

“Stoop, Stoop, Stooping is Stoopid!”

A collaborative exhibition by Rachel Adams & Tessa Lynch

13 July – 15 September 2019

Studio Pavilion at House for an Art Lover is excited to present its Summer exhibition, a new collaborative project by Glasgow based artists Rachel Adams and Tessa Lynch. They have used Frances Gabe’s invention, the self-cleaning house, as a framework by which to look at laborious making techniques and connotations of domestic mess.

Rachel and Tessa have been working as artists in residence over the last couple of months, creating collaborative work for the first time in an involved way. Both artists share an interest in elevating craft and household activity, often associated with women’s work, into the realm of art. These themes are in stark contrast to the staged space of House for an Art Lover where no domestic chaos or mess is allowed.

The exhibition centres around a large-scale braided rug produced using scraps of materials from second-hand bed linen, plaited together and sewn flat in a circle. The work nods to Shaker methods of production; resourceful, fit for purpose and economic in means. The work was made with the additional support of gallery staff in individual living rooms, kitchens, gardens and artist studios. Its title *Anouk, Kristina, Lily, Louise, Martyna, Megan, Rachel & Tessa (Plug)* referring to this.

Laid in the centre of the room, the work, whilst presenting itself as a rug, has become a swirling plughole at the centre of which all mess drains away. The making method is reminiscent of plaiting children’s hair, speaking to a form of care giving. This also highlights the repetitive nature of much of the physical and emotional labour that can make up day to day home and family life. The majority of works within the show have been handmade by the artists, for example the soap was cast using baking tins and greaseproof paper from a kitchen cupboard, the ingredients melted down in a microwave. *Frances’ House (Laundry Basket)* perches on the edge of the windowsill in the corner of the gallery. The artists have made a model of Gabe’s house, reimagining it as a functional household object commonly transported around the home containing never-ending supplies of washing and drying.

Frances Gabe (1915 –2016 Idaho, USA) was driven by her hatred of housecleaning to develop her self-cleaning house in the late 1970s. “Housework is a thankless, unending job, a nerve-twangling bore. Who wants it? Nobody!”* In brief, each room in the house had a cleaning/drying/heating/ cooling system in the centre of the ceiling. At the touch of a button a powerful spray of soapy water would rain down over the room; which was then rinsed and blow-dried. The floors were sloped slightly towards the corners to allow excess water to run off. Crockery was cleaned, dried, and stored inside a cupboard that was also a dishwasher. Clothes were hung in a closet that acted as a washing machine and dryer. The house’s sinks, tubs, and toilets were also self-cleaning, and the bookshelves dusted themselves.

Gabe’s home was unconventional to say the least and came with major flaws. Materials and furniture had to be safeguarded so that they could survive. Furniture was protected by clear acrylic boxes; pictures were coated in plastic; and knick-knacks displayed behind glass. The wall works the artists have produced are inspired by this. A variety of miniature house-hold items associated with cleaning, fixing and serving are encased within soap. Caught in a moment of perpetual action this reminds us of the amount of labour and activity involved in keeping a home –the value of which is often overlooked.

At the top of the steps in the gallery sits a large cast piece of soap ready for use. *Self-cleaning Sculpture* is the artists attempt to imagine the size of a bar of soap, as if it were to clean a house rather than a body. The windows next to this piece and around the whole gallery have been sprayed with glycerin to create a film of condensation, or even sweat. *Wet Room* fixes the moment during window cleaning that would ordinarily be wiped away, as if cleaning in itself is a ‘dirty’ act.

All the *Savon* works share this same inertia. Contradictory to its useful purpose, here soap is used to freeze household items in a moment of toil. These works, perhaps most pertinently and in recognition of Gabe, have

the metaphorical ability to clean themselves. So, let's all eliminate, or at least acknowledge that "Stoop, Stoop, Stooping is Stoopid!"*

*Quotes by Frances Gabe