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Press

SCARLETT CARLOS CLARKE

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BRITISH JOURNAL OF PHOTOGRAPHY
29/07/2021

Scarlett Carlos Clarke's sickly sweet vision of domesticity

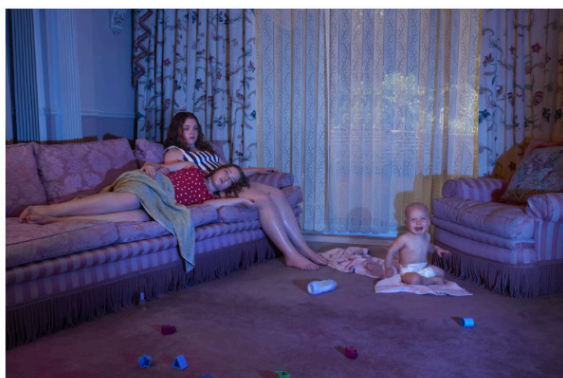
by HANNAH ABEL-HIRSCH



In the artist's debut exhibition, closing this Saturday, Clarke conjures a sense of comfort and claustrophobia through windows onto domestic worlds

A sense of uneasiness pervades the dimly lit domestic interiors of [Scarlett Carlos Clarke's](#) images. Women — lethargic and lost — recline on plump sofas, gaze into household appliances, or stare listlessly into the distance. Thick curtains, scratchy carpets, and dirty linoleum floors frame these claustrophobic spaces, furnished with drooping plants and miscellaneous ornaments; a dim glow — emanating from television screens — coating it all.

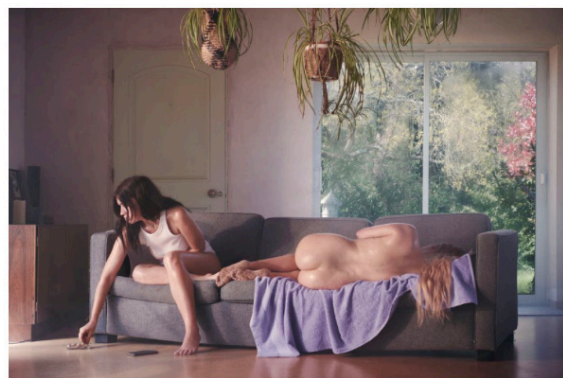
"I see a grotesque heightened version of normality, which magnifies and elevates the mundane," observes Clarke of the worlds presented in her debut exhibition, *The Smell of Calpol on a Warm Summer's Night*, on show at Cob Gallery, London, until this Saturday, 31 July. "They feel safe and warm in their familiarity yet at the same time suffocating." The large-scale tableaus are evocative of windows onto domestic worlds. An apt analogy given Clarke conceived of the idea in 2017 while staring into strangers' windows along the seafront as she pushed her newborn son's pram.



Untitled. 2018. Courtesy Scarlett Carlos Clarke and Cob Gallery.



Paradise. 2020. Courtesy Scarlett Carlos Clarke and Cob Gallery.



That day on the beach. 2021. Courtesy Scarlett Carlos Clarke and Cob Gallery.



The New Flesh. 2019. Courtesy Scarlett Carlos Clarke and Cob Gallery.

The photographs, however, should not be read as a reflection of Clarke's experience of motherhood. Instead, they engender a visceral feeling tied to the experience of domesticity. That simultaneous sense of comfort and claustrophobia, which can intensify after becoming a parent. "I never intended the series to be autobiographical," Clarke continues, "but there is a level of intensity in the rooms — they can feel claustrophobic; suffocating at times — and I think that subconsciously those early years with my son did start to seep in."

The work took Clarke four years to make; the vision she had was strong, and recreating this, in reality, was a challenge. Nonetheless, each of the completed images exudes a visceral atmosphere, and this seeps into the carpeted exhibition space itself, the air thick with the sweet smell of Calpol. In the centre of the room, a sculpture of the artist's pregnant torso weeps milk. Meanwhile, the song *Crimson and Clover* by Tommy James and the Shondells plays on repeat. "I wanted the space to feel familiar yet uneasy," explains Clarke. And, although audiences may attempt to ascribe specific meanings to the work, ultimately, it is the intensity of the atmosphere, which Clarke conjures, that seeps through.

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THE EDITORIAL MAGAZINE

04/08/2021

Scarlett Carlos Clarke

August 4, 2021



The New Flesh, 2019 ,C-type 50 x 70 cm

Review by Molly Cranston

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THE EDITORIAL MAGAZINE

04/08/2021

The smell of calpol on a warm evening, clinging to the thick air of the living room, children running around in a blue TV-glow. Scarlett Carlos Clarke's debut solo exhibition at Cob Gallery interrogates the darkness of domestic life and motherhood. Uncanny and uncomfortable, the gallery space is domesticated and hushed with brown carpet and a bust of the artist's own torso steadily lactating in its own cycle.

Clarke has been working on this series of images over a number of years starting in 2017, presenting women – lovers, mothers, and mothers-to-be – in comfortable but oppressive home settings. There's a poignancy of exhibiting them now in the midst of the mass-isolation demanded by the global pandemic, when the suffocating nature of domestic space and motherhood is more gutting and monotonous than before. The images themselves are lush and painterly, Clarke handles dramatic chiaroscuro like a renaissance painter, imbuing her photos with a sense of history and cinema, but the buzz-blue tones and household props (Daz detergent, Irn-Bru, Pampers) plant her subjects resolutely in contemporary Britain.

Through her work Carlos deftly articulates that crazed duplicitous sensation that solitude brings, contradictory and electric, feeling everything at once: 'craving mess and chaos, craving control; feeling shackled, feeling free; feeling safe and vulnerable; feeling weak and empowered; feeling bored and madly excited; feeling alone.' *The Smell of Calpol on a Warm Summer's Night* was on view this July at Cob Gallery.



installation view



Art contemporain

Photo

Peinture

Street art

Instagram

La vie de femmes enceintes en confinement documentée dans une série photo suffocante

Publié le 11/08/2021 par [Pauline Allione](#)



© Scarlett Carlos Clarke

Les images étranges de Scarlett Carlos Clarke mettent l'accent sur le temps qui passe et la solitude entre quatre murs.

Si la maternité est censée s'accompagner de moments collectifs, être rythmée par les visites de proches, il n'en a pas été de même pour les jeunes mères et personnes enceintes en confinement. À domicile, la maternité aura surtout été marquée par une grande solitude. Et c'est justement cette expérience particulière que [Scarlett Carlos Clarke](#) explore dans son dernier projet.

Dans sa première exposition personnelle "The Smell of Calpol on a Warm Summer's Night", présentée à la [Cob Gallery](#) de Londres, l'artiste britannique articule photos, sculptures et installations vidéo. Elle dévoile une série d'images envoûtantes à l'esthétique léchée, dans lesquelles sont mises en scène des femmes au ventre rond, la plupart du temps nues.



Paradise, The Smell of Calpol on a Warm Summer's Night, 2019. (© Scarlett Carlos Clarke)

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KONBINI ARTS

11/08/2021

Une atmosphère étrange et inquiétante

Immortalisées dans des longs instants de langueur et lassitude, presque surréalistes, les femmes semblent exténuées et aspirées par les écrans, comme une fenêtre vers l'extérieur. Autour d'elles, des enfants sont parfois présents, eux aussi happés par les écrans. Capturées de nuit et uniquement éclairées par des lumières artificielles, les femmes sur les images renvoient une atmosphère à la fois pesante et étrange.

À travers ces images, la photographe dépeint l'étrange rapport au temps qui a rythmé les confinements, avec la prédominance évidente des écrans et des réseaux sociaux, mais également la solitude et les responsabilités qui ont pesé sur les parents ou futures mamans dans le même temps.

Écrans, lenteur et cris d'enfants

Le titre de l'exposition donne d'ailleurs un aperçu olfactif de cette double exploration : "The Smell of Calpol on a Warm Summer's Night", ou "L'Odeur du Calpol pendant une chaude nuit d'été" en français, fait référence au Calpol, un médicament commercialisé au Royaume-Uni à destination des enfants qui ne font pas leurs nuits.

Le contexte sanitaire n'a d'ailleurs pas manqué d'aggraver le post-partum de nombreuses femmes, comme en témoigne un rapport du collectif Toutes contre les violences obstétricales et gynécologiques. Près de 75 % des femmes ayant accouché entre le 15 février 2020 et le 31 mai 2020 étaient sujettes à un stress post-traumatique, contre 2 à 6 % des femmes habituellement.



Lucid Dreaming, The Smell of Calpol on a Warm Summer's Night, 2018. (© Scarlett Carlos Clarke)

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THE EYE OF PHOTOGRAPHY

20/08/2021

THE EYE OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Cob Gallery : Scarlett Carlos Clarke : The Smell of Calpol on A Warm Summer's Night



Scarlett Carlos Clarke, The New Flesh, 2019 - Courtesy Cob Gallery

L'ŒIL DE LA PHOTOGRAPHIE - AUGUST 20, 2021

Cob Gallery recently presented **Scarlett Carlos Clarke's** debut solo show, *The Smell of Calpol on a Warm Summer's Night*, on view at 205 Royal College Street, London. The exhibition took place as an immersive installation consisting of a group of four tableaux, as well as sculptural and video works.

In this richly imagined articulation of all the strangeness and anxiety of our present moment, Carlos Clarke meditates on the new intensities of domesticity, motherhood and isolation. An uneasy blend of immediacy and distance – in a world that has become virtual, mediated by the numbing electric glow of phones and TV screens, and the crushing inescapability of four walls and a toddler screaming at 2am.

The madonna and child re-imagined in a suburban living room, sunk into a plush leather armchair, bathing in the blue light of advertising's stylised plenitude and the sticky panacea of strawberry-pink paracetamol. A sense of being 'contained' or 'framed' in various ways at once – within a swelling body, an armchair or a living room – is key to Carlos Clarke's work. The subjects of her photographs, like the visitor to the gallery space, are framed in a meticulously rendered domestic setting where comfort has become itchy, safety oppressive: a world of only interiors. Thick carpets and soft furnishings play to the sense of suffocation within our seamless 'bubbles', as well as the frustrating collapse of tactility suggested by that term. Glowing pixels out of shot suggest some ephemeral means of escape, even if it's just visual an- aesthesia.

At the centre of the exhibition, Carlos Clarke's rendition of the transcendent, exhausted mother: life-giver and energy source is figured by (*The Smell of Calpol on a warm Summers Night*), 2019, a hyper-real sculpture cast from her pregnant torso, which is in a state of constant lactation.

The tonality of the photographs, meanwhile, captures a screen-addict sense of impending apocalypse lurking beyond the frame, haunting this apparently most anodyne of settings with a threat of further catastrophe to come. And the 'living' room is where it all happens – the beach of the present, with the horizon always in view.

Scarlett Carlos Clarke was born in 1992 in London.

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ANOTHER MAGAZINE

22/07/2021

AnOther

Too Hot to Handle: 12 Photo Stories That Capture the Spirit of Summer

ART & PHOTOGRAPHY / ANOTHER LIST



Ensemble by David Luraschi
© David Luraschi 2021 courtesy Loose Joints

Dive into these sun-soaked photo stories – from 1970s beaches and 1990s raves, to the dancefloors of Ibiza and the lush Polish countryside

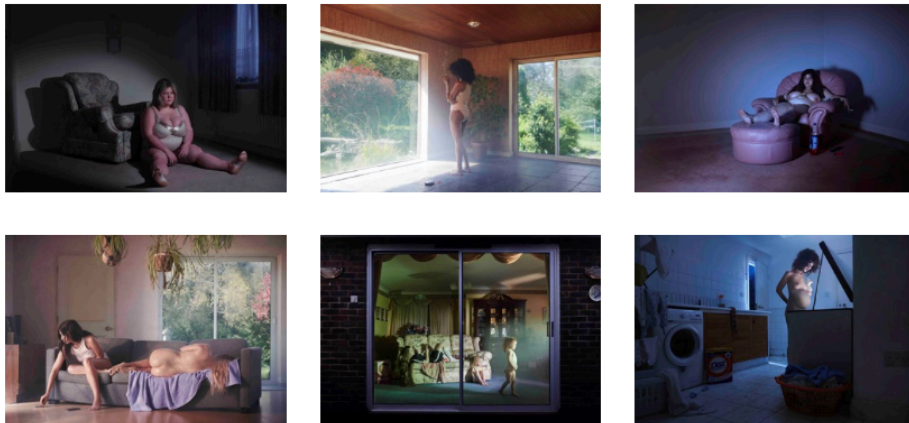
JULY 22, 2021

TEXT Orla Brennan

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ANOTHER MAGAZINE

22/07/2021



GALLERY / 7 IMAGES

The Smell of Calpol On A Warm Summer's Night

The Smell of Calpol On A Warm Summer's Night by Scarlett Carlos Clarke

A palpable sense of heat radiates from Scarlett Carlos Clarke's latest series, *The Smell of Calpol On A Warm Summer's Night*, though it is not a pleasant one: the suffocating works – which feature mostly pregnant women, isolated in sticky, dimly-lit rooms – explore the concept of domestic anxiety and the often-stifling intensity of new motherhood.

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SOFT PUNK MAG

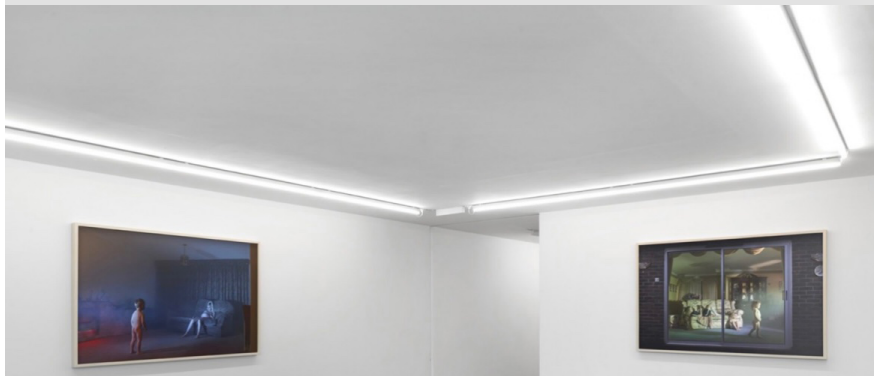
17/07/2021

SOFT PUNK

MENU

**"TRAPPED, BUT
SAFE" -
SCARLETT CARLOS
CLARKE**

**THE BRITISH PHOTOGRAPHER
DISCUSSES SCREEN ADDICTION,
INFLUENCES, AND HER NEW
SOLO SHOW *THE SMELL OF
CALPOL ON A WARM SUMMER'S
NIGHT* AT LONDON'S COB
GALLERY**



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SOFT PUNK MAG

17/07/2021

INTERVIEW BY JACOB BARNES

17.07.21

Speaking to Scarlett, I found her easy demeanour and openness surrounding the role of intuition in her work is disarming. For one, her images – cold, uncanny – do not necessarily suggest a warmth of character, but importantly, peddle more so in feeling than didactic exactitude: they are human in their multiplicities, and as the artist herself notes, contain many coexisting meanings and themes. However, I was fascinated to learn more about her influences and inspiration, and began to see an artistic lineage take shape – these images are intuitive, yes, but that intuition is formed through a deep understanding of photographic and filmic languages. Now, the only thing to do is to see what comes next.



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SOFT PUNK MAG

17/07/2021

Jacob Barnes: Your most recent exhibition, *The Smell of Calpol on a Warm Summer's Night*, feels as if it might be about the pandemic, but that's not the case at all, right?

Scarlett Carlos Clarke: I started making the work in 2017, and all of the work was made before COVID happened – there are only two photos (the two daytime ones, all the others were shot at night) made after the pandemic even was a thing.

JB: I think that "otherness" or multiplicity of themes outside of COVID is clear in the work. You can of course recontextualize it through the lens of the pandemic, and have it gain meaning from that context. But that's not necessarily what it's "about."

SCC: For me, I had just had my son, and I remember pushing him in his pram while he slept, feeling mentally and physically exhausted, but I was still craving to be creative. You still have a creative mind, and you want to keep working, and suddenly there is something in the way of that. When I was looking through windows of houses on our walks, I had the idea for this series of work: everyone looked so trapped, but safe in a way that was both very comforting and also quite scary. It seemed oppressive; detached – like looking into a fish tank. I love the film *Import/Export* (2007, dir. Ulrich Seidl) and the Korean horror film *I Saw the Devil* (2010, dir. Kim Jee-Woon); the lighting in those films is so, kind of, cold but beautiful – very rectilinear, really straight lines. It's all a grotesque realism – real life, but just turned up a notch.

JB: I want to jump back to something you said about it being at once beautiful, but imprisoning. Looking through your work – and thinking about this grotesque realism – I'm struck by a sense of the uncanny; you recognise the world around you, but it feels like an alternative universe, which in your case is a rather dark one. This work clearly seems to emerge from a lineage of your past projects, but this darkness appears somewhat new: what were the influences you were sure to bring from the past, and who did you look towards for inspiration when moving in new creative directions?

SCC: For me, this is all completely new. When I was doing editorial work, it was always a collaborative process, but for this (I've obviously had people that I've teamed with) it's totally my idea. Before, there was always a stylist, or people who are influencing how the project is going to turn out, and it wasn't really my own, solely my own. So, one thing I kept noticing was that I would be wanting to take more and more things out of the rooms [in which the photographs were taken], until they almost become empty. In a way, I almost wanted to take the people out of the room. The rooms have such a strong presence; I think with the lighting and everything, you almost don't need the characters. The locations were so important in cultivating the weird tension of suburban houses that all look the same.

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JB: It's interesting that you bring that up, because, as this was a project that started as being about motherhood, I think about the desire for minimalism being correlated to the chaos of a child. Perhaps my own thinking is rather superficial - I'm not a parent - but having been around small children, there's always stuff around! I can imagine this desire to clean away all of the clutter in a house, which corresponds to the clutter in your own head visually. Can you please talk a little more about the intersection of motherhood and this work?

SCC: I think that's a really good point - I am always tidying, and there's always stuff everywhere, clutter and cluttered minds. But then again, people who come to the show say "Oh, this is all about you and your life," but I really don't feel it's too biographical; it's just how I am, this is the work I want to make. I am not my work, but I guess people always make that assumption about artists.

JB: I think it's much easier for people to draw linear, almost tautological lines through an artist and their work, instead of triangulating work with an individual outside of that practice, as well as a historical moment.

SCC: Yes, completely. I think the real link between myself and this body of work is that I would never have made this work if I hadn't had a child. I've found that at the end of the day, I will go on to my phone, and it's (almost) my only way of escaping the world - by looking at a screen. The lighting in these photographs is a reference to screen addiction, and using screens as a way to numb myself, because there was nothing else I could do to unwind.

JB: I think that expresses the knife edge we all live on - as parents, yes, but also just living in our contemporary moment. Life is very stressful, and we're able to find a (paradoxical) numbing euphoria through our screens. That's not to diminish the joy that we take from being on our screens, but it's also kind of depressing and sad. With that said, there seems to be a real dynamic between boredom, lifelessness, and conceptions of suburbia, but it's unclear exactly what the terms of that relationship are. The universe of these scenes is not all bad, but it also seems like it has the capacity to be quite depressing. Can you say more on that?

SCC: I have quite a dark sense of humour, and I do find some of the work humorous. I really enjoyed making some of that work, and it's not like I was sitting there getting depressed the entire time. When making them I wanted them to feel modern, not like they were in the 90s; not nostalgic. I think in the beginning [of the project], I was trying to establish what I wanted to create in the rooms and with the characters; Nick Waplington - who wrote a text for this exhibition - has a book called *Living Room*, which was a huge influence.

JB: Besides Nick, were there any other influences that you were drawing heavily on? I immediately saw Gregory Crewdson in these pictures.

SCC: I guess his work is dreamlike in a similar way. But aside from Nick Waplington, the inspiration mostly came from the locations - the location was the first thing, and the characters came after. Searching for the right location, I posted flyers through people's doors, thinking it was going to be interesting inside, looking through windows. And a lot of researching on the internet.

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SOFT PUNK MAG

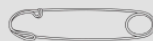
17/07/2021

JB: You posted flyers through doors?

SCC: Yeah - I didn't really get much response from that. I think a lot of people were quite scared. Maybe they think you're trying to shoot a porn film or something; they don't really get it. So it was easier to do it online and go through either people that you know or through location agencies. All the locations are in England, but the last two shots are really different. Those are the daylight ones, and those were like shooting a documentary or something; they weren't staged at all. I don't know how I feel about that because I think I prefer it when it is more theatrical, but I think I didn't know it was a different way of working - I just relaxed and let it happen.

JB: It's funny that you use word theatrical: there is a campness to it all; something remarkably fun and exaggerated. Looking beyond this, one has to ask: what are you working on moving forward?

SCC: I would love to do more video work; more video installations in rooms. Create rooms, maybe. More sculpture. I don't know what direction I'm going to go. It's really open ended at the moment, which is exciting.



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DAZED
09/07/2021

DAZED



Scarlett Carlos Clarke, *The Smell of Calpol on A Warm Summer's Night* (2021) Photography Scarlett Carlos Clarke

Scarlett Carlos Clarke captures lockdown motherhood in surreal imagery

ART & PHOTOGRAPHY - LIGHTBOX

The artist's exhibition, *The Smell of Calpol on A Warm Summer's Night*, evokes the alienation and claustrophobia that shadows domestic bliss

9th July 2021

Text Emily Dinsdale

Like an apocalyptic kitchen sink drama, [Scarlett Carlos Clarke's](#) debut solo exhibition, [*The Smell of Calpol on a Warm Summer's Night*](#), is an immersive experience of photographic imagery, sculpture, and video. The artist's enthralling tableaux of life in lockdown depict scenes of domestic dystopia and the profound isolation of motherhood – a species of loneliness born from the tremendous responsibilities that having a child entails – while her sculptural works represent the alienation of pregnancy; of one's own body being invaded and requisitioned.

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DAZED
09/07/2021

Set at nighttime, this series of portraits are characterised by their surreal absence of natural light – exhausted mothers and distressed children are lit by the harmful, lurid blue rays of smartphones, televisions, and the interior lights of fridge-freezers. The images convey a sense of claustrophobia and incubation magnified by the experience of quarantine – of swelling pregnant bodies and growing infants contained within a series of closeted, carpeted interiors. The sickly-sweet smell of Calpol is almost palpable.

Central to the exhibition is a sculpture cast from the artist's own pregnant torso, perpetually weeping milk. It seems to signify whatever the binary opposite of being disembodied may be – a body without an identity, cognitive thought, or autonomy... reduced entirely to the bodily functions of pregnancy and lactation. Yet, it's powerful and majestic, presiding over the gallery space on its pedestal.

The lighting and tone of the photographs lend a heightened drama to Carlos Clarke's scenes of domestic realism. "The images called to my mind the works of two early 20th century painters, Edward Hopper and Grant Wood," suggests artist [Nick Waplington](#) in the exhibition text. "Like Hopper and Wood, Scarlett is interested in presenting the dark side of the everyday, her figures – often isolated female figures – gesturing toward a domestic dream that has become sinister and uncanny."

Yet, despite the foreboding and slightly unsettling quality of Carlos Clarke's vision of motherhood and thwarted domestic bliss, there's something incredibly alluring about her depiction of stylish, suburban cul-de-sac chic. Her protagonists possess the same vacant-eyed ennui that pervades the detached gazes of [Miles Aldridge](#)'s glamorous female figures. The lovingly recreated, perfect details – boxes of Pampers and Daz, a two-litre bottle of Irn Bru – anchor Carlos Clarke's images in contemporary Britain, yet the suburban interiors are also reminiscent of [Larry Sultan's *Pictures From Home*](#) (if he had set his project in Dagenham, for example, as opposed to Palm Springs).

Take a look through the gallery above for a glimpse of some on display in the exhibition.

Scarlett Carlos Clarke's [The Smell of Calpol on A Warm Summer's Night](#) is at London's [Cob Gallery](#) until July 31 2021

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ANOTHER MAGAZINE

02/07/2021

AnOther

The Artist Capturing the Anxiety, Boredom and Isolation of Domestic Life

ART & PHOTOGRAPHY / IN THEIR WORDS



That Day on the Beach, 2021 Courtesy Scarlett Carlos Clarke



In a new multimedia show, Scarlett Carlos Clarke meditates on the suffocating intensity of lockdown, suburbia and new motherhood



JULY 02, 2021



TEXT Dominique Sisley



In **Scarlett Carlos Clarke's** new art show, home is a suffocating prison. The subjects of her images – all women, mostly pregnant – sit in dim rooms, basking in the icy glow of their phone and TV screens. Their furniture is lacquered with sweat, their carpets are thick, and their surrounding walls are high and close. The air around them is heavy, haunted by the sickly-sweet smell of Calpol.

Something about these scenes will feel familiar. They are a study of domestic anxiety, exploring the uncanny isolation – and blue-screen-bingeing boredom – of lockdown life. But they also, more distinctly, evoke the stifling intensity of new motherhood: of being trapped inside “a swelling body”, in a suburban living room, feeling the “crushing inescapability of four walls and a toddler screaming at 2am.”

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ANOTHER MAGAZINE

02/07/2021

The exhibition is titled *The Smell of Calpol on a Warm Summer's Night*, and it opens this week at London's Cob Gallery. As a multimedia artist, Carlos Clarke uses many methods – including photography, sculpture, video and immersive sensory stimuli – to explore the show's themes of domesticity, motherhood and isolation. The aim, according to the exhibit notes, is to create "a meticulously rendered domestic setting where comfort has become itchy, safety oppressive: a world of only interiors." On the day of the show's opening, we asked the London-born artist to explain its inspirations in more depth.

"The show ended up being an intuitive reaction to my experience as a mother, though I never intended it to be about motherhood. I think I've just been so immersed in this world that it's subconsciously started seeping into my work.

"I started making this work in 2017 after my first son was born – so, prior to the pandemic. It was winter, and I was walking along this path on the seafront, pushing him in his pram while he slept, feeling so stuck and isolated. I'd been feeling a total loss of identity, which I think most new parents experience. Everything was so intensely focused on this tiny human.

"As I was walking, I remember looking through people's windows. It was like everyone was frozen and numb in these cold, blue, TV-lit rooms. There was something really beautiful about it, but also something really intense – it felt kind of oppressive, like looking into a fish tank. I did this walk every day for a few months, and that's when I started to have ideas again. There was a feeling of familiarity and boredom, but also alienation and discomfort in these rooms, like a stark coldness that I wanted to recreate. A familiarity and disconnect for the viewer.

"In total, for the project, I shot about 13 still images, five of which are in the show. They were all shot in different locations, over a long period of time, and almost all of the characters in the photos are friends or friends of friends. Most of the work was done in the pre-production period: I spent a lot of time just trying to find the right locations. It's been about four years and it's been a slow process, I rarely have such a clear vision of something I want to make and both the sculptures were clear in my mind of how I wanted them to look and feel.

"As well as the images, the show is also immersive sensory experience. When I was growing up, my neighbour's daughter used to babysit me, and I remember going over to their house. When you walked in it smelt amazing – like alcohol and cigars. They also had this really musty pistachio green carpet. I was only about three or four, but the whole place is completely ingrained in my mind. I wanted to carpet the downstairs of the gallery to domesticise the space, there is a cosy familiarity yet at the same time in the context of the space, it becomes austere like an unfurnished living room. I wanted the space to smell like Calpol, something I think everyone can relate to from their own childhood."

Scarlett Carlos Clarke's *The Smell Of Calpol On A Warm Summer's Night* runs at London's Cob Gallery until July 31.