

Richard Watts
Mason House

There are many turn-of-the-century, abandoned farmhouses in eastern Ontario. Near my barn/studio in eastern Peterborough County, there is one known in the area as the Mason house. In it, two women lived their last days: scattered remains of pieces of longer life stories.

Wild grape vines grow through open doorways; bats and birds nest inside hanging porcelain chandeliers; jars of preserves, left in boxes, lie amongst the hay in the barn.

What struck me were the bare lath walls, resonant of boning in old corsets, ribbing of boats and streams that weave through the landscape in eastern Ontario. Unusual even in older houses, some of the lath walls were handmade, ripped from small limbs, curved, splintered, uneven.

The house is falling, slowly giving way to the pull of wind, sun, snow and rain; resigning itself into an indigenous landscape of grasses.

I'm using a mold making process of latex as a form of embalming the non-static state the house represents to me. In some of the pieces I have embedded porcupine quills found in the house, in others, the vines growing up the walls.

The outcome of each piece is like a poultice pulling and drawing memories to the translucent surface. They are also like skins, which as we become older thin and shine through to our souls.

Text by Sharon Hunter

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