

calling out in unison to ask: How well do we ever truly understand one another across our differences and to what extent are we willing to try?

Agency is another potent through-line in Kim's practice, perfectly encapsulated by *One Week of Lullabies for Roux*, 2018. The seven-part sound work consists of a multicoloured bench with headphones made to resemble a weekly pillbox. Given our hearing-centric world, when Kim's first child, Roux, was born in 2017, she considered a "sound diet" to encourage balance between sign and spoken language within the family. Uninterested in the pre-set lullabies available to play through her baby's monitor, which Kim could not access herself, she invited seven artist and curator friends to each compose and record a daily dose of low-frequency, non-lyrical serenades to coax her newborn to sleep. As Kim noted on the Whitney website, "these are not actual lullabies that would help a baby sleep but the concept is that I get to decide what is being played and I decide what is available to my baby to hear and so it's about the control that I have as a mom, as a parent." Suggestive of Kim's immense capacities to convey intersectional experiences and identities, this colourful punctuation in a nearly all monotone gallery provides, on the one hand, a relatable footnote on the workings of contemporary parenthood in late-stage capitalism, and, on the other, a profound statement on the ingrained power dynamics between Deaf and hearing communities.

Indeed, one of the most compelling facets of Kim's work is how it might be read through the lens of capitalist critique, or, at the very least, how it connects social and economic systems. The drawing *How Do You Hold Your Debt*, 2022, for instance, shows the ASL sign for

debt, which is annotated with its various drivers, such as child care and health insurance. Even in the case of *Ghost(ed) Notes*, an example Kim uses when explaining the work in a video accompanying the exhibition's online materials—the work is being ghosted by galleries and museums when a necessary, yet not cost-neutral, request is made for two interpreters. The title of the exhibition also points in this direction, alluding to Kim's unrelenting output and perhaps more generally to the market's incessant demand for artistic production. As with her infographics, Kim uses the visual language of standardization to expose the absurdities of capitalist requisites for productivity, compliance and uniformity when it comes to both labour and leisure, revealing instead the individual, shambolic and inconvenient means by which issues of access and artistic labour function, especially within the art world, itself acutely entrenched in capitalism. At the Whitney, where Kim's practice is sited throughout the museum, her appraisals of how systems of power operate hint at the limitations of the now well-worn invitation made by cultural institutions to diverse artists to "take up space." With a wink and a nod, "All Day All Night" reminds us that it is one thing to be asked to take up space and entirely another to be granted permission to change it. ■

*"Christine Sun Kim: All Day All Night" was exhibited at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, from February 8, 2025, to September 28, 2025.*

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## VISUAL ART

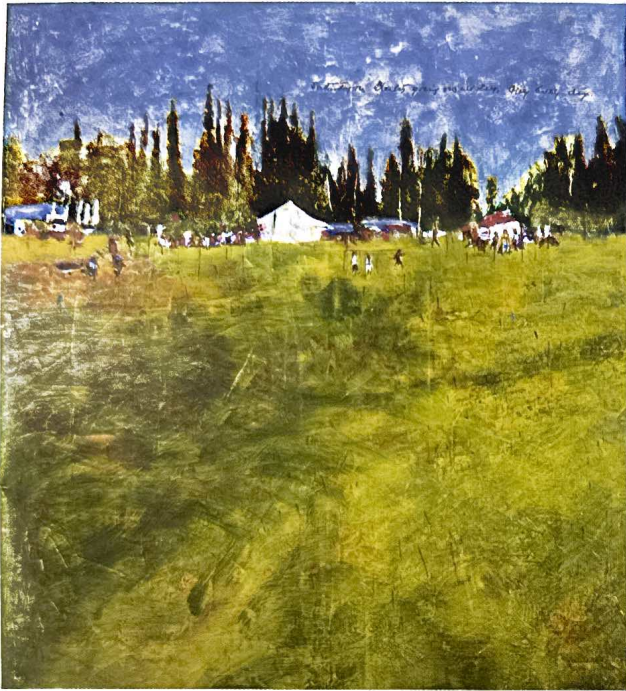
### Tim Schouten

by Doug Lewis

Tim Schouten, Winnipeg-based painter, has devoted much of his career to exploring Manitoba's negotiated land treaties. His work seeks to document these complex histories. His landmark project, "Treaty Lands," opened at <SITE> Gallery in Winnipeg in 1998, marking the start of his ongoing engagement with themes of landscape, sovereignty and commemoration.

Schouten deliberately steers clear of the contentious politics that often surround treaties. Instead, he focuses on conserving historical events through his engaging contemporary approaches—much like an archivist preserving cultural memory, recognizing the land is inextricably linked to Indigenous identity. Schouten's art consciously leaves political debates to those best suited for them, instead emphasizing aesthetic and archival acts. Notably, he draws from oral histories, archival maps and legal documents.

In the summer of 2025, Soul Gallery in Winnipeg exhibited "The Island Lake Paintings (Treaty 5)," Schouten's latest body of work. At least a dozen luminous paintings—mostly in encaustic—reveal his admiration and respect for acts of commemoration. In the fall of 2024, Schouten was invited to travel—by plane, train and automobile, as well as boat—to Linklater Island at Island Lake, Manitoba. He attended the Treaty 5 Memorial Gathering and the inauguration of Michael Birch, the Island Lake Tribal Council Grand Chief. The Treaty 5 Memorial Gathering stemmed from the Adhesion to Treaty 5, established on August 13, 1909, at the historical Old Post Settlement—once a Hudson's Bay Company trading post. The site was a significant summer gathering place for the



1. Tim Schouten, *Children Playing at Ketay-Wahkahikanink (Old Post)*, 2025, oil, pigment, beeswax, microcrystalline wax and dammar resin on canvas, 182.88 x 167.64 centimetres. Photo: the artist. Courtesy Soul Gallery, Winnipeg.

2. Tim Schouten, *The Reverend J. Semmens, Inspector of Indian Agencies in his canoe*, 2017, oil, pigment, beeswax, microcrystalline wax and dammar resin on birch panel, 40.64 x 40.64 centimetres. Photo: the artist. Courtesy Soul Gallery, Winnipeg.

Anisiniw Okimawin people, long before European contact.

This current body of work draws on Schouten's visit to the Treaty 5 Memorial Gathering, making the Anisiniw Okimawin commune at the Old Post Settlement especially significant. The first sightline of the exhibition was comprised of three paintings: *Anisiniwuk Inauguration Set Up at Ketay-Wahkahikanink (Old Post)*, *Arrival at Ketay-Wahkahikanink (Old Post)* and *Children Playing at Ketay-Wahkahikanink (Old Post)*. On an opposing wall, the fourth painting in this grouping, *Monday 16. Mr Semmens and party started this after noon*, further laid the groundwork for the exhibition. All are large-scale landscapes, each measuring 72 x 64 inches. Each artwork is a painterly snapshot, infused with individual dates and brief descriptions, these details drizzled onto the encaustic surfaces. The dates diarize moments—historically and paradoxically, since wax is forever



brittle. As Joshua Whitehead (Oji-Cree) expressed, "The land and its elements are my aunts calling me home." Schouten seeks to locate that connective call in his exhibition and presents historical events as present realities. Unlike painters such as AY Jackson or Paul Nash, whose landscapes often relied on direct "from eyes and hands to canvas" approaches, Schouten's canvases reflect a devotion to process and to community, placing others before himself. His journeys might best be considered a social art practice, where both artist and audience are rooted in human connection. As French theorist and critic Nicolas Bourriaud defined, relational art is "a set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context." The essential question arises: Which came first—process or product? Would the Treaty 5 paintings exist with credibility without such

in-depth engagement? Schouten developed deep friendships with the people he worked with—this is relational social aesthetics in practice.

The landscapes in "The Island Lake Paintings (Treaty 5)" are shaped not by inner reflection but by dedicated research, and in his formal approach, particularly in the diptych *Memorials at St. Teresa Point/Monuments on Main Street*, he evokes Jasper Johns's sense of controlled chaos and use of text. But unlike the power of observation in Johns's printmaking, Schouten draws from direct documentation—using camera, boat and plane to claim his sources. The most successful works integrate text not for formal balance but more as liner notes on a record album cover: some viewers pore over every word, and some don't.

The paintings *The Reverend J. Semmens, Inspector of Indian Agencies in his canoe*, 2017, and *Sunday dinner in Woods Between Deer's Lake &*

*Island Lake*, 2017, offer visual nods to both minimalism and vintage textbook illustrations, suggesting a kinship with historic Canadian illustrator CW Jefferys. These two works, drawn from the separate series “The Treaty Party, 1910,” were wisely included, as they thread histories between the present-day gathering of Anisininew Okimawin relations and the historic Adhesion to Treaty 5 signings of 1909.

While treaties are often seen as complex, one-sided and rooted in land appropriation issues, First Nations peoples can view them as intimate, detailed and symbolic. Citing the Government of Canada’s website: “Canada is a test case for a grand notion—the notion that dissimilar peoples can share lands, resources, power, and dreams while respecting and sustaining their differences.” To First Nations, treaties are sacred covenants intended to foster relationships based on

mutual respect and cooperation. Schouten’s exhibition investigates the origins of Treaty 5 and the subsequent Adhesion, offering rich landscapes and figures who reflect the Anisininew Okimawin connections to rights and freedoms, identity and land.

“The Island Lake Paintings (Treaty 5)” immersed viewers in contemporary and historical contexts, both shaped by fragmented histories. By bridging Island Lake’s geography, history and the present in his studio, Schouten channels the collective memory and brings depth to the work, while expanding the field he can “play in.” The events that happened at the Treaty 5 Memorial Gathering are elevated through his encaustic palimpsest; the works become a contemporary meditation, urging reflection on the ongoing interconnection of community, land and ancestry. ■

*“The Island Lake Paintings (Treaty 5)” was exhibited at the Soul Gallery, Winnipeg, from May 29, 2025, to June 12, 2025.*

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