

For Immediate Release: May 29, 2023

Exhibition Proposes Tender Touch as a Parallel Between the Ill-fated Shackleton Antarctic Expedition and The Artist's Experiences as an Artistic Swimmer

*From June 16 to August 13, experience the visceral frailty of bodies and comfort of touch in Becky Thera's underwater films and embroidered fabrics in a solo exhibition titled *Embrace* at The Art Gallery of Regina*



image: Becky Thera, *Banner* (detail), textiles, variable dimensions, 2023.

Regina, SK:

Artist Becky Thera returns to her hometown of Regina to exhibit her ethereal underwater films and rippling swags of embroidered fabric in a solo exhibition titled *Embrace* at The Art Gallery of Regina (2420 Elphinstone Street) from June 16 to August 13, 2023.

Thera's exhibition draws unexpected parallels between the ill-fated Shackleton Antarctic expedition and her experiences as an artistic swimmer (formerly known as synchronized swimming) to locate non-gendered models for

tenderness and touch.

The experience of social isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic caused the artist to reflect upon the three years that crew members from the Shackleton expedition were stranded in the Antarctic; she likens the pandemic to "the idea of being adrift on an ice floe, disconnected from a world you once knew." In Shackleton's memoir *South!*, the artist discovered descriptions, particularly Shackleton's tender recounting of how the crew, continually wet and cold in their small craft, huddled together for warmth to inspire her exhibition, *Embrace*. "When we were not on watch, we lay in each other's arms for warmth. Our frozen suits thawed where our bodies met, and as the slightest movement exposed these comparatively warm spots to the biting air, we clung motionless, whispering each to his companion our hopes and thoughts."

Conceiving of stitching as caring-in-action, Thera has embroidered silhouettes reinterpreting photographs by Frank Hurley, the Shackleton expedition photographer, on rippling waves of fabric. The artist has selected images from Hurley's archive that depict profound loneliness and tragic scenes coupled with acts of care. Through the long and intimate process of embroidering, the artist translates her care to those shown in the images as her hand repeatedly caresses the fabric with each careful stitch.

Admitting troubling aspects of stitching traditions, Thera's exhibition also touches on restrictive gender norms and the devaluation of traditional "women's work." The artist's great-grandmother's embroidery patterns — child-like imagery of puppies, kittens, and flowers — represent ideal womanhood. Drained of their colour and frayed at the edges, Thera's embroideries seek to tear apart binary gender division and restrictive ideas of performing one's gender well and productively.

Water is a malleable motif throughout the exhibition, threatening to drown, offering the freedom of flotation and enveloping bodies in a liquid embrace. A soundtrack of swelling waves and whale songs lightly echoes through the gallery, reminding us that we are not alone, tempting us to let go of what weighs us down.

Join us to celebrate the profound power inherent in softness during a time when we often feel like we are drowning in trauma, violence, and injustice at the opening reception for *Embrace* from 7-9 PM on Friday, June 16.

Admission to the Art Gallery of Regina is always free; we request that visitors wear medical masks.

Media contact:

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Contact the Moore to arrange interviews with the artist (Becky Thera) in English. The artist can be reached by phone, email or appear in person the week of June 12th.

Please note that this email contains a link to a GoogleDrive folder of images that may be reproduced.

Links:

Reproducible images:

[reproducible images](#)

Websites:

[exhibition webpage](#)

[Becky Thera website](#)

Artist's bio:

Becky Thera is an interdisciplinary artist living and working in Edmonton, Alberta on Treaty 6 Territory. Thera completed her MFA in Art and Design at the University of Alberta in 2018. Her MFA research, which explored trauma in relation to personal, intergenerational and systemic gender-based violence, was awarded a SSHRC (CGS M) grant.

Thera works in video, photography, embroidery, drawing, and performance. With an extensive history in synchronized swimming, Thera has been working as a coach and choreographer since 2007. This experience influences the involvement of performance and water in her artistic practice. Thera's work explores themes of empathy, intimacy, and feminist politics, situating herself between poetry and activism. Thera's work has been featured nationally and internationally, including notable exhibitions at Nuit Blanche Regina and Feminist Art Fest in Toronto, ON. She is currently pursuing her Juris Doctor at the University of Alberta.

For Calendar Listings

Exhibition title: *Embrace*

Artist(s): Becky Thera

Dates: June 16 - August 10, 2023

Opening reception: Friday, June 16

Artist talk: recorded, view-on-demand

Cost: Free

Short Description: Becky Thera's solo exhibition *Embrace* uses fabric depictions of the Endurance Antarctic expedition, videos of bodies in water, embroidery, and sound to locate non-gendered models for tenderness and touch while fraying the idealization of gendered characteristics. *Embrace*

critiques rigid gender binaries proposing the power of softness and offering potential for hope.



images: Becky Thera, installation details from *Embrace*, 2021-2023.

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Located on Treaty 4, the traditional territory of the Cree, Saulteaux, Nakota, Lakota and Dakota peoples, and the homeland of the Métis people, the Art Gallery of Regina (AGR) is a dynamic cultural hub, promoting the development and appreciation of contemporary art, primarily created by Saskatchewan artists.

AGR provides opportunities for Regina's citizens and visitors to engage with contemporary art through its free exhibitions and artist's talks, critical writing and educational programming.

The Art Gallery of Regina is an autonomous, independent public art gallery with non-profit and charitable status. We are a tenant in the Neil Balkwill Civic Arts Centre located within the vibrant Cathedral Village neighbourhood in Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada.



The Art Gallery of Regina gratefully acknowledges the support of its core funders, project funders, partners and sponsors:

