

Shelter in Place by Theresa Bembnister

Manhattan artist Tom Parish has meticulously documented native stone, arched-roof root cellars in the Flint Hills for two years. These shelters, often the last remnants of pioneer homesteads, are the focus of the artist's multi-media exhibition, *Take Shelter: An Installation by Tom Parish*, at Kansas State University's Marianna Kistler Beach Museum of Art in Manhattan. Thirteen high-definition, 360-degree photographs, a map pinpointing the locations of more than 250 structures, written text, and audio recordings convey the history of the cellars and their significance to the region.

Parish spent countless hours wandering the landscape in search of these subterranean structures. He interviewed Flint Hills residents about their cave experiences and poured through primary source materials with the help of local historical societies.

Truly multi-faceted and multi-disciplinary, *Take Shelter* documents Parish's discoveries in an immersive environment. Two large photographs in the exhibition, measuring eight feet tall and seventeen feet wide, hang on either side of a narrow, cave-like enclosure built into the gallery. Melodies of bird songs and the moan of a train whistle filter through the space—these sounds are Parish's recording of ambient noise in a cellar interior. The artist's research is presented in the adjacent corner—oral history interviews, old family snapshots of Flint Hills residents' caves, and a computer monitor with access to www.flinthillshelters.com, where the entire project is archived.

Parish's evocative and beautiful photographic art encourages a dialogue about these stone structures and sheds light on how they were built and functioned. Many are fragile and threatened with extinction. Because very few of these cellars are found outside this region of Kansas, they have become an icon of our region's shared history and community.



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The Beach Museum of Art is indebted to the Kansas Humanities Council for its support of Parish's research and exhibition.

Theresa Bembnister is associate curator of the Marianna Kistler Beach Museum of Art in Manhattan and coordinator of the Take Shelter exhibition. ○

Take Shelter is on display through June 29, 2014. For more information, visit www.beach.k-state.edu. Humanities grants for exhibitions exploring humanities themes are available. For more information, visit www.kansashumanities.org or contact Murl Riedel, director of grants, at murl@kansashumanities.org or (785) 357-0359.



Candon-Garr Root Cellar, Liberty Township, Geary County. Photo by Tom Parish.