

CRISTIN TIERNEY

# CALGARY HERALD

Local Arts

## Altered states: Contemporary Calgary exhibit asks deep questions about how we process art, time, space and reality

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Artists Jennifer Marman and Daniel Borins and their *Three Dimensions* exhibit at Contemporary Calgary in Calgary on Wednesday, October 18, 2023. Darren Makowichuk/Postmedia PHOTO BY DARREN MAKOWICHUK /DARREN MAKOWICHUK/Postmedia

There is a specific order to things at *Three Dimensions*, the three-installation exhibit by Toronto artists Jennifer Marman and Daniel Borins that opens at Contemporary Calgary on Oct. 19.

Sure, the exhibit has a decidedly open-ended and open-to-interpretation vibe to it, but there does seem to be a set path to follow to have the optimal experience. Visitors are first invited to check out and interact with *Balancing Act*, which features an oversized, user-controlled, claw-crane game that allows participants to stack foam shapes and form their own sculptures. It is surrounded by paintings that depict various possibilities and groupings that can be created using the same geometric shapes.

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“The crane game has a long history,” says Borins, who joined Marman at Contemporary Calgary to launch the exhibit earlier this week. “It’s completely recognizable. Everybody has seen claw-crane games in arcades, in fairgrounds. It has a long history connected to the gold rush or the building of the Panama Canal. Why did that get gamified is a question that no one asked. But it was something that we thought was relevant to our practice. We make kinetic art. We make interactive art. There is an industrial-design quality to some of our projects.”



Artists Daniel Borins and Jennifer Marman with their *Three Dimensions* exhibit at Contemporary Calgary in Calgary. Darren Makowichuk/Postmedia PHOTO BY DARREN MAKOWICHUK /DARREN MAKOWICHUK/Postmedia

So visitors are free to contemplate deep questions about the strange history of this gadget, artistic construction and deconstruction or the moral complexities of extraction while manoeuvring the giant claw machine. Or, they can simply have fun.

“Promoting agency and participation in the museum setting is something we’ve been interested in. Not just looking at pictures but actually becoming engaged with artworks.” Borins adds.

The *Balancing Act* had its debut in New York, but *Three Dimensions* as a whole was envisioned and built specifically for Contemporary Calgary’s Flanagan Family Gallery and there are plans to have it tour to other spots in Canada. All three installations have interactive elements and offer a playful mix of painting, sculpture, kinetic art, video, virtual reality, pop-culture allusions, sci-fi narratives and interactivity. It runs until March 17.