

HABITAT artists' books

Maria Moved the Shed

For this collaboration, artist Maria Lee unfolded, over the telephone, a story about a pack rat's nest. Poet Kate Northrop, listened, unfolded and refolded the story into this poem.

Letterpress on digitally printed original gouache painting

ARTIST:

Maria Lee

Tucson, AZ

marialeart.com

WRITER:

Kate Northrup

Laramie, WY



Statement

In thinking about *Habitat*, we thought about harm, we thought about private property and ownership. We thought about stewardship and care. We wanted to make a space for listening and to explore that space. In retrospect, we can see what happened. Artist Maria Lee shared some stories about habitats with poet Kate Northrop. A story about mycelium, a story about cockroaches, a story about a packrat's nest. Kate was drawn to the rat and nest of the rat. She took notes from the telling of the story and reimagined (co-imagined?) the story into a poem. Maria made a painting of the feathered packrat's nest and letterpress printed the poem alongside.

Artist's Biography

Maria Lee makes books, prints, collages & paintings. She was born and raised in Hawaii and lives in Tucson, AZ where she received an MFA in printmaking from the University of Arizona . She works as a conservation technician for the National Park Service but is about to relocate to the South of France this summer.

Writer's Biography

Kate Northrop's newest collection is "Homewrecker," forthcoming in the fall of 2022 in *New Letters*. The poem for the *Habitat* collaboration, "Maria Moved the Shed," appeared in June at *Terrain* (www.terrain.org). Northrop lives in Laramie with poet H.L. Hix.

Content of text included in artwork

Maria Moved the Shed

There, between
earth and where
the floor had been,
a pile of debris—

A nest, exposed
and throbbing at the center
of our attention,
like a toothache—

The edges we saw
were made up of shit, bits
of twig, and further in,
were three or four pieces

of cactus, bitten out of;
the front feet
of a mouse, its toes
splayed like wires inside

a light bulb. The rat
stayed absent and we stood
looking like we look
at accidents, saw then

another thing, tucked
around back, a hollow
egg-shape built, or blown,
from feathers

fluttering in the breeze.
It was still, as a barn
on a hill, or a cup
washed up in a gutter,

with an opening
at the wider end
through which the rat
went to sleep? Inside

we imagined
a spacious place, a sort
of quiet
we could not let go—

Took photos, and learned
from Maria later, it deflated
on her deck chair, slowly
over a number of days.