

The following is one of six projects that took place during the summer of 2010 as part of the [Celebration of the Bow River](#) event. This series of temporary public art interventions gave citizens and visitors of Calgary the opportunity to celebrate and reflect upon the precious Bow River.

I am the River

Artist – Derek Besant

Renowned artist Derek Besant created a contemporary art installation of 12 larger-than-life photo-based water portraits of local Calgarians. The water portraits appeared on Calgary Transit buses, C-trains, LRT stations and outdoor billboards from July 17 – September 13, 2010. Besant used his imagery as a metaphor for humans' relationship with the life-sustaining Bow River, while reflecting the celebratory aspects of each individual's relationship with the Bow.

"People are 70 per cent water and we can think of Calgarians as being 70 per cent Bow River. This installation connects the people of Calgary back to the river," says Besant.



The river is made up of many unseen drainage tributaries, underground systems, aquifers and watersheds that spread through the cityscape like a nervous system. Besant's water portraits flow through the city, targeting key city sites above ground which echo these spreading water systems below.

The Artist



My work hinges on an unorthodox use of materials and technology - realizing hybrid forms relating to themes of memory, language, and the body as metaphor.

The dislocation of the figure often haunts my imagery and explores themes such as sleep, dreams, migration, forgetting, falling, silence, reflection or submersion. The physical / psyche balance is always in question. My public art pieces always take on their own life within the setting they are integrated into.

Many exhibitions are constructed around the ephemeral underpinnings of a concept without answers... only questions. Figures blur into oblivion, fall out of reach into nothing, leave their impressions in unmade motel bed sheets or sink below surfaces in poetic choreographed movements accompanied by strange soundscapes.

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