

## ***How the Sky Carries the Sun* Audio Tour**

Welcome to the exhibition *How the Sky Carries the Sun* by Katherine Boyer at the Art Gallery of Regina.

Katherine Boyer uses process to understand herself through complex and ever-changing relationships with the world, society, history, and materials. The artist was guided by the weather, seasons, and sun throughout a sustained creative process.

In the artworks that comprise this exhibition, we see Boyer's deep research that she processes through arduous and detailed hand-making. Each knot, stitch, timber join, and plant forms a tactile conduit between the body, history, materials and lived experience.

Boyer resists reducing herself to one or another term in binary opposition; instead, she embraces uncertainty, messiness and permeability between facets of the Self. Understanding comes from asking, "Am I the sky, or am I the sun?"

### Start outside the gallery doors:

Please be aware that natural oils from your fingertips are harmful to artworks, especially to the textiles used in Katherine Boyer's exhibition *How the Sky Carries the Sun*. Because of these sensitive materials, even careful touching is not permitted. Please also be aware of your movements, coats, and bags.

[indicate coat rack and urge to put bags down inside.]

Guided by the rhythm of the seasons, Boyer has created this exhibition of entirely new work for the Art Gallery of Regina.

I'm Sandee Moore, curator of exhibitions and programming at the Art Gallery of Regina, and I'm delighted to guide you through *How the Sky Carries the Sun* in this audio tour.

We'll start the tour by going to the left through the entrance door and moving counterclockwise through the gallery. You'll see the exhibition didactic panel on

the wall right beside the door with the artist's name (Katherine Boyer), the exhibition title (*How the Sky Carries the Sun*), exhibition dates and a short introduction to the exhibition written by me. Boyer has written an extended artist's statement explaining many of her artworks in detail; it's posted on the gallery's back wall opposite the gallery entrance.

Photos are allowed. If you post photographs of the exhibition online, be sure to credit the artist and tag the Art Gallery of Regina.

### *Cyan Blue Eclipse:*

*Cyan Blue Eclipse* depicts the artists' lengthy collaboration with the sun and water to grow plants in her garden. Her nontoxic cyanotype prints on cotton depict the plants she tended or harvested from the wild. Cyanotype is a "direct photographic process" that doesn't require a camera, but like plants, requires sunlight. Paper or fabric is treated with an iron solution that turns blue when exposed to sunlight; areas covered by objects remain white, recording a silhouetted outline (kind of like a reverse shadow). The title of this artwork, *Cyan Blue Eclipse*, refers to the shade of pale blue (cyan) used in colour printing and how blocking or eclipsing the sun's rays creates the image in the cyanotype process.

The symmetrical botanical images on the cloth panels serve as a diary of the past summer: a murder of crows is nestled between abstracted shapes of meaningful plants like wild rose, fireweed and tobacco. While destructive forest fires raged, the artist noticed an unusual number of crows flocking to the skies and the land around her.

*Cyan Blue Eclipse* doesn't just depict the natural world; it is a partnership with the natural world. Viewers can become the weather as their movements stir the air, generating breezes that lift and flutter the diaphanous textiles, underscoring this ecosystem's fragility.

### Queer Hometown Horizon:

Next, we circle counterclockwise through the gallery to *Queer Hometown Horizon*.

Like a swipe with a highlighter pen, a long jagged line marks the wall above a long narrow crate built of chipboard. This fluorescent yellow line is, in fact, a hooked rug, an amusing inversion of the usual placement of a mat on the floor. Its narrow shape makes it hard to imagine that this shaggy carpet could be an item of furniture or comfort. It is a glowing horizon line where suburban rooftops meet the sun-drenched sky. Titled *Queer Hometown Horizon*, this artwork depicts the neighbourhood where the artist grew up - her hometown horizon.

"Queer" is sometimes used as a verb, extending its eschewal of expected heterosexuality to resist unspoken norms and creatively pervert hegemony. Katherine Boyer tufted this fluffy carpet not from wool or yarn but by deconstructing and repurposing a piece of equipment called used by bricklayers called mason's line. Mason's line ensures that bricks are aligned and straight. Boyer's line is anything but straight. Not only does it mimic the wildly vaulted line of multiple peaked rooftops, but she is also using it to tell a story of nascent queer longings, or non-straightness, rooted in childhood experiences.

### *The Sky Vest:*

Continuing to move through the gallery counterclockwise, we come to a large sculpture titled *The Sky Vest*.

Boyer has invested *The Sky Vest* with meticulous, repetitive labour. It took her over a year to sew innumerable tiny gray, white, and blue seed beads to the smoked moosehide vest creating a swirling skyscape of tumbled clouds. The artist fitted the vest meticulously to her own body, imbuing it with a personal connection transferred through prolonged contact between her hand and the garment and functioning as a stand-in for the artist's body.

Almost every artwork in Katherine Boyer's *How the Sky Carries the Sun* includes hard and soft components, which reference her seemingly dichotomous identity and, indeed, the fact that no one can be reduced to one of a pair of seemingly opposite dualities. In *The Sky Vest*, hard and soft components are mutually supportive and interdependent: a large 2 x 4 lumber roof truss structure carries the vest aloft like a triumphant flag. At the same time, the vest is a critical structural component; the beams are connected not with metal hardware but with a pliable and delicate item of clothing.

Notably, the vest does not hang limply from this structure. Instead, it clothes the towering architecture like an integral piece of a powerful body.

Walk around the back of this sculpture, *The Sky Vest*, to see the entire back of the garment covered with a sky ranging from cerulean to indigo and scattered with light, cotton-y clouds. Boyer describes this view of the sky as one seen from her singular perspective, rooting the work in her gaze, her experience and her body on the land looking to the heavens. Viewers mimic the artist's activity of turning her gaze to the clouds when they must tip their heads to look up the vest. One feels vulnerably human under the vast shelter of the sky and the essential shelter of the residential roof. While *The Sky Vest* presents a reverent view of atmospheric forces, contrasted with the wonderous protection wrought by hands stitching clothing and hewing shelter.

Scent viscerally creates an experience of the body in the exhibition; *The Sky Vest* is redolent of freshly cut lumber, and smoke used to preserve the moosehide. This relationship to the natural world through labour and the body is a touchpoint in Boyer's exhibition, referenced in her time-consuming processes of rug hooking, knotting, stitching, and joining that she uses to make her artworks.

### *Heavy/Soft:*

Clustered around *The Sky Vest* are several sculptures collectively titled *Heavy/Soft*. *Heavy/Soft* is several chaotic piles of puffy boxes, lightly balanced or slightly crumpled. The artist used the back of some blue faux leather fabric, viewing the production marks on the reverse as a cloud-dappled sky. Misusing things can be an act of resistance, transforming the dominant narrative and making space for difference, such as queerness or Métissage. Although empty and seemingly weightless, these boxes could fulfil their function to contain and carry items. Instead, they are emblematic of the inseparability of hard and soft, use and misuse, function and beauty.

### *Memories the Sundogs Herd:*

*Memories The Sundogs Herd* is autobiographical, reflecting faint memories and ancestral connection to the land of the Souris Valley.

Two small, single lightboxes flank an array of glowing squares. Treated with UV coating that shifts through the spectrum as the viewer moves and alters their viewpoint, these lightboxes replicate sundogs. Sundogs are a visual phenomenon producing a pair of supplementary suns on each side of the actual sun when icy winter air scatters the sunlight.

Sheets of raw OSB or chipboard angled against the wall, referencing a lean-to shelter's basic and provisional structure, support a luminous grid of pastel-hued lightboxes. Typically, the board's raw, mottled service surface marked with manufacturer's stamps and lumberyard codes is unseen, hidden beneath decorative finishes. The artist exposes the layers of information about the manufacture of cheap wood products, encouraging an empathetic investigation of our relationship to trees and construction.

*Memories The Sundogs Herd* references another kind of construction: the material story-telling of quilting. Like sewing fabric patches together to make a quilt, the artist has arranged rigid wooden frames to form an interlocking geometric pattern. Scraps of memory or fabric are interwoven to form a whole narrative.

The hard angles of the lightboxes are filled with Tyvek construction wrap, another material customarily hidden from view.

Diagonal lines extend across each backlit Tyvek square, intersecting angles reminiscent of roof trusses or an aerial view of rural grid road. Vague silhouettes houses and barns, livestock and swallows are buried within the gentle arch and sweep of Tyvek fibres, like blowing prairie grasses.

### ***The Harder I work, the Less I Exist, the More I Become the Work: the Closed Line***

Finally, circling toward the centre of the gallery, we see Boyer's sculpture *The Harder I work, the Less I Exist, the More I Become the Work: the Closed Line*. In this piece, Boyer shows her humour. Again, she displays what would generally be stored out of sight; in this case, she replaced gallery pedestals with the rough wooden crates used to ship the artwork to exhibit the duo of sculptures that comprise this work.

A tree root, dug up, softened with steam and twisted into a large knot, is paired with a length of clothesline sleeved in shiny blue plastic knotted so many times that it is a tightly coiled snarl.

Many of the ways that Boyer creates her artworks rely upon knot-making: sewing, stitching beads to hide, and tufting yarn for rugs. With their repeated squares bisected by diagonals, even her lightboxes reference how quilters stitch and knot together patches to make their finished work.

Tying knots can mean objects are secure or ideas complete. However, knots can also be frustrating; "tying yourself up in knots" means worrying or confusing yourself. Boyer tied a plastic clothesline in so many knots that it no longer functions for hanging clothes illustrating how we can defeat ourselves by overthinking or overworking.

(outside) *Hello from Yesterday:*

There is one other piece in Boyer's exhibition that is not visible in the gallery. It is called *Hello from Yesterday*, a flag flying from the flagpole outside Neil Balkwill Centre.

Pennants and Pom Poms are "crafty" objects that historically served practical purposes and signalled meanings. Katherine Boyer printed three pennants with a view of the sky she photographed in September from this very point.

*Hello from Yesterday* references the diminutive semaphore flags used by ships to convey messages with their graphic designs; Boyer invites us to read the sky in her trio of pennants topped by an oversized pompom of multicoloured remnants. The pompom could be shaken in encouragement by a cheerleader, ornament a military uniform or clergy vestment or be an affordable way of turning scraps into decoration. The wind might wave the flags in a cheery hello, bawl mournfully, blow a sultry "how do you do," or whimper quietly: all reminders that yesterday is still present on the land, in the air and stirring the clouds.

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Thank you for visiting the Art Gallery of Regina to see Katherine Boyer's solo exhibition *How the Sky Carries the Sun*.

The Art Gallery of Regina is a nonprofit, public art gallery that programs contemporary art that tells the stories of Saskatchewan artists and those from adjoining treaty territories.

We are grateful to our core funders, Sk-arts and the city of Regina, who enable us to make our exhibitions free to the public while compensating artists for their work.

I especially thank you for taking the time to listen to this audio tour and attend this exhibition. You can support the Art Gallery of Regina by becoming a member, donating, or both. Visit our website, [www.artgalleryofregina.ca](http://www.artgalleryofregina.ca), for details on becoming part of our gallery's community and more information about *How the Sky Carries the Sun* and the AGR's other programming.