



TALES UNTOLD



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CHRIS REID • DAVIDA KIDD • REBECCA CHAPERON
CHELSEA ROONEY • ERIKA THORKELSON • SUSAN MUSGRAVE • ZSUZI GARTNER

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CURATORS'

INTRODUCTION

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Contemporary curatorial process is by its very nature highly collaborative, as artists and curators work together to realize a vision that presents, and often expands on, the ideas that drive particular artistic practices. But certain projects have the capacity to push the potential for inventive forms of collaboration even further, yielding results that would have been impossible to achieve on an individual basis—results that can surprise not only the public but also the creative participants themselves.

Tales Untold began straightforwardly enough; three artists whose practices all share certain aesthetic and thematic commonalities were selected for a group project. Although materially and stylistically quite different in their practices, all three artists share a common interest in the power of storytelling and the possibilities of narrative structure in visual form. Their works conjure imaginative worlds that are at times suggestive of fairytales, haunting dreamscapes, or vaguely recalled childhood memories.

That shared narrative quality was the impetus for a unique idea that drove the project in an unexpected direction: what if the interpretation for the exhibition came exclusively in the form of creative writing? What if the traditional curatorial voice and process was decentralized, and the interpretation of these works was allowed to flow outward from creative practice, rather than being contained in a more analytical, didactic fashion?

To explore the possibilities inherent in such a proposition, The Reach invited four accomplished British Columbia authors—Zsuzsi Gartner, Susan Musgrave, Chelsea Rooney, and Erika Thorkelson—to select core works for the exhibition and to respond to those works through creative fiction. The only “curatorial” directive given to the writers was a suggested word count, beyond which they were given free rein: to interpret, translate, or animate the visual artworks in any way they chose; to brainstorm their ideas for written responses in consultation with the artists or to develop them independently; to produce creative writing in the form of either poetry or prose; to produce distinct writings for each selected artwork or to weave them together into a longer narrative.

The resulting texts represent a marked departure from the typical hermeneutic descriptions commonly associated with curatorial writing. Rather than discussing the artworks in relation to an overarching curatorial theme, to art history and/or contemporary art movements, or within the context of the artists’ individual practices, the written contributions open the artworks up to the possibility of enriched meaning through the lens of poetry and narrative storytelling. The texts represent a productive fragmentation of curatorial control. Rather than vesting interpretive authority in the singular figure of the curator, *Tales Untold* unfolded organically as a collaboration between three artists, four writers, and two curators. The process allowed unanticipated and sometimes startling understandings to emerge that would not have been possible using a more conventional methodology.

With seeming ease, the writers tapped into the shared and essential qualities of the work by Chaperon, Kidd, and Reid: the darkness that lurks on the edge of childhood, the cryptic relationship between memory and fantasy, cruelty and passion, and the fundamentally indelicate nature of feminine power. The writings do not override the existing meaning of the works of art so much as refract it like light through a prism, broadening the viewer's spectrum of experience and amplifying the already dense and stratified imagery offered by the visual artists. When read together, the works of art and the collection of writings resonate on a common frequency that none of us could have planned.

Apart from the writers' ability to build upon the crucial aesthetic qualities of the work, a number of timely themes materialized and asserted themselves as the exhibition came together. Given the challenging nature of some of the works of art, in hindsight, it is not surprising that the writers took this opportunity to engage in the complicated conversations about voice, credibility, and doubt that have emerged from the #metoo and Time's Up movements. These bold interpretations encourage a reevaluation of the concept of truth, and ask important questions about who is given the authority to speak and who is believed.

A number of design and curatorial decisions were made to underscore and expand these themes in the physical space of the exhibition itself. For example, although all three artists work primarily in two-dimensional media, a selection of sculptural elements that are related directly to the wall-mounted works were employed to perforate the barrier between pictorial and actual space. The galleries were painted with rich colours drawn from the works of art, breaking with the white cube's inherent ability to frame, and instead creating an experience that supports immersion in the artists' imaginative worlds. In developing *Tales Untold*, the exhibition revealed itself as a project not only about testing the limits of the conventional roles of artist, curator, and writer, but also disrupting perceived boundaries between what is real and what is representation.

This publication retains much of the vivid colour experience and organizing logic that characterized the exhibition itself. As both an exhibition and a book, *Tales Untold* encourages us to consider the complex relationship between fact and fiction—and the important roles played by each—in the creation and reception of both visual art and literature.

- Laura Schneider and Adrienne Fast



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Informational text label for the large painting.

WORDS BY ZS

SUZSI GARTNER

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HOW TO MAKE LOVE TO A CAVE WITCH

Sometimes she appears as a waif. Sometimes she is a tight-laced governess. Sometimes she is a cigarette girl in a 1920's speakeasy. Most often, though, she appears at the edge of your vision, a sparkle of beach glass, a shard of ice, the tail of a sirocco wind. Like the Yeti and the Christ she is both mythical and utterly convincing.

There have been many reported sightings of cave witches over the centuries, but prolonged encounters with the human species have been rare.

There is a story about an eighteenth century Austrian spelunker who was exploring the Postojnska Cave in what is now Slovenia, well before it became a tourist destination. The third Baron von Höhle-Schatten went in as a strapping 33-year-old man and emerged an infant, baby Leopold once again, carried by an ageless woman with a withered left arm. He was recognized as himself by the distinctive birthmark on his face, an explosion of magenta and turquoise writhing across his countenance like a nest of snakes. Believing him now cursed, his family disowned him (with admitted sighs of relief; that birthmark had been a source of embarrassment at the annual Habsburg Court balls). This was the first verifiable incident of human contact with a cave witch.

Those of us who have devoted our lives to the study of the cave witch were long derided as cryptozoologists. But, as the cave witch has recently captured the imagination of a public weary of shrapnel and bombast, there has ensued a clamour for information from the media and lecture invitations from the Ivy Leagues. To the ladies and gentlemen of the fifth estate and the ivory tower we say this: the cave witch is not reducible to the equivalent of a TED Talk. And as with all things that become fashionable, there inevitably arises the desire to possess. A cave witch, unlike a Damascus steel chef knife, is not something to possess. She will decide whether or not to choose you. And more likely than not, she would rather make love to a shadow.

Cave witches are rather solitary, but the few who do mate, like swans mate for life. We may not notice that she is bonded as she is eclectic in her choice of partner. A chipped stone could take her fancy. Or an abandoned cast-iron skillet. She loves fiercely and loyally, though eccentrically. She is drawn to flaws, those cracks where the light gets in. In this way she is like Japanese raku potters with their wabi-sabi aesthetic. Perfection and permanence are anathema to the cave witch. If you are conventionally beautiful or handsome, or even just girl/boy-next-door-cute, the cave witch will look right through you as if you were a curtain of rain on an otherwise bountiful day. But if you have a wall-eye, or your eyebrows were burned off in a fire set by an ungrateful stepchild, or your face sprayed with acid by a lout racing past on a Vespa scooter, the cave witch will love you.

Appearances to the contrary, we share more DNA with an Abyssinian kitten or a fruit fly than we do with a cave witch. Her genetic material is four dimensional, exists outside of her body, and has much in common, geometrically, with the I.M. Pei pyramids of the Louvre. This means that intra-dimensional offspring will forever be outside the equation, no matter how strong the flames of passion burn.

If you do feel the keening desire to find a cave witch, first you must find a cave. A suitable cave can be found anywhere there is a source of water, and an abundance of eccentric vegetation and other-worldly botanicals. The cave itself can be of stone, earth, or ice; hidden behind a waterfall or out in the open; moist and subterranean or dry as sandstone.

As with any cave sentient beings have called home since time began, there are stories to be reckoned with on the walls where the cave witch dwells. Even if she's away on her wanderings, her murmurings slip through the opening like fog and curl up along the walls. We've seen shifting shapes in them the way others see images in clouds. We've watched dancing hexagons and

Rebecca Chaperon
Cave Witch, 2017

octagons. Small laughing triangles with tongues of teal riding on the backs of blushing pentagons. Cotton-candy-hued geometric carnivals. A blue fairy emerging from a tar-black pool and lighting up the world with a single candle. Shadow plays flickering on the walls of the cave like Indonesian puppet theatre, but so alive. It was only later we learned these shapes are the repository of the cave witch's memory—or even her soul.

Our one close encounter with a cave witch occurred in the Zvih'hazi oasis, at the edge of a desert in what used to be Libya, where Odysseus once-upon-a-dream stumbled on the Lotus Eaters. She inhabited a crystal grotto accessed through a hole in the ground hidden beneath a sundial.

Her movements followed the sun. She took water in through her pores—she spent hours in a shallow pool near the opening of her cave, her hair turning a bewitching shade of green. Her silence was incandescent. (It must be added that there is no record of anyone anywhere ever having heard the voice of a cave witch.) We were rendered as shy as a Victorian bride and could only watch from a distance. And what we saw told us we would never be lover enough for a cave witch.

In her bristled bromeliad-edged pool, the algae blooms—looking uncannily like the snake nest of magenta and turquoise on baby Leopold's face—and enveloped her semi-submerged body. She shimmered in the peach-fuzzed moonlight, licked by phosphorescence. Tendrils of clematis and woody vines wrapped themselves around her wrists, her waist, and they began to tango. The milk thistle threw up shimmering clouds of pollen, as did the Black Spider lily. She breathed in deeply, as if inhaling the very universe itself. The date palms sang a song so ancient even Methuselah, the oldest saguaro cactus alive, could not recall its origins.

There was recently discovered a system of caves under the city of Montreal. Those of us who live



in la Belle Ville shudder with uncontrollable delight, wondering whether it has a resident cave witch. Just to imagine her nearby as we rocket past on the Metro is thrill enough.

Do not be sad if you never see her with your own eyes. We now know she is everywhere. Contrary to the old-wives tale spawned back in 1746 when the cave witch emerged from the Postojnska Jama with the future Baron von Höhle-Schatten III in her arms, the cave witch does not wither the corn. She is the blessed materfamilias of the flora.

Madonna of the fields. Our Devi of blue agave. Mother of root ball and seed pod. Demeter. Kupala of loosestrife and fern. Zara-Mama, saviour of the corn, and lover of the pocked and the broken.

- from *How to Make Love to a Cave Witch*
(revised paperback edition); Chaperon & Gartner, 2019



Rebecca Chaperon
Drinking Spirit, 2014

“I found myself jittery in the presence of the cave witch, as if a phantom limb were twitching. A shadow passed over us like clouds scudding across the sun, only on this day there were no clouds. As I sat there by that darkening stream, the burnished obelisk behind me winking knowingly, I wondered if this is how things would be once she was gone, a ceaseless string of cloudy days and twitching extremities. Joy, as I had known it for the past few days, utterly extinguished. Life like a drooping helium balloon still tied to a chair from a party that had ended weeks ago. Was there nothing I could say—do—to convince her to stay? (What I fool I was to think I could make her love me through blunt force of will!).

The cave witch noticed me shivering and insisted I have another glass of wine.”

- from *How to Make Love to a Cave Witch: Eye-Witness Accounts* (third edition); Chaperon & Gartner, 2021



“All evidence suggested the cave witch had recently been there. The courtyard buzzed with a delightful energy. The air molecules literally jitter-bugged, forming rainbows with colours not yet on the spectrum. There was, of course, the tell-tale pyramid and a stream as opaque as a pair of ballet tights. We waited a full week, keeping each other awake by telling the stories we’d been told by others about the cave witch. The stone behind our backs was warm and glowed in the moonlight. It was only later, with 20/20 hindsight and a sickening churn in our guts, that we realized the comforting blue boulder had been the cave witch herself. And that’s when we wept.”

- from *How to Make Love to a Cave Witch: Eye-Witness Accounts* (third edition); Chaperon & Gartner, 2021

Rebecca Chaperon
The Source, 2014



Rebecca Chaperon
Memory Light, 2016

There is a dream or “night-vision” common to many who have found themselves in the vicinity of a cave witch. The accounts seldom vary. A blue fairy emerges from a tar-black pool and lights up the world with a single candle held aloft. Her hair smells of something festive. A hot, fetid wind rushes past, carrying on it a parliament of rooks, an exaltation of larks, and a flotilla of stinging jellyfish. The candle wavers, but remains lit. Recent scholarship suggests this purported dream is actually a collective memory of the future.

- from *How to Make Love to a Cave Witch: The Dream Companion Edition*; Chaperon & Gartner, 2023

Rebecca Chaperon
Nourishment, 2014



You will rarely see a cave witch in a grocery store or sifting through the baby greens at a farmers' market. She is marvellously self-sufficient. When living "off the grid" was briefly fashionable in the early part of our century, the cave witch made even the best-intentioned of these spirited pioneers seem like punters. Although she is able to survive for decades tonguing dew off morning glories and inhaling the sharp scent of ozone that presages a rain storm, the cave witch is a culinary whiz. She can make a fire by simply glancing at a pile of kindling, skin a rabbit with her bare hands (although she'd prefer not to), and catch fish with her sharp wit. Her honey-crisped fireflies (page 43) and eucalyptus-leaf tapenade (page 68) will add that certain *je ne sais quoi* to even the smartest social gatherings.

-from the introduction to *How to Make Love to a Cave Witch: The Cookbook* (full-colour illustrations); Chaperon & Gartner, 2025



Rebecca Chaperon
Winchester Mystery House, 2016

There is another, less frequent dream or “night-vision” that visits those who have encountered a cave witch. Unlike the “blue fairy” dream which is now being treated as a collective memory of the future, the “red-headed girl dream” is just that, a dream. At least for the time being. A girl with the hair the colour of fire strides through a peach-lit meadow calling for her mother. Each time she disappears into the over-sized foliage, she appears again from behind a turreted mansion and moves towards the dreamer. Some find her terrifying; these dreamers claim she carries a smoking rifle. Others find her a source of calm; these dreamers say she offers them assorted candies from a paper sack.

- from *How to Make Love to a Cave Witch: The Dream Companion Edition*; Chaperon & Gartner, 2023

STORIES BY ERI

LIKA THORKELSON

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DUPLEX

The trash Jude brought home was definitely haunted. Lydia told me so one afternoon when I was over at her place for a secret smoke. This, she claimed, was the reason a smart guy like her husband was working at the dump rather than at one of the refineries or up in Fort Mac where he could make quadruple the pay. He was rescuing ghosts and making homes for them in the backyard. “He brings back the pieces that give off the strongest vibrations,” Lydia said, her voice low and conspiratorial. “When he finds them, they’re lonely. They tell us what they need and we build it.”

I looked out at the towers of interlocking refuse that were taking over her backyard and waited for her pouty lips to curl up into that teasing smile that made her gray eyes glint. But she seemed committed, so I played along. Artists like her can be hard to read. They see the world in a different way from the rest of us. “That’s nice,” I said. “I hope somebody finds me when I’m gone.” I’d known Lydia and Jude were artists from the moment they moved into the second half of our duplex. I saw their jumble of vintage furniture, Jude tall and catlike, Lydia wearing the same kind of silk kerchief my Oma used to put on for church, and I called it. “There are artists moving in next door,” I said to Tyler.

He looked up from the hockey game and scowled. “They’ll be noisy,” he said. “Weird music. Parties with lots of hippies.”

I nodded as if I agreed that would be a bad thing.

It turned out they did make a fair amount of noise, but not the kind he predicted. No growling guitars or drug-fueled blow-outs, just the metal on metal pounding of construction noise in the backyard during the day. Once in a while, long after Tyler was asleep, I thought I heard the rhythm of intense lovemaking. But none of that bothered me. Our last neighbours had been yoga fanatics who complained when we held barbecues that the scent of Tyler’s hamburgers was messing with their chakras.

It took me a few weeks to work up the courage to go over to meet the artists next door. Tyler told me I should go ask them to turn down the construction racket so he could hear the game. I just wanted to see what they were building. On my day off, while Tyler was at the refinery, I decided to make my move. I piled homemade cookies on my Oma’s best china plate—the one with the red and yellow roses—and knocked on their door.

Lydia wore her hair up in a loose bun, errant curls falling around her tiny ears, which she decorated with ruby studs that looked like tulips. She had on a pair of jeans and a striped men’s dress shirt, both oversized, spattered with every colour of paint and streaked with grease. I offered her my cookies—gluten free, no peanuts, just in case. She put her hand on her heart as if to contain it from exploding. “Just in time,” she said. “What a beautiful dish.” She suggested we have a smoke out back. I hadn’t had a cigarette in two years, but how could I refuse?

That was my first glimpse of the sculptures she and Jude were working on. They were already about as tall as the fence, constructed out of a jumble of metal and plastic. There were parts that looked like soft nests made from scraps of bedding, and parts that were jagged, built out of smashed pottery. One had a hubcap for a head. I told Lydia that it reminded me of one of those paintings of Mary with a halo. “But that’s stupid, right?”

Her face split into a grin that made her look equal parts child and angel. “Not at all,” she said. “You’re very perceptive.”

I had to take a bite of a cookie to cover my prideful smile.

We spent most of that afternoon on her deck pulling tarot cards and making up fortunes for each other. Well, I was making them up. She seemed quite serious. She told me a big change was coming to my life, that I had some decisions

to make about who I was and who I wanted to be. I told her she was on the road to art world fame, which made her laugh again. It wasn't until the end of the day that she told me about the ghosts. By then, she could have told me just about anything and I would have believed it.

When Tyler saw what was taking shape in the neighbour's backyard, he took off his ball cap and pinched the skin between his eyes. "I was ready for some hijinks, but this is too much," he fumed.

I tried to explain to him that the artistic process was mysterious, that what was going on was important, even if we didn't quite understand it, but he wouldn't buy it. I suggested that we have them over for dinner, but his face turned red and he gripped the remote so tight I could hear the plastic crack. "I only have so many hours a week off," he said through gritted teeth. "I'm not going to spend them with a pair of fruitcakes."

When Mom called, I tried to tell her about our new neighbours, but all she wanted to talk about was babies. She'd read an article about how certain root vegetables decreased fertility, and she was worried I had been eating too many yam fries. We were supposed to be trying to conceive, but we hadn't made any solid attempts since we were in Lloydminster for the Dirksen wedding, and we stayed in the hotel with the waterslide and the continental breakfast. There had been a whole junior girls' hockey team staying there that drove Tyler wild. Most of the time, he was too tired from work, so he'd just fall asleep, and I'd stay up listening to Jude and Lydia go at it next door, their voices deep and animal. Artists are like that—they have passion to spare. Sometimes I feel I could be one of Jude's ghosts, alone and confused in the broken and rotting remnants of someone else's life.

After Lydia told me about the ghosts, I began to hear other sounds from their yard at night. It was hottest July on record. We kept all the doors and windows open, but the temperature



hardly changed from day to night. Through the screens, I'd hear conversations of many urgent voices, laughter, or old drinking songs like my Opa used to sing. I thought I heard different languages, the swallowed r's of French or the breathy hum of Cree or the acrobatic vowels of Cantonese. Sometimes one language would speak and another would reply as if they could understand each other perfectly without the need for translation. Like a dream, the memory of the voices lost solidity with the sunrise. I mean, I can barely read the French side of a cereal box—since when have I been able to recognize Cree? How could I possibly know Cantonese from Mandarin? Was this the change Lydia had promised? If so, it was taking an unexpected form.

One afternoon, I was making one of the recipes from my Oma's great big cookbook for Tyler. It was hard work, but I'd been trying to put some meat back on his bones, something to counteract the bulge of his swiftly growing belly. I don't remember exactly what I was cutting when the knife slipped and sank deep into the flesh of my finger. When I pulled it away, blood welled up and trickled down my hand. It became a river down my palm and my head started to spin. I guess I hadn't been eating enough, either.

I looked all over the house, but I couldn't find a single bandage, so I wrapped a few paper towels around my finger to soak up the blood and went next door for help. The lawns were seared and yellow because of a water use ban, the sun felt close enough to touch. I knocked as hard as I could. No answer. I knocked again and rang the doorbell. I could feel my heartbeat in my hand. It was really starting to hurt.

I knew Jude was at work because I'd seen him leave on his bicycle that morning, but perhaps Lydia was working on the sculptures. I walked round back. Since my visit, their backyard had become filled in a great deal. The sculptures had expanded and interlocked to become like walls. It was much cooler on the shady path between them. Old scratched CDs hung from a few like makeshift wind chimes. I wandered along, admiring how the reflected light danced, almost forgetting the towel wrapped around my hand that was quickly soaking with blood.

The path sent me in the direction of the alley, then back to their house, but Lydia was nowhere to be found. They had the same screen door we did—Tyler was always on me about forgetting to lock it. I tested theirs and it slid right open. I couldn't see inside, but I thought I heard voices ahead. Maybe she was home and hadn't heard me knock. Even if she wasn't, surely, she wouldn't mind if I just helped myself to a bandage or two from the medicine cabinet.

The house was darker than I expected. When my eyes adjusted, I realized that the sculptures extended inside. I ran my hand along them and marvelled at how tightly the pieces locked together. A drop of my blood hit the floor. It made an echo like water dripping in a cave, and I remembered why I was there. Since our houses were mirror images, it should have been easy to find the master bathroom. I turned the corner but my way was blocked, so I went deeper, left then right until I'd lost my position. I couldn't find a room I recognized. Their house seemed so much larger than ours, the floor a slow incline. The voices came to me again, just around the corner. They sounded friendly. They knew my name.



Chris Reid
Hot Summer Evening, 2017

Sometimes, for a moment, I remember why I married you. I remember the tingle of your hand on my thigh, or the cold February nights when I would curl myself around you for warmth. Once, you were the anchor around my neck that dragged me beneath the waves. Now, you are the skeleton in my closet, begging me to join you in the dark, in a private hell of tailored shirts and sundresses, of garden parties where I would smile and make you look good. Your tuxedo went back to the shop ages ago, but my wedding dress still remains for the moths to devour.



In my dream last night, we were wading together in the ocean. We were both still very young and clothed as if preparing for a water blessing, the kind they do at Christian revivals in movies about the Old South. You promised the rocky island further out would be perfect for us. You mused about building a house there, off the grid, beyond the walls of civilization. A plane flew by on its way to Calgary to visit my grandmother's grave. I told you that I probably couldn't follow you any further. You grinned and suggested it was my turn to lead.

Chris Reid
Airplane, Spider and Heron, 2010



Morning people shouldn't marry night people. You woke each morning with a kind of glee that made me want to end you. You'd start talking before you even opened your eyes. Remember the morning you dropped the coffee urn on my foot while we were doing dishes? A great shard of glass wedged into the flesh above my big toe. You rushed me to the emergency room, so contrite, face ashen. You were pretty when you were pale. Remember all those stitches? The severed nerves that shut off feeling to part of my foot? I still have a scar there. I call it my stigmata.

Chris Reid
Drinking Coffee, 2009

Chris Reid
The River Visit, 2010



You insisted we do this endless road trip to see the wild places of our country. The air conditioning blew out halfway through, and I thought I was going to die in the July heat. I bought a bag of ice and held it in my lap as if it were our child, picking out little anchor-shaped pieces and sliding them over the skin of my face and shoulders. It made things better until the meltwater began to pool on the floor. That's when you got really mad, stopped the car, and threatened to leave me on the side of the road if I didn't clean it up. There were no barriers between us and the canyon. How easily I could have pushed you down.



POEMS BY SUS

SAN MUSGRAVE

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—

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LA PASIONARA

"I let your mind enter me
out of loneliness..."

- Leonard Cohen, *The Energy of Slaves*

(i)

Some days he would send me away
to satisfy a man who made me stuff
a live bird up inside me, then stop
myself with my fist so it couldn't
get away; I swear I could hear
that bird's heart tearing up in the wet
sex darkness. There was never much
satisfaction in licking the man's
boots, the ones he would have me
polish, afterwards, by straddling them
and rubbing my juices into the cool
leather until he could make out his own
face in their shine (leather, you said
is forgiving, and it's true). As the bird thrashed
inside me he would beg me to tell him
how much I could feel: the claws, the beak,
did it excite me the way the bird struggled
to beat his way out of me? Oh, he said, what
he wouldn't give to live and die in a woman
like this, fighting to get free. What kind of man

was he? Ordinary, in most senses. To see him
on the street you would never have guessed
what made him hardest was whispering to me,
as I tongued his boots' rims and sucked
his laces clean: *your pussy's got a bird inside her,*
your pussy got a bird as if he saw something predatory
in me—a cat, wild, with the night's meat in her jaws.

If all men were as easily satisfied as he
I'd be rolling around between coiled bolts of razor wire
like the last time I left someone who tried to put distance
between us. You think you want me now?
I live by my own laws, and break them
in tears, in fucks, in blood. To be a slave
to a slave: could you take, day after day
my greed for you? You think?
You want me now?

(ii)

He'd lay me naked, face down,
a taste for his friends,
legs spread a little, enough
to let the imagination in. The only
weapon I had was my contempt: it's an art
to show contempt when you have
a mouth full of something that grows
hard. *Hard like the cries of the past,*
harder than the cries of the future.

I held my mud. Took it
on the chin. I never looked
one of them in the eye. That way
I could finish them in peace.

(iii)

He didn't like it when I asked
questions about freedom but I knew
I'd be punished for it later and that
is what I prayed for, the punishing part.

He would give me to his dogs, chained
on their backs to the earthen floor
and force me to crawl from one to the other
on my knees. I did to them only what was
most forbidden and pleasurable
because, to you, I had always been cruel.

I wasn't to draw blood, that was another rule,
but my hands and lips were skilled and I
thought of your eyes as I did what I was born
to do, how you, my refugee, once told me
all is permitted in God's name

when exile was in our blood like time
and you were like God to me.

(iv)

I was supposed to be grateful
because he allowed me to wear my blue dress
when I lay down to sleep each night
on a bed of splintered glass. To understand

is to suffer. In the next room I could hear him
telling the men he paid to torture me
how nothing would satisfy me, I had been
broken in so many places I was like
lace, how I preferred the taste
of my own blood to the memory of trying on
pair after pair of red shoes. Later
when the hired men gave up and went
home to their hungry wives he would untie

me and try to make me eat, but I gave up
eating the day I realized my life was being
run by people who think up diets
for a living and that the rest of us use love
as an excuse for growing thin. He wanted
to undress me but I was already
naked. Except for the blue dress, the one
you paid me to put on every night
for you, in the smashed mirror as I let
your mind enter me the only way I could.



Dauida Kidd
Dig a Foxhole and Hide in the Graveyard of Ambition, 2016



THE LONELINESS OF WHAT MAKES YOU UNIQUE FROM OTHERS

David Kidd
Big Dad, 2018

My mother carried him over Christmas,
roasting a turkey, making bread sauce,
Brussels sprouts we all eschewed, the usual
— yams candied with brown sugar, baby
peas, and plum pudding for dessert
with enough rum in it to keep my father
happy. She felt, she said, when I was old enough
for her to confide in me, like a walking coffin.
Her doctor told her the baby had to “come to term.”

How can the dead know when it is their time to be
delivered? My father drove to the hospital that night
and parked illegally (the detail my mother remembered
most, after not being allowed to hold her stillborn boy)
smack outside the main entrance doors under
the expectant sign, MATERNITY.



DETACHMENT

Davida Kidd
Iron Lung, 2017

When you rake leaves, watch
your mind. When you cook meat
over an open flame, watch
your mind more closely. You still think
your mind is in your head? Think
again. A voice, strange and wild, sings
when there's nothing left to burn
light yourself on fire.



BEFORE ENLIGHTENMENT

Daivda Kidd
Tank, 2006

My big brother tries to open the door
carrying two buckets of red paint.
The lesson for today — let it go.
Not until you have first put down
whatever you desire most. But you
don't do you—you try to grasp
the doorknob when your hands
are already full of split
cedar for the stove, or water
hailed from the well in a leaky pot
(by the time you reach the house
there's scarcely a drop left.) Hard
to let go of such habits that cause us
to bow under their weight, let go

of a life. Put it down. Red paint rivering
the sky and the blistering stars. No water
within reach to put the flames out.



WAR IS KIND

David Kidd
The Hazing, 2018

I confess: I pinched my best friend's
baby brother and made him cry.
I was cruel to a fly; I told my father
in Ireland, circa 1976, he had wasted
his life. I aspire to being kind,
the way war is kind.

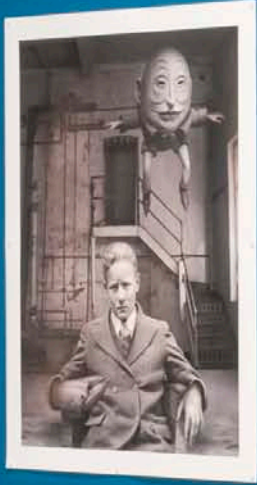
Remember sitting at the bar,
of the Clifden Hotel in Massey, Ontario
with Murray Muncaster, circa 1988?
"All my life I refrained," he said.
"All my life I refrained, and nobody noticed."



THE WAY THE STUBBORN LAND GOES SOFT BEFORE THE SEA

Dauida Kidd
The Safety of Small Things, 2006

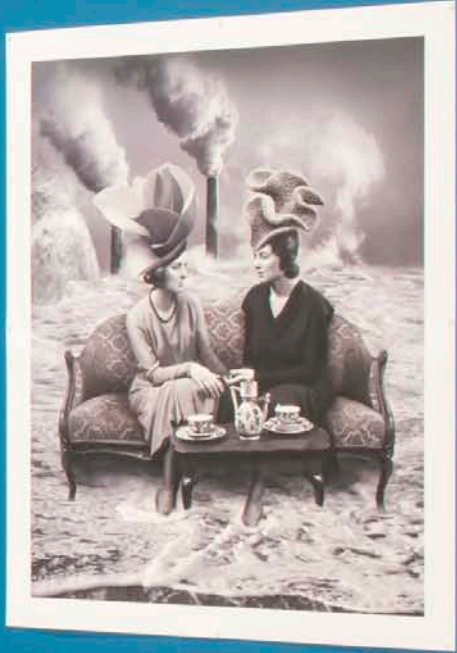
That month before my sister died I found her
on the beach; the foam, after a north wind
had blown all week, knee-deep.
These days when I walk to White Creek
I think of her, closer to death
than I was at the time, the way
she sat straight against a stranded log,
waiting. My father said look your last
on all things and I looked at my sister and back
at the sea, thinking this is what I will miss, too —
the surge upon the shore, the herds
of sandpipers jinking in and out as the waves
break and recede. Now each time I look,
I look my last, and then
I look again.



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STORIES BY C

CHELSEA ROONEY

38



44

PRACTICING MAGIC

Me and my friend Teresa, Jacaranda Beach, 1986. In the afternoons we met for coffee at The Strand, right on the water, and, looking north, could just make out the oil refinery, four miles down Vista Del Mar on El Segundo Beach, puffing out its lucrative black smoke. Hard to believe that only sixty years ago, this entire community was made of tents on sand. Not hard to understand though when you know the value of oil. Teresa and I chatted, and the sky over the Pacific Ocean was so infinitely blue, we couldn't fathom the harm of the burn. Besides, the harm was already within us. We felt it churning inside and leaving our ears and mouths like smoke as we discussed where we'd gone wrong.

I argued that Jacaranda Beach—the whitest community in Los Angeles—had been fucked since the 1910s, when local hate groups set fire to the homes of local Black folks in an attempt to terrorize them out of their own neighbourhood. When it didn't work, the city bought their land and built a park, forcing them out. Teresa rolled her eyes. "It started before that," she said. In 1771, the Spanish soldiers arrived and raped the Tongva women and killed the Tongva men and claimed the Tongva land and built the San Gabriel Mission and indentured the Tongva people. "You wouldn't know it now though to read a history book," said Teresa. She handed me a book called *Skirts Across the Sand*, written by a white lady, Jacaranda Beach's 'local historian.' Uh huh. It basically said, "This land was uninhabited before the whites showed up in the 1880s." Oh yeah, except for those Spanish colonizers. And oh yeah, except for those 'Gabrielino Indians,' who fished on the coast and gathered salts from the flats and whose jewelry and currency and arrowheads we still find today all over town today. Except for them.

Me and Teresa in 1986. We knew a secret that few other whites did: the investigation was ongoing because it had come time to deflower our children. We were so puritanical as a culture; no one kept their kids on ice like us. And that's

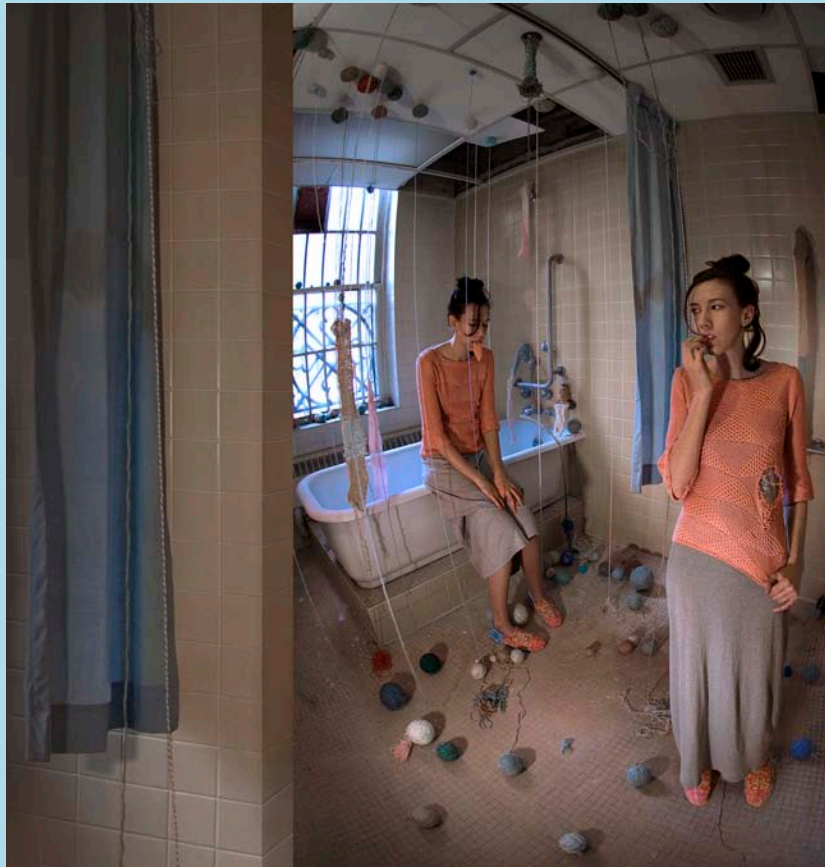
why the allegations had gotten so out of hand. A series of underground tunnels connecting Satanists and pornographers? Where was the proof?

In 1986, we watched thousands of white people march from our city of Los Angeles to Washington DC for the Great Peace March for Global Nuclear Disarmament. Imagine! It's 1986 and you think the biggest threat is nuclear war. (Of course, it's understandable we thought that. This was, after all, their plan. Distract us with the thought of mass straight white death while carrying out the deaths of all the others. Why didn't we all march for AIDS? Or crack-cocaine? Or police brutality? Or the rise of the New Right? And, I'm sorry, how many of us ended up nuked? And, I'm sorry, how many others died?)

Me and Teresa, two smart white ladies, we knew everything back then in 1986. Well, almost everything. The only thing you could have surprised us with is if you'd told us that the conservatives of our time would become your neoliberals of today. That the men who fought for our children—saving them one by one from the grip of unholy perverts!—would rail against the adult women crying rape today. They believed us as children, those conservatists. But then, something changed. Me and Teresa wonder what it was. Why, today, they have forsaken us.



Davida Kidd
Practicing Magic, 2015



The woman who first reported that the employees of the Jacaranda Beach daycare were abusing children was a single mother with an alcohol addiction. At least, that's what I've read about her in newspapers and books from my post-internet perspective thirty years later. The articles say that she showed up at the Jacaranda Beach police department one day and told police that her son was bleeding from his bum and that the employees at the daycare had done it and that also her ex-husband had done it too. Arrest them both. The investigation started and within a month she had claimed that the daycare employees had killed a horse in front of her son and that one of them had flown through the air like a bird. The investigation continued. Eventually, hundreds of children were making these types of claims, allegations I in my post-internet age find equally difficult to believe. People who hate women are called misogynist. What about people who hate children?

David Kidd
Asylum, 2017

The articles and books go on to say that halfway through the resulting criminal trial the woman who made the initial accusations died of alcohol poisoning. They say the investigation and trial, which ended in acquittals for all, was all her fault. They say her boy was in fact never touched. They say.



Rebecca Chaperon
Displacement, 2011

They took the children to this building, the parents did, the parents took their children to this building, it was called the Children's Institute and it was brand new, the government had a lot of money to spend on programs like this, programs that combatted child abuse.

Social workers (mostly new social workers, young social workers) took the children into rooms and closed the doors and asked them questions, for hours at time, using stuffed dolls for reference—a white girl or boy doll for the child and a black doll for the daycare worker, even though the daycare workers accused of abuse were all white.

The social workers said, “Did he touch you here? Did he touch you there? Did he put this inside that? Did anything come out of here?” When the kids said no, which they all did, the social workers changed their tactic. “Your friends already told us what happened. Are you stupid? Or are you smart, like your friend?”

Eventually, the kids said yes.



Here's Samantha. She rode her bicycle from her bedroom at nighttime into the forest where she found a safe place to sit and let the darkness enter her. If she were alive a few hundred years before 1986, she would probably have been burned at the stake for doing this. Going into the woods and letting the darkness enter her. Her mother Marie wanted to leave town, because all the residents had become consumed by the investigation. Samantha feared that she would be taken from her friends, from everything she knew, and it made her unable to sleep. So at night she went to the woods to calm herself. Marie had attended the daycare herself, twenty years before, and remembered nothing, no abuse. Same with Samantha. After several minutes in the forest, the darkness calmed her and she saw finally a great blankness inside her. What a relief. She did not know if she had been touched. She never wanted to know. If you cannot remember something, leave it that way.

Rebecca Chaperon
Cave Witch, 2017



Of course, everyone who went digging underneath the daycare looking for animal remains found some.

Chris Reid
Bats and Bones, 2015

The owners of the daycare had operated it for thirty years and, in that time, had laid to rest many a dead bunny, goldfish and turtle. At least, that's what the court transcripts from then say. Again, they could have been lying. How do you prove that the animals you've laid to rest died from natural causes? How do you prove you didn't hold animal sacrifice rituals in an attempt to terrify the children into submission and silence?

Of course they found animal bones under the daycare. Animals die outside every night. Think of all the animals you see in a day: the raccoons, the squirrels, the skunks. They die, flesh recedes, bones sink. Do you ever find their bones? You would. If you had to. If you only went looking.



But don't listen to me, I dislike children.

Some people thought children brought out the best in them. Not me. Children scared me, so they made me worse. Take my niece, Helen. Always running, jumping, falling. I spent most of my time with her thinking, "She's gonna die."

One day, she was swinging too high, and I told her, "You could fall and break a bone."

"No way, Auntie," still pumping her legs, "that only happens in movies."

"Helen!" I laughed, "are you kidding? You don't know you can break bones?"

She shook her head.

It made me angry. "I broke a bone once, you know," I said. "I was your age. Your mother, two years older, slid down a Slip-n-Slide and smashed into me. I broke my arm."

Helen said, "You're a liar."

The word stung. I wanted to tell her it was rude, but I couldn't, because I'd taught her that word myself. A couple hours ago, I'd found her with the cat, his fur matted with my sister's favourite lipstick.

"Why did you do this?" I'd asked.

"I didn't," she said. "You did."

My face burned and my stomach tightened. "You're a liar," I'd said, and she'd remembered.





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Small white rectangular caption card.





1971



1972



ARTISTS' BIO

7

0

GRAPHIES

50

55

REBECCA



CHAPERON



On the visual journey through Rebecca Chaperon's work we are repeatedly immersed in surreal versions of the world, places that waver just outside of our perception. Hovering crystals, palatial icebergs, secretive caves, and psychedelic gardens are some of the recurring motifs found in each of her painting series. Chaperon's work shifts between treating the landscape as figurative representation or as highly symbolic spaces that hint at a mysterious narrative.

Chaperon was born in England in 1978 and graduated from Emily Carr University in 2002. Her work is exhibited and collected internationally and she is a two-time recipient of Canada Council Awards for her *Antarticus* and *Cave Paintings* series respectively. She has shown extensively in Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal, and has been included in exhibitions in Richmond (VA), Chicago (IL), San Francisco and Los Angeles (CA). Her paintings are held by several private and corporate collections including TD Canada and Aritzia.

CHRIS REI



D



Chris Reid holds a BFA from the University of Alberta and an MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. She uses a variety of media both traditional (like acrylics and chalk pastels) and non-traditional (like wax paper, socks, eggs, and tea bags) to create artworks that are part biography and part fantasy. Her practice incorporates elements of her life as an artist, mother, wife, and social services worker.

Reid is influenced by her work both as a housing resource worker in Brandon Manitoba, and as a visual arts instructor at the Art Gallery of Southwestern Manitoba and at Brandon University. Reid has been awarded creation/production support by the Alberta Foundation for the Arts and the Manitoba Arts Council and has participated in residencies across Canada. Her work can be found in several public collections including the Banff Centre for the Arts, the MacKenzie Art Gallery, and the Alberta Foundation for the Arts. In her recent practice, Reid has begun to explore collaborative works with the community as part of the Bertram Reid Collective.

DAVIDAKI



KIDD



Davida Kidd's work engages in biting double entendres that are steeped in social commentary and satire. Addressing themes that blur the line between illusion and reality, and working in the realm of manipulated photography, she cultivates an ambiguous zone wherein the subjects of her work emerge as invented creatures. Through the use of constructed sets and staged subjects, she creates large-scale photographic images that use digital collage and drawing to combine multiple objects, images and views. The result conveys a sense of loss and displacement on both a personal and environmental level.

Born in Edmonton, Kidd received both her BFA and MVA from the University of Alberta, where she specialized in Print Media, Photography, and Visual Communication Design. Kidd is currently an Associate Professor of Visual Arts at the University of the Fraser Valley. She has been the recipient of many international awards including the prestigious Grand Prix at the 2003 International Print Triennial in Poland. She has received project grants from the Canada Council of the Arts and the BC Arts Council and has participated and been invited to exhibit in juried international print exhibitions worldwide including Russia, Japan, China, Germany, Poland, the Czech Republic, and Sweden.



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A
The first part of the exhibition is dedicated to the early stages of human evolution, from the emergence of our ancestors in Africa to their migration across the globe. This section explores the genetic and environmental factors that shaped our species and the challenges they faced during their journey.



T
The second part of the exhibition focuses on the development of early human societies and the emergence of agriculture. It examines the transition from nomadic hunter-gathering to settled farming communities and the impact of these changes on human culture and technology.



WRITERS' BIO

7

GRAPHIES

60
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61

ZSUZSI GARTNER

Zsuzsi Gartner is the author of the acclaimed story collection *All the Anxious Girls on Earth* and the editor of the award-winning *Darwin's Bastards: Astounding Tales from Tomorrow*. Her second book, *Better Living through Plastic Explosives*, was a Scotiabank Giller Prize finalist. She has won National Magazine Awards for Fiction, most recently in 2016. Gartner taught MFA students at the University of British Columbia for eight years and has mentored fiction and non-fiction writers through the Banff Centre's writing programs. She was the inaugural Frank O'Connor International Short Story Fellow in Cork, Ireland for 2016 and was a member of the 2016/2017 Expert Advisory Group on Canadian Culture for the Federal Minister of Heritage. She lives and works in East Vancouver.

SUSAN MUSGRAVE

Susan Musgrave has published more than 30 books and received awards in six categories: poetry, novels, non-fiction, food writing, editing, and books for children. She lives on Haida Gwaii where she owns and manages Copper Beech Guest House.

In 2012 Musgrave won the Spirit Bear Award for her enduring contribution to the poetry of the Pacific Northwest. "Her artistic presence over the past 40 years has helped create who we are," wrote Patrick Lane. "She is as important to us as Emily Carr." In the fall of 2014 she won the Matt Cohen Award in Celebration of a Writing Life from the Writers' Trust.

Musgrave's latest book, *A Taste of Haida Gwaii: Food Gathering and Feasting at the Edge of the World*, won the Bill Duthie Bookseller's Choice Award at the 2016 B.C. Book Awards, and in the same year was the gold winner in the Regional Cookbook category at the Taste Canada Awards.

CHELSEA ROONEY

Chelsea Rooney is the author of *Pedal*, a debut novel published with Caitlin Press and a finalist for the 2015 Amazon.ca First Novel Award, co-presented with *The Walrus*. *Pedal* was also nominated for the 2015 ReLit Award for Best Independent Fiction. CBC Books named Chelsea Rooney a “Writer to Watch” in 2015. In 2014, Canada’s book blog *49th Shelf* chose *Pedal* as a Book of the Year and Stephen Beattie of *Quill & Quire* chose *Pedal* as a Best Debut.

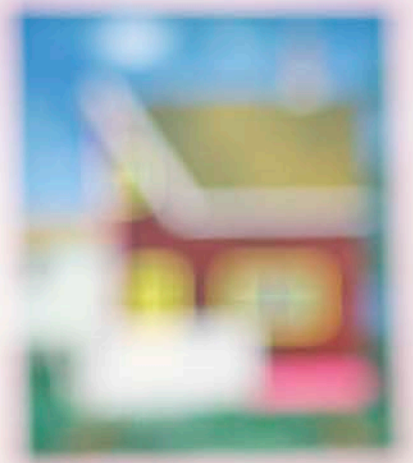
Rooney has taught fiction writing in the English department at the University of the Fraser Valley and was their 2017 Visiting Fellow for the Kuldip Gill Writing Fellowship program. As an educational writer, she devises the secondary-school curriculum for the English Ministry of Education in Quebec. She also teaches art history and writing to designers at Openstudio Academy of Art and Design, and novel studies to high school students at Elite Educational Institute.

ERIKATHORKELSON

Erika Thorkelson is a writer of fiction and creative non-fiction whose work has appeared in *Maisonneuve*, *Room Magazine*, *The Walrus*, *Hazlitt*, *The New Quarterly*, *This Magazine*, *Ricepaper Magazine* and *Quill & Quire*. She has been a regular contributor of arts and culture writing to the *Vancouver Sun* and *Edmonton Journal* with a focus on theatre criticism.

Thorkelson holds an MFA in Creative Writing from the University of British Columbia and was a longtime host of *The Storytelling Show* on Vancouver Co-op Radio. She is also an instructor and graduate writing consultant at Emily Carr University of Art + Design.

From 2007 to 2009, she taught English in Miyagi Prefecture, Japan. In 2013, she received an Access Copyright Foundation Grant to travel to Japan to continue work on a book that explores events around the 2011 tsunami. Her essay “Liquefaction,” which explores her first trip to Japan after the tsunami, was runner up in the Edna Staebler Personal Essay Contest and was published in *The New Quarterly* in 2012.





LISTO

OF WORKS

66



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REBECCA

*Interlude, Channel,
Displacement (triptych), 2011*
acrylic on canvas
91.5 x 223.5 cm (overall)

Hyperbole, 2011
acrylic on canvas
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. M. Ionescu
91.5 x 61 cm

Drinking Spirit, 2014
acrylic on canvas
Collection of Nadia Thibault
28 x 25.5 cm

Nourishment, 2014
acrylic on canvas
Collection of Nadia Thibault
45.7 x 35.5 cm

The Source, 2014
acrylic on canvas
45.7 x 61 cm

HAPERON

Wavy Rainbow, 2014
acrylic on wood
Collection of Tierney Milne
108 x 18 x 65 cm

Memory Light, 2016
acrylic on canvas
101.5 x 76.2 cm

Presence III, 2016
acrylic on canvas
106.7 x 122 cm

Winchester Mystery House, 2016
acrylic on paper
Collection of Nadia Thibault
40.5 x 30.5 cm

Cave Witch, 2017
acrylic on canvas
213 x 152.5 cm

Giant Portal, 2017
acrylic on canvas
183 x 137 cm

Portal, 2017
acrylic on wood panel
114 x 91.5 cm

Offering, 2018
acrylic on canvas
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. M. Ionescu
152.5 x 137 cm

Snake Lake, 2018
acrylic on canvas
183 x 137 cm

Spellwork, 2018
acrylic on canvas
183 x 137 cm

Swamp Magic, 2018
acrylic on canvas
152.5 x 114 cm

*all dimensions are listed as height x width

DAVID DAVID KID

The Safety of Small Things, 2006
inkjet print on paper
101.5 x 203 cm

Tank, 2006
lightjet print on paper
81.3 x 200.5 cm

Picture for Boys, 2016
inkjet print on paper
86 x 71 cm

Practicing Magic, 2016
inkjet print on paper
86 x 61 cm

*Dig a Foxhole and Hide in the
Graveyard of Ambition*, 2016
inkjet print on paper
81 x 111.7 cm

Asylum, 2017
inkjet print on paper
101.5 x 101.5 cm

DD

Iron Lung, 2017
inkjet print on paper
101.5 x 203 cm

Red Dwarf, 2017
inkjet print on paper
101.5 x 111.7 cm

Big Dad, 2018
inkjet print on paper
101.5 x 147.3 cm

The Hazing, 2018
inkjet print on paper
101.5 x 172.7 cm

CHRIS REID

Sock Creatures, 2006–13
mixed media
dimensions variable

Eggs, 2006–14
eggs, wax, dye
dimensions variable

Drinking Coffee, 2009
chalk pastel on paper
227.5 x 230 cm

Airplane, Spider and Heron, 2010
chalk pastel on paper
120 x 221.5 cm

The River Visit, 2010
chalk pastel on paper
127 x 118 cm

Cat Before Cypress Coming up the Stairs, 2011
chalk pastel on paper
195 x 120 cm



Slow Burn, 2011
chalk pastel on paper
42 x 125 cm

Baba Yaga Half Duplex, 2015
acrylic on paper
147 x 127 cm

Bats and Bones, 2015
acrylic on paper
77.5 x 125 cm

Cat, Dog, Half a House, 2015
acrylic on paper
127 x 105 cm

Flesh Cat and Red Boots, 2017
acrylic on paper
104 x 71 cm

Hot Summer Evening, 2017
acrylic on paper
89 x 81 cm

Houses in Hoodoos, 2018
acrylic on foam core and mat board
32 x 36 x 10 cm

Cat and Girl with Partial Bridge, 2018
acrylic on foam core and mat board
46 x 31 x 15 cm



