

For Immediate Release: July 6, 2026

Beast Friends Forever: Free, Fun Exhibition at Art Gallery of Regina Blurs Boundaries Between Human and Non-human Animals

Featuring five prairie artists, exhibition reimagines our bonds with other beings through playful works—painting, textiles, animation, and art for wildlife



image: *Shelter/In plain Sight* (site-specific installation view), Mackenzie Kelly-Frère, 2024, digital photograph. *Shelter/In plain sight* is part of the Nickle Galleries collection at the University of Calgary. Photo: courtesy of the artist.

Regina, SK: The Art Gallery of Regina (AGR)'s summer exhibition, *Beast Friends Forever*, opening July 17, invites visitors to explore how human and “more-than-human” lives are intertwined. In artworks spanning painting, animation, textiles, photographs, sculpture and site-specific installations, prairie artists Bruce Anderson, Joanne Bristol, Mackenzie Kelly-Frère, Jeff Meldrum, and Adrian Stimson ask, “Do the distinctions we make between 'human' and 'animal' merely mask the impermanence, interdependence, and complexity at the core of all relationships?”

Adrian Stimson, a celebrated Siksika artist, is renowned for his evocative paintings of bison. For Stimson, painting the bison is an act of remembrance for a once-plentiful species and a tribute to the lasting bond between the Siksika and the bison. Stimson's paintings invite reflection on the profound relationship between humans and animals—how bison once sustained the Siksika people spiritually and physically, with their meat and skins. Two of his bison paintings, on loan from public and private collections, are featured in *Beast Friends Forever*.

Bruce Anderson's heroically large equine oil paintings evoke the mythic centaur—blending human and horse—and trace how their combined powers made possible feats of exploration, conquest, and colonization. Painted with painstaking detail, Anderson's horses are not set in naturalistic environments but stride across the surfaces of historical maps, emphasizing how human ambition and mobility have been shaped by this interspecies partnership. These works capture not only the muscle and sinew of each animal, but also their individual identities, and remind viewers of their own smallness beside such powerful creatures—until, like the rider, they are uplifted by the horse.

Beast Friends Forever marks the first time Mackenzie Kelly-Frère has exhibited photographs of his shaggy-pile cloak that weaves wool into a replica sheepskin—*Shelter/In plain sight*—being worn and camouflaged in natural settings. Large photographs show the cloak, blending with lichen-covered stone, vanishing among grasses, with a figure emerging from the cloak's extravagantly coiled wool tresses—neither fully human nor animal—suggesting our urge to inhabit the mantle of beasts. These images and a miniature, touchable version of the textile speak to how shelter and belonging can be drawn from merging with the natural world. Created using historical techniques and wool from both Iceland and Treaty Seven territory, Kelly-Frère wove stories of migration and connection to place into *Shelter/In plain sight*.

With a practice that often reflects a deep connection to the natural world and examines the intricate relationships between humans and their environments, it is not surprising that Joanne Bristol's animated video records the community of nature woven into our human-built environment. Created in the years the artist lived on McTavish Street, just blocks from the AGR, the artist's sparse line drawings reflect the bleakness of early spring as urban critters emerge to animate a shadow city of non-humans. Projected onto the gallery wall facing location they

depict, viewers are transported beyond the gallery walls to truck and trash-bin-lined alleys, snow piles, manhole covers, squirrels, birds, cats and insects.

Artist and Provincial Park Ecologist Jeff Meldrum reimagines art's purpose in his *Artwork for Animals* projects, making works intended not for humans but to attract and reward wildlife, while challenging us to imagine a more-than-human aesthetic. An artwork for bears—an oversized cheque—prompts us to rethink notions of value. The replica cheque is coated in lard—a commodity of real value to bears compared with the currency it represents—and displayed alongside images of bears engaging with the piece, captured by a remotely triggered wildlife camera.

"Rather than elevate the animal to the status of human beings," Meldrum notes, "this project aims to diminish the egocentric nature of contemporary art and human culture. By using the disarming tools of parody, *Artwork For Animals* is able to pose questions rather than definitive answers. Musings on collaboration, value judgements on art, nature vs. nurture and the origins of aesthetic preference are all bound up in the ways in which the audience perceives the animal to be engaging with the artwork." Meldrum will also install a site-specific sculpture in the gallery's courtyard, created specifically for the resident squirrel and designed to be activated by the building administrator during the squirrel's daily feeding, highlighting their ongoing relationship.

Beast Friends Forever explores the fluid and often ambiguous boundaries that shape our interactions with other animals and the wistful desire to transcend human-centred perspectives. To be more than friends, to be Beast Friends...Forever.

Beast Friends Forever at the Art Gallery of Regina is free and open to the public this summer—from July 17 to September 17. We invite all to experience the exhibition and join us for the closing event, held in conjunction with the AGR's annual general meeting, on September 12. For more information, visit artgalleryofregina.ca.

Visitors can engage further through free resources such as exhibition audio tours sponsored by SaskTel and Indigenous Perspectives events sponsored by Casino Regina.

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Contact Ms. Moore to arrange English-language interviews with the artists and/or curator in person, by phone or by email.

Links:

artists' bios:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/10mi0q3_otwHEYXj0TSgsTmc7vJCf-oVJ/edit?usp=sharing&oid=100162772614665632957&rtpof=true&sd=true

reproduction-ready images:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1S09IN_Mzo-Vvd4_KS_yJLZYLoELXOjtN?usp=sharing

artists' websites:

- Mackenzie Kelly-Frère <https://mackenziekellyfrere.com/>
- Adrian Stimson <https://adrianstimson.com/>
- Joanne Bristol <https://www.joannebristol.net/>
- Jeff Meldrum <https://whistlinj.weebly.com/>

For more information and updates, please visit our website (www.artgalleryofregina.ca) or contact the Art Gallery Regina by calling 306-522-5940.

For Calendar Listings

Exhibition title: *Beast Friends Forever*

Artists: Bruce Anderson, Joanne Bristol, Mackenzie Kelly-Frère, Jeff Meldrum, Adrian Stimson

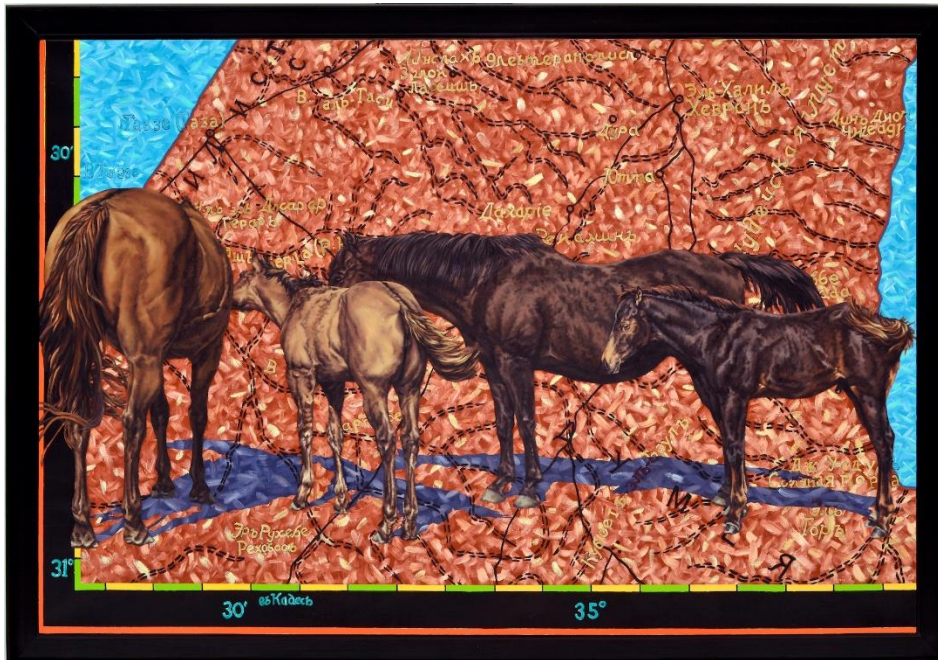
Dates: July 17-September 17, 2026

Closing reception: Saturday, September 12, 2026

Cost: Free Admission

Website: <https://www.artgalleryofregina.ca/upcoming-exhibition>





images (top to bottom): desire lines (still), Joanne Bristol, 2026, MP4 digital video, 10 minutes, funded by SK-Arts; Manifest Buffalo: A Bison Dream Past 10, Adrian Stimson, 2022, oil, graphite and charcoal on canvas, 106.7 cm x 72.4 cm, on loan from the collection of the University of Saskatchewan; gift of the artist in 2023; Continental Drift And It Came to Pass, Bruce Anderson, acrylic on canvas, 4 feet x 6 feet; Compensation 2 of 3, Jeff Meldrum, 2020, Cabela's trail camera photograph, 1 in edition of 5, funded by SK-Arts.

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