

Homes

A work by Richard Ibghy & Marilou Lemmens
École du Zénith, Shefford





Homes

Produced for École du Zénith, an elementary school created in the spirit of Lab-Écoles in Shefford, the work consists of two permanent outdoor structures in the shape of triangular prisms: *The Big Home* and *The Small Home*.

The facades are made of clay bricks with a glazed finish comparable to that of ceramic, and continues the artists' exploration of geometric abstraction. For each tower, the bricks have been arranged to form abstract tableaux that unfold in space while harmonizing with the landscape and dialoguing with the architecture.

On the inside, the structures are designed to offer habitable spaces for chimney swifts, an endangered species. The design and materials were conceived in consultation with biologists to make the towers as welcoming as possible for the birds - offering spaces to rest, gather, and build nests.

More broadly, this work is in line with the great challenges of our time, marked by the decline in biodiversity. It responds to the need to create solidarity on a local scale - on the ground and in a tangible way - in order to develop operative solutions for shared lives.

In its pedagogical and symbolic dimensions, the work seeks to restore our cohabitation with other-than-humans and make them more visible. For the artists, in proposing that the students and the community that gravitate around the school develop a relationship with the swifts, is not just a question of acquiring knowledge, conservation, or protection, but of creating a bond, a concern, and an attachment to their existence.

Driven by a commitment to the living and a renewed attention to our multispecies cohabitations, *Homes* is a work of art that offers a pragmatic solution for the recovery of an endangered bird species, the chimney swift, while acting as a symbol of hope for present and future generations.

The Big Home



The Small Home



Chimney Swifts



Photo: Michael Veltri

There are 96 species of swifts in the world, but only one of them, the chimney swift, is found in Quebec. This small, swallow-like, insectivorous bird uses chimneys almost exclusively to build its nest. In the province, the species is threatened and its population has declined by almost 90% since the 1970s. One major reason for this decline is a reduction in the number of nesting sites. According to Environment Canada, in a period of 20 years, 30% of chimneys available to chimney swifts have been blocked or destroyed. The maintenance of existing chimneys, but also the construction of new nesting sites, are therefore essential to the survival of the species.

Practical Information

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The work is accessible at all times.

The artists

Working in duo for over fifteen years, Richard Ibghy and Marilou Lemmens create installations, videos, sculptures, images, artist books and public artworks. Combining rigorous research with a material exploration that emerges from the subjects specific to each project, their practice explores issues at the intersection of ecology, economy, epistemology, and history. In recent years, their work has sought to expand concepts of hospitality, care, and interspecies communication. They live and work in Durham-Sud, Quebec.

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Technical Information

Homes (2024) consists of two triangular towers made of glazed brick, mortar, concrete and metal. *The Small Home* is 2 m x 2 m x 6 m tall. *The Big Home* is 2 m x 2 m x 6.4 m tall.

Photo credits: H&S

Credits And Thanks

The work was made possible by the Politique d'intégration des arts à l'architecture et à l'environnement du Québec. The habitability components of the structures were designed with the assistance of Chelsey Paquette, biologist and conservation coordinator at Granby Zoo. The structures were built by Robert Hardy inc.

The artists would like to thank Chelsey Paquette and Granby Zoo, Robert Hardy and his team, Joaquin Riesgo, biodiversity conservation specialist at the Fondation pour la sauvegarde des écosystèmes du territoire de la Haute-Yamaska (SÉTHY), Isabelle Devost, biologist at QuébecOiseaux, Noémie Fortin, independent curator, and Hubert Pelletier, architect.

Site Map

