

# Celebration of the Bow River 2010

a project of The City of Calgary Public Art Program and Utilities & Environmental Protection Department

Text by Linda Hawke

Photography by Carlos Amat

Design and layout by Daniel Blais

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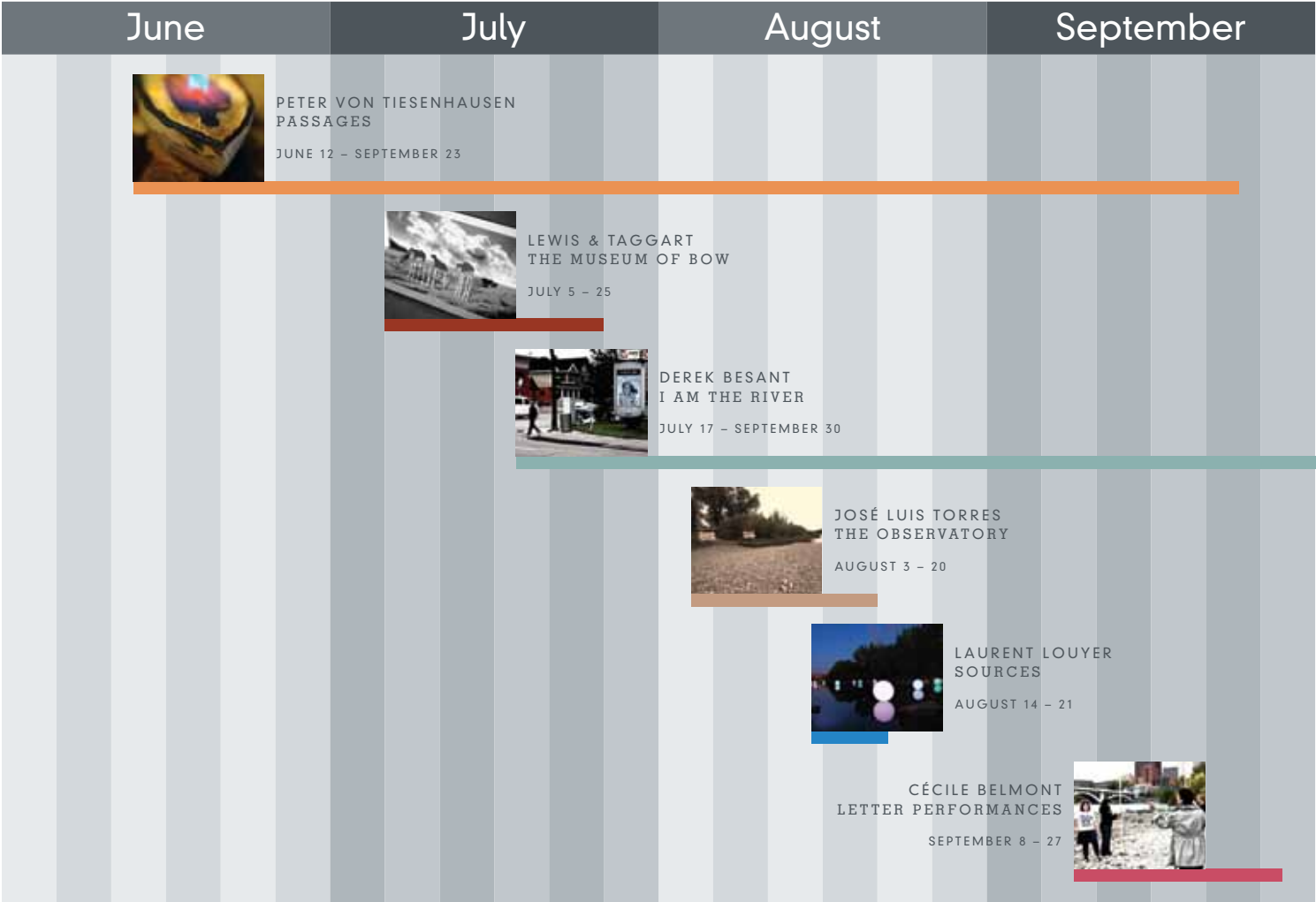
# Catalogue Artists Biographies

**Carlos Amat** has photographed the Queen of England, documented the backstreets of London, Paris, and Prague, and flown with the Canadian Snowbirds while they demonstrated maneuvers over the Rocky Mountains. A 25-year veteran of newspapers and magazines with many commercial projects to his credit, Carlos is an independent photographer with a taste for diversity and a drive to capture the gamut of human experience.

**Daniel Blais** is a graphic designer who has a passion for projects with artistic values at their core. Self-employed since graduating from the Alberta College of Art and Design in 1999, Daniel's graceful integration of layout, typography, and message serves business, non-profit, and cultural sector clients alike. Daniel is a fan of live music and an enthusiastic collector of contemporary visual art.

**Linda Hawke** endeavours to put the richness of artists' visual expressions into words. She earned a degree in education at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design and applied it for close to 20 years working in public museums and art galleries. She sees her freelance writing as a way to extend her educational reach. Linda also teaches, pursues her art practice and is an avid sailor.

# Timeline 2010



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Celebration of the Bow River 2010

# Introduction



# Summer of the Bow

“Every second, ninety cubic metres of water rushes by us in the river.” Paul Fesko launched *Celebration of the Bow River 2010* with this lively fact. Fesko heads The City of Calgary’s Strategic Services, Utilities & Environmental Protection (UEP). As a result of his vision, *Celebration* punctuated the Calgary summer with six contemporary art projects.<sup>1</sup> This collaboration between UEP and the Public Art Program proved powerful; it merged ecology, artistry and community to bring the river into public focus. On that particular June day the Bow tumbled past as artist Peter von Tiesenhausen orchestrated an eager crowd’s involvement. The spirit of exploration and plurality that defined *Celebration* was heartily engaged.

The projects were chosen from a pool of proposals submitted in response to an international call to artists. Linked by their common connection to the river, they spanned artistic and geographic boundaries. Performance art, interventions with nature, mobile photographic portraits and a narrative-based collection told the river’s story from creative and diverse perspectives. These works portrayed the Bow as both specific watershed and metaphorical presence, providing abundant opportunities for viewers to make emotional connections.

It was this end that came to mind for Fesko when The City introduced its Public Art Policy in 2003. The document presented an opportunity to communicate UEP departmental values in a way that would make them personally meaningful for Calgarians.<sup>2</sup> UEP Public Art Plan followed soon after, marking the start of an ongoing partnership between the UEP

and the Public Art Program.<sup>3</sup> The plan not only embedded water awareness within the public presentation of art, it redefined public art in Calgary by including artworks of a non-permanent nature. The immediacy and excitement of time-sensitive works became central to *Celebration*. Tom Tittermore, chair of the Public Art Board, was in favour: “The memory of the spheres floating in Prince’s Island lagoon [during *Sources*] is part of people’s experience of that place,” and it will perpetually influence their relationship to the space.<sup>4</sup>

The presentation of temporary public art may be new for The City, but it is well-supported in Calgary’s contemporary community. A willing partner was found in TRUCK Gallery, a local artist run centre that holds its summer residency program in a 1975 recreational vehicle. *Contemporary Art Mobile Public Exhibition Rig* (CAMPER) is a studio on wheels dedicated to the development of new artworks, new ways of working and engaging the public. TRUCK director Renato Vitic saw *Celebration* as “proactive and engaging . . . and that is what CAMPER is all about. It was a natural fit.”<sup>5</sup> Three of *Celebration*’s projects — *The Museum of Bow*, *The Observatory* and *Letter Performance* — were co-presented by TRUCK. The artists used the R.V. variously as a studio, gallery, workshop space and mode of transporting supplies. The creative process gained transparency as artists parked and worked in various public and riverside locations.

Reflecting on two and a half years of development, public art co-ordinator Heather Aitken observed that *Celebration*



“became so much more than [the project team] could ever have imagined . . . ” as the artists shaped their visions to include the community and the landscape of the Bow.<sup>6</sup> The artists generously invited us to witness that process. The incredible commitment, risk-taking and insight this writer and photographer encountered as a result are documented in the following pages. We hope you enjoy our response to the challenge of capturing an ephemeral program in lasting form.

#### Endnotes:

- 1 Heather Aitken described Paul Fesko as the “visionary” for this project in a conversation with the author, Calgary, December 7, 2010.
- 2 Paul Fesko in conversation with the author, Calgary, November 29, 2010. Re Public Art Policy: “On May 27, 2003, City Council approved the fundamental principle of a Public Art Policy whereby one percent of all capital Upgrade and Growth projects over \$1 million would be designated for the commission, purchase, and installation of public art.” – From The City of Calgary website: [www.calgary.ca](http://www.calgary.ca) > Public Art Program > About the Program. Council approved the Public Art Plan on January 12, 2004.
- 3 The UEP Public Art Plan was completed in 2007 and can be found on The City of Calgary’s website: [www.calgary.ca/docgallery/bu/recreation/public\\_art/uep\\_public\\_art\\_plan.pdf](http://www.calgary.ca/docgallery/bu/recreation/public_art/uep_public_art_plan.pdf).
- 4 Tom Tittlemore in conversation with the author, Calgary, September 8, 2010.
- 5 Renato Vitic in conversation with the author, Calgary, July 23, 2010.
- 6 Aitken conversation, December 7, 2010.

# Acknowledgements

The City of Calgary Public Art Program and Utilities & Environmental Protection department would like to thank the artists, staff, volunteers and communities that made *Celebration of the Bow River 2010* possible.