

The Telegraph

Refuge or trap? Female artists explore the concept of a room at Sadie Coles

Louisa Buck | 27 JANUARY 2017 8:00AM



Marianne Vitale, Double Decker Outhouse, 2011
CREDIT: COURTESY THE ARTIST AND SADIE COLES HQ, LONDON

This exceptional show gathers together a clutch of stand-alone installations and photographic works by some of the great female artists of the 20th and 21st century, all of which revolve in some way around the traditionally feminine domain of the domestic space.

As we see here, the idea of the room can assume a multitude of forms and meanings, whether as physical structure, psychological metaphor or social construct - and often all of the above at the same time, as well as much more besides.



Installation view, Heidi Bucher, Room, Sadie Coles HQ
CREDIT: COURTESY THE SWISS INSTITUTE, NEW YORK; COURTESY CENTRE CULTUREL SUISSE, PARIS; COURTESY SADIE COLES HQ, LONDON/THE ESTATE OF HEIDI BUCHER AND FREYMOND-GUTH FINE ARTS, ZURICH

The room hovers between refuge and a trap in Heidi Bucher's eerie walk-through installation, in which the walls and door of her father's study have been cast in sheets of grimy amber latex which stretch like fleshy membranes over bamboo frames.



Sarah Lucas, Chuffing Away to Oblivion, 1996, installation view, Room, Sadie Coles HQ, London
CREDIT: SARAH LUCAS/COURTESY SADIE COLES HQ, LONDON

There's also a decidedly uncomfortable form of containment in Sarah Lucas's smoker's den, with its flimsy walls papered with nicotine-stained tabloid soft porn. Louise Bourgeois's steel and mesh Cell seems to offer little comfort for the sinister stuffed fabric head which it houses, while Marianne Vitale's Double Decker Outhouse, constructed from recycled wood, resembles not so much a functional building as a firmly-shuttered place of confinement, or a hastily constructed watchtower.



Installation view, Marvin Gaye Chetwynd, Room, Sadie Coles HQ
CREDIT: COURTESY SADIE COLES/MARVIN GAYE CHETWYND

Less ominous is the ramshackle energy of Marvin Gaye Chetwynd's moveable Folding House or Andrea Zittel's mobile home, which has been converted into a rather enticing flotation tank – complete with underwater sound system and climate control.



Installation view, Beverly Buchanan, Room, Sadie Coles HQ
 CREDIT: ESTATE OF BEVERLY BUCHANAN/COURTESY ANDREW EDLIN GALLERY, NEW YORK AND COURTESY SADIE COLES HQ, LONDON

There is something decidedly cheering about the flamboyant, theatrically baroque'n'roll swagger of Rachel Feinstein's The Shack, accessed via a curvaceous staircase and framed by a bundle of gilded curlicues. While Beverly Buchanan's small plinth-mounted sculptural shacks fashioned from scavenged wooden scraps and offcuts are a moving tribute to the historically spartan living spaces of the rural poor from America's southern states.



Installation view, Nan Goldin, Room, Sadie Coles HQ
 CREDIT: NAN GOLDIN/COURTESY SPROVIERI, LONDON AND SADIE COLES HQ, LONDON

A wall of photographs by Francesca Woodman shows a series of rooms haunted by the artist's spectral presence, while Nan Goldin's grid of cibachrome Empty Rooms, Berlin/Hamburg

resonates with a psychologically charged absence: you can only imagine what might have been taking place within these now-unoccupied beds and oppressively patterned walls...



Klara Lidén Teenage Room 2009 (installation at Boros Collection, Berlin)
CREDIT:NOSHE /COPYRIGHT THE ARTIST AND THE BOROS COLLECTION, BERLIN

The room as self portrait, as site of memory and as springboard for follies and fantasies - all of these readings can be applied to the collages of Penny Slinger, who has appropriately sub-titled each of this series of uncanny, atmospheric chambers *An Exorcism*. However, while something unspeakable also seems to have happened to cause the charred wreckage of the bunk bed of Klara Lidén's walk-in, burnt out teenage room, here there is an escape hatch which thankfully offers a way out.

Room is at Sadie Coles until 18 February. 62 Kingly Street, London, W1B 5QN