

GEOGRAPHICAL ART EXHIBIT OPENS

LAÍSA CONDÉ

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The Kamloops Art Gallery has been transformed into a speculative, surreal landscape with the opening of Staircases Leading to Nowhere, a major new exhibition by Vancouver-based artist Keith Langergraber.

From May 10 to Aug. 30, the multi-sensory installation invites viewers into a shifting world of floating architectural sculptures, immersive video and sound environments, and sprawling drawings that challenge the boundary between the real and the imagined.

Langergraber's work draws on historical references, popular culture, and science fiction to reflect on global instability in the wake of the pandemic and the climate emergency.

Familiar and uncanny, his layered installations collapse timelines and geographies, pushing visitors through fractured presents and possible futures.

A central piece in the exhibition is the video work *In Hell Everyone Needs a Glass of Water*, which begins in the Mojave Desert and follows a fictional character—performed by Langergraber himself—who discovers a mysterious map etched on a ruined wall inside an abandoned mine.

Compelled northward, the character arrives in Ashcroft, B.C., where he becomes obsessed with tracking a sub-herd of wild horses that roam the mountains near the Highland Valley copper mine.

"I know these horses from oral histories and research. They've been there way before the mine was," Langergraber told the Herald. "There needs to be some way of acknowledging and celebrating that this is there too, it's quite unique."

The herd, estimated at 250 animals, is under threat from wildfires, drought, and the mine's environmental impact. Langergraber, who has spent significant time in the area, camping and filming the horses, incorporates this research into drawings, photographs, and a large-scale sculpture—a 30-foot cascading herd of wild

horses suspended in the gallery.

The project was also shaped by the artist's deep connection to B.C.'s Interior. Raised in West Kelowna and born in Trail, Langergraber reflected on his upbringing in rural environments and his current life in Vancouver.

"I've found myself being between these two worlds," he said. "Since the pandemic, there's been sort of a political divide between small towns and larger urban centres. I'm not trying to bridge that gap or do anything political... but to allegorically use the unknown that we find in paranormal or in UFO stories to show that moment of uncanny or unfamiliarity."

That uncanny space is symbolized most poignantly through the motif of staircases, a recurring element throughout the exhibition.

Inspired by eerie stories of staircases appearing in forests and associated with missing time, Langergraber uses both sculptural and cinematic representations of these structures as metaphors for political, cultural, and psychological divisions.

"For whatever reason, staircases became sort of a symbol for where we're at politically, between these divides between rural and urban," he said. "They look very ghostly and that's where I started running with that artistically."

Blending fact with fiction, Langergraber invites viewers to question what they see and know. His work, though grounded in extensive research, leans heavily into the poetic and philosophical.



PHOTO/ KEITH LANGERGRABER

Horses at Highland Valley Copper Mine.