviting several local artists to respond to *RELATIONS: Diaspora and Painting* in the form of creating engagement opportunities for the public. In addition to these artist-led programs, we will also be offering artist talks, youth, and family programs, as well as a generous amount of digital content.

Continue to check out the “Watch and Listen” page on our website for audio and video material, and when visiting the gallery in person look for QR codes to access more information about the artists and their work.

All the best from the Esker team.

FRONT COVER:

Firelei Baez, *Ooloi Ciguapa (mass pedigrees of masterpieces unsold)*, (detail), 2018. Gouache on paper. Rennie Collection, Vancouver. Courtesy of the artist, and James Cohan, New York. © Firelei Báez.

BACK COVER:

Rick Leong, *Goldstream*, 2019. Oil on canvas. Collection Nick & Dale Tedeschi.

OPPOSITE:

Curtis Talwst Santiago, *The Day of the Carnival*, 2018. Watercolour, aerosol, charcoal, oil pastel on canvas. Weissman Family Collection.





Hurvin Anderson, *Untitled (Lady/TV)*, 2001. Oil on canvas.
Collection Martine d'Anglejan Chatillon & Dara Khera, London.

RELATIONS:

24 July –
27 November 2021

Diaspora and Painting

ARTISTS

Larry Achiampong
Hurvin Anderson
Kamrooz Aram
Firelei Báez
Frank Bowling
Cy Gavin
Barkley L. Hendricks
Lubaina Himid
Bharti Kher
Moridja Kitenge Banza
Rick Leong
Manuel Mathieu
Julie Mehretu
Jordan Nassar

Yoko Ono
Maia Cruz Palileo
Rajni Perera
Ed Pien
Jessica Sabogal
Curtis Talwst Santiago
Marigold Santos
Yinka Shonibare CBE
Shanna Strauss
Mickalene Thomas
Salman Toor
Hajra Waheed
Jinny Yu
Curated by Cheryl Sim

PHI
FOUNDATION

RELATIONS: Diaspora and Painting is organized
by the PHI Foundation for Contemporary Art,
Montréal, and presented in collaboration with
the Esker Foundation.



Marigold Santos,
shroud (in stratified light) 1,
2021. Acrylic, pigment,
gesso on canvas.
Courtesy of the artist,
and Norberg Hall, Calgary.

A CONFLUENCE OF RELATIONS by Cheryl Sim

My parents are immigrants. My father was born in Swatow, China but grew up in Hong Kong, where his family fled during the fall of the Republic Era. My mother was born in Kabankalan, located in the western Visayas of the Philippine archipelago but, due to economic constraints, was sent to live with her aunt's family in the northern town of Laoag at the age of eight. No strangers to migration, they both left their countries of origin in the 1960s for the lure of prosperity in the United States. They met at the University of Houston, Texas. When my mother secured a job as a nurse at St. Joseph's hospital in Hamilton, Ontario, she left the U.S., and my father followed soon after. They married in 1967 and eventually became Canadian citizens in conjunction with the relaxation of immigration laws. I was born in Hamilton in 1971, also the year that the Trudeau government made multiculturalism an official policy.

I HAVE BEEN TELLING THIS STORY ALL MY LIFE

It started in kindergarten, when I was asked to share it at a school-wide celebration organized around the theme of multiculturalism. Kindergarten was also the time of an awakening awareness of my difference within Canadian society. The larger social context of school brought me into contact with things like ethnic slurs, comments on my appearance, and physical bullying. Over time, it occurred to me that the utopian rhetoric of the multiculturalism policy, which was meant to affirm “the value and dignity of all Canadian citizens regardless of their racial or ethnic origins, their language, or their religious affiliation,”¹ would prove to be instrumental in articulating uneven power relations between immigrant ‘others’ and the dominant Anglo-Saxon Canadian culture. As a result, like so many second-generation people of colour born in Canada, I eschewed the signifiers of my difference in an attempt to assimilate into mainstream culture, which—underneath its accommodating surface—is ultimately what the multiculturalism policy would have us do.

¹ This formulation, which has been revised since 2015, has been quoted in a variety of published texts, including Andrew Griffith's *Multiculturalism in Canada: Evidence and Anecdote* (Ottawa: Anar Press, 2015); and Fethi Mansouri's *Interculturalism at the Crossroads: Comparative Perspectives on Concepts, Policies and Practices* (Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 2017).



Moridja Kitenge Banza, *Chiromancie #9, No3*, 2019.
Drawing, ink on mylar. Caisse de dépôt et de placement du Québec.

Entering adulthood, I came to celebrate my mixed ethnic heritage, and I have been empowered by what I learned in the margins. Disillusioned by the double discourse of multiculturalism, haunted by the voices of ghosts that destabilized my sense of belonging with their constant whispers of where are you from, and politicized by post-colonial and feminist theory, I discovered the term/concept/condition/experience called 'diaspora.' Without a deep investigation into the academic and theoretical explorations of this slippery and messy word, it spoke directly to my deepest desires to root while asserting my route—to reference the great text by Paul Gilroy.² The re-telling of one's migration story is a validating process of diasporic transcription, one of thousands that account for really being here, but also there...and there too. As so much of my living and thinking have been informed by a diaspora experience as a personal and professional interrogation, I am infinitely grateful for the opportunity to realize *RELATIONS: Diaspora and Painting*. With this exhibition, our hope was that we might explore and gain insight into the complex, multiple, constantly evolving, and syncretic meanings of diaspora—along with its conditions and experiences—through painting, from a diversity of artist's perspectives, methodologies, and aesthetic languages. The wide spectrum of productive interpretations and relations that bring about a diasporic consciousness remain unfixed, providing an expanded notion of identity and belonging in a world of advanced globalization and migration.

² Paul Gilroy, *L'Atlantique Noir: modernité et double conscience (The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness)* (Paris: Éditions Amsterdam, 2010).

The word 'diaspora' is taken from the Greek, *diaspeirein*, which means to 'disperse.' More precisely, from *dia* 'across' and *speirein* 'scatter.'³ As many scholars claim, the earliest academic discussions of diaspora were grounded in the concept of a 'homeland' and, moreover, a longing for and desire to return to that homeland.

³ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diaspora>

Furthermore, scholars were pre-occupied with identifying a paradigmatic case, or a few cases, that would become the reference for the term. As Rogers Brubaker writes, the "paradigmatic case was, of course, the Jewish diaspora;



ABOVE

Mathieu Manuel, *The Entrance*, 2019.
Acrylic, charcoal, chalk, tape, fabric, oil sticks.
Collection of Sylvi Plante & Neil Wiener.
Courtesy of the artist.

NEXT PAGE

LEFT

Rajni Perera, *Ancestor 2*, 2019.
Mixed media on paper.
Courtesy of the artist, and Patel Brown Gallery, Toronto.

RIGHT

Shanna Strauss, *Bee-Keeper*, 2019.
Mixed media, photo transfer, acrylic, fabric, found wood.
Courtesy of the artist.

some dictionary definitions of diaspora, until recently, did not simply illustrate but defined the word with reference to that case.”⁴ The centrality of this reference later branched out to include the Armenian and Greek diasporas. Historian George Shepperson introduced the idea of the African diaspora as early as 1966, and in 1976, John Armstrong threw the term ‘mobilized diasporas’ or ‘trading diaspora’ into the mix, which would include Chinese, Indians, Lebanese, Baltic Germans, and the Hausa of Nigeria.⁵ Diasporans have been defined as those forcibly displaced from their countries of origin and include exiles, refugees, asylum seekers, and survivors of the slave trade. But diasporans also uproot themselves in pursuit of education, land, and business or career opportunities. From the 1960s onwards, the idea of diaspora became mostly associated with the first generation of people who settle in the ‘new’ country, who develop the ability to skillfully negotiate its cultural terrains but stay emotionally connected to the homeland, forming communities with others who share the same ethno-diasporic heritage.

⁴ Rogers Brubaker, “The ‘Diaspora’ Diaspora,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 28, no. 1 (2005): 2.

⁵ Ibid.

By 1990, Stuart Hall complicated this definition by, first of all, asserting that the idea of a homeland can “neither be fulfilled nor required,” but also that diasporic identities can be defined:

*...not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of ‘identity’ which lives with and through, not despite difference; by hybridity. Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference.*⁶

⁶ Stuart Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” in *Identity, Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), 234.

Hall sees a diasporic identity as mutable, informed and empowered by its difference, which produces an ability to traverse and negotiate multiple cultural terrains simultaneously. This idea provided me with a substantial way to joyfully reconcile the multiplicity of my heritage with the ambivalence of nationality. In 1994, James Clifford also



challenged the established definitions of diaspora with the contention that the Jewish case need not be the definitive model of diaspora, and that “transnational connections linking diasporas need not be articulated primarily through a real or symbolic homeland.”⁷ Rather, diasporas could share “decentered, lateral connections” through a shared consciousness, which is “entirely a product of cultures and histories in collision and dialogue.”⁸ In 1996, Avtar Brah went a step further, taking up Hall and asserting that:

*...not all diasporas sustain an ideology of return. Moreover, the multi-placedness of home in the diasporic imaginary does not mean that diasporian subjectivity is ‘rootless.’ I argue for a distinction between ‘feeling at home’ and declaring a place as home. Processes of diasporic identity formation are exemplars par excellence of the claim that identity is always plural, and in process.... In other words, the concept of diaspora refers to multi-locationality within and across territorial, cultural and psychic boundaries.*⁹

By releasing the concept of diaspora from the idea of a longing for a ‘homeland,’ real or imagined, these writings provide second generation diasporans, such as children of the post-1965 wave of immigrants to countries like Canada, the ability to assert the multiplicity of their identities as part of diaspora discourse. Following Brubaker’s suggestion that “we should think of diaspora not in substantialist terms as a bounded entity, but rather as an idiom, a stance, a claim,” I also argue that the appropriation of the term diaspora as a condition/experience/consciousness in constant evolution can provide agency and a sense of belonging for first generation immigrants and the generations that follow.¹⁰ As Trinh T. Minh-Ha has written, the “multidimensional necessity of being both here(s) and there(s) implies a more radical ability to shuttle between frontiers and to cut across ethnic allegiances while assuming a specific and contingent legacy.”¹¹ In this way, the diasporic experience involves a sharpening of the senses and learning to ‘see’ and

appreciate the existence of many perspectives at the same time, which can involve the psychological negotiation of treacherous terrain. This unique position of being both within and without, therefore, teaches the diasporic person how to be comfortable with discomfort. Operating within diasporic consciousness also collapses temporality, allowing for one to exercise and be the confluence of histories, cultures, and languages that inform one’s identity, without negating those of the ‘new’ nation-state. I offer this very brief overview of the evolution of the idea or term diaspora as a way to foreground the conceptual underpinnings of this exhibition. Hall and Brah’s contributions liberate diaspora discussions through a consideration of racialization, ethnicity, class, sex, and capital, and they provide the theoretical framework upon which this exhibition ‘un’rests.

For many years, I have been drawn to artists who explore diasporic experiences in their work, as they are a potent place from which to formulate questions, to acknowledge ambivalences, to pay homage, and to assert positions. I had it in the back of my mind to one day propose a large-scale exhibition devoted to diasporan perspectives. But every attempt to think it through left me feeling daunted about where to start. When our Founder/Director suggested we pursue a painting show, I thought ‘yes!'; her suggestion provided a focus through which to explore this research interest as a conceptual framework that could ground itself in a medium that in contemporary practices is also continuously freeing itself from strict definitions. If there was an over-arching directive that helped guide the organization of this exhibition, it was to privilege a multiplicity of voices that would never let the discourse settle.

A focus on painting, with its historicity and Western centrism, provided more than a way to narrow the field of selection, but became a particularly provocative medium through which to explore diasporic consciousness in its many variations and permutations. Indeed, the artists in *RELATIONS* demonstrate a profound awareness of the power relations of painting that have become entrenched

⁷ James Clifford, "Diasporas," *Cultural Anthropology* 9, no. 3 (August 1994): 302–38.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Avtar Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities* (London: Routledge, 1996), 197.

¹⁰ Brubaker, "The 'Diaspora' Diaspora," 12.

¹¹ Trinh T. Minh-ha, "Bold Omissions and Minute Depictions," in *When the Moon Waxes Red* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 159.



Jinny Yu, *why does its lock fit my key?*, 2018.
Oil on aluminum. Courtesy the artist, and Art Mûr.

in the canon of art history. The countless arguments about what painting is or isn't, as well as its temporality, are taken up and challenged by the proposals of the many artists presented in this show. Through various richly contemplated approaches, these artists stake out and claim positions that both critique and engage with the histories of painting, exemplifying Schwabsky's observation that in contemporary painting "positions are now multiple, simultaneous and decentered."¹² These are the very qualities that can describe diasporic consciousness, and, in this sense, contemporary painting practices can be seen as analogous.

¹² Barry Schwabsky, "Painting in the Interrogative Mode," in *Vitamin P: New Perspectives in Painting* (London: Phaidon, 2002), 8–9.

This exhibition presents the work of twenty-seven artists who employ a staggering array of materials and strategies to traverse painting's incredibly rich terrain of possibilities, and to push the boundaries of what painting is and can be. A concern in researching and selecting artists was to bring together works from a diversity of diaspora experiences, which manifest in a multifarious array of methodological, material, and aesthetic approaches. I also wanted to acknowledge the diaspora experiences across countries that experienced a major influx of people of colour, as the realities of racialization add a significant dimension to the experience of living in and through difference, where questions of kinship are sought and redefined as strategies for survival. Diasporas are everywhere and the contours of these experiences take on different shapes according to where they are located. With that in mind, and in consideration of the Montréal context, I decided to focus on artists operating in (and in some cases between) Canada, the United States, and Britain. The histories of imperialism and the colonialist projects of nation-building put forth by these countries would be critical contexts through which to contemplate the works on view. Another intention in regards to the selection of artists was to assemble an intergenerational dialogue that would contribute to a sense of the harmonies and dissonances over time, and to a sense of contemporary diasporic consciousness.

In line with the curatorial research practice at the PHI Foundation, the works were placed intuitively, guided by a concern to offer each one a space to speak on its own terms, free of the imposition of a 'grand narrative' or set of sub-themes. With this ethos in mind, this publication brings together a brilliant group of writers from a variety of fields including poetry, cultural studies, and art history. This interdisciplinary approach is exemplary of our desire at the Foundation to tear down academic silos in pursuit of a more liberating space to talk about art. Given the open ended and discursive nature of the subject/theme, *RELATIONS* made no attempt to be exhaustive but, rather, endeavored to open up ideas and encourage dialogue.

In reference to the creative possibilities of the experience of exile, Edward Said has suggested that living in and with more than one culture produces a 'plurality of vision' that "gives rise to an awareness, of simultaneous dimensions, an awareness that—to borrow a phrase from music—is contrapuntal."¹³ It was my hope that this strategy of a multiplicity of voices with their joys, tensions, traumas, and struggles across these many approaches would allow for a polyphonic experience. The relations in and between these artists' works elicit melodies and counter melodies that accumulate as each is encountered, culminating in a beautiful and complex baroque fugue or jazz counterpoint. By adding our own melodic readings to the score, we too exercise the potential of a contrapuntal gaze.

¹³ Edward W. Said, "Reflections on Exile," in *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 186.



Maia Cruz Palileo, *Afterward*, 2019. Oil on panel.
From the Young-Abraham Collection.

BIOGRAPHY

Cheryl Sim is Managing Director and Curator at the PHI Foundation for Contemporary Art, Montréal. Recent exhibitions include *RELATIONS: Diaspora and Painting*, *Phil Collins*, and *GROWING FREEDOM* by Yoko Ono. Sim is also a media artist whose practice incorporates her background in media studies and research on post-colonial strategies in contemporary art practice.

Her video and installation work have been presented in exhibitions and festivals in North America and Europe. In 2015 she completed a PhD in the études et pratiques des arts program at the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQÀM). Her book *Wearing the Cheongsam: Dress and Culture in a Chinese Diaspora* launched in September of 2019 on Bloomsbury Academic.

PROJECT SPACE



Installation view of Molly JF Caldwell's exhibition *With One Hand Tied Behind My Back*, 2021. Photo by: John Dean.

Molly JF Caldwell

With One Hand Tied Behind My Back

14 JUNE – 10 OCTOBER

Ruffled, red velvet curtains part to reveal a lush, textural interior. A 30-foot tapestry, cherry red and bubble-gum pink, snakes languidly across suspended bars and chains. The hand-dyed, hand-woven tapestry is adorned with jewel-encrusted charms. Enveloped in acerbic pink paint and shag carpeting, the space is a heightened, almost grotesque imitation of a private, domestic interior.

Molly JF Caldwell's new site-specific installation, *With One Hand Tied Behind My Back*, is a love letter to Penelope, a mythical figure from Homer's *Odyssey*. Piously waiting for her husband, presumed dead, to return following the Trojan War, Penelope repeatedly wove, unraveled, and rewove a tapestry—ostensibly a funereal shroud for her father-in-law—to avoid her scores of suitors. Through her own textile-based practice, Caldwell considers multiple readings of Penelope's labour. Can Penelope's weaving be imagined as an utterance of autonomy and power, removed from the bounds of patriarchal systems and networks? Or is it a visual manifestation of her subservience? Caldwell offers no easy answers, revelling instead in ambiguity and openness.

The practice of weaving contains multitudes. It is a highly labour-intensive practice that has traditionally carried associations of femininity and domesticity. It mirrors a visual language of submission; the body bends over the loom, eyes cast downwards. It is also a profoundly generative, almost alchemical act; the process of creating something out of nothing. Caldwell harnesses the physical act of weaving and its various associations to point to the perversities of our collective relationship to work.

In this sense, *With One Hand Tied Behind My Back* can be read as the visual articulation of Caldwell's ongoing research on the complexities and contradictions of labour, care, gender, and sexuality. Laced with signifiers of femininity and feminine sexuality, the installation directly confronts our latent biases against both. In turn, Caldwell's unapologetic celebration of Penelope's weaving within an unabashedly domestic space points to the systemic devaluing of feminized labour.

BIOGRAPHY

Molly JF Caldwell is a yonsei artist living and working in Mohkinstsis. She focuses on textile processes, specifically weaving and sewing, to navigate emotions, generational trauma, and healing. She graduated from the Alberta University of the Arts in 2017 and has since been exhibiting and participating in residencies nationally and internationally. She is inspired by Marxist feminism, equity work, and Mariah Carey.

UPCOMING

Vivek Shraya
18 October 2021–6 February 2022

PROGRAMS AND ENGAGEMENT

Esker Foundation's free programs create connections: with exhibitions, contemporary art, and each other. Through collaboration with artists, diverse communities, and partnerships we encourage engagement, creativity and belonging.

REGISTER

You must register for programs through our website:

eskerfoundation.com/program/current/

or by clicking the buttons in the descriptions below

or by calling:

403 930 2490

Please note that our programs will be offered online unless otherwise specified. Registration is required to participate. Space in the programs is limited.

We request that you please provide 72 hours notice for cancellations so we can offer your ticket to the waitlist.

Artist Talk with Molly JF Caldwell

Thursday 5 August, 6–7:30PM, MST, online.

Join Molly JF Caldwell for an artist talk and Q & A about her work and practice, as well as her current exhibition in the Project Space, *With One Hand Tied Behind My Back*. This site-specific installation is a love letter to Penelope, a mythical figure from Homer's *Odyssey*. Piously waiting for her husband to return from the Trojan War, Penelope repeatedly wove, unraveled, and rewove a tapestry to avoid her scores of suitors. Through her own textile-based practice, Caldwell considers multiple readings of Penelope's labour; is it an utterance of her autonomy and power, or a visual manifestation of her subservience? *With One Hand Tied Behind My Back* reflects Caldwell's ongoing research on the complexities and contradictions of labour, care, gender, and sexuality.



Photo by: Chelsea Yang-Smith

Molly JF Caldwell Collaborative Weaving Workshop Series

Thursday 19 August, 6–7PM

Friday 20 August, 3–4PM

Saturday 21 August, 11AM–12PM

Join Project Space Artist Molly JF Caldwell for an earth-friendly interactive workshop where you will learn how to transform old clothing, sheets, or fabric into textile art. Molly will share her knowledge and skills, including how to warp a loom, weaving techniques, and creating patterns. Participants will work on their own project and will have the opportunity to add to a collaborative large-scale weaving.

All ages and skill levels are welcome including children and youth.

Participants are encouraged to bring in old clothing or other household textiles to repurpose into fabric strips for weaving.

Workshops will take place in person. Registration is essential, and limited to 20 participants.

Please register for only one workshop, and return to add more! Over the course of the workshop series and until it is complete, the collaborative weaving will be publicly installed in the Atlantic Avenue Art Block atrium and can be added to by the public on a drop-in, ongoing basis.

Creative Connections: A Collaborative Mural Making Art Camp

24, 25, & 26 August

Morning Program: 10AM–12PM

Afternoon Program: 2–4PM

Children aged 5 to 8 are invited to join us for this three-day summer art camp experience! Activities will include nature walks, games, and working with a variety of art making materials such as paint, pastels, and mixed media to create individual creative projects and a large-scale collaborative mural.

This program will take place in person, in an outdoor and indoor setting.

Registration is essential, and limited to a maximum of 10 participants per class.

Please register for either the morning or afternoon programs, but not for both.



RELATIONS: Diaspora and Painting Engagement Series

In response to the exhibition *RELATIONS: Diaspora and Painting*, Esker Programs and Engagement presents a monthly series of engagement opportunities in collaboration with local artists. During the initial presentation of *RELATIONS* in Montréal at the PHI Foundation in 2020, Curator and Director, Cheryl Sim highlighted the connections formed, and ideas exchanged, between the exhibiting artists as a meaningful and important part of the exhibition.

To recreate and extend this connective experience in our local context and community, we have invited four local artists to collaborate with us on this programming series. In turn, each artist will invite a collaborator to join them in continuing the dialogues generated around *RELATIONS*. Each month these artists will explore a theme, artist, or medium from the exhibition through unique programs and public projects.



AUGUST

BETHEL AFEWORK AND THE ALCOVE CENTRE FOR THE ARTS

For the month of August, we will be collaborating with local spoken word artist and arts entrepreneur Bethel Afeework. Bethel recently founded the non-profit arts organization The Alcove Centre for the Arts, which is a continuation of a project she started in 2016 called RAW Voices. This was a monthly event featuring spoken word, comedy and music that ran over 40 times before the start of the pandemic last year.

Bethel and The Alcove Centre for the Arts will be doing several pop-up events throughout the city beginning in late summer. Their first pop up is happening on 30 July at containR. The August pop-up programming will be developed in partnership with Esker Foundation and inspired by the theme of roots, place, and identity from *RELATIONS: Diaspora and Painting*. Details on these happenings and events will be released throughout August.

BIOGRAPHY

Bethel Afeework is a spoken word artist, musician and arts entrepreneur based in Calgary. She recently founded The Alcove Centre for the Arts, a non-profit organization whose model is the “YMCA for the arts.” This newly founded organization is part of the evolution of Raw Voices, a monthly comedy, spoken word and music event that Bethel has hosted since 2016. In addition to her role as a community organizer and arts entrepreneur, Bethel is also a political staffer with the municipal government and a graduate of the University of Calgary with a degree in Energy Sciences and Communications.

RAW Voices YYC, 2019. Courtesy of The Alcove Centre for the Arts. Photo by: Phareke Frazer.

UPCOMING INVITED ARTISTS



Bianca Guimarães de Manuel está no in-between Brazil and Canada. She is uma Latinx scenographer, performance designer and artist-researcher interested in como creation happens between people and things. Bianca believes que scenic elements podem interrogate the body, and people can interrogate space, destabilizing power relationships of language, meaning and status cuó. Bianca is trained in the MO_AND method (Brazil), which is focused on creative practice at the intersection between ethics, aesthetics and politics, and has an MFA in Technical Theatre from the University of Calgary.



Kaitlyn Purcell (she/they) is Denesuline and a member of Smith's Landing First Nation (Treaty 8 territory). She is also a member of the Writing Revolution in Place (WRiP) creative research collective based on Treaty 6 territory. WRiP generates grassroots critical literacy around social justice issues to propose new futures through experimental poetry and poetics. She is the recipient of numerous awards, including the Metatron Prize for her debut poetic novella *ʔbédayine (Spirit)*, and a doctoral SSHRC award. Their research is structured through the four directions of the medicine wheel, and it meditates on recovery, ecology, and intergenerational survivance.



Sydonne Warren is a contemporary Jamaican-Canadian visual artist who specializes in large-scale expressive paintings and murals. Her themes reflect her experiences as a Jamaican-Canadian immigrant woman and mother and share her desire for the African Diaspora to occupy, impact and own space. Sydonne is currently receiving her Bachelor of Design at the Alberta University of the Arts, and in 2020 received the "Artist of the Year" award from Diversity Magazine's African Caribbean Awards for her impact on the city as a person of colour. Sydonne's latest work can be found inside The Core Shopping Centre, The Jamaican Canadian Association, Centre Street and Kensington.

Courtesy of the artists; Kaitlyn Purcell, photo by: Brad Casey.

PROGRAMS AND ENGAGEMENT NEWS



University of Calgary Public Humanities Fellow:
Kaitlyn Purcell. Photo by: Ivanna Baranova.

Esker Foundation is currently hosting PhD candidate and Public Humanities Fellow, Kaitlyn Purcell (she/they) in partnership with The Calgary Institute for the Humanities, University of Calgary. Purcell's research project is focused on decolonizing gallery spaces through activities with youth as part of Esker Youth Engagement (EYE).

Kaitlyn Purcell is Denesuline and a member of Smith's Landing First Nation (Treaty 8 territory). She is also a member of the Writing Revolution in Place (WRiP) creative research collective based on Treaty 6 territory. WRiP generates grassroots critical literacy around social justice issues to propose new futures through experimental poetry and poetics. She is the recipient of numerous awards, including the Metatron Prize for her debut poetic novella *ʔbé-dayine (Spirit)*, and a doctoral SSHRC award. Their research is structured through the four directions of the medicine wheel, and it meditates on recovery, ecology, and intergenerational survivance. It will be presented through multi-modal creative productions such as storytelling, poetry, visual, digital, and installation arts.

Purcell's practice is informed by her experiences growing up in Edmonton detached from her Dene roots, Indigenous ways of knowing, and her passion for creative expression as a tool for cultivating community.

Kaitlyn Purcell comments that: "They are a survivor of intergenerational trauma, and they quit drinking in 2020 to pursue the journey towards healing. They once had a dream that told them their horoscope said to write something positive and uplifting, and that the world needs it. It will change everything."

Bridge

A space
dedicated to young
people



Since 2015, Esker has provided programming for children and families that engages with exhibitions and encourages material and creative exploration. The launch of Esker Youth Engagement (EYE) in 2019 introduced programs that connect youth (13–24) to contemporary art and artists through making, experiential activities and dialogue.

Bridge is for the young members of our community. It is a space to make visible the incredible work created by children and youth in programs, for youth-led curation, and a space to be claimed by young people for expressions yet to be imagined.

CURRENT BRIDGE EXHIBITION

Unmasking Imagination

UNTIL 12 SEPTEMBER

In March and April of 2021, Esker Foundation offered two free online spring break art camps for children. This workshop was developed collaboratively with local artist **Katie Green**, and YW Calgary's **Mindful Moments** program. The camps ran alongside exhibitions by Louise Bourgeois, Chris Curreri, and Fin Simonetti, all of which draw on the theme of creativity as a vector for emotional and mental wellbeing.

Over the course of the week, children aged 8-13 years learned about mask making in relation to Katie Green's practice as an artist, and to their own emotional landscape. Through drawing, journaling, character development, acting, painting, and sculpting, participants worked with Katie to explore what it meant to embody the mask and character they were creating. Alongside this creative exploration, each day involved mindfulness practices led by YW Calgary Child Development Counsellor Mackenzie Fraser. Mindfulness is the practice of paying attention, on purpose, to the present moment. Practicing mindfulness can help children focus, regulate their emotions, and make measured decisions. By bringing together mindfulness and creative practice, children were given tools to decompress from daily stressors and shift their mindset.

Over thirty children participated in Esker's inaugural spring break art camps, and some of their artwork is displayed here alongside their portraits photographed by Katie Green.

Installation view of *Unmasking Imagination*, 2021.
Bridge Space at Esker. Photo by: John Dean.

CURRENT BRIDGE EXHIBITION



Thinking Of You

UNTIL 12 SEPTEMBER

Thinking of You explores writing, connection, and memory through the process of making postcards for friends and family. Led by **Yolkless Press**, youth artists synthesized text and images to create two-colour Risograph prints—a hybrid digital and analogue printing method that can be described as “silkscreen meets photocopier.” Drawing inspiration from works by artist Teresa Tam, and the Louise Bourgeois exhibition, *What is the Shape of This Problem, From the Collection of Jordan D. Schnitzer and His Family Foundation*, the resulting mix of photographs, collages, and illustrations imagine who might receive and become connected through them. They capture the sense of missing one another, and an attempt to link with those separated by space and time.

Yolkless Press is an artist collective with an aim to nurture, facilitate and collaborate on book-based projects with artists in and around Calgary. Possible formats include artists’ publications, books, postcards, posters, packaging, pamphlets, and other printed things. We think about the potential of artistic practice that can be disseminated in de-centred modes beyond the confines of art galleries.

Esker Youth Engagement (EYE) connects youth (13-24) to contemporary art through free experiential and creative activities, community-building, and dialogue.

Find us on Instagram: @EskerYouthEngagement

Left: Julie Christensen, *in limbo*, 2021. Risograph print.

Above: Installation view of *Thinking of You*, 2021. Bridge Space at Esker. Photo by: John Dean.

UPCOMING EXHIBITION

Farah Al Qasimi

22 JANUARY – 25 JUNE 2022

Spanning photography, video, and performance, Farah Al Qasimi's work speaks to the complexities of negotiating overlapping cultures and multiple contexts simultaneously. This exhibition will bring together new and recent photographs that consider the story of her family's migration between the United Arab Emirates and the United States, the global circulation of popular culture, and the reflection of both within the idiosyncrasies of personal style and aesthetic.

Al Qasimi offers fragmented glimpses into public or private realms, often exploring the language of adornment and its relationship to identity, probing the ways in which we construct self-image through our surroundings. The resulting images reflect an ambivalence towards the transnational flows of commodity culture in the same breath as they approach the aesthetic predilections of their subjects – often young women – with seriousness and care.

Lush, textural, and brimming with visual excess, Al Qasimi's photographs possess a heightened quality that veers towards the uncanny. While her subject matter appears legible and familiar at first, her images transcend the realm of the ordinary and confuse the boundaries between perception and representation.

Biography

Farah Al Qasimi (b.1991, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates; lives and works in Brooklyn and Dubai) works in photography, video, and performance. Her recent commission with Public Art Fund, *Back and Forth Disco*, was on view on 100 bus shelters around New York City in 2019 and 2020. Her work has been featured in exhibitions at Jameel Arts Centre, Dubai; the San Francisco Arts Commission, San Francisco; the CCS Bard Galleries at the Hessel Museum of Art, New York; Helena Anrather, New York; The Third Line, Dubai; The List Visual Arts Center at MIT, Cambridge; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Toronto; and the Houston Center for Photography, Houston. Al Qasimi received her MFA from the Yale School of Art. She has participated in residencies at the Delfina Foundation, London; the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Maine; and is a recipient of the New York NADA Artadia Prize, the Aaron Siskind Individual Photographer's Fellowship, and this year's Capricious Photo Award. Her work is in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi, UAE; Tate Modern, London; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge; Huis Marseille, Museum for Photography, Amsterdam; Bowdoin College Museum of Art, Brunswick; and NYU's Grey Art Gallery, New York.



Farah Al Qasimi, *A Reclining*, 2020. Archival Inkjet Print, edition of 5, 2 AP.
Courtesy of the Artist; Helena Anrather, New York; and The Third Line, Dubai.

UPCOMING EXHIBITION

Michelle Bui

22 JANUARY – 25 JUNE 2022

Michelle Bui's photographs reflect the processes of accumulation, presentation, and eventual decay that mark our relationships to seemingly mundane items. Sensual and sensorial, her images point to the negotiation between our understanding of ourselves and the objects that we accumulate. In the same breath, they cause us to question our appetite for these objects, this excessive consumption, in the first place.

A series of larger-than-life photographic images meet at the intersection between still life and commercial photography. Bui intuitively arranges objects and ephemera, photographing them against acidly colourful backdrops: sprigs of baby's breath are arranged sculpturally with inflated latex gloves atop a blue shag carpet; a bouquet of wilting anemones is hand-tied with oversized maroon plastic in front of orange vinyl. The appeal of these uncanny images is undeniable; the lure of Bui's heightened colours and textures and the familiar visual language of commercial photography provoke desire before we fully comprehend the image, or even despite that comprehension.

Bui's newest work is a continuation of her recent "wet-cooked" photographs – images that capture an arrested moment within a much longer process of material transformation. She intuits the membranous, porous, formless affinities between flower petals, pig's bowels, stone fruits, latex gloves, and other banal objects that elude recognition. These materials are combined into sculptural assemblages which are then submerged in boiling water, fixed in gelatine, or crushed beneath the weight of a rolling pin. Printed in large-scale vinyl and subsequently plastered over the gallery walls like a billboard, the resulting images evoke the sight, smell, and sound

of Bui's alchemical processes. In a moment where the lion's share of our visual interactions are mediated through screens, the sensory overwhelm of Bui's images is simultaneously seductive and unsettling.

Biography

Michelle Bui is a Montreal-based artist working in photography and sculpture. Her work revolves around the inseparable conjuncture between material culture and identity, opening it to a shifted place where sensory identity can unfold. Recent solo exhibitions include *Spilled Plenitude*, Franz Kaka, Toronto (2020); *Centerfold*, Parisian Laundry, Montreal (2019); *Plein Soleil*, Circa, Montreal (2019); *Pool of Plenty*, Galerie de l'UQAM, Montreal (2018). Selected group shows include Maison de la culture Claude-Léveillé, Montreal; Paul Robeson Galleries at Rutgers University, Newark; Projet Pangée, Montreal; Vu Photo, Quebec City; Galerie Antoine Ertaskiran, Montreal, Galerie Nicolas Robert, Montreal. Bui completed her MA at Université du Québec à Montréal and at Beaux-arts de Paris, and her BFA at Concordia University.

Michelle Bui, *Hell's Angels Bouquet*, 2018.
Pigmented inkjet on paper. Courtesy of the artist.



UPCOMING EXHIBITION

Veronika Pausova

22 JANUARY – 25 JUNE 2022

Painter Veronika Pausova draws on figurative imagery to tell diagrammatic short stories—hands grasping, noses sniffing, fruit flies teeming—that mine the territory between animation and stasis. The implied movement of these recurrent motifs serves as a proxy for the viewer; we can feel the anxious energy that results in endless scratching, tugging, or pacing within our own bodies.

These figurations form a cast of recurrent characters that evolve within and between compositions with a logic personal to the artist. Spiders with pearl-like bodies appear to be dancers in one painting, earrings in another. Elsewhere, spider legs devolve into a series of walking boots, each of which is punctuated with a single, photo-realistic big toe. The elements of Pausova's visual vocabulary are in perpetual transformation, existing across a continuum of possible states, places, and times.

Her paintings deftly intertwine figurative elements with surreal abstraction and graphic surface detail. Multiple disembodied hands pull at louvered blinds amid a setting sun, both of which are abstracted with geometric surface detail so as to meld into one another – architecture and atmosphere becoming one. The alchemy of these combinations destabilizes the spatial logic of Pausova's paintings and complicates the relationship between seeing and knowing.

BIOGRAPHY

Veronika Pausova was born in Prague, Czech Republic and lives and works in Toronto. She received her BFA from Glasgow School of Art in 2009 and her MFA from Virginia Commonwealth University in 2013. Recent solo and two-person exhibitions include *Playing the Organs*, Sunday Painter, London (2021); *A to C*, Simone Subal, New York (2019); *Busy Bodies* at Parisian Laundry, Montreal (2018); drawing the curtain, Hunt Kastner, Prague (2018); *Age me a Heavy Twig*, Franz Kaka, Toronto (2018); *Forest House* at Tatjana Pieters, Ghent (2017); and *Chests in the Current* at Motel Gallery, New York (2016). Select group shows include *My Cartography*, The Erling Kagge Collection, Santander Art Gallery, Madrid (2020); *If I have a body*, Remail Modern (2019); *On Anxiety*, Cleve Carney Gallery, Chicago (2018); *An Assembly of Shapes*, Oakville Galleries (2018); *Line and Verse*, Andrehn-Schiptjenko, Stockholm (2018); RBC Canadian Painting Competition 2017, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa (2017).



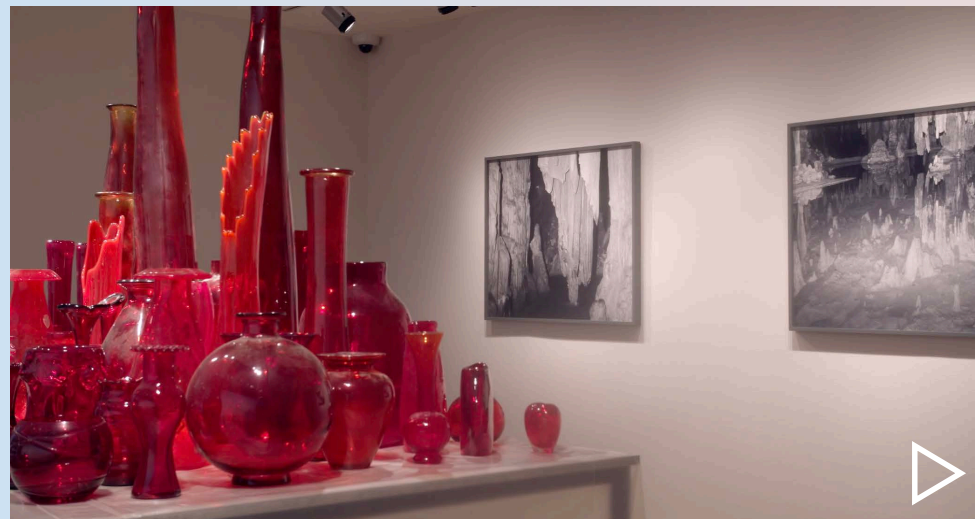
Veronika Pausova, *Contact Lense*, 2018. Oil on canvas.
Courtesy the artist, and Bradley Ertaskiran, Montréal.

Watch & Listen

We continue to grow our digital resources through our online art activities, video program and audio recordings.

Watch our latest documentaries on artists, video exhibition tours, and experience behind-the-scenes at Esker.

Listen to insights from our current and previous exhibiting artists, curators and educators for more in-depth knowledge and a deeper enjoyment of contemporary art.



Chris Curreri: *Thick Skull, Thin Skin*



Louise Bourgeois: *What is The Shape of This Problem*

Self-Guided Tours

Audio and video content about each artist and their work, including interviews with many of the artists in the exhibition: *RELATIONS: Diaspora and Painting*, can be explored via QR codes found on artwork labels throughout the exhibition, and can be accessed on our website [here](#).

Watch an interview with artist Marigold Santos:



Curatorial Tour

Listen to curatorial conversations between Cheryl Sim and Naomi Potter, below and on our [watch & listen page](#).



When visiting Esker, look for green QR codes in each gallery to listen to the curatorial conversations. Ipad's are available to borrow at the front desk on request.

Permanent Collection

For each season of exhibitions, Esker commissions a response from compelling voices within or beyond the visual arts. We ask contributors to consider each of the current exhibitions together as a means of generating new ideas and connections about and between the artworks from a new perspective. Our contributors have ranged from poets, to neuroscientists, to design advocates, and art historians, who have crafted prose, poetry, letters, and musical scores.

Upcoming in Permanent Collection we are pleased to present two new texts:

Jacqueline Bell

Circling

In response to Katie Ohe.

Karen Hines

MONOLOGUE FOR A DREAMING DOG

In response to Liz Magor, Samuel Roy-Bois, and Jon Sasaki.

Parmela Attariwala: *Heme ♦ Stand Healing*

Billy-Ray Belcourt: *WE ARE ALL SUPERNATURAL NOW: KEYWORDS*

Amery Calvelli: *Rewriting Place*

Mark Clintberg: *Sincerely, M*

Cobra Collins: *Winter*

Adam Dickinson: *SPECTRUM*

Joshua Edwards: *Calgarian Triptych: On a visit to Esker Foundation*

Murray Gerges: *LET THEM TAKE SELFIES*

Heather Igloliorte: *Inuit Ceramics and Other Outliers: Creation and Collaboration in the North and South*

Areum Kim: *I fully pledge for the pleasure of the domestic*

Andrea Protzner: *Art, Colour Vision, and More in the Human Brain*

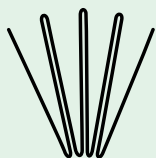
Diana Sherlock: *Precarious Constructions: Wafaa Bilal, Etienne Zack, Richard Ibghy & Marilou Lemmens*

Michael Turner: *Object, Gesture, Iconography, and Belief: Neil Campbell & Jeremy Shaw.*

Discover and read from Permanent Collection [here](#).



Liz Magor, *One Bedroom Apartment*, (detail).
1996-2020. Photo by John Dean.



Explore the Bookshop at Esker

We are pleased to re-launch our Bookshop at Esker with two new publications!

RELATIONS: Diaspora and Painting is produced by the PHI Foundation to accompany the twenty-seven-artist painting exhibition currently on view at Esker.

Quantification Trilogy Reader by Jeremy Shaw is an extension to the artist project and installations of Shaw's exhibition *Quantification Trilogy* previously presented at Esker Foundation from 26 January to 12 May, 2019.

Visit the **Bookshop at Esker** at the gallery or online to order a copy of these new publications and browse all art publications, limited edition artist totes, and pins. Shipping, and local pick-up is available.

BOOKSHOP AT ESKER— & ONLINE!
eskerfoundation.com/bookshop/



RELATIONS: Diaspora and Painting Edited by Cheryl Sim

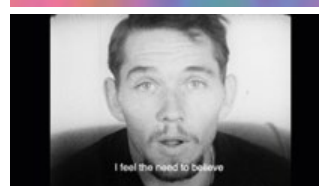
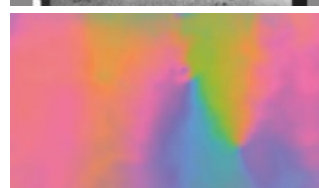
Contributors: Rahel Aima, Mojeanne Behzadi, Eunice Bélidor, Hera Chan, Joséphine Denis, Tammer El-Sheik, Dominique Fontaine, Diane Gistal, Phoebe Greenberg, Joseph Henry, Emily Jan, Adrienne R. Johnson, Marissa Largo, Yaniya Lee, Joseph O. Legaspi, Sarah Nesbitt, James Oscar, Ara Osterweil, Janice Lobo Sapiago, Jonathan Shaughnessy, Cheryl Sim, Robin Simpson, Rachel Spence, Tracy Valcourt, Kaelen Wilson-Goldie, and Paul Zits

This richly illustrated volume explores the multiple and evolving meanings of diaspora, its condition, and its experiences as expressed through painting. *RELATIONS* brings together artists who address questions of diaspora from diverse perspectives, methodologies, and aesthetic languages. With its own deep and complex history, painting becomes a particularly provocative lens through which to explore the complications and diversities that are analogous to the richness and wide range of diasporic experiences. The volume includes full-colour reproductions of these artists' works and is enriched by installation views of the exhibition, as well as texts by the curator and an interdisciplinary collection of writers who explore the practices of each artist.

224 pages, hardcover, colour illustrations, English, and French, 31 × 23 cm.

\$65.00

QUANTIFICATION TRILOGY JEREMY SHAW



Jeremy Shaw Quantification Trilogy Reader

Jeremy Shaw's publication *Quantification Trilogy Reader* operates as an extension of the artist project and installation. It renders the narratives of the films through full-colour, full-bleed stills, which become immersive visual experiences. Each narrative is followed by the original voiceover transcripts, as well as critical texts exploring the questions the project provokes.

This publication accompanies Jeremy Shaw's exhibitions held between 2018–2021. Concerned with the shape of future societies, *The Quantification Trilogy* itself examines fringe culture, theories of evolution, virtual reality, neurotheology, esotericism, dance, the representation of the sublime, as well as the notion of transcendence itself. The trilogy comprises parafictional short films: *Quickeners* (2014), *Liminals* (2017), and *I Can See Forever* (2018). The works are set in the future and explore how marginalized societies confront life after a scientific discovery has mapped and determined all parameters of transcendental spiritual experience.

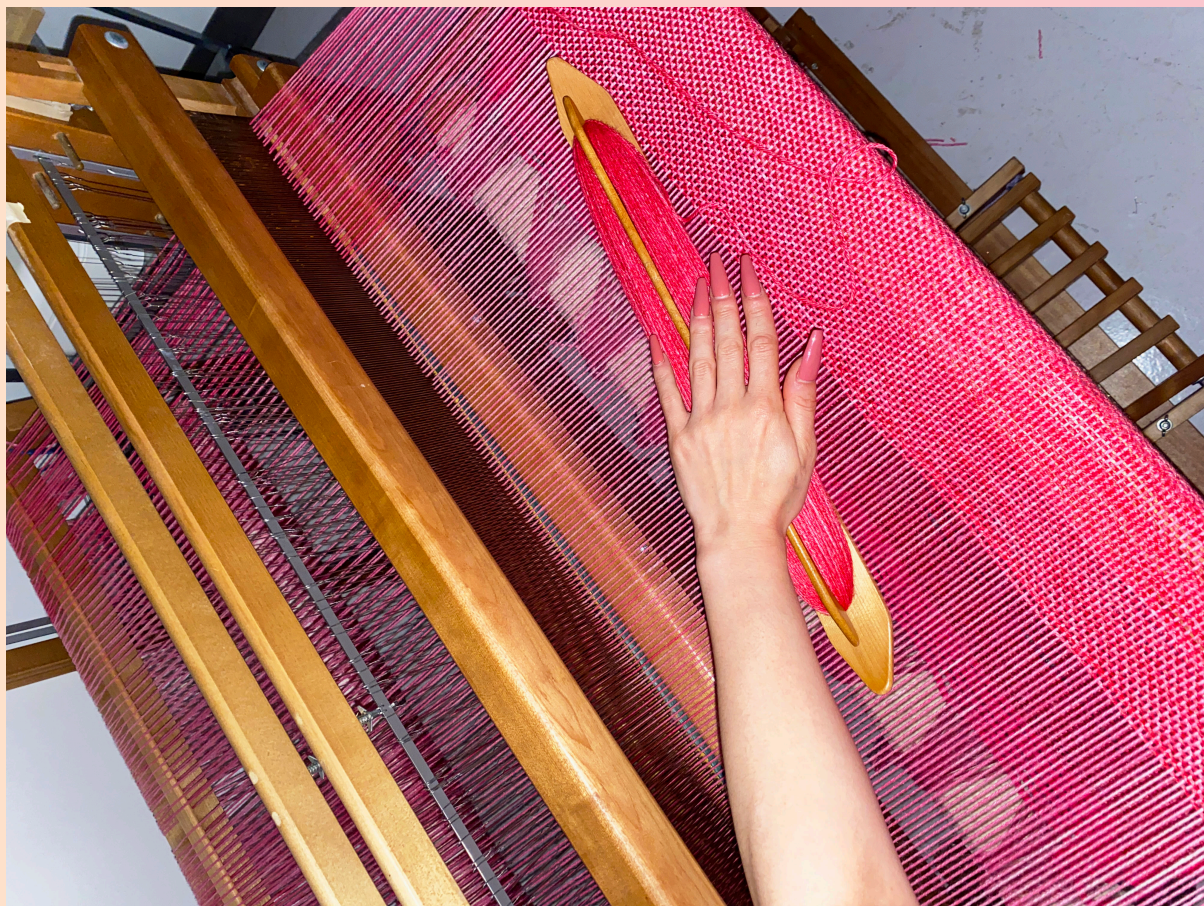
288 pages, hardcover, colour & bw illustrations, English, 17 × 24 cm.

\$50 — email to pre-order your copy:
info@eskerfoundation.com

Jeremy Shaw: Quantification Trilogy Reader published by Information Office in partnership with Kunstverein Hamburg, the Esker Foundation, and the Julia Stoschek Foundation.

AUGUST CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Registration opens
28 July at 11AM



ESKER ELSEWHERE

Louise Bourgeois: What is The Shape of This Problem, from the Collection of Jordan D. Schnitzer and his Family Foundation

Upcoming at the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art at Portland State University

31 August - 4 December 2021

www.pdx.edu/museum-of-art/upcoming

ARTIST TALK WITH MOLLY JF CALDWELL

Thursday 5 August
6-7:30PM - online

MOLLY JF CALDWELL COLLABORATIVE WEAVING WORKSHOP SERIES In-person in the lobby

Workshop 1:
Thursday 19 August, 6-7PM

Workshop 2:
Friday 20 August, 3-4PM

Workshop 3:
Saturday 21 August, 11-12PM

CREATIVE CONNECTIONS: A COLLABORATIVE MURAL MAKING ART CAMP FOR KIDS

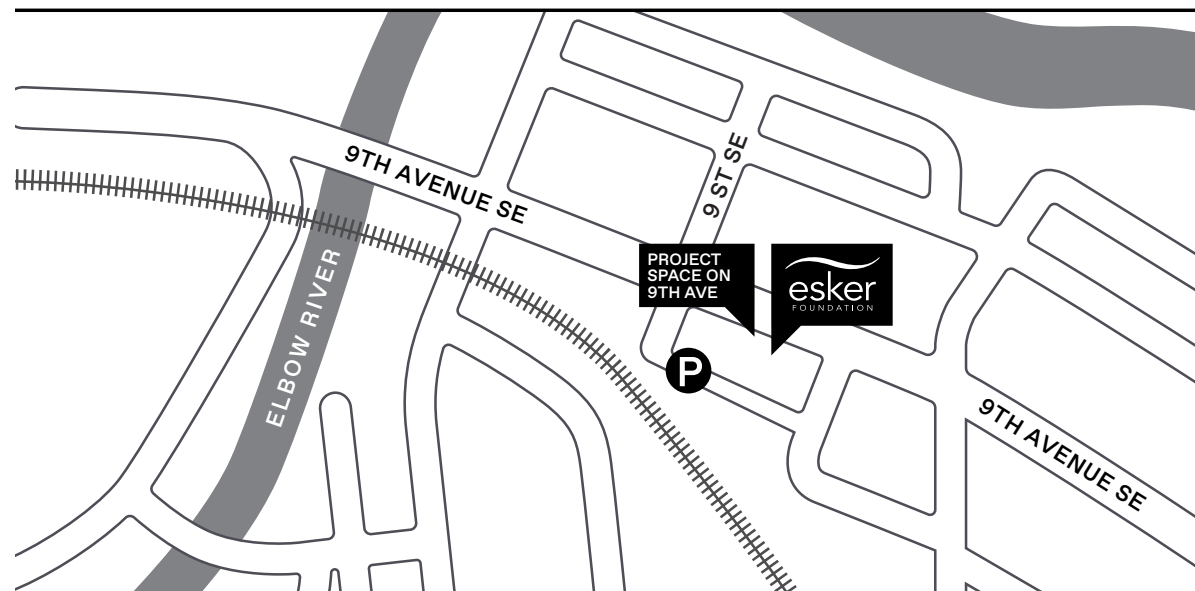
August 24, 25 and 26

Morning program: 10AM-12PM
Afternoon program: 2-4PM

REGISTER FOR PROGRAMS HERE

Image: Courtesy of Molly JF Caldwell.

INFORMATION



LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Esker Foundation is located on the traditional territories of the Niitsitapi (Blackfoot) and the people of the Treaty 7 region in Southern Alberta, which includes the Siksika, the Piikani, the Kainai, the Tsuut'ina, and the Iyarhe Nakoda First Nations. The City of Calgary is also home to Métis Nation of Alberta, Region III. Esker Foundation extends sincere appreciation for the opportunity to live and learn on this territory in respect and gratitude.

ACCESSIBILITY

Esker Foundation is accessible via elevator access up to the fourth floor, which is available on all levels of the building. A swing door with an automatic door control into the gallery is situated adjacent to the gallery's revolving door. A wheelchair-accessible public washroom is available on the fourth floor. There are accessible parking space at the rear of the building.

While Esker Foundation is physically accessible, we all benefit from deeper, relational considerations of accessibility. If you have any questions or requests regarding access to the gallery or programs, please don't hesitate to contact us at 403 930 2490 or by email at info@eskerfoundation.com

Find our location on [what3words](https://www.what3words.com). Use the links below to find precise locations of:

The south building entrance at:
[///familiar.backers.tempting](https://www.familiar.backers.tempting)

Accessible parking spaces:
[///relaxed.behave.takes](https://www.relaxed.behave.takes)

HOURS

Wednesday to Saturday 11-6 PM
Free admission

ONLINE PROGRAM REGISTRATION

Programs are free and open to all.

Please visit:
eskerfoundation.com/program/current
to register

CONTACT US AT

Telephone 403 930 2490
Email info@eskerfoundation.com
Twitter [@EskerFoundation](https://twitter.com/EskerFoundation)
[@EskerCalgary](https://twitter.com/EskerCalgary)
Instagram [@eskerfoundation](https://www.instagram.com/eskerfoundation)
Facebook [Esker Foundation](https://www.facebook.com/EskerFoundation)
Vimeo vimeo.com/esker



Fourth Floor
1011, 9 Avenue SE
Inglewood, Calgary, Alberta
Canada T2G 0H7

