

Collect Art

**Digital
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Louise Richards



"My digital artworks magnify and abstract everyday domestic items, transforming the familiar into the surreal. Using vivid colour and pop art references, I interrogate the overlooked rituals of domestic life, often coded as feminine and undervalued. Through still and moving images, including video works like Ironing, Random Leaps Converge, and Water Torture, I explore how gendered labour persists within private spaces. My practice invites viewers to reconsider domestic objects not as passive background, but as charged symbols of cultural narratives around work, identity, and inequality."

Louise Richards is a London-based visual artist working across photography, digital print, monoprint, and video installation. Her practice explores themes of domesticity, gendered labour, and inequality through vibrant, surreal imagery. She is currently pursuing a Professional Doctorate in Fine Art at the University of East London and holds an MA in Fine Art from Central Saint Martins (2021). Her work has been exhibited at Winns Gallery, Askew Gallery, and featured in Haus-a-Rest's student showcase.

Your work transforms everyday domestic items into surreal, vibrant symbols—what draws you to the domestic space as a site of critique and reimagination?

To further my artistic journey, I commenced an MA at Central Saint Martins in 2019. However, COVID-19 struck, and my studies and art practice were forced to come to a halt. My kitchen became my studio, everyday objects and the tasks performed within this domestic space became inspiration. It was also a time to explore ideas of gendered labour and the undervalued nature of women's work.

How do you use colour and pop art aesthetics to shift the meaning or emotional weight of the objects you depict?

Colour is central to my practice, particularly in how I approach the reimagining of everyday domestic items. In my Pop Art-inspired abstract prints, I use bold, vibrant colours to challenge the viewer's perception of the familiar. These are not just kitchen utensils, cleaning products, or household tools; they become other, stripped of their functionality and mundaneness. My pop art aesthetic is conceptual in that it blurs the boundary between what is considered high and low art/culture, provoking reflection on value. Colour allows me to reframe domesticity not as a passive or overlooked space, but as one filled with potential for visual and cultural re-evaluation.

Cored
Digitally manipulated photograph, 48x62cm, 2021



In pieces like 'Ironing' and 'Water Torture', you merge beauty with discomfort—how do you balance visual allure with political urgency?

I use beauty and visually pleasing aesthetics to draw the audience in, initially creating a sense of calm and intimacy. I then intentionally disrupt this through uncanny, surreal, or violent juxtapositions. In Ironing, what begins as a mundane, domestic act slowly transforms: it becomes clear I am ironing my own face. The initial calm gives way to horror and discomfort in the audience, whilst I embody repetition, control, and self-erasure. In Water Torture, I use the sound of an echoing drip of a tap to evoke discomfort, anxiety, and violence.



ironing
Video, 2025



In this unsettling video performance, the act of ironing is turned inward, onto the artist's face. Blurring beauty rituals with domestic labour, the image evokes both absurdity and violence, confronting ideals of perfection, control, and the silent pressures embedded in gendered care. The face becomes both surface and site: disciplined, smoothed, and nearly erased.



How has your experience pursuing a Professional Doctorate in Fine Art influenced your current practice or deepened your conceptual investigations?

My Prof Doc has helped me drill down into what makes me tick as an artist, forcing me to ask not just how I make work, but why. Through this process, I've come to understand that the surreal and the uncanny are an important part of my practice. They allow me to unsettle the familiar, to stretch the boundaries of reality to reveal deeper truths. I'm particularly drawn to themes of domesticity and value, especially how certain types of labour, roles, and bodies are undervalued or rendered invisible. Humour also plays a crucial role. It's not just an engagement device, but a strategy: a way to smuggle in discomfort, critique, and complexity. I'm interested in how humour can make political or social inequalities more palatable, only to shift the ground beneath the viewer when they realise what they're laughing at.

Can you speak to how the medium—photography, monoprint, or video—shapes the narrative or tone of a given work?

Each medium I work with offers a distinct way of framing my ideas, both emotionally and materially. For instance, in photography, I often capture domestic objects as if they were human subjects, giving them the same care, attention, and compositional weight I would in a portrait. Then, in Photoshop, I manipulate the photograph, monumentalizing, abstracting, and adding color to the object. Monoprint introduces tactility, imperfection, and repetition. I use chopping boards that hold the memory/mark of every cut that has been made on them as backgrounds. I use kitchen knives loaded with ink to add marks of chopping and slicing, mirroring the physical and emotional labour of the kitchen. Video opens time, rhythm, and sound, allowing me to perform, disorient, or seduce before introducing disruption. I employ Marshall McLuhan's mantra The medium is the message.

Much of your work explores the persistence of gendered labour—how do you approach these themes without falling into nostalgia or cliché?

I avoid nostalgia and cliché by using humour, a tool that allows me to disarm, disrupt, and reframe the domestic space with wit and critical distance.

How do you see domestic objects functioning as cultural artifacts, and what do they reveal about contemporary notions of gender and identity?

I love the functionality and materiality of my domestic objects. We have become at one with one another, my knives are the right weight and have moulded to fit the shape of my hand over time, we have a history together. Domestic objects function as cultural artefacts by reflecting the values, identities, and daily practices of the people who use them. They preserve tradition, signal social roles, and reveal how culture evolves through everyday life and material expression.

Do you see your work as part of a feminist lineage within art history, and if so, who are your influences or points of departure?

*Yes, I do see my work as part of a feminist lineage within art history, drawing on figures such as Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro's *Womanhouse*, as well as Bobby Baker and Mona Hatoum, to name but a few. Despite decades of progress, inequality persists, domestic labour remains undervalued, invisible, and disproportionately carried out by women. As long as this imbalance exists, my practice will continue to confront and explore these realities.*

Can you walk us through your creative process—from the selection of an object to its abstraction and final presentation?

*My creative practice is born out of doing, experimenting, and boredom. Many domestic actions, I've noticed, carry surprisingly violent or dangerous connotations: we slice, beat, whip, chop, and grate. These are everyday gestures, but they hold the potential for harm and for artistic exploration. Often, my process begins with performing a domestic task, ironing, for example. Then a question arises: what happens if I iron a green sheet and project my face onto it? Suddenly, a repetitive, mundane activity becomes a site of artistic exploration. I approach objects like a kitchen knife or a grater with curiosity and ambivalence. I see their balance, their elegance, their functionality, but also their threat. A grater is beautiful, yes, but it is also sharp. Once I find an object or gesture that resonates, I often become obsessed with it, exploring all its possibilities. Take the iron: I discovered that the soles of irons carry distinct patterns. This led to a body of work called *Iron Works*, a series of digital prints based on those patterns, traces of domesticity transformed into art. I also filled the iron with food dye to see what would happen, which was a bit messy but did produce some interesting results that I probably will not take further.*



Moth

Digitally manipulated photograph, 50x50cm, 2025

Fe.



Fe.Flower

Digitally manipulated photograph, 50x50cm, 2025



Part of Iron Works Series

What conversations or emotional responses do you hope your viewers have when confronted with the surrealized symbols of everyday life in your installations?

Through my work, I aim to provoke questions about value, what we value, and who we value. I want to challenge the persistent undervaluing of women's work, whether in the home, the boardroom, or the art gallery. By reframing domestic gestures and objects as sites of creativity and critical reflection, I assert that this labour deserves recognition, respect, and space within art history and contemporary discourse.

