

## GLADSTONE GALLERY

Charlotte Jansen, "Sarah Lucas takes a bite out of Beijing in major exhibition at Red Brick Art Museum," *Wallpaper*, November 15, 2019

### Wallpaper\*

# Sarah Lucas takes a bite out of Beijing in major exhibition at Red Brick Art Museum

The English artist's debut in China is a celebration of androgyny, ambiguity and British bawdiness

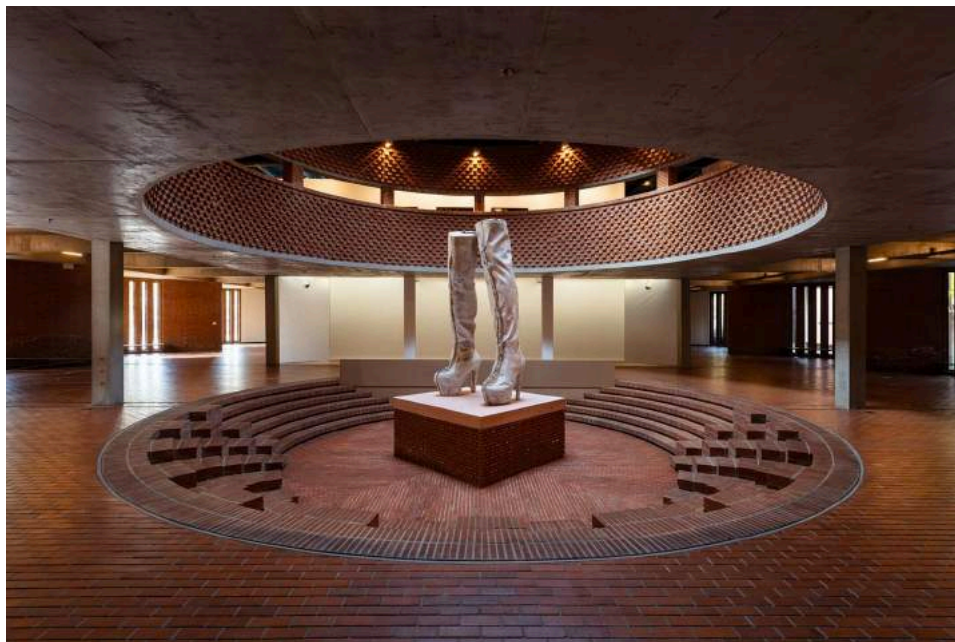


Installation view of 'Sarah Lucas' at Red Brick Art Museum, Beijing. © The artist.  
Courtesy of Red Brick Art Museum, Beijing and Sadie Coles HQ, London

**I**t's taken a while for Sarah Lucas to take her work to China – given the notorious censorship issues in the country, it's perhaps hardly a surprise. Since the 1990s, the *enfant terrible* of the British art world has built career on sexual subversion and rebellion, defying traditional ideas about gender and class.

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Her visual one-liners, equally informed by feminist literature as by porn, have playfully drawn on cheap and familiar materials from the British vernacular: tights, fried eggs, digestive biscuits and cigarettes have been juxtaposed with bodily orifices, sagging tits, pendulous willies, toilet bowls, and custard.



None of this is left out of Lucas' first major solo exhibition on the Asian continent, recently opened at the Dong Yugan-designed Red Brick Art Museum in Beijing. Curated by museum founder and director Yan Shijie, the exhibition incorporates works from the 1990s to brand new commissions, in a no-holds barred review of three decades of the 57-year-old's work. 'I believe that the Chinese audience is ready to meet the hurricane-level cultural impact that Sarah Lucas will bring,' Yan says. (The exhibition comes with an explicit content warning.)

Lucas herself has said she is unfamiliar with Chinese culture: 'I don't have a strong sense of what and how Chinese people think about the cultural, conventional, audacious, radical, conservative – things that I have some sense of,

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in England and least. So I am all eyes and ears and antenna.’ But she’s game to see how it’ll go down with local audiences in Beijing, where there’s currently an appetite for the YBA period.

Concurrent to Lucas’ show, the Red Brick Archive Center is presenting photographs documenting the YBA artists taken by Johnnie Shand Kydd, a friend of Lucas who captured them at work and play over 25 years. Among the works are those that made Lucas famous in the 1990s, when she was running *The Shop* (a store and installation that ran for six months) with Tracey Emin.

Lucas’ *Au Naturel*, her seminal 1994 installation comprising a mattress propped against a wall, holding a couple made of two melons and a bucket and a cucumber with two oranges, is a centrepiece of the show, as punchy and iconic as it was when she first made it.



Works from her 1997 *Bunny* series also appear. ‘I partly started to make these things to keep myself company,’ Lucas once said of the sculptures that she has referred to as creatures. Also included is a 2015 sculpture of the artist’s own naked legs and bottom, half-perched on a bar stool, cigarette poking out of her

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rear end. When she cast the work, she said, she had just come back from a pub lunch.

Moving back and forth between soft to hard, from feminine to masculine, inverted to protruding, in expressions that are both vulnerable and ostentatious, Lucas' debut in China is a celebration of androgyny, ambiguity and British bawdiness. Some of it might get lost in translation, but it won't fail to make its mark. On the opening day, Lucas invited the public to participate in her performance *One Thousand Eggs: For Women*, joining her in chucking eggs at the white walls of the museum. \*



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