

ARTFORUM



Laëtitia Baudat Haussmann, *Architectural model for unnumberable mothers*, 2021, wood, linoleum, translucent plastic film, ceramic, black-and-white photographs, 6 1/4 × 76 × 76".

“A woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction,” wrote Virginia Woolf, one of the figures in Laëtitia Badaut Haussmann’s feminist genealogy. Nearly one hundred years after *A Room of One’s Own* was published, in her exhibition “As if a house should be conceived for the pleasure of the eye, she says,” the artist proposed a mode of exploration—through cinema, sculpture, and design—of just what that room might resemble. A door is essential. Here Badaut Haussmann gave us two of them, heavy interior models, presented leaning against a gallery wall, positioned like sentries. Both make up a single work, titled *Les chiens*

(The Dogs), 2021. One is printed with a black-and-white photograph of a snarling dog, the other with two images of what appears to be the same animal, its gaping mouth big enough to swallow a child.

Two works titled *Love sculpture*, 2021, hung high up on the walls of the gallery's space in a historical canal house. The pieces reflect the artist's approach to textures and materials, which reveals an interest in strength and sensuality: Scraps of luxury leather were draped over cleanly arching strips of black metal, as if dressing the exhibition itself or evoking the soft roof of a luxurious desert tent. The artist's use of the word *love* betrays a sort of romanticism, a belief that trust, as well as truth, resides at the heart of a desired architecture. Taking her exhibition's title from a 1994 essay by Caroline Constant on Eileen Gray's now-iconic

E-1027, Badaut Haussmann seems interested not only in Gray, but also, as signaled by her leather sculptures, in the architect's relationship with her lover Jean Badovici, her collaborator for the modernist villa in the South of France.

Wrapping around the exhibition was *Safe Maîtresse*, 2020, a black-and-white wall painting that appropriates the title of two films, Barbet Schroeder's *Maîtresse* (1976) and Todd Haynes's *Safe* (1995). The former casts Bulle Ogier as a dominatrix who receives clients in a suite of rooms—their walls entirely black—on a floor just below her luminous bourgeois apartment in Paris. In the latter, Julianne Moore's character, having become allergic to the interior of her own home, locks herself into a protective white dome in the middle of the New Mexican desert.

Badaut Haussmann's sculpture *Stage Marble Circle*, 2020, is a model of the BDSM space in Schroeder's film. With its shiny black rectangular form reminiscent of a VHS cassette, it could also function perfectly well as a coffee table. Meanwhile, incorporating a metal desk chair as a pedestal, *Maquette (Safe)*, 2020, depicts the supposedly lifesaving dome rising from Haynes's Southwest.

While on a residency at Villa Lena in Tuscany, Badaut Haussmann crafted dozens of ceramic breast shells for *Architectural model for unnumerable mothers*, 2021.

Placed inside a shallow round wooden structure lined with black linoleum and

covered with frosted plastic film, the white glazed cups, each marked with a handpainted black dot at its center, seemed to float like water lilies. The artist insisted on leaving the ceramic elements, each uniquely crafted and opening like a tiny bloom, uncounted. “This piece is still growing,” she told me in an email, “physically and mentally, of what could be such an architecture, such a space, and where mothers are, as well as who they are.” Because if there is to be a feminist architecture, room must also be made for motherhood and childhood. With kids around, the architecture is inevitably messy, but it’s also playful. As fences are necessary, so they say, between neighbors, the door might indeed be the most important—and, for Badaut Hausmann, the most ferociously guarded—element of a feminist architecture, particularly one that posits the (still surprisingly novel) generative coexistence of artistic production and motherhood.