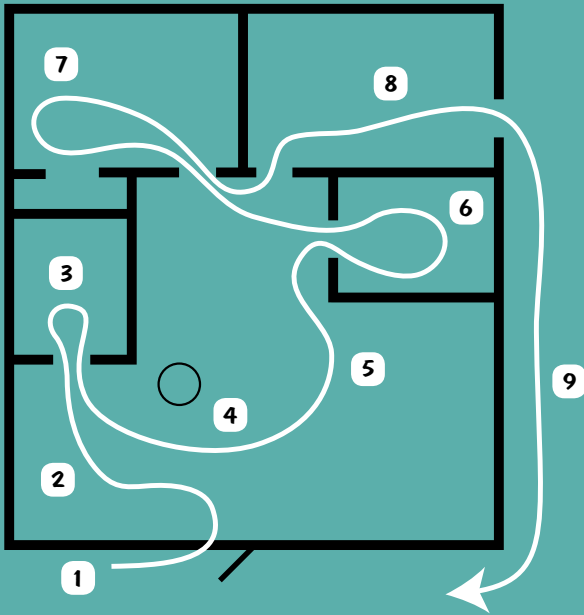


Karine Giboulo

Housewarming



All the artworks in the exhibition are by Karine Giboulo (born in 1980 in Sainte-Émélie-de-l'Énergie, QC). Unless otherwise noted, all pieces are on loan courtesy of the artist.

1. By my door

Please pause before entering the house to peer into this shipping parcel. Inside, a vast Amazon warehouse expands infinitely. Masked employees work in a crowded space to prepare the packages that will keep others safely at home. While working remotely was encouraged and embraced during the pandemic, being confined to the home was a luxury inaccessible to many.

Throughout the house, you will encounter other factory sites within boxes and furniture. The scenes are without specific geographical markers and stand in for precarious labour more broadly. These works prompt reflection on how we connect to the rest of the world through the material goods that fill our homes and how our own comfort depends upon the labour of others.

Amazon Box, 2021

Amazon box, polymer clay, acrylic paint, mirrors, LED light
Collection of Julie David and Pierre Leroux

2. My Kitchen

From indulgence to sustenance, food stands at the heart of our lives. On the kitchen counter, masked individuals form a socially distanced line that leads to a food bank housed in a grocery bag. Created during the first year of the pandemic, this piece speaks to household food insecurity and to the inequitable impact of COVID-19 on community members rendered vulnerable by systemic barriers and poverty. On the opposite end of the counter, another scene further addresses the struggle to fulfill the most basic needs in times of crises. A group—perhaps a family of refugees—gathers in a casserole dish, sharing a meal and finding warmth around a makeshift stove.

In contrast, a well-stocked fridge highlights our consumption habits and the environmental impact of our food systems. In the doorway, a woman wearing personal protective equipment pushes an overflowing shopping cart that underscores the social inequities exacerbated by the pandemic. We may wonder what portion of her cart's content will end up in the garbage. On the shelves, life-size sculptures of wrinkly vegetables evoke food waste, a scourge of Western society. Below, cattle lined in neat rows are trapped in the meat drawer. The consequences on climate of intensive livestock operations unfold in the freezer, as humans cover a melting glacier with a blanket, a belated and futile attempt to revert the damage caused by global warming. In the sink nearby, the artist tends to her own garden, dreaming of food self-sufficiency.

Defrost, 2022

Refrigerator, polymer clay, acrylic paint, epoxy resin, paper

An Oasis in my Sink, 2022

Sink, polymer clay, acrylic paint, epoxy resin

Food Bank, 2021

Grocery bag, polymer clay, acrylic paint
[ON THE COUNTER]

Heat Wave, 2022

Stove, baking dish, polymer clay, acrylic paint, neon lights

Sustenance, 2022

Casserole dish, polymer clay, acrylic paint
[ON THE COUNTER]

Morning Self-Portrait, 2022

Electric coffee maker, polymer clay, acrylic paint, epoxy resin

An Oasis in my Sink 2, 2022

Watercolour on paper

[NEAR THE DINING TABLE]

3. My Pantry

Seniors are among the greatest victims of the pandemic. Featuring elderly individuals confined in canning jars, this moving installation invites a moment of recollection about the human tragedies that have unfolded in long-term care homes across Canada. While contributing to the creation of a medical, sterile environment, the glass containers encourage direct engagement with each person so that we experience their isolation, loneliness, and sense of abandonment during a prolonged crisis.

Revealing what is hidden from public sight, the series communicates the depth of emotion at the heart of human tragedies often reduced to numbers and statistics. It also elicits reflection about aging and care more broadly. In Giboulo's words: "We keep seniors alive, we preserve them, yet without offering them emotional contacts and a proper quality of life. The pandemic only unveiled and exacerbated a situation that existed prior." Among the group, devoted health-care workers appear in comparatively low number, signalling their own lack of support—another failing system. The installation's placement in the pantry, a space that we visit infrequently and just briefly, is thus highly symbolic.

Jars 1-24, 2021

Glass canning jars, polymer clay, acrylic paint

Jar 22: Collection of Yann Fortier and Marie-Ève Gingras

Jar 23: Collection of Susan and Ron Holliday

Jar 24: Hamelys Collection

4. My Home Office

Social distancing, masking, and sanitizing are among the new gestures and behaviours widely adopted during the pandemic. On the table, a satire of society's excesses is staged, as miniature figures dressed head to toe in personal protective equipment spray sanitizer over a life-size breakfast. This is the artist's meal, left behind as she fell into the void of her computer screen. Perhaps the aftermath of a long virtual meeting?

During the pandemic, virtual tools have allowed us to remain connected to friends and families, to our work,

and to the rest of the world. At the same time, we have been made hostages, like the man wearing a headset and perched on the swing of the birdcage located nearby. Scenes throughout the house speak to smartphone addiction, social media compulsion, and technology's firm grip on our existence, like a "black hole that sucks up our lives," as Giboulo puts it.

My Breakfast, 2021

Polymer clay, acrylic paint, polyester fiber fill

[ON THE TABLE]

Lost in the Metaverse, 2022

Laptop computer, polymer clay, acrylic paint

[ON THE TABLE]

Guided Cage, 2022

Bird cage, polymer clay, acrylic paint, mirror, newspaper

Collection Bédard-Guillot

[IN THE HALLWAY]

5. My Living Room

The story of a vacation lost unfolds before our eyes. Eager tourists ready for adventure are grounded to the couch as a moving walkway sinks deep inside the cushions, diverting their destination. The vacation they have been longing for unfolds on a lush, blue carpet transformed into a sandy beach. Without warning, a vacuum cleaner sucks up the hopeful dream! The idyllic escape is now broadcasted on TV.

This narrative also alludes to the environmental impact of vacationing and leisure activities. We can follow the tragic fate of a killer whale washed up on the seashore, as portrayed in the painting displayed above the couch—a rather sombre vacation souvenir. An earlier phase of the whale's life unfolds in the hallway. There, he appears in a plastic-filled ocean contained in an aquarium, spitting balloons and delighting a group of tourists on a boating trip. Because of our actions, nature is in a state of crisis. She is now taking her revenge, as a self-portrait of the artist swallowed by a carnivorous plant reminds us.

Travel Pillow, 2022

Couch, polymer clay, acrylic paint, screens

The Ocean in my Living Room, 2022

Video by Olivier Higgins

Carpet, vacuum cleaner, TV monitor, polymer clay, acrylic paint, sand, paper

Berthe-Aline, 2014

RCA television, polymer clay, acrylic paint, LED light

Collection of Works of Art of the City of Montréal

Nature's Revenge, 2022

Polymer clay, acrylic paint

[ON THE WINDOWSILL, OVERLOOKING THE FRONT OF THE HOUSE]

Intellectual Drought, 2022

Polymer clay, acrylic paint

[ON THE WINDOWSILL, OVERLOOKING THE BACKYARD]

Killer Whale 2, 2022

Watercolour on paper

[BY THE COUCH]

Killer Whale, 2022

Aquarium, polymer clay, acrylic paint, epoxy resin

[IN THE HALLWAY]

6. My Bathroom

Giboulo appears as a character in many of the stories she tells. Her self-portraits are often tied to specific moments of her own reflection about the world. In the bathroom, she floats in the sink, wanting to escape reality. All around, life-size sculpted objects stand for routine and the loss of meaning as we repeat the same gestures, day in and day out, while knowing that their impact is unsustainable.

In the laundry area, large-scale installations further portray the impact of our modern ways of life on the planet by staging some of the most extreme weather events caused by climate change. The washing machine will soon inundate the bathroom, its overflow carrying away little bungalows. Environmental refugees leave their homes with a few cherished possessions. On the ironing board, a steam iron forgotten on a shirt causes a forest fire, animals fleeing as their natural habitat is destroyed. This scene overturns the habitat dioramas of natural history museums, which often depict an idealized nature.

Drifting, 2021

Sink, vanity cabinet, polymer clay, acrylic paint, epoxy resin

Conscience Cleanse, 2022

Shower stall, polymer clay, acrylic paint

Lost in Oblivion, 2021

Ironing board, cotton shirt, polymer clay, acrylic paint, LED lights, polyester fiber fill

Water Damage, 2022

Washing machine, polymer clay, acrylic paint, epoxy resin, polyester fiber fill

7. My Bedroom

A personal, feminine environment, the artist's bedroom reflects on gendered labour, self-acceptance, and identity. A chest of drawers is the site of a clothing factory, one of its drawers pulled to reveal endless rows of women workers at industrial sewing machines. Their labour relates to actions we perform daily: selecting an item of clothing and getting dressed. Through such a connection, the installation confronts us about the personal role we play in global systems of capital and labour, while highlighting women workers' greater vulnerability to exploitative conditions.

A figure of Giboulo's grandmother, Berthe-Aline, sits on top of the dresser, a maternal and protective presence. She knits from a disproportionately large ball of yarn, juxtaposing handmade clothing with mass production. This beloved grandmother, who would never waste anything, reappears at work in the closet nearby, re-knitting an unravelling sweater into something new. Her endeavour highlights how dramatically our consumption and waste behaviours have shifted over the span of only two generations.

The bedroom is conceived as a space of introspection. The artist here unveils an aspect of her personal journey through a series of self-portraits: on a wall shelf, on the nightstand, and on the bed. Through these scenes and her own written account (presented by the shelf), she offers a very intimate narrative of living with an invisible disability as a hidden aspect of her identity.

Hidden in My Drawers, 2022

Chest of drawers, polymer clay, acrylic paint, mirrors, fabric, LED light

Berthe-Aline Knitting, 2021

Polymer clay, acrylic paint, wool yarn

[ON TOP OF THE CHEST OF DRAWERS]

Upcycling, 2022

Wool cardigan, laundry basket, polymer clay, acrylic paint
[IN THE CLOSET]

Amazon Box 2, 2022

Amazon box, recycled cardboard, mirrors, LED light
[IN THE CLOSET]

My Dinosaur Disease, 2022

Wall shelf, mirror, polymer clay, acrylic paint

“I was diagnosed with ankylosing spondylitis just a few months before the COVID-19 pandemic began. There was finally a name (a dinosaur’s name) for the condition from which I had been suffering for many years. Over the months and years preceding the pandemic, I had been feeling increasingly confined: in my house, because of a loss of mobility, as well as in my own body. I felt like the perimeter around me was shrinking. With the onset of the pandemic and its restrictions, I therefore became doubly confined.

I am a young person in an elderly person’s body. Invisible disabilities mean that an aspect of one’s identity remains ignored. When I look at myself in the mirror, I see an old woman’s body.

One characteristic of this dinosaur in me—this ankylosaurus—is that it comes to life at night. I do not sleep well. I often wake up. My super-soft memory foam mattress still pokes into my bones. Occasionally, when in need of reparative sleep, I resort to medication. Tonight, I offered myself a good night’s sleep. I have loved floral sheets for as long as I can remember; one sleeps so well on them. They remind me of my childhood in the country.” - Karine Giboulo

Happy Light, 2022

Lamp, polymer clay, acrylic paint
[ON THE NIGHTSTAND]

Summer Night, 2022

Bed, bed sheets, polymer clay, acrylic paint, paper flowers

Sleepless Night, 2022

Wall clock, polymer clay, acrylic paint

8. My Kid's Bedroom

Step into the world of childhood. A time to dream and play, childhood also brings its struggles. On a tabletop hockey game, a child's nightmare unfolds as pajama-clad kids confront a team of demons, including coronavirus playing goalie. Symbolizing the obstacles that can befall children, the piece further alludes to the impact of the pandemic on kids and youth, ranging from isolation and anxiety to the interruption of beloved physical activities.

Bedtime is often a cherished opportunity for exchange between parent and child. On the bed, we encounter an ideal world as described by Giboulo's eleven-year-old son during the course of many bedtime conversations. The scene speaks to the emergence of a consciousness about the world and to the simple solutions children offer to the major struggles and challenges our planet faces.

On the desk, a Blue Origin rocket (the space tourism company established by the founder of Amazon) is about to take off. A pair of space tourists with carry-on luggage eagerly take a selfie before boarding the spaceship built out of recycled Amazon packaging—a comment on capitalism and wealth inequalities. A laughing boy dressed in a rocket costume lies on a chair, undoubtedly dreaming of space. When you reach the backyard, look through the telescope to follow his journey.

Monsters under My Bed, 2022

Hockey table, polymer clay, acrylic paint

My Perfect World, 2022

Bed, bed sheets, fabric, polymer clay, acrylic paint

To Buy the Moon, 2021

Desk, polymer clay, acrylic paint, recycled cardboard

Northern Plan, 2014

Metal truck, polymer clay, acrylic paint, sand, wood

Collection of Norman Barney and Jane Austin

[BY THE BED]

9. My Backyard

In this exhibition, Giboulo presents the home as an extension and reflection of the self. Yet she also acknowledges her place of privilege, as well as ours. A camping tent dominating the backyard acts as a powerful counterpart to the home presented as a place of refuge and safety. Inside the tent, over seventy miniature figures lie on a sleeping bag. We recognize them as unhoused individuals, while the form of the tent alludes to the encampments established in parks of major cities like Toronto and Montréal during the first waves of the pandemic.

A personal connection inspired this installation. At the beginning of the pandemic, Giboulo lost track of a close friend she had met while leading workshops in shelters; their line of communication broke due to strict confinement measures and curfews in Montréal. The installation has since continued to grow in tandem with the housing affordability crisis and as an increasing number of individuals face housing instability. People of all backgrounds and ages, including parents and children, inhabit the tent. Entitled *Shelter*, this piece carries a straightforward message: having a place to call home should be a right not a privilege.

Shelter, 2022

Camping tent, sleeping bag, polymer clay, acrylic paint, lantern

Overflow, 2022

Recycling bin, polymer clay, acrylic paint

Escape, 2022

Moon by Robert Trépanier; photo by Jacques Talbot

Telescope, polymer clay, acrylic paint, LED light

Lunchbox, 2021

Cooler, polymer clay, acrylic paint, epoxy resin

[ON THE PICNIC TABLE BENCH]

Fish Box, 2021

Styrofoam box, polymer clay, acrylic paint, mirrors, LED lights

Collection Bédard-Guillot

[ON THE PICNIC TABLE]