





FRANCESCA WOODMAN: "MY HOUSE PROVIDENCE RHODE ISLAND" 1976

Among the installations that give this feeling of claustrophobia at *Room* is a work by Swiss Avant-garde artist Heidi Bucher, who started making art about domestication in the 1950s and later started to make 'casts' of entire rooms – including her parent's bedroom – using latex, that she then peeled from the walls and suspended in gallery spaces.

At Sadie Coles, one of her largest 'room skins' *Herrenzimmer* (1977-79), hangs like a corpse. It's a cast of her Father's study, taking possession of a space that's sealed off and masculine. But the semi-translucent, yellowed latex, strung up like a dead animal hide at a butcher, also has a spectral presence that sends chills down your spine.

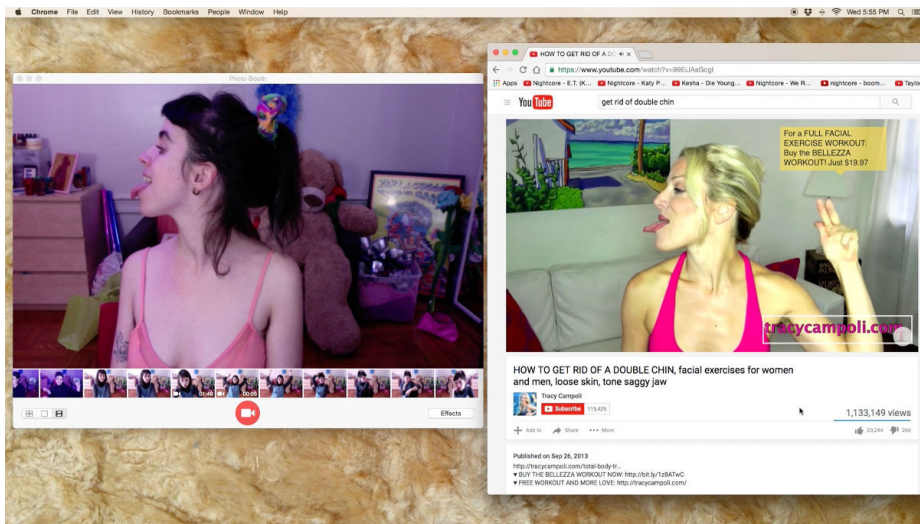


SARAH LUCAS: "CHUFFING AWAY TO OBLIVION"

Nothing is more scary, though, than Francesca Woodman's photographs, also on view at *Room*. Of the 120 or so of Woodman's images that have been made available to the public, the domestic is continually represented as gothic – often engulfing the ghostly female figures that seem to float through them – or else they're trapped inside cabinets or closets. In one of her best known-images, a naked body is consumed by the wallpaper – an eerie resonance with Charlotte Perkins-Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper* – a room so oppressive it physically overwhelms the body. It's hard to look at her pictures without thinking of Woodman, aged only 22, flinging herself from the window of a loft in New York.

Even as women's freedom and access to things outside the home – like jobs and voting – has improved, the home is still strongly associated with femininity. Artists working more recently have turned their art even more inwards, looking less at the oppressive nature of the bedroom as a feminine concept.

In 1998, Tracey Emin's explosive *My Bed* showed us the candid chaos and mess of self-loathing, sex and depression that usually concealed from public view. It exploded the idea that women artists could make their most private, intimate spaces public as a subversive act, a way to own their space rather than be shamed by it.



MOLLY SODA: "IT'S OKAY, NO ONE CAN SEE US"

The Internet poses a new threat to the safety we assume we have in our rooms, and has accelerated our desire to intrude in people's private spaces. From creating work about the bedroom to creating work in the bedroom, artists working now, like Molly Soda, take the idea of the bedroom being a "safe space" and then invites the world in.

"My work is interested in what we do within our private spaces and what happens when we make those spaces public. How do we perform for our webcams with the intent of putting something online? How does the seemingly casual or "authentic" bedroom image become curated and contrived?" Soda says.

Bedrooms are, of course, still evocative of sex and even when a woman depicts her own private space, it evokes a voyeuristic urge from the viewer. The domestic setting in erotic art and pornography has often kept women's sexualised bodies indoors. London-based artist Eva Stenram takes domestic settings from vintage porn and erotica – such as living room curtains, drapes, upholstery fabrics – and puts them in the foreground of the image, reversing a photograph's usual hierarchies. It reveal the strange relationship between the familiar comfort of the domestic and the fetishisation of women's bodies.



RANA SAMARA: "INTIMATE SPACE VI" 2015.

Rana Samara, a painter from Ramallah now based in Chicago, also addresses sex, but doesn't give the viewer what they expect. She paints post-sex scenes of women's rooms in refugee camps in Palestine, capturing the post-coital moment in crumpled sheets and warm colours. She asks us, also from her standpoint as an artist speaking about taboo subjects, what women are, or aren't allowed to do, in private and in public. Like Soda, she seems ask how free we really are to show what we are.

Norwegian artist Anja Carr uses a different tactic to challenge our voyeuristic tendencies, creating creepy domestic scenes, complete with disturbing, life-size sculptures of childhood toys. These nostalgic settings become stages for performances where children's characters are often brought to life, from Pippi Longstocking to a bodybuilder dressed as a Ninja turtle, adults enacting private fantasies in front of an audience – pointing to the way domestic space is gender-coded, and shapes our psyche, and our sexual behaviour.

By turning their bedrooms into art, women artists give us a more authentic and nuanced account of the individual female experience – one that, when you look at the work of these artists, makes you want to get out of the house more.



ANJA CARR: "FEED -> FEEL" SOLO EXHIBITION AT NEBBELUX, FREDRIKSTAD, NO 2016 © ANJA CARR