

As Long as the River Flows Responses to the Oil Catastrophe — North Saskatchewan River

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Public Engagement

Reception: N/A

Visitors: 54 people



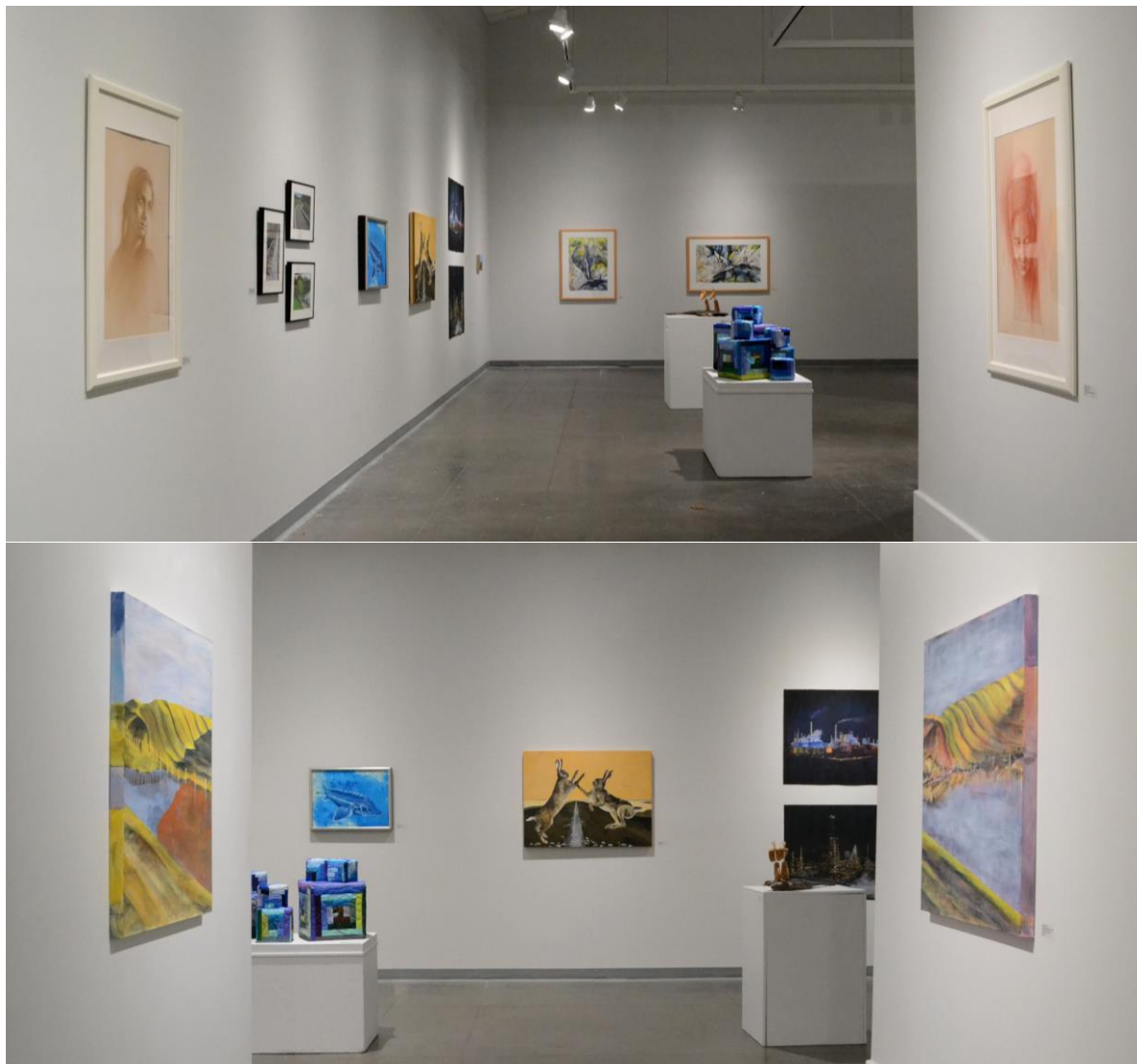
As Long as the River Flows: Responses to the Oil Catastrophe—North Saskatchewan River, installation view in Main Gallery

As Long as the River Flows emerged in 2017, when Leah Garven (Chapel Gallery, North Battleford, SK) and Jesse Campbell (Mann Art Gallery) issued a joint call to artists for work that responded to the 2016 Husky oil spill in the North Saskatchewan River.

The spill had taken place over the course of two days in July when Husky's pipeline failed and leaked 225,000 litres of heavy crude oil into the river. It affected around 70,000 residents in communities including North Battleford and Prince Albert, contaminated drinking water, killed wildlife, damaged spawning grounds and impacted a great many Indigenous communities along the river. Politically and economically, the disaster coincided with a severe drop in global oil prices

and swelling criticism around the world of the carbon-based economy. The Husky oil spill quickly became a slimy, noxious sign of human contempt for the environment and a wake-up call to the profound value of natural water systems.

However, while the oil spill provided the catalyst for the exhibition, this is not protest art. The artistic decisions and curatorial choices made were not intended to be read as clear statements of opposition. Pulling back from the particular issues and debates the catastrophe gave rise to, the work in *As Long as the River Flows* is better understood as a meditation on the value of Saskatchewan's waterways, their interconnectedness with myriad other natural systems, the value we place on the environment – and ultimately, ourselves.



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