



CARBON:

Heather Magusin

EXHIBITION GUIDE



Alberta
Foundation
for the **Arts**

TRAVELLING EXHIBITION PROGRAM

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The Alberta Foundation for the Arts (AFA) has supported a provincial travelling exhibition program since 1981. The mandate of the AFA Travelling Exhibition Program is to provide every Albertan with the opportunity to enjoy visual art exhibitions in their community. Three regional galleries and one arts organization coordinate the program for the AFA:

Northwest Region:

The Art Gallery of Grande Prairie, Grande Prairie

Northeast and North Central Region:

The Art Gallery of Alberta, Edmonton

Southwest Region:

The Alberta Society of Artists, Calgary

Southeast Region:

The Esplanade Arts and Heritage Centre, Medicine Hat

Each year, more than 600,000 Albertans enjoy many exhibitions in communities ranging from High Level in the north to Milk River in the south and virtually everywhere in between. The AFA Travelling Exhibition Program also offers educational support material to help educators integrate the visual arts into the school curriculum.

Exhibitions for the TREX program are curated from a variety of sources, including private and public collections. A major part of the program assists in making the AFA's extensive art collection available to Albertans. This growing art collection consists of over 9,000 artworks showcasing the creative talents of more than 1700 artists. The AFA art collection reflects the development of the vibrant visual arts community in the province and has become an important cultural legacy for all Albertans.



The AFA and TREX partners respectfully acknowledge that the artistic activity we support takes place on the territories of Treaty 6, 7 and 8: lands of First Nations and Métis peoples.





CARBON: Heather Magusin

"[Humans] carried in their toolkits and genetic heritage a power no other creature possessed. They could kindle fire...Fire had two vital properties unlike nature's other physical disturbances or humanity's toolkit. Unlike a thrown spear or a club, it could propagate, and unlike a flood or a glacier it spread not against a biota but through it. Fire was different. For a landscape like the boreal forest, where fire was also fundamental, this difference rendered fire unlike anything else, bonded not only to life but also to humanity." – Stephen Pyne, *Awful Splendour: A Fire History of Canada*

Regrowth, Renewal, Recycle.

Centered on the aftergrowth of wildfire sites in Boreal forests across Alberta, the 15 photographs in *Carbon*: Heather Magusin embody all three of these words, as each striking image presents us with various stages of fire's vital role in the ecological lifecycle of the Boreal Forest. As the above quote by environmental historian Stephen Pyne observes, fire has a lengthy, significant, and complicated relationship to humanity. Part of the complexity of this connection can be understood through the chemical element carbon. Carbon is one of the principal visible by-products produced when fire burns through something. Yet, carbon is also the central organic unit of all living things, acting as a binding structure that sustains and upholds life. In this way, carbon is representative of the duality that Pyne also speaks of in relation to fire—the absolute importance of fire to life, as well as its destructive potential. In ecological science, the balance of these two sides is fundamental to the Adaptive Cycle in the natural environment, which cycles through stages of growth, maturity, collapse and renewal.

Heather Magusin's photographs capture how intricately intertwined these ecological stages are, as lush, vibrant shoots of green contrast against dark carbonized branches and tree trunks. The purple flowers present in many of the photos—fireweed—are themselves indications of the delicate and complex ecological cycle of renewal as they are the first plants to regrow in a burn-site, taking advantage of the sunlight available in the freshly opened landscape to form splendid fields of magenta. These plants take over the site until evergreens like the Lodgepole pine—which requires fire to release seeds—regrow and claim the space once more.

Each photo represents Heather Magusin's personal exploration of forests across Alberta, presenting a close, sensory, and ground-level view of the regrowth of burn-sites. The intimacy of the photos is a deliberate contrast from panoramic and distanced views often shown of wildfire, allowing us to see the minute details of the various stages of regrowth and the important role fire plays in the life cycle of many Boreal flora and fauna. Inspired by the legacy of photographers like Ansel Adams, Magusin's work is rooted in ecological goals, and asks questions about our relationship to, and understanding of, the natural world. Through highlighting the rejuvenating potential of fire, and its integral role in the ecology of Boreal forests, Magusin's photos ask us to consider how we co-exist with fire in the present and in the future, as well as the long history of fire in the landscape and in human society.



ABOUT THE ARTIST

ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Heather Magusin is a photographer and Master of Arts student born and raised in Grande Prairie, Alberta. She grew up closely with its natural landscapes; languid summers were made of river mud, mosquito bites, Saskatoon berries, and the music of aspen leaves; long, dark winters of biting prairie wind, thigh-deep snow, and northern lights. When she picked up a camera over fifteen years ago, it was this rich clash of the natural and human worlds she sought to capture. Recent projects include a photo essay series on the beautiful and paradoxical landscapes of Lebanon called Lebanon Diaries, and a photo essay on climate change in the Yukon, an excerpt of which is published in Briarpatch Magazine under the title Flux. Currently, her time is spent photographing and researching the contemporary relationship between humans and wildfire in western Canada. She currently lives in Victoria while finishing her Master of Arts at UBC Okanagan and working as a research assistant on the Living with Wildfire project.

ARTIST STATEMENT

To live in Northern Alberta is to live between two worlds. One is still wild, wed to the beauty, hostility of the bush, and the other is eagerly modern, built around the oil field that brought us wealth but desensitized us to the rhythms of the natural world. This was never a paradox, just reality.

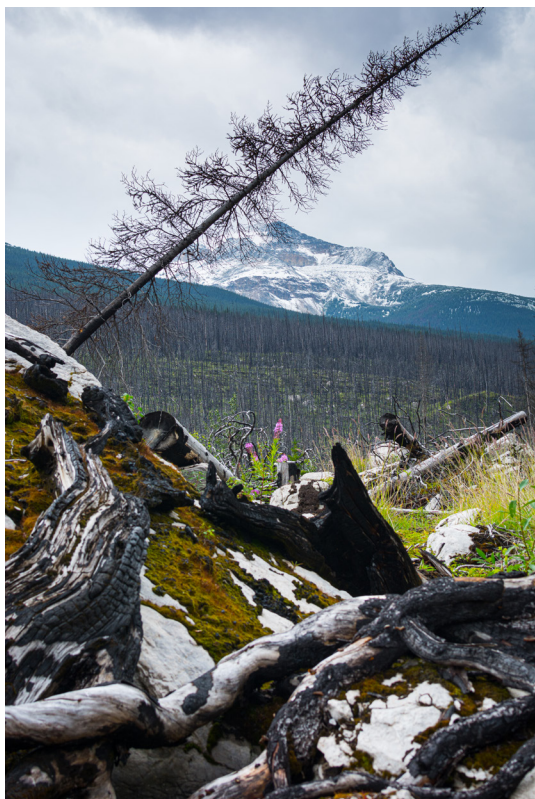
Over the last few years, I've continued to explore these two worlds in an effort to reconcile them intellectually, artistically, and emotionally. This has led me to pursue a Master's thesis on the sociology of wildfire and taken me on two bike tours across Alberta and BC. After two years of research and photo journeys, I've come to see Alberta's natural ecosystems and its oil and gas industry not as irreconcilable, but as different expressions of a similar millennia-old process: creative destruction through fire.

Carbon is the visual coalescence of these three things: the oil dependence of my Alberta hometown, the beauty of the boreal forest, and the increasingly threatening and badly misunderstood reality of wildfire. It is also their reconciliation, an attempt to heal the metabolic rift between our limited understanding of fire and its reality on the land we call our home.

Taken in burn sites in Alberta, these photos defy the dominant narrative of fires as spectacular destructive events. With handheld, intimate shots, Carbon invites you into the world of the fire-adapted Boreal forest. These scenes are not spectacular; they are intimate and commonplace, attentive to the quiet details of the landscape. They are not destructive; they show green shoots and blooms; open space and berries. And they are not events; they are snapshots of a cyclical process of release and renewal that goes far beyond the moment of the fire.

Ultimately, the metaphorical and visual parallels in these photos show that fire, the forest, and our fossil-fuel dependent lives are not at odds. Rather, they are part of the necessary and inevitable cycling of carbon.

IMAGE INVENTORY



Heather Magusin
Decaying
Digital Photograph
2021



Heather Magusin
Fragmenting
Digital Photograph
2021

IMAGE INVENTORY



Heather Magusin
Rising
Digital Photograph
2021



Heather Magusin
Inheriting
Digital Photograph
2021

IMAGE INVENTORY



Heather Magusin
Standing
Digital Photograph
2021



Heather Magusin
Emerging
Digital Photograph
2021

IMAGE INVENTORY

Heather Magusin
Growing
Digital Photograph
2021



Heather Magusin
Yearning
Digital Photograph
2021



Heather Magusin
Blooming
Digital Photograph
2021

IMAGE INVENTORY

Heather Magusin
Gazing
Digital Photograph
2021



Heather Magusin
Falling
Digital Photograph
2021

IMAGE INVENTORY



Heather Magusin
Flaming
Digital Photograph
2021



Heather Magusin
Seeking
Digital Photograph
2021

IMAGE INVENTORY



Heather Magusin
Offering
Digital Photograph
2021



Heather Magusin
Gathering
Digital Photograph
2021

CRATE LISTINGS

CRATE # 1

1. GATHERING, photograph
2. EMERGING, photograph
3. STANDING, photograph
4. FRAGMENTING, photograph
5. BLOOMING, photograph
6. GROWING, photograph
7. FLAMING, photograph
8. OFFERING, photograph
9. INHERITING, photograph
10. YEARNING, photograph
11. GAZING, photograph

NOTE: FRAGILE WORKS- Carefully review how the works are packed.

NOTE: Only remove foam packing that is marked remove/replace.
Keep all packing with the crate.
Repacking – Line up the numbers.

Concerns Contact: Art Gallery of Grande Prairie
Robin Lynch – TREX Curator/Manager, 780.357.7483
Region 1, AFA Travelling Exhibitions

CRATE LISTINGS

CRATE # 2

- 12. FALLING, photograph
- 13. RISING, photograph
- 14. SEEKING, photograph
- 15. DECAYING, photograph
- 16. Didactic 1
- 17. Didactic 2

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