

TEXTS BY ATIF AKIN, JOAN ANIM-ADDO, MAGALÍ ARRIOLA, RAKHEE BALARAM, ERIKA BALSOM, UTE META BAUER, BETTINA BRUNNER, D. GRAHAM BURNETT, PATRICK CHARPÉNEL, DAMIAN CHRISTINGER, SEBASTIAN CICHOCKI, CM LIVE (NEELOFAR, SURAJ RAI, AND SHAMSHER ALI), GABRIELLE CRAM, HEATHER DAVIS, ANGELA DIMITRAKAKI, GEORGES B.J. DREYFUS, EVA EBERSBERGER, CHARLES ESCHÉ, BEATRICE FORCHINI, ANSELM FRANKE, NATASHA GINWALA, DAVID GRUBER, CARLES GUERRA, SOLEDAD GUTIÉRREZ, NAV HAQ, EVA HAYWARD, STEFAN HELMREICH, STEFANIE HESSLER, VÁCLAV JANOŠČÍK, CAROLINE A. JONES, RUBA KATRIB, LUTZ KOEPNICK, CRESANTIA FRANCES KOYA VAKA'UTA, LUCA LO PINTO, SARAT MAHARAJ, CHUS MARTÍNEZ, MARGARIDA MENDES, SUZANA MILEVSKA, VANESSA JOAN MÜLLER, HEIKE MUNDER, SARA NADAL-MELSIÓ, HENNING NASS, ASTRIDA NEIMANIS, INGO NIERMANN, SANDRA NOETH, HANS ULRICH OBRIST, BORIS ONDREIČKA, ANNIE PAUL, NATAŠA PETREŠIN-BACHELEZ, IGNAS PETRONIS, ELIZABETH A. POVINELLI, FILIPA RAMOS, RAQS MEDIA COLLECTIVE, MARKUS REYMANN, KATHRIN RHOMBERG, DAN RICHARDS, RIDYKEULOUS (NICOLE EISENMAN + A.L. STEINER), RALPH RUGOFF, THIBAUT DE RUYTER, NADIM SAMMAN, MIRJAM SCHAUB, ANDREAS SCHLAEGEL, CORY SCOZZARI, TSERING SHAKYA, CHRIS SHARP, JASPER SHARP, FREDERIKE SPERLING, ANDREAS SPIEGL, FRANCESCA THYSSEN-BORNEMISZA, EMILIANO VALDÉS, NICOLA VASSELL, FRANZISKA SOPHIE WILDFÖRSTER, EVA WILSON, SLAVOJ ŽIŽEK, DANIELA ZYMAN, OONA ZYMAN

Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary The Commissions Book

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BASEL ABBAS AND RUANNE ABOU-RAHME, DAVID ADJAYE, NABIL AHMED, DOUG AITKEN, ATIF AKIN, JOHN AKOMFRAH, NEVIN ALADAĞ, ALLORA & CALZADILLA, LAURA ANDERSON BARBATA, JONATHAS DE ANDRADE, KUTLUĞ ATAMAN, NEİL BELOUFA, CECILIA BENGOLEA, JOHN BOCK, MONICA BONVICINI, CANDICE BREITZ, JANET CARDIFF AND GEORGE BUREŠ MILLER, JULIAN CHARRIÈRE, ANETTA MONA CHIŠA AND LUCIA TKÁČOVÁ, TYLER COBURN, PHIL COLLINS, CLAUDIA COMTE, ABRAHAM CRUZVILLEGAS, EMANUEL DANESCH AND DAVID RYCH, DARK MORPH, JEREMY DELLER, OLAFUR ELIASSON, NOA ESHKOL, OMER FAST, MARIO GARCÍA TORRES, GELITIN, ISA GENZKEN, LIAM GILLICK, DOMINIQUE GONZALEZ-FOERSTER, DAN GRAHAM, ARIEL GUZIK, CARL MICHAEL VON HAUSSWOLFF AND THOMAS NORDANSTAD, FLORIAN HECKER, NIKOLAUS HIRSCH / MICHEL MÜLLER AND CYBERMOHALLA ENSEMBLE, CARSTEN HÖLLER, MARINE HUGONNIER, PIERRE HUYGHE, INHABITANTS, SANJA IVEKOVIĆ, RASHID JOHNSON, JOAN JONAS, BRAD KAHLHAMER, AMAR KANWAR, RAGNAR KJARTANSSON, ARMIN LINKE, SHARON LOCKHART, LOS CARPINTEROS, SARAH LUCAS, URSULA MAYER, JONATHAN MEESE, EDUARDO NAVARRO, ERNESTO NETO AND THE HUNI KUIN, RIVANE NEUENSCHWANDER, CARSTEN NICOLAI, OLAF NICOLAI, JORGE OTERO-PAILOS, MATHIAS POLEDNA, WALID RAAD, RAQS MEDIA COLLECTIVE, LISA RAVE, MATTHEW RITCHIE WITH ARANDA LASCH AND ARUP AGU, TOMÁS SARACENO, RITU SARIN AND TENZING SONAM, HANS SCHABUS, CHRISTOPH SCHLINGENSIEF, ALLAN SEKULA, CHARLES STANKIEVECH, SIMON STARLING, SUPERFLEX, TERRITORIAL AGENCY, RIRKRIT TIRAVANIJA, SISSEL TOLAAS, SUZANNE TREISTER, JANAINA TSCHÄPE WITH DAVID GRUBER, JANA WINDEREN, SUSANNE M. WINTERLING, CERITH WYN EVANS, ŽELIMIR ŽILNIK

The Commissions Book

Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary

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Sarah Lucas

BUNNY GETS SNOOKERED #3, 1997

TAN TIGHTS, GREEN STOCKINGS, RED OFFICE CHAIR, CLAMP, KAPOK, WIRE
120 × 58 × 60 CM

POLAROID BUNNY #1-4, 1997

FOUR C-PRINTS ON MDF BOARD
50.8 × 50.8 CM EACH

THE LAW, 2000

C-PRINT FROM POLAROID
122 × 91 CM

CHARLIE'S DELIGHT, 2002

PHOTOCOPY ON PACKING PAPER
115 × 140 CM

G-G-G GUNNER ON PARADE, 2002

CONCRETE FOOTBALL, PEARLY BUTTONS ON LEATHER BOOTS
DIMENSIONS VARIABLE

DACRE, 2013

CAST BRONZE
SCULPTURE: 61.5 × 49 × 65.5 CM
PLINTH: 84 × 44.5 × 44.5 CM

BORN IN LONDON, UK, IN 1962.
LIVES IN ALDEBURGH, UK.

ANATOMY OF DESIRES

OONA ZYMAN

Piercing stare, lank hair, sprawled legs in thick jeans, clumsy boots: what sounds like a description of Jim Stark, James Dean's character in *Rebel without a Cause* (1955), is actually Sarah Lucas's look in her series of photographic self-portraits (1991–98). By striking a pose reminiscent of self-assured masculinity—or perhaps the vulnerable self-display of nude models in men's magazines—the artist shamelessly directs our gaze to her most private parts. Uncomfortably and unwillingly, we are complicit in objectifying her body. This simple but cocky gesture has become emblematic of the confrontational attitude that has infused Lucas's works since, in which she occupies spaces of antagonisms to subvert, rupture, and break with gender and identity biases. Iconographically the posture references VALIE EXPORT's *Action Pants: Genital Panic* (1969), six identical photographs that document an actionist performance during which the artist interrupted a movie screening at an art-house cinema in Munich, wearing crotchless pants and holding a gun in her hand. Just as EXPORT confronted the clichéd historical representation of woman in cinema as passive objects without agency, Lucas turns to a different source of imagery propagating sexist and hegemonic discourses: tabloids and lad's mags, whose *readership* (or rather viewership), it is said, is particularly strong in the working-class milieu. In the color photograph *The Law* (2000), an unidentified person dressed in jeans and dirty sneakers—probably the artist in her studio—sits, legs spread, on a sculptural work by Lucas also titled *The Law* (1997): a TV box cast in concrete with huge engraved letters that read “THE LAW.” The sitter is holding an issue of the *Sun* so that it covers most of her face and upper torso, displaying the catchy tabloid headlines and flashy images. The image circles around questions of representation and what it means to be on the other side of the lens. How is one captured, represented, and perceived in a photographic image, in real life? With her fuck-you attitude Lucas is appropriating male stereotypes and overlaying them with female elements—as in *Self-Portrait with Fried Eggs* (1996), in which she sits in her trademark pose wearing jeans, T-shirt, and a couple of fried eggs atop her breasts—to operate within a mode of visibility that empowers those being exploited and devalued in the media landscape. She brings to light the extent to which art with claims to loftiness and refinement is often in the service of male desire, laying bare a distorted attitude toward sexuality that moves between hypersexualized content and the repression of basic sexual impulses. Her system of reference is a visual and semiotic language that already exists in tabloids and pornographic magazines, which resurfaces in her work. She explains: “I don't think any of the pieces are that shocking. Things, other images, people see everyday are far more explicit. I find the thing that makes it shocking is people's own self-consciousness.”¹

Taking a politically feminist stance, Lucas is looking for alternatives to male-female dualism and finds new ways to think about identity construction, in which androgyny becomes a tool of resistance and, as Andrea Dworkin writes in *Woman Hating*, “a paradigm for a wholeness, a harmony, and a freedom which is virtually unimaginable, the antithesis of every assumption we hold about the nature of identity in general and sex in particular.”² Lucas’s objects often fluctuate between daily commodities and out-of-this-world hybrids that emerge as headless, half-object and half-human figures, such as her notorious Bunnies, made from colored tights stuffed with cotton wadding, with features that evoke both human limbs and elongated bunny ears. For the installation *Bunny Gets Snookered* (1997), eight Bunny sculptures were placed around a snooker table, evoking the ambience of a night out at a pool bar or, much worse, the wake of a sexual assault. *Bunny Gets Snookered #3* (1997) wears enticing stockings, in one of the eight colors of billiard balls, and is slackly positioned on a red cushioned office chair. Her drained, postcoital body is reminiscent of sexual conquest, as the sculpture becomes the stand-in for unresponsive sexuality, a figure bored by desire and indifferent to violence. Lucas indeed deconstructs the image of the Playboy Bunny, making it (her) hilariously comical, sexually unappealing, and bizarre in shape. One of the Bunnies emerges again in a photographic series titled *Polaroid Bunny #1–4* (1997), in which the figure is seen in Lucas’s studio, strapped to a wooden chair in front of several oil paintings. Each image shows the figure from a different angle—the front, the back, and the two sides. Strokes of sunlight illuminate the room, creating a chiaroscuro-like interplay of light and shadow, all evoking a crime scene. Was the artist making an archival photograph, inventorying the sculpture before it left the studio? Are the images adding a layer to the dark and mysterious narrative around *Bunny Gets Snookered*? Once again, the artist offers no answers. Coinciding with the posthuman turn in critical theory, Lucas’s artistic production in the early 2000s started to incorporate more nonfigurative, organic, and biomorphic elements. In that context the Bunnies opened a new chapter: after finding a frayed and tangled old version lying around in her shed, the artist, who was drawn to its curious allure and fragile state, began reproducing different versions and ended up with a shape resembling intertwined soft pinkish-brown limbs. This metamorphosis led to a playful new series titled *NUDS* (2009–), in which she placed these alienish limbs on a plinth made of gray breeze blocks. Troublingly fleshy and somewhat domestic at the same time, these sculptures overthrow standard definitions of human life and eventually propose new evolutionary properties. Lucas’s objects are never stable but transgress form, materiality, and temporality, and after years of twisting and twirling, her *NUDS* eventually morphed into the golden bronze sculptures exhibited in the Central Pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2013. *Dacre* (2013), one of the sculptures in question, fuses two beings

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into a single entity through their embrace, consolidated by their long, slender arms. The figure possesses a frosty elegance that is heightened when light strokes shimmer on its highly polished surface, contrasting with a sensible fragility, a moment of intimacy evoked through its sensual position, which in a way conjures Brancusi’s *Kiss* (1907). What surfaces is a feminine physicality, one that recalls the image of a caring mother and her child, two cuddling lovers, or a protective guardian. The golden hue links the bronze to the material history and status of gold, resonating particularly with Byzantine icons, golden Buddha statues, or over-the-top Versailles. Drawing on personal experience, Lucas still lets the material speak for itself. Her worn shoes are turned into sculptures, as with the bulky biker boots covered with pearly buttons that she paired with a concrete football for *G-G-G Gunner on Parade* (2002), an ode to the English football player Charlie George. The footballer, who rose to fame playing for Arsenal in the 1970s and who, like Lucas, grew up in Islington, then a working-class London neighborhood, plays a leading role in

her narrative around football machismo and the clichéd story of the self-made man. With similar looks and background, the artist playfully appropriates his persona and ultimately circles back to her self-portraits. “I thought I’d use him as a stand-in for myself. Try him on. An androgynous extension.”³ Again Lucas drew on preexisting visual material to speak about the commodification of success stories, in which the celebrity becomes the blank screen for the projection of logos and commercial values. Indeed, the wide



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SARAH LUCAS, *G-G-G GUNNER ON PARADE*, 2002

coverage of George's achievements in the tabloids was partly responsible for his lasting legacy. Both his athletic performance and its virtual reenactment in the media are the subject of *Charlie's delight* (2002), an enlarged black-and-white photocopy of an original magazine photo spread. It shows two successive moments during a game: George levitating from the ground to flick a header and his ecstatic reaction after scoring the pivotal goal. The composition is visually constructed to underline his strength and extraordinary skill and athleticism. He looks as if he was picked out from among his team members to rise to the occasion. ■■■■■ Reevaluating Lucas's artistic legacy from today's politically fraught perspective can open up new agonistic spaces, to use Chantal Mouffe's term, which allow for the negotiation of alternative modes of being and seeing. Bodies matter to the artist, but instead of latching onto our carnal existence, with its culturally enforced oppositions of "she" and "he," Lucas questions biological determinism and explores more than human identities in a posthuman world vision. Antagonism is also fun, punk, and highly energizing, and so Lucas draws on the allure of naughtiness, and on that note we'll end with a quote from Kathleen Hanna's "Riot Grrrl Manifesto": "BECAUSE we are angry at a society that tells us Girl = Dumb, Girl = Bad, Girl = Weak. BECAUSE I believe with my wholeheart-mindbody that girls constitute a revolutionary soul force that can, and will change the world for real."⁴

1 Lucas, in Natalie Rigg, "Power in Woman: Sarah Lucas and the Female Gaze," *AnOther Magazine*, April 6, 2016, www.anothermag.com/art-photography/8553/power-in-woman-sarah-lucas-and-the-female-gaze.

2 Andrea Dworkin, *Woman Hating* (New York: Penguin, 1974), 175.

3 Sarah Lucas, in "Q&A Matthew Barney—Sarah Lucas," in *Sarah Lucas: After 2005, before 2012*, ed. Sadie Coles (London: Koenig, 2012), 18.

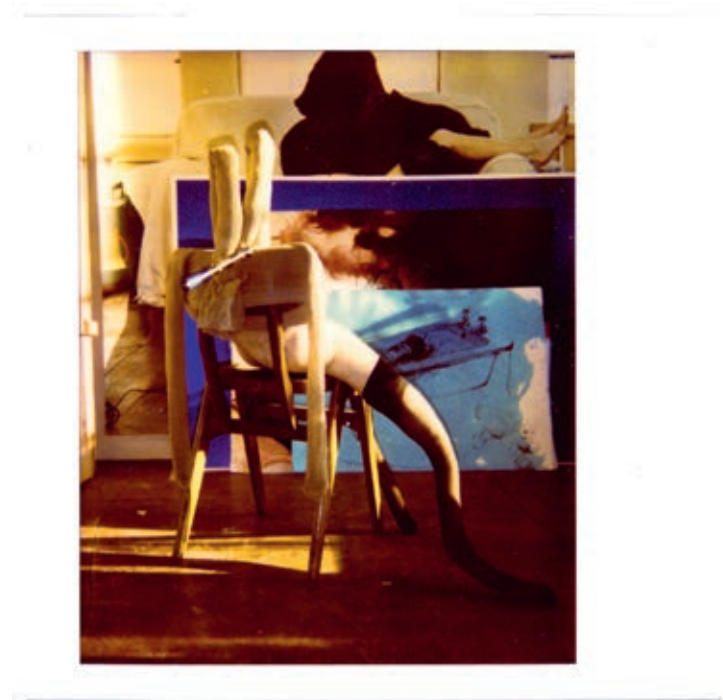
4 Kathleen Hanna, "The Riot Grrrl Manifesto" (1991), www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/riotgrrrlmanifesto.html.



SARAH LUCAS, *BUNNY GETS SNOOKERED #3*, 1997
INSTALLATION VIEW, KUNSTHAUS GRAZ, GRAZ, 2008



SARAH LUCAS, **BUNNY GETS SNOOKERED #3**, 1997
INSTALLATION VIEW, NEW MUSEUM, NEW YORK, 2018



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SARAH LUCAS, **THE LAW**, 2000



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SARAH LUCAS, **DACRE**, 2013
INSTALLATION VIEW, VENICE BIENNALE, VENICE, 2013



CHARLIE'S DELIGHT

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Like Stoke's quarter-final hero, John Ritchie, Arsenal's match-winner in the Sixth Round had battled against injury to get fit for the FA Cup. In their case it was brilliant Cockney prospect, Charlie George, who missed the first months of the season, but has now returned to add his natural flair to Arsenal's bid for honours. Charlie is pictured (left) rising above the grasping fingers of Leicester's Peter Shilton to head the only goal in the replay and (right) he rushes off to accept the acclaim of the Highbury customers.

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SARAH LUCAS