

Making visible the everyday materials that surround us in and make up the construction of our dwellings, the works of *User's Manual for an Invisible Home* reflect on the political and social conditions that define our notions of home. With practices ranging from the tactile and hand-drawn to the virtual and sculptural, these artists explore the state and spaces of domesticity from de-colonial, feminist and socioeconomic perspectives, grappling with the realm of domesticity as it is experienced and imagined in myriad ways.

The installation *Bouche de miel* by **Miri Chekhanovich** is inspired by a Soviet cookbook titled *The Book of Healthy and Delicious Foods*, commissioned by Stalin in 1939. This book depicts lavish and colorful feasts filled with caviar, fish, wine, and fruits, while in reality, people of that time couldn't find these products in grocery stores and were starving. Resembling a kitchen counter, her work features shapes that are reminiscent of both food and the body while giving the illusion of being made of plastic. However, this "fake plastic" is edible; it is created by the artist using biodegradable sources such as gelatin, eggshells, beet juice, nasturtium, titanium, and glycerin. Inspired by a book presenting real food with deceptive appearances, Chekhanovich's cuisine concocts, distorts, and interweaves multiple layers of illusion. The result is an edible substance that, through its affect, brings us back to a sensorily and bodily experience of the piece.

Carefully drawn in coloured pencil on a blank white background, **Jazz Keillor's** *Floor Plan for an Adorable Bungalow* resembles an architectural drawing or video game with its bird's eye view and starkly cast shadows. It depicts a three-bedroom dwelling delineated with rocks and surrounded by artificial-looking trees fixed to the ground with wood planks. The home is fully furnished, as if posed for a viewing. But something isn't quite right: the kitchen is outfitted with a picnic table and outdoor trash can that would be better suited to a public park. In the living room, in place of a coffee table, there's a fire pit, and the flatscreen TV is affixed to a barren tree. One can surmise that there's nowhere to hook up the appliances. In contrast to the rosy language of its title, reminiscent of housing listings, the seams are clear: this "adorable bungalow" is not quite as advertised, missing crucial components of livability. It brings to mind the impossibilities of today's strained housing market, with its unlivable homes and astronomical prices. Amidst its dystopian cast, Keillor's piece retains a sense of coziness, creatively refiguring the disappearing dream of the single-family home with wistful inventiveness.

Lindsay Lion Lord's fibre pieces draw on textile traditions and a personal poetics of feeling, embracing the childlike world of imagination and play. Her dazzling quilted and patterned tent sculpture combines segments of intricately hand-dyed fabrics to form a cocoon-like environment for visitors to take refuge in. Embracing a sense of comfort and contentment through colour, touch, and expression, Lord's piece embodies a productive escapism that provides a soothing haven of rest from the world's tensions, much like a feeling of home. Underlying this mood of optimism and protection is a layer of ambiguity provoked by the tent's association with bare survival needs, and a contrasting tension between the pleasurable leisure activity of camping (or blanket fort-building) and the dire realities of those forced to live outdoors. In light of today's climate emergency and housing crisis,

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Lord's whimsical quilted shelter embodies both a longing to escape to simpler times and dreaming a sense of empowerment and possibility through creativity and joy.

The figures in **Laila Mestari's** softly detailed drawings float in mythopoetic space, rendered with fine textures and jewel tones that unfold as whimsically choreographed compositions. Surrealistic and layered, these portraits are richly adorned, from their wooden marquetry frames shaped into symbols and patterns, to the hidden images tucked amidst the artworks' inhabitants. Tendrils of hair curl into script. Hands become useful objects and a printed scarf erupts into lifelike foliage. The Moroccan-born Mestari's work explores hybrid identities, reflecting on the complexity of belonging through their dreamlike realism. With bodies posed in structural formations, these individuals carry their stories with them: holding a handful of earth bursting with fresh growth, turning the pages of a book which morph into opulent patterned rugs, clay tiles forming a roof at their crown. Embodying kinship in somatic space, bodies and the things they hold become supporting beams in a home of one's creation.

Intricately cut into the deep blue skin of water-resistive air barrier film, **Caroline Monnet's** *Whispers of Blue* pays homage to the traditions of minimal art as well as her Anishinaabe-French heritage. A construction material used to insulate buildings, the air barrier's ordinariness contrasts sharply with Monnet's luminous geometric designs based on the patterns of traditional Anishinaabe art. Outlining cultural cosmologies and aspects of everyday life, these motifs are often found in beadwork and weaving, and hold multifaceted cultural meanings. Monnet's superimposition of Indigenous geometries onto the cube are the result of explorations into architectural diagrams and drawings evoking this foundational architectural form as well as the proverbial "white cube" of modern art. In the context of home construction, Monnet's work underlines the housing inequities and environmental issues impacting Indigenous people, as well as a reclamation of cultural traditions and a delineation of decolonial space.

Revising the notion of home through the transformations and upheavals of our time, *User's Manual for an Invisible Home* traverses migrations, uprootings, the fragmentation of traditions, and the toxicity of everyday materials. Home becomes a fragile, ambivalent concept, whose comforting dimension is crumbling. Nevertheless, the artists brought together in this exhibition navigate these threats and paradoxes, infusing the domestic space with a dose of lucidity, handmade resistance and combative joy.

- **Kayla Guthrie** writes about contemporary and underground art, with an interest in queer and transgender artists and art engaged with technology, music/sound, or performance.

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