

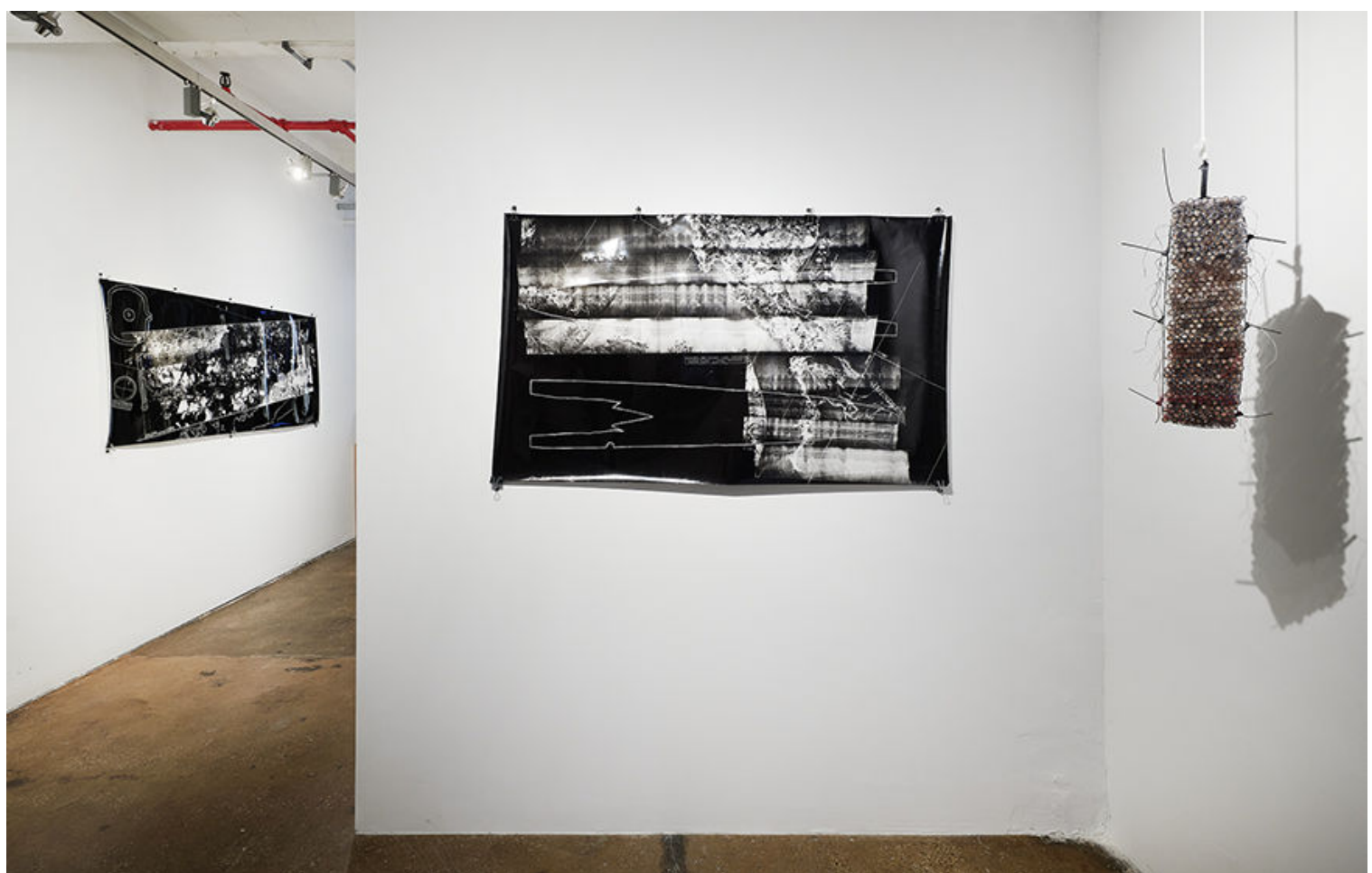
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The Women's Darkroom + Gallery
36 Waverly Ave. #403 Brooklyn NY 11205



Nakataq (nuh-ka-tuk) A marker to help in finding something again, installation view.



Nakataq IV, 2022, hand-etched fox stretchers on vintage (1980's) oil company aerial survey photograph. **Untitled**, 2022, a sculpture made of vinyl tubing, beads, thread, tanned moosehide and zip ties, installation view.

The Women's Darkroom + Gallery is honored to present the work of **Maureen Gruben**, her first solo show in New York.

Nakataq (nuh-ka-tuk)

(A marker to help in finding something again)

Recent hand-etched photographic prints, sculpture and video: **Stitching My Landscape** (2017).

Exhibition dates: 10.8.2022–12.17.2022

Hours: Weds.–Sat., 1–6PM

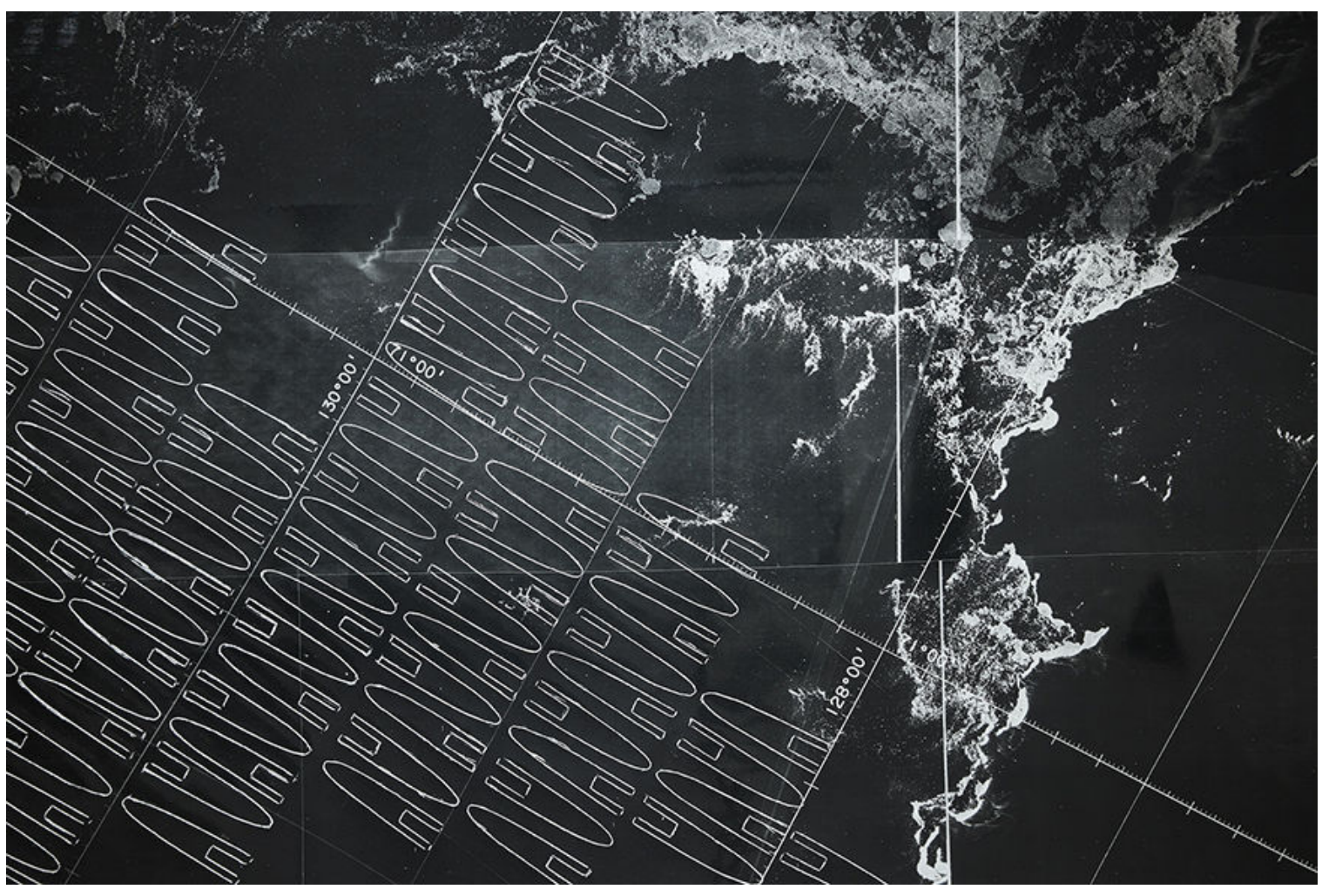
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Maureen Gruben's first solo show outside of Canada considers how knowledge of place accumulated over generations might differ from information; it delves into impacts of how both are produced, reiterated, and transmitted. Using patterns based on her father, Eddie Gruben's fox stretchers and traps, the artist has hand-etched repeated forms into a set of found photographic aerial survey prints. These prints chart ice coverage in relation to oil wells in the Arctic Ocean that surrounds the artist's home community of Tuktoyaktuk (dook-dooo-yaq-dooooq); they were recovered from local work camps that had been set up by oil companies and subsequently abandoned in the '80s. Marks added by the artist converge with but are texturally distinct from the exposures, which themselves include surveyors' annotations—names and numbers added in the darkroom when originally printed. This intersection of inscriptions touches on very different but deeply entangled relationships to land and concepts of value, particularly with respect to tensions between home and resource extraction.

Eddie was renowned as the region's most successful trapper and is remembered as a generous supporter of his community. Orphaned as a young child by famine and the 1920's pandemic, his skill and efforts in trapping with a dog team over vast distances enabled him to eventually build the largest transportation company in the Northwest Territories. Gruben's (re)presentation of his tools is an ongoing process throughout her practice that works to preserve not the objects themselves, but to reflect on the many complex memories and values that can be sustained by a form.



Nakataq I, hand-etched fox stretchers on a vintage 1980's oil company aerial survey photograph of Tuktoyaktuk and the surrounding area.

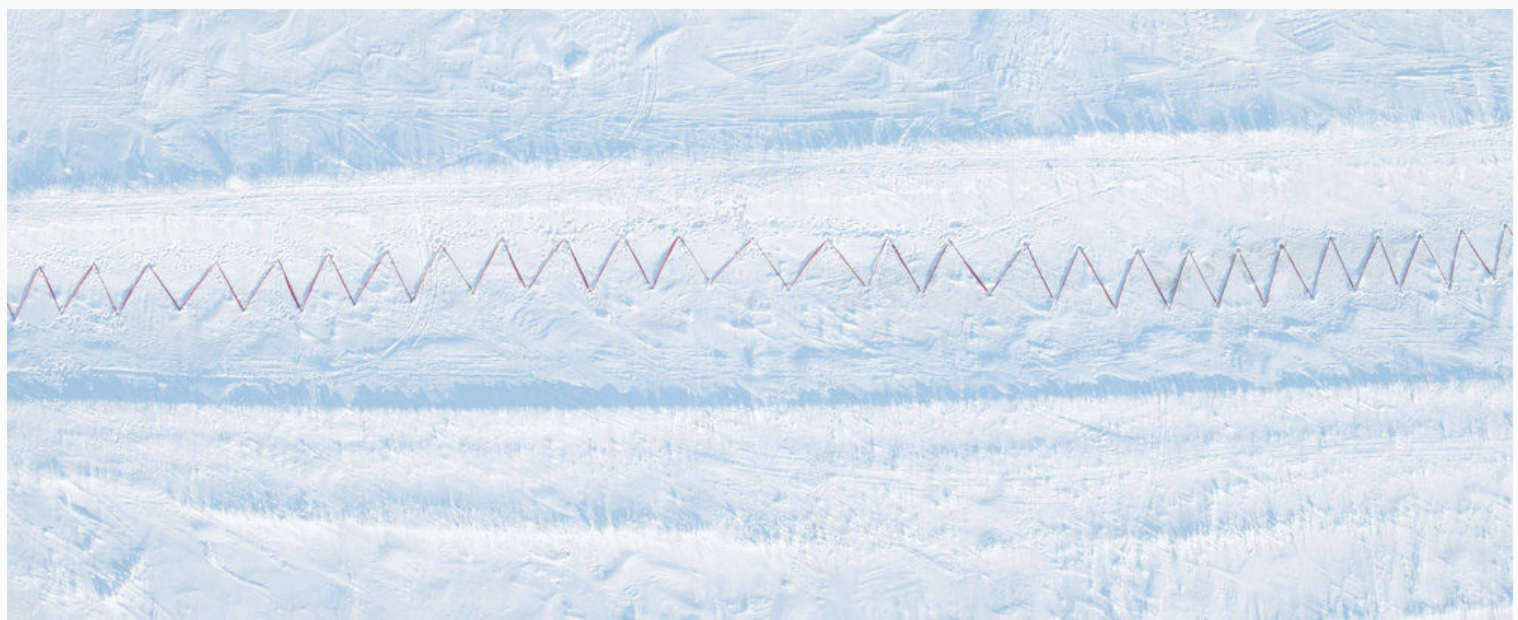


Detail **Nakataq I**, hand-etched fox stretchers on a vintage 1980's oil company aerial survey photograph of Tuktoyaktuk and the surrounding area.



Untitled, 2022, vinyl tubing, beads, thread, tanned moosehide, zip ties.

A recent sculpture presents a small, thread-bound stack built from short sections of vinyl tubing. The tubes are filled with beads and secured at the ends with scraps of home-tanned moose hide still carrying the aroma of smoke. This small construction speaks to intersections of culture and commerce—beads were once currency as well as tools of creativity; the price for pelts were set by colonizers based on how high they were stacked. The zip straps that hold them are a common industrial and household tool also used frequently in packing goods for transportation.



Still from **Stitching My Landscape** (2017): Video (8:10mins). Commissioned by Partners In Art for LandMarks 2017/Repères 2017.

Gruben's 2017 video piece, **Stitching My Landscape**, is included in the exhibition. Here, an aerial perspective on the frozen Arctic Ocean traces 111 ice holes connected by red broadcloth in a minimal, zigzag pattern reminiscent of the beautifully worked Delta Trim that adorns Inuvialuit (ee-noo-vee-ah-loo-weet) drum dancing parkas. Gruben installed the work on a closed, snow-blown section of the annual Inuvik-Tuktoyaktuk ice road on April 23rd, 2017, just a week before its final springtime closure in more than half a century, due to the construction of an all-weather access highway.

The core visual elements of red material stretched across ice are also embedded in a recollection Gruben has of her brother harvesting seal; during the process a long, red string of fresh gut was pulled out taught against the white snow. **Stitching My Landscape** simultaneously evokes traditional skills and means of subsistence; the strength of family and community; and the potential for healing and being healed by the land.

– Kyra Kordoski

Artist Bio

Inuvialuk (ee-noo-vee-ah-look) artist **Maureen Gruben** employs an intimate materiality. In her practice, polar bear fur, beluga intestines and seal skin encounter resins, vinyl, bubble wrap and metallic tape, forging critical links between daily life in the Western Arctic and global social and environmental concerns.

Gruben was born and raised in Tuktoyaktuk (dook-dooo-yaq-dooooq) where her parents were traditional knowledge keepers and founders of E. Gruben's Transport. She holds a BFA from the University of Victoria and has exhibited regularly across Canada and internationally. Gruben was long-listed for the 2019 Aesthetica Art Prize and the 2021 Sobey Art Prize, and her work is held in national and private collections.

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Maureen Gruben: **Nakataq** (nuh-ka-tuk) A marker to help in finding something again.
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