



## REMEMBERING Brian Dyson

October 4, 1944 - March 11, 2023



On the 11th of March 2023, like two beams of light to the stars, our brilliant dad and artist, Brian Dyson (b. October 4, 1944; Yorkshire, UK), passed away at 78. Hospitalized with pneumonia, Brian suddenly lost his life five days later at South Okanagan General Hospital in Oliver, BC, Canada. Pre-deceased by his parents in 1995; Mother Gladys Dyson (b. Smith); Father Sydney Dyson, of Leeds, UK; In 2011 beloved wife Daniela Lindner (46) tragically lost her life to an aggressive rare form of breast cancer (Oliver, BC); Brian is survived by his son Andrew Dyson (45) and daughter Ailsa Dyson (49) both of Calgary; five grandchildren: Lily Marka (16), Kale Ian (20), Isabella Josephina (21), Simon Seon (23), and Theodore Sydney (28), all surnamed Dyson; sister Elaine Rogers (b. Dyson); niece Helen Colby, and nephew Nigel Colby, all of UK.

Brian was a visionary who graduated from the Visual Communication program at Leeds College of Art (UK) with a major in photography and related design. Upon his graduation in 1966, he worked as an assistant photographer in a commercial photographic studio in London. Brian emigrated to Vancouver, Canada in 1968, working with N.E. Thing Co. as Director of Information from 1969-1971. In 1975, Brian along with then-wife Karen Kerr, moved from Vancouver to Calgary, Alberta with their one-year-old daughter Ailsa, to work as Assistant and later Acting Curator at what was then the Alberta College of Art Gallery (now the Illingworth Kerr Gallery at the Alberta University of the Arts), where he quickly became one of Alberta's leading conceptual artists. Informed by Dadaist, Marcel Duchamp's anti-art movement Brian's work took the form of art objects, poetic homages, critical manifestations, and products of esoteric research, aimed to deprogram the mechanical responses of the mind and emotions toward the development of

understanding or consciousness and to promote art as a vehicle for social interaction addressing issues in the areas of culture, economics, politics, law, social ethics, and aesthetics. In 1977, Brian's second child Andrew was born at their 9A Street home in Sunnyside, Calgary; the house that Brian fought tirelessly in the early 1980s to protect against demolition by the City of Calgary to accommodate the new Light-Rail-Transit system being built through the NW quadrant of the city. Brian proposed to the city to have the LRT line built underground through Sunnyside which would spare hundreds of family homes from the unrest created by a 200,000-pound train constantly running down the front street. After years, the battle was lost when the city finalized the train being built above ground, most homes were saved although it heavily depreciated the property values on 9A Street NW. In 1980 Brian left the Alberta College of Art to form Syntax Arts Society with University of Calgary Professor of Art, Paul Woodrow. Syntax was a non-profit organization dedicated to community arts and cultural activism, unique among artist-run centres of the time, Syntax supplied a support facility for groups in the alternative arts, social services, and the inner-city community of Hillhurst/Sunnyside. Between 1980-1999, Syntax provided cultural programmes and services to organizations such as "Afrikadey!" that encouraged the demystification of media and promoted minority perspectives through their presentation in print and electronic media. In 1981 during the heyday of live music venue 10 Foot Henry's, Brian became lead vocalist with lifetime friend and collaborator on keyboards, Paul Woodrow, who together formed the band Big Dog with drummer Peter Moller (RipChords). Syntax produced the first of two albums; 99 change hands was recorded in 1982; a tongue-&-cheek response to New Wave and in 1985, Second Coming; Big Dog's 2nd record continued the tradition of songs developed in a narrative format gaining much airplay on university radio. Brian wrote Under a Cloud for his kids; a children's pantomime, as a cautionary tale about global warming which follows a traditional English pantomime structure addressing corporate and individual responsibility for the environment. In 1988, the play was performed for a live run at The Pumphouse Theatre in Calgary. Brewing superb English Ale, creating crossword puzzles, watching Formula 1, and organizing fireworks displays were some of Brian's passions outside of the arts. In 1988 during the Calgary Winter Olympic Games, Syntax presented a firework display curated by French artist Pierre-Alain Hubert; The Bridge of Fire; a one-time fireworks exhibition displayed off the 14 Street bridge in NW Calgary. Brian became President of the Hillhurst/Sunnyside Community Association (HSCA), and in 1989 the Hillhurst/Sunnyside Community Garden Project was established and developed with Syntax members working within the HSCA to develop a community garden for renters who live in the community. This groundbreaking project cleared the way for current social spaces within the inner-city community such as the Under-bridge Skateboard Park and Community Garden in Bow Landing Park at the corner of 9A Street and Memorial Drive NW. In 1993 Brian formed The Calgary Fireworks Festival Society, and together with his wife Daniela (married 2001), worked tirelessly for years as festival organizers, leading the groundwork for the first "GlobalFest" in 2003; an annual not-for-profit cultural & fireworks festival with a mandate to produce an inclusive, world-class, multi-faceted arts and culture festival that celebrates and highlights cultural diversity and artistic excellence, facilitating

discussions around racism, discrimination, oppression, and justice, through forums and educational programming with the intention of sustaining commitment within the community to work towards a more inclusive society. "GlobalFest" is still held every summer at Elliston Park in SE Calgary. In 2004, Brian withdrew from his activist work to concentrate on his street photography, which was published in *One Eye Open, One Eye Closed: Photographs by Brian Dyson* (Bayeux Arts Inc, 2005). Brian considers photography to be the backbone of his media-based work. His work has been included in major exhibitions such as *Not Just Another Print Exhibition*, which toured Alberta between 1980-1981; *Traffic: Conceptual Art in Canada 1965-1980*, a travelling exhibition that occupied multiple gallery spaces in Toronto, Halifax, Edmonton, Montreal, and Vancouver between 2010-2013; and *Made in Calgary: the 1970s*, the second instalment in a five-part survey of regional art, hosted by the Glenbow Museum in 2013, and curated by Ron Moppett, RCA.

In 2007, after 40 years of Brian working full-time as an artist, along with Daniela bought an orchard in the "Wine Capital of Canada" Oliver, BC, and became certified organic farmers. Tending two acres of orchard and ground crops; growing apples, plums, cherries, pears, garlic and what came to be known as the most delicious asparagus people had ever tasted. Invariably forward-thinking Brian was consistently producing content ahead of its time. He lived a genuine life to its fullest and will be deeply missed, especially by his kids Ailsa, and Andrew. No one can fill the space he held in this world for them. Proud to call Brian Dad, he showed us how to carry ourselves through this world and for his influence we are ever grateful. May you rest in eternal peace dear Daddy; you will be forever loved in our hearts and cherished in our minds.

