



## **Shoplifting in Woolworths: And Other Acts of Material Disobedience**

**Paula Chambers**

The solo exhibition *Shoplifting in Woolworths: And Other Acts of Material Disobedience*, comprises a series of free-standing and wall-based sculptures, film and installation works made from domestic objects.

### **Research process**

The sculptures and installation works in this exhibition perform narratives of domestic disobedience; in each, overlooked and undervalued domestic objects have been activated through careful manipulation of the material culture of femininity to disrupt purpose and intention. These sculptural works are intrinsically domestic, the objects and materials from which they are constructed are the things of home, the stuff of femininity.

### **Research insights**

The artworks exhibited unsettle our expectations of the homeliness of home; following Alexandra Kokoli's (2016) proposition that art informed by feminism is intrinsically uncanny, and that uncanny domesticities are those where the familiar is infected with the unfamiliar, the women and girls implied by the sculpture and installation exhibited enact domestic resistance. Using materials and objects close to hand, the domestic detritus of everyday life; these sculptural objects that reference ornaments or domestic furnishings are misleading, for their feminine materiality has been put to use in a manner that suggest rebellion, albeit with humour and an eye for colour coordination. *Shoplifting in Woolworths: And Other Acts of Material Disobedience* poses an alternate understanding of home as a place where women can create a site of resistance as well as comfort.

### **Dissemination**

The exhibition was open to the public from 25<sup>th</sup> January until 7<sup>th</sup> March. The exhibition was supported by an artist's talk, a performance evening, a youth poetry group workshop, and a talk to Fine Art students from Barnsley College. The exhibition was reviewed by Dr. Dawn Woolley for *Third Text* and by Jay Drinkall for *Corridor 8*.

# Shoplifting in Woolworths: and Other Acts of Material Disobedience

An exhibition by  
**Paula Chambers**

Barnsley Civic  
25<sup>th</sup> January – 7<sup>th</sup> March 2020







## Press Release

### **Paula Chambers - *Shoplifting in Woolworths: And Other Acts of Material Disobedience***

When I was a girl I used to steal things from Woolworths, small things, things I didn't really want or need. These small acts of defiance were dangerous and thrilling; they made me feel like an outlaw, a revolutionary, a pirate.

The sculptures and installation works in this exhibition perform narratives of domestic disobedience; in each, items of furniture come together with crafted sculptural objects constructed from the stuff of home. Yet these objects that reference ornaments or domestic furnishings are misleading, for their feminine materiality has been put to use in a manner that suggest rebellion, or, dare I say it, a feminist domestic revolution.



*Domestic Front* (2016 –present)  
Found furniture, paper, plywood

The barricade of found furniture that makes up the sculptural installation *Domestic Front* is 'manned' by paper and plywood cut-outs of women and girls with guns, the images originating from a range of online sources. Positioned in the gallery space in a manner that partially obstructs access, this sculptural barricade asks the question, under what circumstances might women and girls need to build such a defensive structure?







### *Kitchen Shanks* (2017)

Domestic utensils, tights, hair bands, security grill

Mimicking the make-shift weapons made by prisoners from everyday objects found or stolen, in *Kitchen Shanks* domestic utensils such as cheese knives, cork screws and pickle forks are wrapped and bound with women's tights and hair bands. This wall based sculpture suggests a scenario where women and girls might feel the need to protect or defend themselves from within the home.



*Fire Starters* (2019-present)

Voile curtain, luggage trolleys, concrete, carpet-runner, vinyl

It is a little known fact that the suffragettes, alongside chaining themselves to fences, also undertook a campaign of arson attacks; using improvised explosives, the women set fire to abandoned and unoccupied buildings. *Fire Starters* memorializes the destructive actions of these women through cast concrete jerry cans that unashamedly parade down a domestic runway.





### *Witchcraft for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (2018)

Paper, ply wood, plastic shot glasses, salt, plastic key fobs, brass

The brooms of twelve female friends were photographed in their domestic spaces, digitally altered to suggest imminent departure, each image displays a time approaching midnight, the witching hour. Presented as objects of domestic furnishing, from these shelf-like sculptures hang plastic key fobs encasing images of poisonous plants and their seedpods.

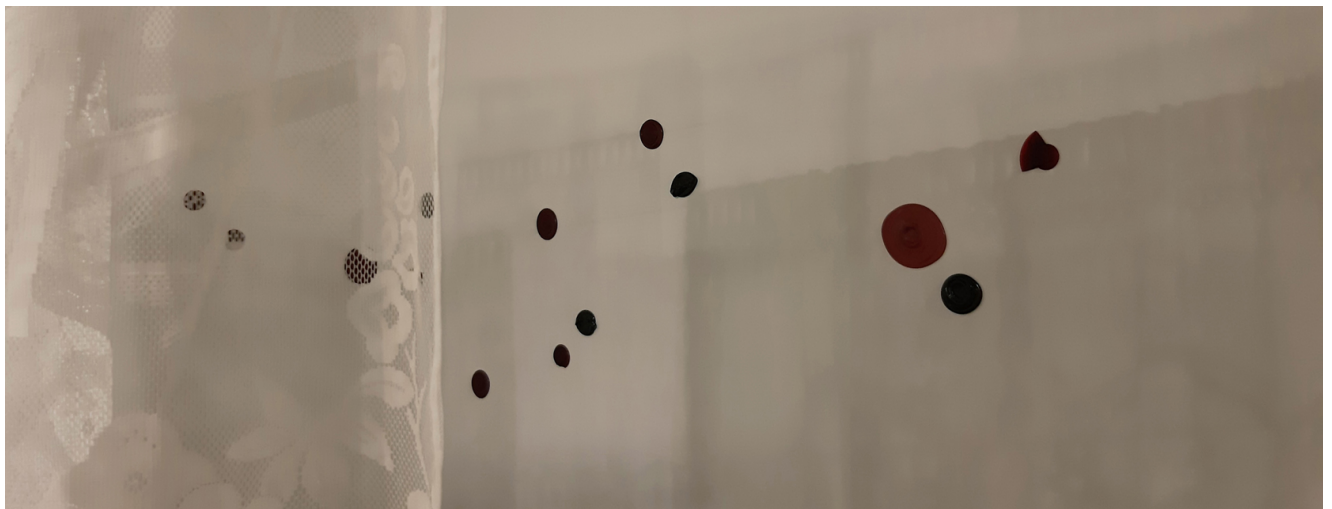


*Balls (for girls)* (2020)

Tights, glass marbles, powder coated steel

Referencing both the children's game of stocking ball where a tennis ball at the end of a sock or stocking is swung backwards against a wall between the players arms and legs, and the 'madball', an improvised weapon where a snooker ball in the end of a sock swung at force can potentially kill someone. *Balls (for girls)* aestheticizes these actions to become a dangerous game for girls.





### *You and Whose Army* (2020)

Reclaimed kitchen units, net curtains, slumped shot glasses, curtain wire

When my son was little, we found by the roadside a life-size rifle handmade from scrap wood. Twenty years later I have reconstructed this rifle through pieces of kitchen units I found in skips. The title of this installation, *You and Whose Army* references the phrase used in contempt for another's capability to force anyone to do anything unwanted.



*Runaway Objects* (2017)

Paper, plywood, acrylic

Footstools and coffee tables, rolled cushions and Tupperware containers; these overlooked and undervalued domestic objects have packed up and run away from home. Presented here as if caught on night vision camera, *Runaway Objects* suggests narratives of feminine abscondance.





*Unwelcome Gift (2020)*

Wooden shelf, paper, plywood, brass

Images of handguns cut from vintage gun club magazines are mounted and displayed as if presented as awards, souvenirs or memorial objects. On each is a brass plaque displaying a man's name, are these mocking objects lover's gifts or subtly coded threats?



*Folding Chair for the Feminist Resistance* is a short film that depicts a black folding chair with the word FEMINIST stenciled on the back in white, inhabiting a range of seating arrangements, from the formal to the feral. The ironic overlaid narration of the film aligns the ubiquity of the folding chair to the resilience of women as embodied subjects.

*Folding Chair for the Feminist Resistance* (2018)  
Film (4.04mins), folding chair





Shoplifting in Woolworths: And Other Acts of Material Disobedience. Gallery View

## Publicity

### Third Text Online Review

'Shoplifting in Woolworths: And Other Acts of Material Disobedience' An Exhibition of work by Paula Chambers.

By Dawn Woolley

<http://www.thirdtext.org/woolley-chambers>

### Corridor 8 Exhibition Review

Paula Chambers: Shoplifting in Woolworths and Other Acts of Material Disobedience. The Civic; Barnsley

By Jay Drinkall

<https://corridor8.co.uk/article/paula-chambers/>