



## **Home Strike**

**Paula Chambers**

The output is a creative project, comprising a series of sculptures, drawings and objects. It interrogates those biopolitical and cultural norms that see women, and their bodies, systematically domesticated, exploited and imprisoned by ideologies founded on patriarchy.

### **Research process**

The work involves weaponizing everyday household objects, transforming them into instruments of self-defence, or violent revolt – a stark reminder that the home is often no safe space. Common cooking utensils have their handles wrapped in women's tights and secured by colourful hairbands in Kitchen Shanks (2017), turning material supports of femininity into makeshift armaments. Exhibited on a security grille, the shanks allude to DIY weapons confiscated from prison wards, and often put on display to educate wardens. A rickety barricade of motley found or stolen furniture has been used to construct Domestic Front (2016). Both protective and defensive, the front is infested with small cut-outs of women with guns that are both real and imaginary, grotesque and idealized, from images Chambers sourced from the internet.

### **Research insights**

The work implies that the female revolt may have already been suppressed – or else, it could illustrate that its insurgents are gaining ground and sharing skills. The installation “haunts our retrogressive imagination” through the use of “dysfunctional furniture and ambivalent ornamentation.” Oscillating between horrific and humorous images, Home Strike revisits the domestic biopolitics of 1970s feminism. Through its inflection, the exhibition considers the impact 1970s feminism has had on intersectional discussions of class, gender, and race.

### **Dissemination**

The project was disseminated at l'étrangère, London, 8 March - 21 April 2018.



Gallery view, Paula Chambers, *Domestic Front* (2016-8) and *Bridie* (2013)



Paula Chambers, *Bridie* (2013), paper, plywood, felt tippedpen. And *Domestic Front* (2016-8) found furniture, paper, plywood





Paula Chambers, *Domestic Front* (2016-8) found furniture, paper, plywood (rear view)





Paula Chambers, *Domestic Front* (2016-8) found furniture, paper, plywood (front view)





Paula Chambers, *Domestic Front* (2016-8) found furniture, paper, plywood (detail)





Paula Chambers, *Mother Knows Best* (2013) archive inject print on stolen paper



Paula Chambers, *Mother Knows Best* (2013) archive inject print on stolen paper (detail)





Paula Chambers, *Kitchen Shanks* (2018) kitchen utensils, tights, hair bands, security grill





Paula Chambers, *Kitchen Shanks* (2018) kitchen utensils, tights, hair bands, security grill. With Su Richardson's *Burnt Breakfast* as other crochet works





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**Contextual Information**

CANAN, Paula Chambers, Malgorzata Markiewicz, Su Richardson

*Home Strike*

8 March — 21 April 2018

Private View: Wednesday 7 March, 6 - 9 pm



Paula Chambers, *Domestic Front*, 2016, dimensions variable, found furniture, paper, plywood.

*Home Strike*, guest curated by Alexandra Kokoli and Basia Sliwinska, brings together the work of four female artists — CANAN, Paula Chambers, Malgorzata Markiewicz, Su Richardson — in an exhibition exploring contemporary resistance to the persistent feminisation of domesticity and household maintenance. The exhibition interrogates those biopolitical and cultural norms that see women and their bodies systematically domesticated, exploited and imprisoned by patriarchal ideologies.



Oscillating between the horrific and the humorous, *Home Strike* revisits the domestic biopolitics of 1970s feminism. Through its contemporary inflection, the exhibition considers the impact of 1970s feminism on intersectional discussions on class, gender and global inequalities.

**Paula Chambers'** practice involves weaponising everyday household objects, transforming them into instruments of self-defence, or violent revolt — a stark reminder that the home is often no safe space. Common cooking utensils have their handles wrapped in women's tights and secured by colourful hairbands in *Kitchen Shanks* (2017), turning material supports of femininity into makeshift armaments. Exhibited on a security grille, the shanks allude to DIY weapons confiscated from prison wards, and often put on display to educate wardens. This depressingly implies that the female revolt may have already been suppressed — or else, it could illustrate that its insurgents are gaining ground and sharing skills. A rickety barricade of motley found or stolen furniture has been used to construct *Domestic Front* (2016). Both protective and defensive, the front is infested with small cut-outs of women with guns that are both real and imaginary, grotesque and idealised, from images Chambers sourced from the internet. In the artist's own words, the installation "haunts our retrogressive imagination" through the use of "dysfunctional furniture and ambivalent ornamentation."

The family home is **Małgorzata Markiewicz's** battlefield. The artist targets the often glossed-over power struggles of family life, turning the tables on a mother's obligation to nurture and cherish, whilst confronting the bourgeois expectation for women to entertain guests that simultaneously renders them as complicit objects of desire. *Home Strike* sees Markiewicz present a set of pristinely-designed boxes filled with the details of poisonous concoctions — more fitting for a witch than a hostess. On the current social position of women Markiewicz comments, "Things are going badly, to put it mildly." In the video *The Resistance Kitchen* (2017), the artist, wearing a military double-breasted trench coat, offers her audience recipes for the deadly dishes — perhaps "the only tool of resistance available to women." She calls for women to defend themselves and "join the resistance kitchen," in a radical subversion of care-giving.

A pioneer of 1970s feminist art, **Su Richardson** plays a key role in revalidating craft, and its potential as a means of disrupting the white cube aesthetic. Simultaneously celebrating, exploiting and subverting feminine craft skills such as crocheting and embroidery, Richardson's home-made objects stir the unconscious of domesticity and femininity and their mutual implications. The not-so-lovingly prepared fry-up of charred egg and sausage in *Burnt Breakfast* contrasts with the carefully crocheted technique Richardson has used to create the objects — emblematic of the artist's ambivalence towards the traditional dos and don'ts of 'home-making'. "Although we respect the skills passed on to us, they stink of poverty [...] your work was used, trodden on, or worn right out, like you yourself" - Kate Walker. In addition to *Burnt Breakfast*, Richardson is exhibiting a new body of work — a series of crocheted sculptures made for *Home Strike* that speak to the commodification of the female body, in its reduction to the role of either mother or sexual play thing.

*Fountain* (2000), a video work by Istanbul-based artist and activist **CANAN**, records the artist's heavily lactating breasts filling the top half the screen, whilst milk drips audibly from her nipples. *Fountain* is an attempt by the artist to exorcise the phallic arrogance of Duchamp's readymade, whilst also challenging the breezy irreverence of Bruce Nauman's 1960s riff. Devoted to exposing the continuous and multi-faceted commodification and biopolitical exploitation of the female body, CANAN presents us with the ready-made's diametric opposite: mother-made milk, both an ordinary and extraordinary product of postpartum mammals. The nakedness of her tumescent breasts stands in stark contrast to the images of femininity paraded before us in contemporary society: these are active, un-silenced producers rather than objects for the delectation of the male gaze.

**CANAN** (b. 1970, Istanbul, Turkey) currently lives and works in Istanbul. CANAN studied painting at Marmara University, Istanbul, from 1994 to 1998. In 2006, she completed a residency at The School of The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. She has held solo exhibitions at institutions including: Rahmi M Koç Museum, Istanbul; Tabela, Istanbul; Laden No:5, Germany; KBH Kunsthall, Copenhagen; and Festival De Rode Loper, Amsterdam. Her work has been included in group exhibitions at: Passage de Retz, Paris; Centrum Beeldende Kunst, Utrecht, Netherlands; Istanbul Technical University; Gallery 291, London; Gian Carla Zanutti Gallery, Milan; Istanbul Bilgi University; Proje 4L, Istanbul; Parc de la Villette, Paris; Skironio Centrum Kiffissia, Athens; Gallery Berkelkraftwerk, Vreden, Germany; Emser Salon, Germany; Apartman Project, Istanbul; Maribor Art Gallery, Slovenia; and Radikal Art, Istanbul. She also was invited to participate in the Bienal de Valencia, Spain, in 2001, and the Istanbul Biennial in 2005.

**Paula Chambers** (b. 1966, Watford, UK) currently lives and works in Leeds. After studying under Griselda Pollock at the University of Leeds for the MA Feminist History, Theory, Criticism and Practice in the Visual Arts, Chambers went on to become a principal BA (Hons) Fine Art lecturer at Leeds Arts University. She is also studying for a practice-led PhD at Middlesex University. Recent solo exhibitions include: *Transcendental Housework* (2016) Stockport Art Gallery, Stockport, UK; *With Intent; Fanciful Objects* (2014), Batley Art Gallery, UK; *Domestic Pirate* (2013), Showspace, London, UK; *Regretfully* (2012), Blenheim Walk Gallery, Leeds, UK; *Bird* (2010), 20/21Gallery, Scunthorpe, UK; *Precious* (2009), Ropewalk, Barton on Humber, UK. Selected group exhibitions include: *Alternative Art School Fair* (2016), New York, USA; *In Dialogue: Made of all Work* (2016), The Bowery, Leeds, UK; *Tabletop Tableaux* (2016), Dean Clough Galleries, Halifax, Canada; *Art Car Boot Fair* (2015), Brick Lane, London; *Floribunda* (2015), Dean Clough Galleries, Halifax; *Leeds Revisited* (2015), Dortmund Galleries, Germany; *BEYOND* (2014), Quad Gallery, Derby; *A Day for HYSTERIA* (2014), 142-150 Arlington Rd, London; *Feminist Fiesta 001* (2014), HQ, Doyce St, London, UK; *Shelf Life* (2013), Shed Gallery, Ilkley; *Wildness Between Lines* (2012), The Gallery, Leeds College of Art, Leeds, UK; *Lines of Conflict* (2012), Crescent Arts, Scarborough, UK; *Religionis Violenta* (2012), London West Bank Gallery, London; *10 Sculptors* (2011), Batley Art Gallery, UK; *Protect* (2010), 10 Vyner Street, London, UK; *Frieze Fair Day* (2010), 10 Vyner Street, London, UK.

**Małgorzata Markiewicz** (b. 1979, Poland) currently lives and works in Kraków, Poland. She graduated from the Fine Arts Academy in Kraków, where the artist was recently awarded a PhD for her research on gender roles in domestic environments. Recent solo exhibitions include: *I Am Very Glad That You Could Make It* (2016), solo performance, The Photographers' Gallery, London, UK; *Can I Make You Feel Bad?* (2016), l'étrangère, London, UK; *It's nothing, It's nothing, I said to myself, nothing, nothing.* (2016) WzyTUjaca Gallery, Warsaw, Poland; *Home. Domesticity. Domestication.* (2015), F.A.I.T Gallery, Krakow, Poland; *House, Home, Domesticity* (2013) Botkyrka Konsthall, Tumba, Sweden; *Negotiating the everyday* (2013), Przytyck Gallery, Tarnowskie Gory, Poland; *Vanishing Points* (2012), Piekary Gallery, Poznań, Poland; *Wearable Nations* (2011), The Factory for Art and Design, Copenhagen, Denmark; *EU Textiles* (2011), MOC AK, Krakow, Poland; *Half – empty/ Half – full* (2011), Art Agenda Nova, Krakow, Poland. Selected group exhibitions include: *Gestures of Resistance* (2017), Romantso, Athens, Greece; *Gastronomki* (2017), Dom Norymberski, Krakow; *Flow* (2017) Powrót Suma (Flow.The Catfish Return), Razem Pamoja Bookstore, Exhibition, Kraków, Poland; *L'arte differente: MOC AK al MAXXI*, (2016) MAXXI National Museum of 21st Century Arts, Rome, Italy; *Flow: group project by Małgorzata Markiewicz and Iddi Bashir* (2016), Razem Pamoja Foundation and Bel Etage Projects, Berlin, Germany; *Widmo (Phantom)* (2016), BWA Gallery, Katowice, Poland. Residencies include: CRIR, Residency at Christiania, Copenhagen, Denmark (2014); Botkyrka Konsthall Residency, Fitja, Stockholm, Sweden (2013); The Factory for Art&Design, Copenhagen, Denmark (2011); Residence SPACE Cleveland, USA (2007); and HIAP, Cable Factory, Helsinki, Finland (2006).

**Su Richardson** (b. 1947, South Shields, Tyne and Wear, England) currently lives and works in Birmingham. Richardson moved to Birmingham as a secondary school art teacher in the 1970s. Around this time she met Monica Ross and Phil Goodal, who together formed the Birmingham Women's Art Group. Solo exhibitions include: *Burnt Breakfast and other works* (2012), Constance Howard Gallery, London. Selected group exhibitions include: *Issues* (1980), curated by Lucy Lippard, ICA, London, UK; *Alternative Images of Men* (1980), Bakehouse Gallery, London, UK; *Midlands View* (1980), Stoke Museum and ArtGallery, UK; *Women and Textiles* (1983) Battersea Arts Centre, London, UK. Prior to this Richardson co-organised the Women's Postal Art Event – *Feministo: Representations of the Artist as Housewife* (1977), ICA, London, UK, which toured nationally and internationally.

**Dr. Alexandra Kokoli** is Senior Lecturer in Visual Culture at Middlesex University London and Research Associate at VIAD, University of Johannesburg. She curated *Burnt Breakfast and other works* by Su Richardson (Goldsmiths, 2012) and has published widely on art, visual culture and feminism in journals including *Art Journal*, *Women and Performance*, *n.paradoxa*, *Performance Research* and *Oxford Art Journal*. Her books include *The Feminist Uncanny in Theory and Art Practice* (2016); and (as editor) *Feminism Reframed: Reflections on Art and Difference* (2008); and *The Provisional Texture of Reality: Selected Talks and Texts by Susan Hiller, 1977-2007* (2008).

**Dr. Basia Sliwinska** is a Senior Lecturer in Cultural and Historical Studies at the University of the Arts London. Her research is situated within feminist art history and critical theory and focuses on concepts of the body, activism, gender and citizenship within contemporary women's art practice. Recent publications include: *The Female Body in the Looking-Glass. Contemporary Art, Aesthetics and Genderland* (with I.B. Tauris, 2016); and the co-edited special issue of *Third Text: 'Transfigurations: Transnational Perspectives on Domestic Spaces'* (2016). Forthcoming publications include the co-edited book *The Evolution of the Image: Political Action and the Digital Self* (2018 by Routledge).





## Selected Press

- <https://fadmagazine.com/2018/04/01/top-7-art-exhibitions-see-london-week-010418/>
- <https://news.artnet.com/exhibitions/shows-womens-day-1238396>
- <https://wsimag.com/art/36828-home-strike>
- <https://www.standard.co.uk/go/london/arts/international-womens-day-2018-four-women-artists-are-resisting-domesticity-with-a-home-strike-a3785191.html>
- <http://contemporarylynx.co.uk/calendarevent/london-malgorzata-markiewicz>
- <https://londonist.com/london/art-and-photography/the-best-exhibitions-to-see-to-mark-international-women-s-day>
- <https://artmattermagazine.com/home-strike-letrangere-gallery-london/>
- <https://www.islingtongazette.co.uk/entertainment/home-strike-at-l-etrangere-in-shoreditch-weaponising-domesticity-1-5430151>
- <http://cubmagazine.co.uk/2018/03/home-strike-a-feminist-art-exhibition-subverting-the-role-of-woman/>
- <https://www.studiointernational.com/index.php/home-strike-alexandra-kokoli-basia-sliwinska-malgorzata-markiewicz-su-richardson-video-interview>