



## FRANK SHEBAGEGET

graduated with his A.O.C.A. from the Ontario College of Art in 1996 and received his Master of Fine Arts degree from the University of Victoria in 2000. Recent solo exhibitions include “HOME | Works”, Thunder Bay Art Gallery, Thunder Bay ON (2016); “Light Industry”, Carleton University Art Gallery, Ottawa ON (2010) and “Model Life”, Surrey Art Gallery, Surrey BC (2010). Group Exhibitions include “Changing Hands: Art Without Reservation, Part 3”, Museum of Art and Design New York, NY which toured to these venues: Memorial Art Gallery, University of Rochester, Rochester NY; McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Kleinburg, ON; Museum of Contemporary Native Arts, Santa Fe NM; University of Michigan Museum of Art, Ann Arbor MI and Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art, Indianapolis IN (2012-15). “Native Art Now, New Indigenous Art at NONAM”, Stadt Zurich Nordamerika Native Museum, Zurich, Switzerland (2014); “Before and After the Horizon: Anishinaabe Artists of the Great Lakes”, the Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian, New York NY; and Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto ON (2013-14). His work can be found in the collections of the Stadt Zurich Nordamerika Native Museum, City of Ottawa Art Collection, Indian Art Centre, Ottawa Art Gallery, the Canada Council Art Bank, the Dorothy Hoover Library of the Ontario College of Art, and the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation, as well as several private collections.

### LIST OF WORKS

#### Beavers (2003)

Basswood and Metal  
1692 airplanes  
Each airplane 14.7 x 8.8 x 2.5 cm  
Collection of the Ottawa Art Gallery

#### Small Village II (2004)

Millboard, Cedar, MDF  
30.5 x 25.4 x 274.3 cm  
Collection of the Ottawa Art Gallery

#### The Housing (2009)

Millboard, Cedar, Particleboard  
66 x 150 cm  
Each house 16.5 x 14 x 14 cm  
Private Collection

#### Cell (2010)

49 Nylon Fishing Nets, Steel Hooks, Aluminum Angle and Rod  
254 x 254 x 254 cm  
Collection of the Artist

Published in conjunction with the exhibition HOME | Works organized by the Thunder Bay Art Gallery, Curated by Nadia Kurd, April 15 - May 29, 2016.

ISBN 978-1-927926-03-1



THUNDER BAY  
ART GALLERY

see yourself here

#### THUNDER BAY ART GALLERY

1080 Keewatin Street  
P.O. Box 10193  
Thunder Bay, ON P7B 6T7

theag.ca

*The Thunder Bay Art Gallery gratefully acknowledges the ongoing financial support of the City of Thunder Bay, Ontario Arts Council and Canada Council for the Arts.*



The Thunder Bay Art Gallery acknowledges the private lender and the Ottawa Art Gallery providing works for the exhibition.

Designed by Stem to Stern Design Co.

Printed in Canada

# HOME | Works

## FRANK SHEBAGEGET

Thunder Bay Art Gallery

April 15 - May 29, 2016

# RECORDING HOME AND PLACE: THE ART OF FRANK SHEBAGEGET



Cell (2010)

The term *housing* architectural historian Harold Kalman argues, is quite distinct from the word *house* – the latter connotes ‘dwelling’ whereas the former refers to “the houses of the working class, particularly those built for it by government authorities or private developers.”<sup>1</sup> Likewise, Kalman points out, both terms significantly diverge from the affecting term *home*, a word that specifically evokes deeper sentiments related to familial life.<sup>2</sup>

In his exhibition *HOME | Works*, Anishnawbe artist Frank Shebageget carefully weaves together all three concepts in his art. His installation and sculptural practice recalls a time and place keenly rooted in the history of Northwestern Ontario. Born in Upsala, a small unincorporated community 144 kilometers north of Thunder Bay, Shebageget’s work details the past history of the region as well as his own through architectural and dioramic work.

For example, in the installation *The Housing* (2009), Shebageget evokes the standardized and government issued mining houses that also simultaneously points to both the forced relocation of Indigenous communities and Western ideals of modern living. A group of uniformly made millboard houses are arranged in a circle on a wooden platform, placed directly before an architectural drawing of a house – one very much like the home his father built in Upsala. Shebageget reflects, “This work addresses housing development on reserves and allows us to visit this community built by western concepts and modelled for a “typical nuclear family.” Is it Indian? Is it isolated? — these are questions we [must] ask.”<sup>3</sup>

Indeed, it’s a question that is further examined in *Small Village II* (2004)

where Shebageget has constructed several miniature cardboard houses. Stacked vertically, these single-family houses also reference the proliferation of condominiums increasingly found in urban centres across Canada. This work illustrates how we can easily be “disconnected from both the ground and the surrounding geographys — suburban sprawl gives way to an acute sense of confinement.”<sup>4</sup> The current explosion of condominiums in cities such as Toronto, Calgary and Vancouver has not only created disconnects from the *genius loci* of its environs, but also a crisis in the accessibility of housing costs for middle and low income families.

The repetitive and precisely made objects in the exhibition once again question the promise of development and progress: a *de Havilland Beaver*, an iconic bush plane that is well-known for opening Northern Ontario for resource development and the transportation of goods. In *Beavers* (2008), Shebageget has handmade 1692 miniature Beaver planes and methodically suspends them from a wire grid anchored on to the walls. Nestled in the corner of the gallery, the cluster of planes resembles a school of fish. The plane was first flown in August 1947 and was produced commercially until 1967. In total, 1692 Beavers were made, and as a tribute to the plane’s ability, many of these are still flying to this day.<sup>5</sup> While the plane is frequently credited for opening the north for the trade of goods, they were — like many other types of small planes — also associated with the removal of children from communities to church-administered residential schools.<sup>6</sup> In this work, we are presented with both insight on the history and impact of this powerfully small aircraft across northern Ontario.

A seemingly thematic departure from the works that focus on housing,

*Cell* (2010) is made from a series of nylon fishing nets that are hooked on a hanging metal frame. The installation calls to mind the luminous underwater world of marine life and the activity of fishing. As the spotlights hit the sheer nets, they reflect and vibrate across the room. A decidedly minimalist installation, the work points to both the leisurely and industrial pursuit of fishing, but also to the transformative nature of the netting. However for Shebageget, the work also recalls the hours spent in his childhood home untangling fishing nets for his family.<sup>7</sup>

The work of Frank Shebageget draws on multiple histories, images and the built environment. Moreover, it sheds light on how communities — not only draw from the distinct understanding between housing, house and home — but also have a definite link with the development of land and resources in Canada. In *HOME | Works*, Shebageget intertwines a complex history of Northwestern Ontario to see through the appearance of progress and its lasting impact on the people of this region.

NADIA KURD, PHD  
Curator

## ENDNOTES

1 Harold Kalman, *A History of Canadian Architecture*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press: 2000), 424.

2 Ibid

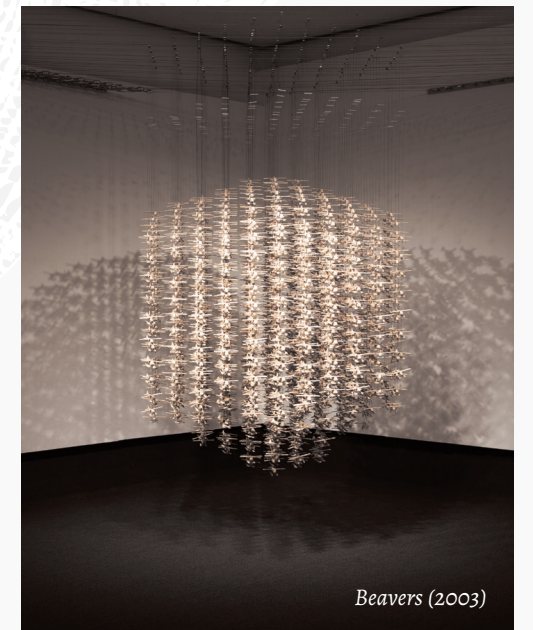
3 Frank Shebageget, Artist Website. Accessed April 25, 2016. [frankshebageget.com](http://frankshebageget.com)

4 Ibid

5 “DeHavilland DHC-2 Beaver.” Accessed April 26, 2016. [www.bush-planes.com/DeHavilland-DHC-2-Beaver.html](http://www.bush-planes.com/DeHavilland-DHC-2-Beaver.html)

6 Frank Shebageget, Artist Talk, University of Winnipeg, January 18, 2013.

7 Frank Shebageget, Artist Talk, Thunder Bay Art Gallery, April 15, 2016.



Beavers (2003)



Small Village II (2004)



The Housing (2009)