

Sarah Lucas

Sadie Coles HQ, London

May 22 - June 21, 1997

Bunny's behavior just gets worse, and now they won't let her serve in the front room at all anymore. Last week she spilled a drink right down a gentleman's front, ruining a perfectly good hand of poker. Then she caught her tights in the snooker table, and spent the rest of the evening working the floor with a jungle of ladder runs streaming all the way up her legs! Bunny would have been one of those doe-eyed, slow-moving waitresses who uses the word "cocktails" for drinks and "powder room" for the toilet, except that she has no head and can't walk either. She sits tied forcibly to a chair in a tangle of stuffed tights with a wire-hanger armature jammed up her back.

In "Bunny Gets Snookered," eight such deformed ladies lounge about a giant snooker table, like exhausted soldiers around a trench, bored and

lust. Somehow Sarah Lucas has turned a pair of ladies' stockings, roughly stuffed with cushion padding, into these stringy, weirdly straddled, deathly legs, stand-ins for available yet unresponsive sexuality. They are shapely, of course, but what exact shape might they be? Bunny is a necrophiliac's centerfold, sick with sexuality, as bored with desire as she is with violence and mutilation.

The area off London's elegant Regent's Street, where we find Sadie Coles's beautiful new gallery, once attracted teams of unescorted men to its all-male gentlemen's clubs, and these often featured a snooker room. Lucas, easily one of Britain's most important young artists, is known for her work's in-your-face sexuality, always pairing male and female stand-ins (melons, say, or big thick zucchinis) in unequivocal postures. This installation, with its soft, open-legged ladies and solid, virile pool table, does not leave its gender-coding up to the imagination. "Snooker," it turns out, comes from the French (sexy!) for the "new military cadets" who once filled the pool halls. Indeed what we have here is itself a little army—of uniformly dressed lovelies who might service enlisted men, as they do certain boys having their nights on the town, shootin' and huntin' for tender bunnies like these.

Two weeks before "Bunny Gets Snookered" opened, Lucas presented a giant warehouse exhibition on the other side of town which seemed to cover the ground of her autobiographical, sometimes scatological work. In the midst of all the immense color photographs and room-sized installations sat the first incarnation of Bunny, spineless and staggering in a Fluxus kind of way, like a deflated Liza Minnelli slumped over her cabaret chair. The work's understated perversion was recognized instantly as one of the artist's finest efforts to date, and Lucas, true to her practice, picked up the ball and ran with it, producing eight more just weeks thereafter, as if reiterating Bunny's cheap, common availability. Bunny is now also on offer in large-format, black-and-white photographs, posing to display her best decapitated angle, as if caught in the three-way mirror of a Hollywood dressing room. Lucas and Bunny, sometimes mistaken one for the other, are true art world divas.

Gilda Williams

OPPOSITE:

LIZ LARNER, *VERWOVEN*, 1989, INSTALLATION VIEW, COPPER, FABRIC, PLASTIC, PAPER, COTTON, NYLON, RUBBER, LEATHER.

BELOW:

SARAH LUCAS, *BUNNY GETS SNOOKERED #7*, 1997, TAN TIGHTS, BLACK STOCKINGS, WOOD, VINYL CHAIR, CLAMP, KAPOCK, WIRE, 103 x 84 x 79 CM.

