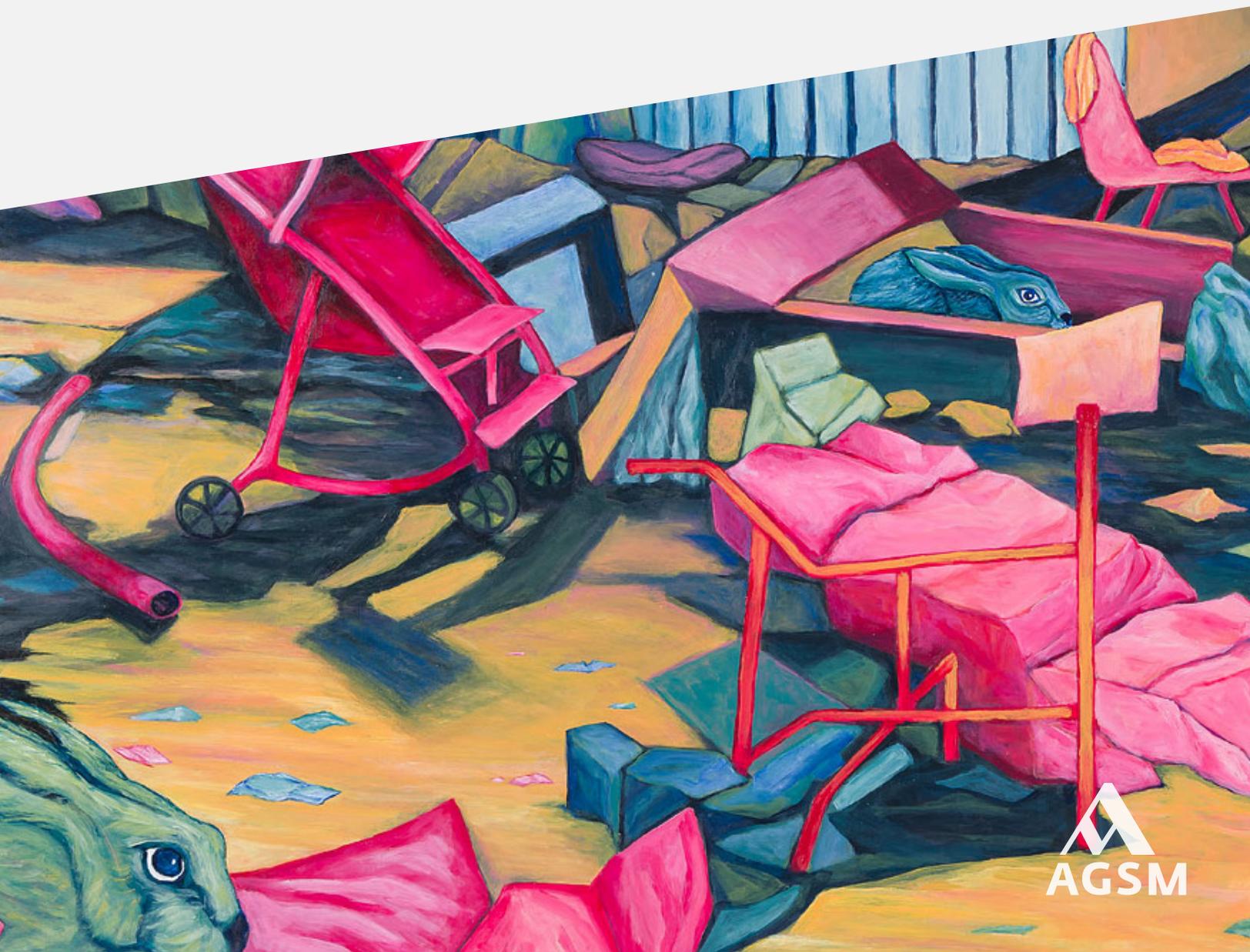


CHRIS REID:

Nothing Smells in Absolute Zero

APRIL 8 - MAY 29, 2021



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Remnants
Acrylic on Paper. 39" x 50"
2020

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Credits:

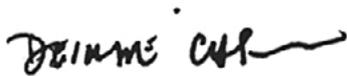
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I. A Letter from the Executive Director

Through its exhibitions and programming, the Art Gallery of Southwestern Manitoba is challenging the stigma surrounding homelessness. Stigma can be a heavy burden for people experiencing homelessness. They are often disapproved of and discriminated against. In the exhibition project *Nothing Smells in Absolute Zero*, Brandon-based artist Chris Reid challenges these notions by giving these individuals a voice and a chance to tell their own story. 7th Street and Rosser Avenue, the downtown location of the Art Gallery, is a great equalizer--where the 'haves and the have-nots' are side by side. This exhibition emphasizes our shared human experience. When homelessness becomes a personal story, it helps audiences to engage with it.

We are also conscious and mindful as visitors and settlers to Treaty Two territory, that this is the traditional territory of Anishinaabeg, Cree, Oji-Cree, Assiniboine, Dakota, and Dene Peoples, and the homeland of the Métis Nation.

I wish to personally thank Neil Cristall, New System Store, Sutton-Harrison Realty and Dr. Derry Decter for their generous support of the exhibition during unprecedented societal upheaval.



Deirdre Chisholm
Executive Director

II. Nothing Smells In Absolute Zero

i) Zero

Consider the shape of zero. A little egg, smaller than most words, standing in for nothingness. Its shape is the consequence of being a form without angles, containing a void. All it is, is the boundary separating the nothingness within from the somethingness of everything else. And so it is gently curved like an egg, to withstand the outward-pressing from within, as its contents try to join the rest of the world, to become something. Existing on the continuum between within and without, the built environment of Chris Reid's Brandon, Manitoba is her personal dreamscape. The exhibition *Nothing Smells in Absolute Zero* is an invitation to enter. It is a call to inquire: is the essential quality of a home its permanence, its past, or its future?



1st and Rosser
Ink on Paper. 38" x 50"
2014



Safe and Warm Shelter
Acrylic on Paper. 24" x 21"
2020

In homelessness studies, "absolute zero" means that no person is without a secure and stable place to spend the night. Its pragmatic sibling, "functional zero," aspires that for every person who is sleeping precariously, there is a place standing empty where they could be secure¹.

In physical sciences, absolute zero is the temperature at which molecules stop moving. Many substances behave strangely as they near the coldest temperature--helium, for example, moves frictionlessly and its atoms become perfectly synchronized. Scientists call these quirks "funky quantum behaviour," a whimsical umbrella term for a number of the greatest mysteries of the physical world². As atoms slow to a halt, their wavelengths become so long each one begins to reach out to its neighbour³. The temperature at which atoms stop moving is -273° Celsius (otherwise known as 0° Kelvin), and it is an impossible temperature to reach.

It is impossible to stop moving.

Perhaps this belabours the metaphor. It is natural to suppose that the use of the term “absolute zero” across these two disciplines is a coincidence--while each is descriptive in its own niche, it becomes abstracted outside of it. From within a winter city like Brandon, however, the thoughts of shelter and cold temperatures are inextricably linked. Without a shelter, to stop moving through Brandon as it reaches its coldest temperature is to stop moving, finally.

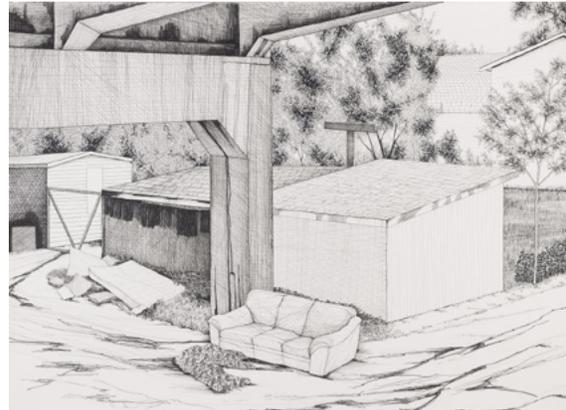
Chris Reid, who for many years has worked in support of Brandon’s unhoused people, has witnessed residences fill with life and just as quickly crumble away. She began an investigation, looking for some innate quality of tenuous housing. Why, she wondered, are some places allowed to stay, while others barely get to exist? Interviews and surveys collected from unsheltered and at-risk people, as well as care workers, all of whom were remunerated with funds from the Manitoba Arts Council and the Canada Council for the Arts, contributed to her data as she looked for an answer to the question: “How do you know when you’re home?”

For the narrator in the animation *Places I Stayed*, “home” seems to consolidate the smells of dirty clothes, cigarettes, and cats in a seasonal loop, as though time moves differently within those walls. Other subjects wax nostalgic about the smell of home cooking and cleaning supplies. Another person said that although their last place smelled of cigarettes and liquor, it was a comforting smell because it indicated that they still had cigarettes and liquor to consume.

However, smell is composed of two things: volatile compounds and memory. At absolute zero, where movement ceases, there is no volatility. At absolute zero, places of public



4th and Louise with Icicles
Mat board, acrylic, latex. 11" x 21" x 23"
2019



Monster Couch Under Bridge
Ink on Paper. 37" x 50"
2014



Abacus 1 (2-sided)
Wooden Sculpture. 24" x 2.5" x 41.5"
2017

congregation stand empty, and personal connections are preempted. At absolute zero, MMB (the compound that gives cat urine its odor) stands still, and besides, it doesn't mean anything without a memory to reference.

Wielding her unique brand of pop-surrealism, Reid infers the significance of these citizens by rendering fragile structures substantial. Shadows and hybrid figures stand watch as sentries or as ghosts. Devoid of human presence, representations of places are understood to be portraits in the negative, if one believes that a person's substance can be gleaned by what they carry with them when there is no place to leave anything behind.

ii) Oral Histories

Responding to the insufficiency of defining home in terms of a physical structure, scholars and policy-makers have begun to include emotional and non-material standards, such as social and personal histories and authority over one's own narrative⁴. Reid reflects this sentiment with the motif "I like to Believe I am Telling the Truth," which recurs in her work. The comic-like panels of the same name set a different sort of tone. As an epigraph for the installation of excerpts from the interviews she conducted from 2019-2021, it serves as a stark reminder that memory and self-description are neither true nor untrue.

In most Western logic systems, ambiguity and uncertainty are the byproducts of a failure of knowledge: to know all the facts is to know the truth⁵. Eastern ideas, such as those contained in Buddhism, Hinduism, and Jainism, assert that, to the contrary, not only is there middle ground, but there is only middle ground--things are all true, untrue, both, and neither. It is no coincidence, it has been argued, that these cultures are the ones who first conceived of zero⁶. Absent any tools for judgement, Reid resolutely moves the testimonies to a space in the middle, offering no clues as to which, if any, deserve scrutiny. Their existence is evidenced by virtue of their presence here, and in turn, their presence must be taken as evidence.



I Like to Believe I Am Telling the Truth

Ink on Paper. 11 x (5" x 8.5")

circa 2007



Cat and Baker's Daughter By Telephone Poles
 Ink on Paper. 12.5" x 18"
 2014

These excerpts are rife with humanity; the homes are recounted in a way everyone can recognize: family, freedom, and food, while the anxieties are likewise familiar: vermin, danger, and isolation. Paradoxes also linger within these reflections: a need for company and for privacy; a desire to be cared for and to be depended upon; a future-vision that can focus enough to hope but that cannot reconcile consequences.



Safe and Warm Shelter
 Digital photograph. 20" x 16"
 2020

To convey the professional filter she must use in her work with Brandon's unsheltered people, these excerpts are transcribed onto translucent plastic--the same material that temporarily patches shattered windows or waterproofs a square of earth. Varied handwriting by multiple participants represents the heterogeneous voices that Reid collected in the course of this research. The sheets have been hung like scrolls, voices from the sky, inviting an adjustment.



Alley Across from the Library
 Digital photograph. 16" x 20"
 2020



Homeless Garden Tractor
 Digital photograph. 20" x 16"
 2020



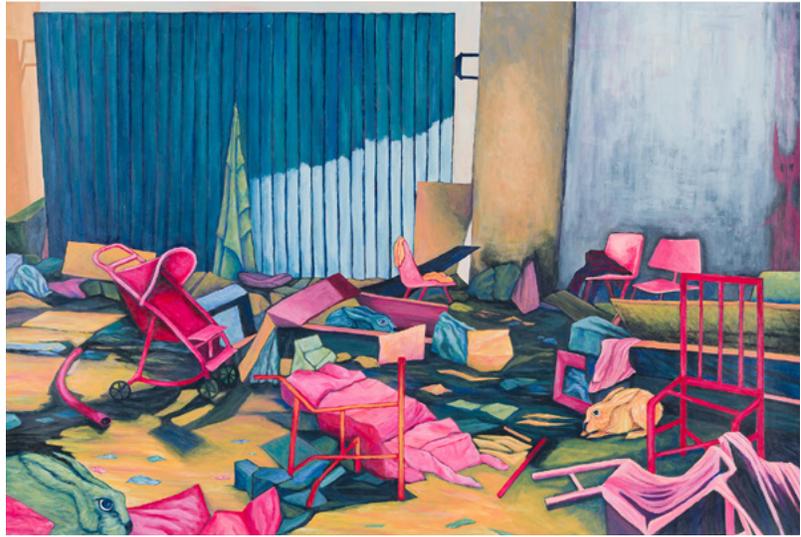
Camp Implying Bodies
 Digital photograph. 16" x 20"
 2020

The following excerpts are taken directly from email interviews conducted by Chris Reid, 2019-2021.

1. Home is when you come back and your belongings, your stuff, is how you set it up. It is control of who is there and at the end of the day being able to put my head on my pillow without worrying about it.
2. I had to leave because it was too violent. The father of my children was not taking the kids health seriously. They had lice, scabies and bed bugs. I had to wait until he hit rock bottom with his drinking. The separation was hard and there was no help until things got bad, then got worse and then he was caught in a lie.
3. Living in a small duplex with my common law wife and family would suffice. Something off the grid a bit. My house at home smelled of booze and cigarettes but once the booze ran out anxiety was skyrocketing.
4. The landlord didn't care until there were overdoses. We called the ambulance and the cops showed up. What were they doing there?
5. Something has been wrong with all the places I stayed. The last apartment in Brandon was too quiet. The neighbours kept complaining about noise. My son couldn't play with his toys. He started acting out and purposely making noise.
6. A place where I felt comfortable and safe was my mothers most likely, its hard to answer that because I had to grow up in foster homes and group homes. I naturally have a lot of anxiety being in places because I didn't know when I'd have to pack my stuff and move again but my mother's is where I fell most comfortable. My moms house always smells like great food, orange cleaner and candles.
7. We would have meet up places so there was a structure like at home in the street family. We would meet at the pool hall to find out where we were going to stay or stay up all night at the donut shop...Flop houses were maintained by mama geeses who would clean up after everyone was gone.
8. My friend allows me to stay but I come to the shelter because I don't want to feel like a burden. There are always people to talk to on the streets. I have had no bad experiences with people on the street.
9. I have to be careful of where I stay because of my life style. I don not want to get into trouble. You can sense and feel the environment and know if it is comfortable or wanted.
10. If I had a coffee and a cigarette and a home, I am safe.



8th Street Bridge with Baba Yaga feet
Acrylic on Paper. 50" x 64.5"
2019



Homeless Camp at Greyhound
Acrylic on Paper. 43" x 33"
2020

iii) Myth & Symbol

Chris Reid's uninhabited shelters are, paradoxically, rife with inhabitants. The lanky cat-headed man, who appears in numerous works here, has been a constant figure throughout Reid's decades-long career. Despite his skeletal face and empty eyes, he should not be understood as a phantom. Though he is lurking above, he is not a harbinger. Rather, this character is a protector and a witness. In Reid's oeuvre, the cat-headed man stands in for her husband, often engaging in domestic tasks or standing resiliently with Reid's own cypher, the Baker's Daughter, who can be seen in *I Like to Believe I am Telling the Truth*. The cat-headed man's long shadow in *1st and Rosser* is coming to help, and he leans over a ledge in *8th Street Bridge with Baba Yaga Feet* and *Chicken Paul's* not as an assassin but as a watchman.



Chicken Paul's
Ink on Paper. 37.75" x 50"
2014



Burnt House Down the Street
Acrylic on Paper. 38" x 25"
2020

In *Burnt House Down the Street*, shadows in the shape of Victorian dolls, who should be at play, face us head-on. Without any form, they are frozen in terror, their shadows taking on physical properties that recall paper dolls on the one hand and shooting range targets on the other. The cat-headed man and the baker's daughter spy through an unlit window in *Space Between Two Buildings on 10th Street*. In the absence of

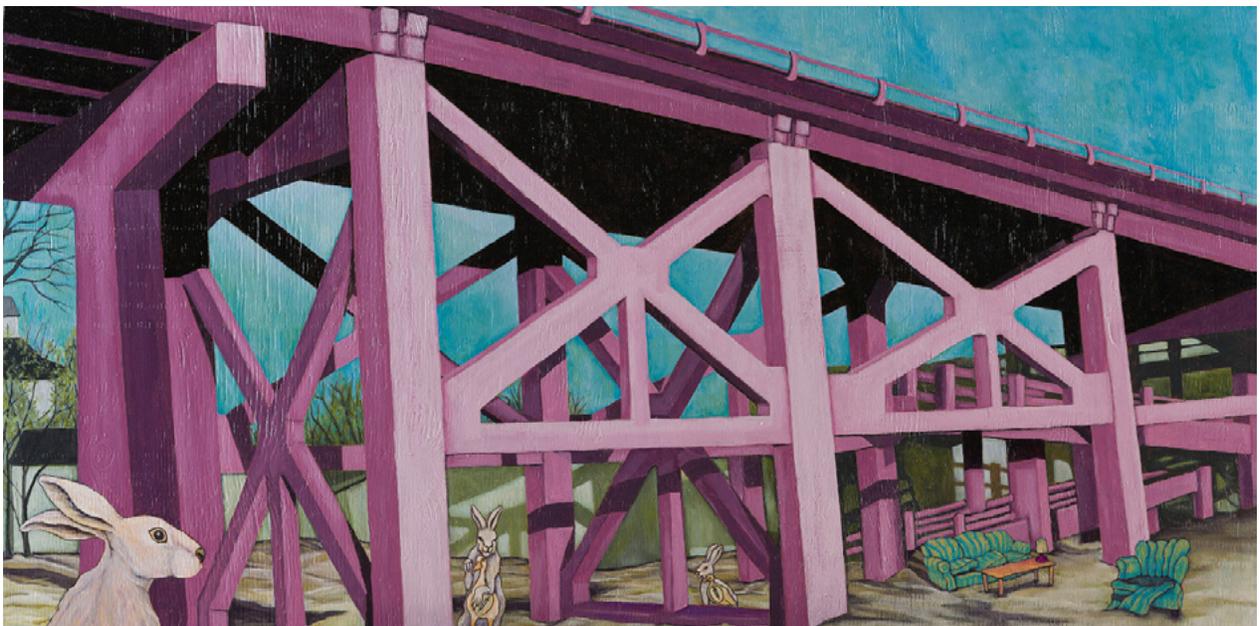


Space Between Two Buildings on 10th Street
Acrylic on Paper. 50" x 53"
2020

corporeal forms, Reid emphasizes empty spaces and the missing bodies that would morph a space into a home.

Huddled among the detritus of *Homeless Camp at Greyhound*, we find rabbits, another common motif in Reid's work. They mourn with the neighbourhood in *4th and Louise After the Fire*, and loiter, waiting for some unknown event, in *8th Street Bridge, Bunnies, and Couch*. Especially visible in the last, the leporine residents each hold a duck tightly in their arms, either in a gesture of protection or abduction. The duos make direct reference to a villainous Slavic archetype: Koschei the Deathless.

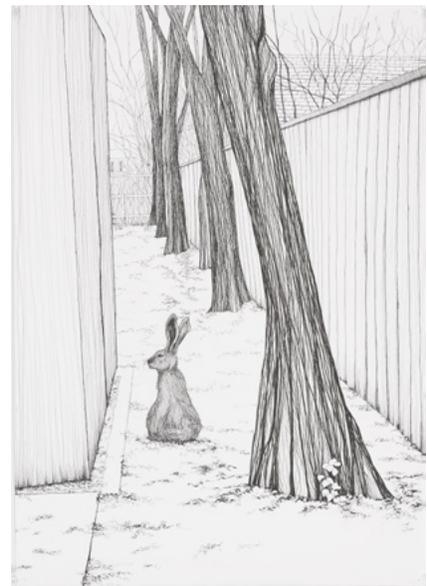
Koschei's power and his downfall lie in his immortality, which he has approached by the careful safeguarding of his soul. Koschei's soul is tucked into a needle, in an egg, in a duck, in a rabbit, in a locked chest, which is buried variably under an oak, a mountain, or any number of great features that are subject to a different scale of time. If the chest is breached, the rabbit will run; if the rabbit is caught, the duck will fly; if the duck is shot down, the egg will fall and shatter; if the egg shatters, the needle will shatter as well. Modern audiences might think of Voldemort's horcruxes from the Harry Potter series by J.K. Rowling, or, in considering the risk of this practice, think of little Billy Costa



8th Street Bridge with Bunnies and Couch
Acrylic on Plywood. 24" x 48"
2019

from Phillip Pullman's novel *The Golden Compass*, who clutches a dead fish to his chest when his dæmon, the external manifestation of his soul, is severed from him.

Reid has had many opportunities to consider the consequences of addiction in her work with unsheltered Brandonites. The immediate symptoms of debilitating addiction--loss of family, finances, and health--are empirically survivable. The bunnies in these works are engaged in a more essential task. It is so essential, indeed, that its parallels are found in children's literature, outside of the purview of economy, infrastructure, and adult responsibilities. These bunnies are keeping tabs on their own souls, left outside of their bodies, in a syringe.



Dead Zone
Ink on Paper. 23.5" x 16.5"
2014

iv) Tend(erness)

"It was never about housing," said Housing First founder Sam Tsemberis, "it has always been about choice⁷." At the heart of the problem with absolute zero is the paradox: freedom of choice encompasses, necessarily, the freedom to make damaging choices.

The ethos of Housing First emphasizes that the problem of unsheltered people is not a lack of shelter. There are entrenched systems, habits of society, that cause homelessness, and they will continue to cause homelessness until they are addressed. In 2012, the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness (COH) amended their definition with a separate formulation of Indigenous homelessness. In twelve dimensions, it builds a



4th and Louise - Summer (Detail)
Mat board, acrylic, latex. 9.5" x 18" x 21.5"
2019



4th and Louise - Summer (Detail)
Mat board, acrylic, latex. 9.5" x 18" x 21.5"
2019



conceptual “home” that has little to do with walls and roofs. A feeling of belonging to the human and non-human world, a connection to a spiritual and cultural past, and validation that one is a valued citizen, all factor in to this definition⁸. It offers a counter-narrative to a settler mentality of human dominion, and pays heed to the nuances of residing. The failures of modern society become apparent in an Indigenous Worldview: commercial land is valued over ancestral land; one Creator crowds out another; descendants cannot access their rightful cultural legacy.



After the Landlord Found Squatters
Mat board, wooden dowels, acrylic. 33” x 14” x 25”
2020

Reid’s maquettes highlight the absurdity of a shelter-first approach to housing. The decimated, hollow forms of the *4th and Louise* diptych and the weightless monument of *After the Landlord Found Squatters* are built at the scale of a dollhouse--impermanent, frivolous, foundationless. She pays tribute to the *8th Street Bridge* by inverting its import from above to below. The bridge was demolished in 2017 because it had deteriorated to the point that it could no longer support vehicles. With the monumental sculpture *8th Street Bridge*, Reid notes its other function as a place of assembly and contact for people who gathered in the slope of land underneath its concrete abutments. The recurrent use of exaggerated scaffolding triggers a sudden awareness of the ground, as though it could be pulled right out from under us.

Cultural critic Elke Krasny recently wrote about life as it relates to living within a shelter. Living, she says, is the human body engaging in eating, socializing, resting, and evacuating. Having a place that allows for those performances “tied to social reproduction” is basic to survival. She allows that living is larger than homemaking, and also occurs outside of the household, but what must not be neglected is the verb: “to live--which implies two critical aspects: to occupy a home and to maintain oneself. To do both is to be alive--aliveness⁹.”



8th Street Bridge

Mat board, wooden dowels, acrylic. 188.5" x 45" x 17"
2020



4th and Louise After the Fire

Acrylic on Plywood. 36" x 48"
2019



4th and Louise with Icicles (Detail)

Mat board, acrylic, latex. 11" x 21" x 23"
2019

Consider home as the opposite of exile¹⁰, and consider how exile might also be the opposite of living. A built dwelling and the action of dwelling within it feed back onto each other. These are the spirits of occupation and maintenance. They enact tending to a home with tenderness. Like particles approaching absolute zero, they are bound together with a force. They reach out to each other as neighbours. In this worldview, functional zero is no longer a compromise. Secure spaces sitting empty are not empty. They are an escape hatch, a place to store a soul. An eggshell is fragile, this is true; but an eggshell is also a marvel of engineering. It is exactly as strong as it has to be to fulfill its function, a series of domes distributing pressure until what's inside no longer needs its protection.

- Lucie Lederhendler, Curator, March 2021



Deadpool Drawing
Acrylic on Paper. 36" x 50"
2020



After Fire
Digital photograph. 20" x 16"
2020

III. Extended interview

In March 2021, Chris Reid sat down with a few colleagues at Housing First to hear what they thought about the difference between housing and home-ing. The interview has been condensed and edited for this publication.

Chris Reid: So, as I told you, the project is looking at homelessness and homeless issues, and I wanted to get some perspective from a lived experience as well as from the social service provider perspective. One of the things we talked about, Kris, was feelings about home or where you had control. I think that would be a good place to start.

Kris: I think it was control over what I had in the house. If I left my sweater on the couch, it was okay because it was where I lived. In the places I was couch surfing or squatting, you had to tuck all your stuff away because you were scared you would lose that stuff. Or coming home after work, and sitting on the couch and watching TV, and knowing that I'm not bothering anybody.

Chris: There's also an idea I've come across, that once someone pays something, they're asked to leave.

Kris: I'd have friends who would say don't worry about it, just stay here as long as you can and we'll figure something out later. But then I would be called out, saying that I never contributed.

Chris: That thing about owing, how on the streets everybody relies on everybody else. And then when someone gets a place, they're expected to share, right?

Kris: Nothing's free. That's the biggest thing that I learned, and I think it hurts me past even my experience being homeless, when I was going through the really rough times. There's nothing free. Everybody wants something from you, and everybody's out to get something from you. Even after you get out of that life, you still believe that. One of the first things we noticed when we started Good Samaritan House, I found it so fascinating how six, seven people could sit in a circle and share a two-litre of beer. Knowing that the rest of the day, their cravings will be through the roof and they will

want more beer. But they still share! Are they sharing because they care? Or, are they sharing because, next time you find five dollars, you buy the two-litre.

Chris: I talked to a girl who's relatively new in town. She's like 18, 19-ish? She was telling me about how she's had no problem with anybody on the streets, and how everybody's sharing with her. So, what would she do to prevent that? Is she going to be able to say no to all of those people who are her support now?

Kris: To me it sounds like she still holds value in herself. I felt like the value of who I was wasn't there anymore. I wasn't substantial, I wasn't that important. I would do whatever because I want to survive the day, or I want to get high, or I want to get drunk, or I want to stay somewhere. You're always looking at the angle, and when you're not in that broken place, you don't need to look for it anymore. People are genuine. People are actually sincere--they're real people, and they actually care. But when you're in that broken part, you don't see that anymore. You see they're asking for your purpose. The woman you're talking about, I think that she's holding herself in a really good spot. And hopefully she steps forward before something makes her slip back, and then she starts dropping value.

Brie: I think that people in that situation need to still hold on to the thought, I'm out here for myself and I need to protect myself. You can still offer help to your friends and the people you've met along the way, but if you don't protect your own other people are going to drag you down. Whether they are doing it maliciously or not.

Kris: We took a client this morning to see two places. One's a house over on Rosser East. Nice little house, decent price, three bedrooms. A little out of the way, but not too bad. Then I took them to a place that's like a block and a half from here. Tiny little apartment, the same price as the house, and instantly that individual chose that apartment. Even though they had stated before that they do not want to be in the downtown area because of all the problems and the trouble.

Chris: So why do you think they chose that?

Kris: If this individual is not ready to get sober and be better, that's exactly where they're gonna want to be stationed. If that individual was ready to take the steps towards sobriety, they would have taken that place on Rosser in a heartbeat, because it's further away from problems. They take that place a block and a half away, that's saying I'm not ready to be sober and this is a perfect spot for me.

Ryan: The last individual we had in the house is a graduate. They're now in college. A housing first graduate within just over a year. That's a success house for us.

Kris: Meet them where they're at, right? If they're not ready there's no point.

Chris: When I first started working at 7th Street, I learned all my presumptions-- you get put in your place a lot, right?

Ryan: The bubble is burst.

Chris: I live downtown, and I was saying to my client, well you know downtown is not so bad, right? It's not that bad. Since I moved to Brandon I've always lived downtown, and it's like, if you aren't going out at night, like ridiculous hours, if you choose who you're going to invite into your home, if you mind your own business, it's really not that bad! And this woman was First Nations, and she looked at me and said, "Yeah that's what white women always say." Is there something cultural as well going on there?

Kris: I don't believe so. In Brandon anyway, I see that yes, there is definitely a larger Indigenous factor that we do recognize. But if you watch the individuals who actually live downtown, and how they actually integrate together, there's no colour difference. They treat each other as family, regardless.

Ryan: I find that the clients, they don't care if you're white, purple, brown, or green, they look out for each other. Do you remember the *8th Street Bridge*? I used to show kids this all the time, that there was actually a 48-pack of toilet paper shoved underneath it. It stayed there, but there would be a roll missing here and there. Because they looked out for each other,

the whole pack never went missing. A 48-pack of toilet paper is over 20 bucks, and they all knew it was there and they would all just go and grab a roll. I thought that was pretty cool.

Kris: Trying to bring culture into recovery is one of the struggles we had. That's what a lot of people want, and there's lots of funding out there for Indigenous to get culture, or grants for cultural outreach. We're assuming that, from an outside point of view, and hoping that they buy into that. In my opinion, this is no different than Christianity or religion. Youth for Christ first started Housing First, and they had a religious aspect that was part of it. Then they got their hand slapped because no, Housing First is not supposed to be based on that. Because you can't force somebody to believe something just because you think it's better for them in the long run. Well I'm Norwegian, so if I'm in trouble and I was going through my recovery and I live on the street, and someone comes up to me and says well you better learn about your background, you know, as a viking, or you're never going to move forward. That's trying to force feed it--it's discouraging! And it's definitely not welcoming. I think a lot of times we lose sight that it's up to that individual to approach you on what they want to learn. It's just like, if I tell someone that you better go to church on Sunday because you have to believe in God, that's kind of force-feeding someone. I think it's the same. That's my opinion, I don't know what you guys think.

Ryan: Oh I agree.

Chris: Someone said that they felt that some of the landlords who chose to work with harder-to-house people have dark histories of their own, or something in their background that makes them a little more understanding.

Brie: Some of them do, we've had a couple landlords share a little bit about their histories with us, and explain that that's why they want to help others. Some people just think that the program's great and they want to be part of it. But I think it helps. There's more understanding from people that have similar backgrounds or just a bit more empathy.

Kris: Like you said about the bubble burst when you first started. When you're working in this industry, you can live in a bubble, or in this city you can live in a bubble. My children live in a bubble--please, stay in there! I don't want them to be naive, but I definitely want them to be aware. The ten year old

asked me about this guy with dreadlocks, we drove by him yesterday, my son wanted to toss him a toonie but it was at a crosslight, and he said "I'll give you the toonie dad, if you give it to him, then he can see I gave it to you!" And he asked, "where does that guy stay?" I said, I'm pretty sure he stays in a tent over in the bush. And he's like, "Well why don't you try and help him?" And I said, well he doesn't want my help. So that's a ten year old who's aware of what's out there and he felt it. He goes, "Well yeah dad, I guess some people are more fortunate than others and they have better opportunities." And I was like definitely, definitely.

Ryan: Some people also just care. I've definitely had a couple landlords I can think off the top of my head, who have lived experience one way or another, so maybe they're trying to, I dunno, correct their wrongs in life? By giving back, or paying it forward?

Kris: There is always a story behind someone, and the question is going to be, as we're speaking to somebody who's vulnerable in that moment, are we going to stop ourselves and take the time to remember that they're behaving or acting a certain way because there is a story there. And we don't. It's hard, sometimes. Especially what we do, you know our empathy card runs out pretty quick some days. My empathy card for myself runs out pretty quick some days. So with that, how do you keep yourself in that moment? There's a story behind every single action that you do. Individuals on the street it's the same thing, and a lot of people write them off so bad. There is always a background piece to it that you don't necessarily pay attention to either, that you don't even understand.

Chris: Again back to landlords and stories, one of our infamous landlords had one tenant for many many years, and he kept renting to this guy, despite the fact that the tenant had been incarcerated multiple times, had done damages, had started a business selling stolen property. The thing is, 10 or 15 years ago, the landlord's wife was getting out of their truck, and she slipped. This tenant caught her, and ever since then, he could do no wrong.

Ryan: And I think that's the perfect example of, you've seen somebody for who they truly are as opposed to seeing what they're doing, right?

Chris: Exactly.

Kris: It's that there's a reason, in his head.

Chris: It was caring, he really wants to house these guys and give them their chance, despite all of the other stuff that we all know.

Kris: People knock the landlords, when their places aren't the cleanest or the nicest, but you need those places. Just as much as you need a nicer place--you need those. I'm not saying that you want cockroaches or mice or bedbugs, but you do need those options. Because some individuals, that's kind of the lifestyle they want to live. We all want something better for them, but it's good to have those options. Also, too, when you're transitioning from a street life to housing, a home, and everything is pristine and really nice looking, that's scary! That would terrify the shit out of me! I want something that looks like it's beat up a little bit, just in case I put a scratch in the wall or I drop my food on the ground. I don't want something that's immaculate. Like, I need to transition to get to that. Now, obviously I don't want to live in a dumpster, but some people, that's the lifestyle they choose and they can literally just go one step up from that and they're home.

Chris: So you were saying, you don't want to move into a place that's all perfect and clean. Do you think that has to do with self-esteem? Like, you don't deserve it?

Kris: Yeah definitely, 100%.

Brie: That'd be a huge factor, yeah.

Kris: I once squatted at the Western Motel. I went in one side of the building, kicked in a window and put a mattress up against it, then I went down the hall and I stayed on the other side of the building, cause I'm being sneaky. Nobody knew I was in there. And I found it so fascinating, because there was still bedding in there. I was so excited that there was a blanket in there, and a bed, and a toilet, obviously no running water, but I was thrilled, because I had my own little spot, and nobody knew I was there, and I felt safe. It was a beat up hotel that was getting trashed--getting demolished soon. Later on in life, to just sit back and think about it even now--the

insanity of how comfortable I was in that squat for the week or whatever it was that I stayed there. It still just baffles me. I think a lot of individuals that we see on the streets that we work with, they find that. Under the church, you know there's a spot there with blankets. They find their own little spot, and they're excited about it, and I think as a community we take that away from them a lot of times by telling them that that's not something to be excited about. It's not up to somebody else to tell me that I can't be excited about squatting in the Western Motel, you know?

Ryan: For example, the two individuals who sit beside the food bank. They were sitting there and she went over to the vendor, grabbed a two-litre and came back, sat down on the pallet, handed him the bottle. Then she grabs a blanket, pulls up the blanket--dirty old, muddy old thing--pulls it up the same way you'd be doing in the comfort of your own home, snuggling up with your spouse. The next day we went there, he's cleaning out cans and joking that she made him clean up the yard.

Kris: We had an individual last summer who made himself known on 7th street with a tarp. Made himself very known, to everybody. And now all of a sudden the paper's phoning. I've got individuals calling my boss and asking how we're going to take care of him. The NRC's getting phone calls, saying, hey, you should get Housing First up here and take care of this--you know, go help this guy. And it's because he made himself known to the public because of what he put over top. But what's the difference with him as opposed to the other 90 to 150 individuals that live in Brandon that are homeless that we're aware of. Nobody was making a stink about them.

Chris: The other question I was going to ask--some people that always have a ton of stuff, like a stroller full.

Kris: It's the sense of having something. When I was on the street I had a duffel bag. That's what I had--nothing. Every place I'd squat at or I'd couch surf at, I'd get less and less. So then when I started recovery or moving forward in life, well, shit. I think I own like 19 pairs of shoes now. Because I felt like I needed that! I needed that to fulfill a gap in me. I've got a huge selection of shirts, and I love collecting different hats! Because it makes me feel like I have something. Because at one point I had one hat, and it stunk, 'cause I was sleeping with it outside.

Chris: We have to both take into account some of the ingenuity of these people too, and how they're solving problems on the street.

Kris: Oh the survival is just fascinating. Individuals that--well let's take Covid-- Covid came to Brandon and right off the bat, everybody painted a picture of you better stay away from the homeless because they're gonna have Covid. But the homeless in Brandon weren't travelling anywhere, they're not going on trips, they're not going to Winnipeg. That picture of the homeless or the poor individuals of Brandon as the ones that were going to spread Covid was so misleading. Like, ridiculous. And the survival mode in that. These individuals made it almost a freakin' year before anybody caught it downtown. But at this point we're complaining because we can't go sit in a restaurant, or the movie theatre's closed, and we gotta stand in line at Walmart. Not eight months of actually surviving outside, with no diseases, in a lifestyle that you don't think could be worse.

IV. List of Work

Sculptures

1. **4th and Louise-Summer**
Mat board and mixed media. 9.5" x 18" x 21.5"
2019
2. **4th and Louise with Icicles**
Mat board and mixed media. 12" x 21" x 24"
2019
3. **8th Street Bridge**
Mat board and mixed media. 188.5" x 45" x 17"
2020
4. **After the Landlord Found Squatters**
Mat board and mixed media. 13" x 30" x 24"
2020
5. **Abacus 1**
Wood and permanent marker. 24" x 2.5" x 41.5"
2017
6. **Abacus 2**
Wood and permanent marker. 24" x 2.5" x 44.5"
2017
7. **Abacus 1a (Maquette)**
Paper, masking tape, wire, bamboo, permanent
marker. 14.5" x 1.5" x 21"
2017

Paintings

8. **4th and Louise After the Fire**
Acrylic on plywood. 48" x 36"
2019
9. **8th Street Bridge with Bunnies and Couch**
Acrylic on plywood. 48" x 24"
2019
10. **8th Street Bridge with Baba Yaga Feet**
Acrylic on paper. 50" x 64.5"
2019
11. **Kitten that Knew Too Much**
Acrylic on paper. 24" x 30"
2019
12. **Homeless Camp at Greyhound**
Acrylic on paper. 43" x 33"
2020

13. **Remnants**
Acrylic on paper. 39" x 50"
2020
14. **Burnt House Down the Street**
Acrylic on paper. 38" x 25"
2020
15. **Safe and Warm Shelter**
Acrylic on paper. 24" x 21"
2020
16. **Deadpool Drawing**
Acrylic on paper. 36" x 50"
2020
17. **Space Between Two Buildings on 10th Street**
Acrylic on paper. 50" x 53"
2020

Drawings

18. **Monster Couch Under the Bridge**
Ink on paper. 50" x 37"
2014
19. **Chicken Paul's**
Ink on paper. 36" x 50"
2014
20. **Cape Dorset**
Ink on paper. 39" x 50"
2014
21. **1st and Rosser**
Ink on paper. 38" x 50"
2014
22. **Dog with Bowler**
Ink on paper. 39" x 50"
2014
23. **Cat and Baker's Daughter by Telephone Poles**
Ink on paper. 18" x 12.5"
2014
24. **Dead Zone**
Ink on paper. 16.5" x 23.5"
2014

Digital Media

25. **Places I Stayed**
Digital animation (projection). 00:40
2021

V. Chris Reid Biography

Chris Reid is a Brandon-based artist and educator. She works for the Community Health and Housing Association for whom she is developing a sober living facility, after many years working as a housing resource worker for the Prairie Mountain Health Region. She has a Bachelor of Fine Arts and a Bachelor of Education from the University of Alberta, and a Master of Fine Arts from the Art Institute of Chicago, where she specialized in painting and drawing. She has received grants from the Manitoba Arts Council, the Alberta Foundation for the Arts, and the Canada Council for the Arts. Over her decades-long career, she has exhibited across Canada and the US, and all around the prairies in particular.

Solo Exhibitions:

- 2021** *Nothing Smells in Absolute Zero*, Art Gallery of Southwestern Manitoba, Brandon, MB
 - 2019** *I like to believe I am telling the truth*, Gallery@501, Sherwood Park, AB
 - 2017** *This Place*, Wasagaming Arts Centre, Wasagaming, MB
 - 2015** *The Cat and the Baker's Daughter*, Esplanade Arts & Heritage Centre, Medicine Hat, AB
 - 2014** *Truth in Repetition*, Cape Breton University Art Gallery, Sydney, NS
 - 2013** *I like to believe I am telling the truth*, Art Gallery of Southwestern Manitoba, Brandon, MB
 - 2012** *I like to believe I am telling the truth*, Gallery 1C03, University of Winnipeg, and Oseredok; Ukrainian Cultural Centre, Winnipeg, MB
 - 2010** *Bunny Days*, Yukon Arts Centre, Whitehorse, Yukon
 - 2009** *Dazed and Amused*, Latitude 53 Contemporary Visual Culture, Edmonton, Alberta
- Bunny Days*, Thames Art Gallery, Chatham Cultural Centre, Chatham, Ontario

2008 *Pride of the Prairies: Baba Yaga, Bread, Bunnies and Other Subversions*,
Dunlop Art Gallery , Regina, SK

The Good, The Bad and The Bunny, Two Rivers Art Gallery, Prince
George, BC

2006 *Bunny Days, The Third Chapter*, Art Gallery of Southwestern Manitoba,
Brandon, MB

2002 *Dayz*, Main/Access Gallery, Winnipeg, MB

Endnotes

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- 3 Nigel Cooper, "How cold can you go? What is absolute zero?" Interview with Chris Smith, *The Naked Scientist*. 2019, June 11. Podcast, <https://www.thenakedscientists.com/articles/interviews/how-cold-can-you-go>
- 4 Hedda Haugen Askland & Matthew Bun, "Lived Experiences of Environmental Change: Solastalgia, power, and place," *Emotion, Space, and Society* 27, 2018. 16-22.
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- 7 Katie Mingle. "Chapter 5: Housing Finally," *According to Need: A Project of 99% Invisible* podcast, 2020, December 15.
- 8 Jessie Thistle, "Definition of Indigenous Homelessness in Canada," *Homeless Hub*, 2017. <https://www.homelesshub.ca/IndigenousHomelessness>
- 9 Elke Krasny, "Care." *AA Files* 76, 38, 2019.
- 10 Askland and Bunn, "Lived Experiences," 20.



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