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## DOUBLE TAKE

A wet and muddy Calgary photographer has us looking at puddles—and our city—with fresh eyes.

A PHOTO ESSAY BY JOEY PODLUBNY

Untitled 2011,  
Industrial Series.

Podlubny drove past this northeast Calgary commercial-storage construction site three times before stopping to capture this dramatic image.

# DOUBLE TAKE

A Photo Essay by Joey Podlubny | Written by Jacquie Moore

Who would have thought that Calgary could look twice as interesting seen from a mud puddle? It took an artist willing to get down and dirty to find out.

You'd think the son of a forest ranger—a guy who spent a good part of his childhood in the northern Alberta bush—would know something about how to survive in the wild. “I should know more about which berries are OK to eat, but I don’t,” photographer Joey Podlubny admits sheepishly. “I didn’t retain a lot of that.”

Indeed, the 33-year-old SAIT photojournalism grad who, since 2001, has been employed largely by trade magazines and the oil and gas industry, usually goes hungry on the wilderness sojourns he still occasionally enjoys. “When I have my camera with me on fly-fishing trips, I don’t catch much fish.”

Rather, Podlubny is consumed with finding new ways of looking at the world. “I’m interested in exploration and perception,” he says. So interested that, following a big and ultimately inspiring melt last spring, he regularly sacrificed his clean clothes and his health and, in one case, almost sacrificed his life (see the caption on page 34) to find poetic perspectives on prosaic views. Podlubny’s photos, meant to be viewed vertically, are all taken from mud puddles in which the artist lies flat while keeping his camera dry on the palm of his hand. The result is a striking, manufactured twist on the classic image of the mountain reflected in the

lake; his Urban Core, Industrial, Suburbia and Consumption series are Rorschach-like images of a Calgary that appears, on the one hand, implausibly bright, sexy and alluring, and, on the other, dark, generic and almost post-apocalyptic.

Podlubny’s dualistic outlook was no doubt influenced by a recent gig with the Victoria Park Business Revitalization Zone people, for whom he documented the dramatic changes that have taken place on Calgary’s east side. That neighbourhood is a microcosm of boom and bust, dark and light, rapid growth and slow decay. In any case, his professional connection to the area gave Podlubny—who sports an “I ♥ Victoria Park” pin wherever he goes—the confidence to approach a local gallery about showing his work for the first time. Since opening in September 2011, Endeavor Arts Gallery has displayed Podlubny’s inaugural exhibit on its 1st Avenue S.W. windows (look up, look way up) in the form of laminated acrylic transparencies.

Podlubny, meanwhile, continues his quest to find “perfect puddles” to reflect his vision, which remains distinctly urban in its subject matter. “I still love nature, getting out of the city, but,” he adds, “society is wild, too. It’s a crazy place.”

*Untitled 2011,*  
**Urban Core Series.**

Podlubny took this  
Gothamesque image of  
Calgary's downtown from  
a puddle on the footbridge  
leading from Sunnyside  
into Prince's Island Park;  
it was his first stab at a  
night shot for the series.



*Untitled, 2011,*  
Industrial Series.

On assignment for union magazine *Hard Hat*, Podlubny found a puddle in the middle of the road outside the South Health Campus and, you guessed it, fearlessly made himself at home. His art nearly cost him his life when he was almost run over by an unsuspecting driver. **S**

