

SPOTLIGHT

Calgary's Esker Foundation offers a chance to skate on art

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So when was the last time you laced up and went for a skate inside an art gallery? On an actual work of art? The correct answer should probably be “never” – unless you experienced artist Mia Feuer's *An Unkindness* when it was installed at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington. The Winnipeg-born artist made headlines with her black synthetic ice-skating rink, installed under an ominous mobile constructed from materials such as tar and raven's wings.

The work was inspired by a trip the artist took to Alberta's oil sands, in particular the upside-down dead trees she encountered. This inverted insertion into the ground, she was told, was meant to give ravens (a group of which may be called an unkindness) a place to nest. Now Ms. Feuer is bringing the work to Alberta, with a show at Calgary's Esker Foundation (where skates in every size will be available to visitors). *Mia Feuer: Synthetic Seasons* is composed of four works by the now Oakland-based artist, including the enormous, ambitious *Boreal*; and *Trap* – a new work created by sculpting Louisiana crab traps together. The works are inspired by the artist's travels to troubled or controversial parts of the world, and thus creates a degree of interconnectivity between the different installations.

The show is one of three exhibitions (which also share a certain connection) opening at the Esker – a privately funded, non-commercial contemporary art gallery in Inglewood. Kevin Schmidt's *A Sign in the Northwest Passage* documents his 2010 project: The Vancouver- and Berlin-based interdisciplinary artist built a cedar billboard emblazoned with apocalyptic messages from the Book of Revelation (eg. “men gnawed their tongues in agony”) and placed the billboard on the ice of the Northwest Passage north of Tuktoyaktuk – an action made possible by the results of climate change. The idea was that it would sail off somewhere after the ice melt – and then he would attempt to track it down.

And the Esker is also showing three films by Guido van der Werve, including his 2007 film *Nummer Acht, everything is going to be all right*, which documents a performance in which the Dutch artist strolls calmly ahead of a 3,500-tonne icebreaker off the west coast of Finland.

These icy images are sure to prompt some heated discussion this spring and summer.

Mia Feuer: Synthetic Seasons; Kevin Schmidt: A Sign in the Northwest Passage; and Guido van der

Werve: Nummers Vier, Acht, Veertien are at the Esker Foundation May 23-Sept. 6.

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