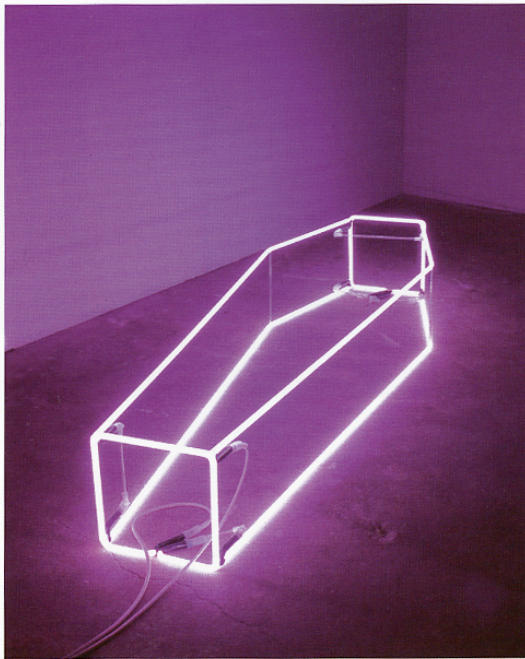


GLADSTONE GALLERY

White S., Erin, "Sarah Lucas", Art Lies, Spring 2009, pp.91



L. Sarah Lucas, *New Religion (violet)*, 2001; neon; 15 x 21 x 71¼ inches

R. *Pepsi and Cocky*, 2008; chair, kapok, wire, nylon pantyhose, fabric; 40 x 26 x 28 inches

DALLAS

Sarah Lucas
Goss-Michael Foundation

For some, the making of art is inextricably bound to the act of confession. And while this notion is often derided by the postmodern establishment, more than a trace of the cult of personality persists. Sarah Lucas' work, the subject of a recent solo exhibition at the Goss-Michael Foundation, would seem to operate as self-revelation. Calling upon recent art history—from Jasper Johns' casting of his own body parts to first-wave feminist employment of handicrafts such as needlework—Lucas' work is decidedly cheeky, blurring the line between emotive sincerity and detached solemnity. Whether confronting the viewer with a close-up photograph of her left breast or presenting a pair of her boots cast in paint-splattered concrete, the artist looks to be everywhere. Yet one of the strengths of Lucas' work is that you can't pin her down, despite her ostensible divulgence of self.

The exhibition, which spans the artist's career, is sparsely installed in the handsome, minimal gallery space—and to good effect. A selection of two sculptures and a large-scale photograph of the artist inhabit the lobby area, priming our senses for Lucas' embrace of multiple media. One of these is *New Religion*, a coffin hewn from lavender neon tubing; the seductive color and radiance on the smooth gallery floor imbue the space with a palpable charge that is at once alluring and macabre.

Curatorial choices highlight Lucas' skill at elucidating the aberrant qualities of the human experience, sexual and otherwise. Finding a kindred spirit in the messy, irreverent work of artists such as Paul McCarthy and Tracey Emin, Lucas throws a good measure of blunt, adolescent sexual humor into the mix in works such as *Little Man Big Willy*. Here, a pedestal made of tiny tins of smoked sausage supports a "man" made of flesh-colored fabric sporting a construction worker's brightly colored helmet. The

fabric is crudely sewn to form a large phallus (body) and uncomfortably squished testes (legs?). The discomfort of this inanimate figure is plain, and its handmade quality draws the viewer near. Nearby, *Pepsi and Cocky* is formed from two pairs of nude pantyhose and an old-fashioned school chair. Lucas positions the amorous union of fabric-stuffed hose atop the chair, placing the torso-less beings at knee-height for close inspection. The privacy of this pair is nonexistent, and a feeling of voyeurism will startle even the most decorous viewer.

Photography is well represented in this exhibition, and it is a medium for which Lucas is celebrated. A grouping of self-portraits artfully covers a prominent wall in the foundation's office space, spanning the length of Lucas' career. Yet in the end, when these are considered next to the raw immediacy of the artist's sculptural work, the latter wins. The photographs are fun but somehow too literal to conduct a meaty dialogue with this viewer. For my money, it is Lucas' forays into three dimensions—with an eye for the abject and the use of common materials—that is both conceptually layered and most materially dense. Her witty, often crass approach to sculpture makes this show worthwhile.

Erin Starr White is Curatorial Research Assistant at the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth.