

## Related Events

### In Conversation: Nina Beier

Saturday 21 July 2018, 2–3.30pm

Free, booking advised

Nina Beier discusses the central ideas explored in her exhibition *European Interiors* with Spike Island curator Vanessa Boni.

### Exhibition Tour

Saturday 11 August 2018, 2–3pm

Free, booking advised

Polly Maxwell, Spike Island/UWE MA Curating student, leads a tour of Nina Beier's exhibition *European Interiors*.

Book for events at [www.spikeisland.org.uk](http://www.spikeisland.org.uk), call 0117 929 2266 or visit reception.

## Spike Island

133 Cumberland Road, Bristol BS1 6UX

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### Visitor Information

Gallery open Tuesday to Sunday, 12–5pm (during exhibitions only).

Admission to the gallery is free.

Café open Monday to Friday, 8.30am–5pm  
Saturday and Sunday, 10am–5pm.

Spike Island aims to be a fully accessible building.

Nina Beier's *European Interiors* is supported by the Danish Arts Foundation. Soap is generously donated by Soapworks Ltd. with additional in-kind support from The English Soap Company.

*Beast* (2018) was originally commissioned by Kunstmuseum St.Gallen, Switzerland.



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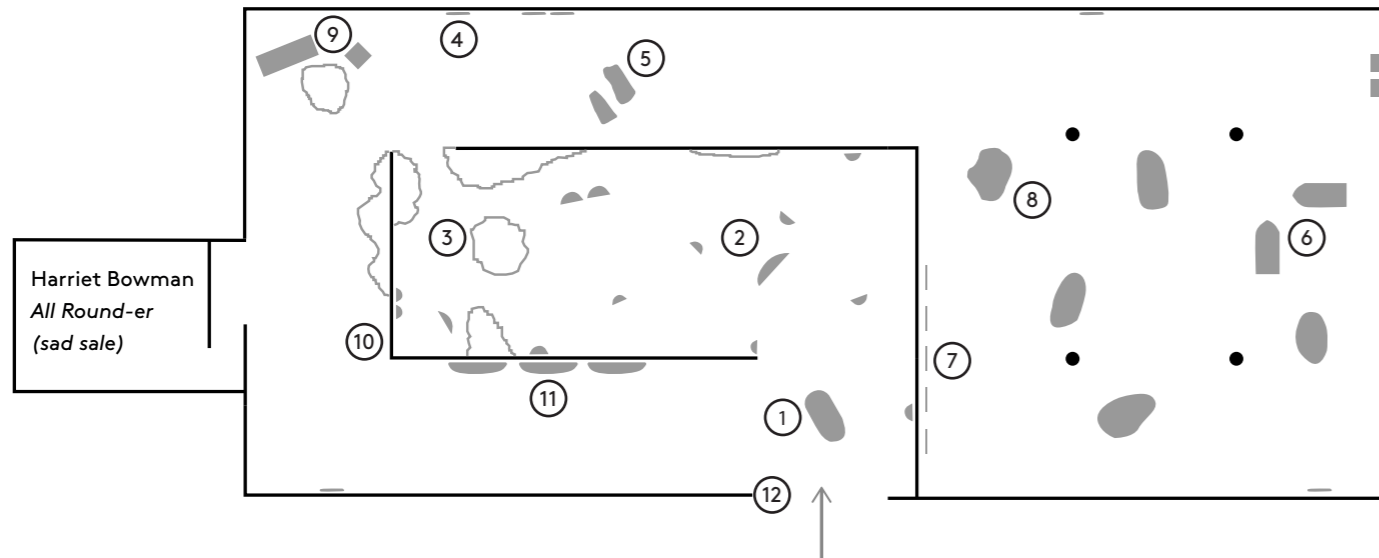
# Exhibition Guide

## Nina Beier

# *European Interiors*

21 July to 23 September 2018

## Spike Island



- ① *Charity Hotel* (2018) Bronze statue, steel wool
- ② *Plug* (2018) Ceramic sink, hand-rolled cigar
- ③ *Ruin* (2018) Soap, dirt, bugs
- ④ *Man* (2018) Burnt baguette
- ⑤ *Mars* (2018) Asphalt, Mars bars
- ⑥ *Beast* (2018) Mechanical bull, plastic tanks, baby milk formula
- ⑦ a *Curly Maroon Fade Pixie* (2016) Human hair wig, painted frame  
 b *Layered Side-Swept Ombre* (2015) Human hair wig, painted frame  
 c *Rich Copper Charleston* (2015) Human hair wig, painted frame  
 d *Choppy Layers Blunt Bang* (2016) Human hair wig, painted frame  
 e *Ebony Volume Frizz* (2015) Human hair wig, painted frame
- ⑧ *Female Nude* (2015) Lodoicea seed, fertilized dirt
- ⑨ *European Interiors* (2018) Leather furniture, cow skin imitation bones
- ⑩ *Wallet* (2013) White cotton underwear (women's, men's, children's), void
- ⑪ *Baby* (2018) Waterbed mattress, water, leaves
- ⑫ *Wedge* (2011) Shoe, size 40

## Nina Beier

Danish-born and Berlin-based artist Nina Beier has held solo exhibitions at the Kunstverein in Hamburg; David Roberts Art Foundation, London, UK; Objectif Exhibitions, Antwerp; Kunsthaus Glarus, Switzerland; Kunsthal Charlottenborg, Copenhagen; and Contemporary Art Centre (CAC), Vilnius, Lithuania.

Her work has been included in group exhibitions at the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, USA; Centre Pompidou, Paris, France; Tate Modern, London, UK; Musée d'Art Moderne, Paris, France; KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin, Germany; Artists Institute, New York, USA; Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin, Italy; Swiss Institute, New York; and the Power Station, Shanghai, China.

She has been awarded the Prize of the Böttcherstraße, Arkens Rejse pris and recently her work was included in 13th Biennale de Lyon and the 20th Biennale of Sydney. She is represented by Metro Pictures, New York, Standard (Oslo), Croy Nielsen, Vienna, and Joségaría MX, Mexico.

For *European Interiors* Nina Beier works with an array of existing objects that carry particular social histories, such as ceramic sinks, cigars, soap, waterbeds and human hair wigs. She investigates how their value is both constructed and undone by physically challenging these objects in various ways. In doing so, Beier loosens up binary power structures such as masculine/feminine, interior/exterior, organic/artificial, global/domestic.

The first sculpture you almost trip over as you enter Beier's exhibition is *Charity Hotel*, a toppled bronze imitation of Antonio Canova's statue *The Three Graces* stuffed with steel wool. A well-known motif, *The Three Graces* was created as an allegory for feminine qualities and we are immediately reminded of society's projections onto the female body. Beier places the object on a journey from the symbolic to purely material and back again. *Charity Hotel*, besides being a symbol of old gendered ideals, represents flesh in patinated bronze and wool in finely shredded steel. Beier uncovers multiple layers of meaning in her works: what is implied through the intention, use and trading of objects and perhaps most importantly, what is projected onto them.

A major new commission for *European Interiors* is *Plug*, a series of pastel coloured bathroom sinks scattered across the main gallery and protruding out of the floor and walls. Hand-rolled cigars – objects heavily loaded with references to patriarchy, power and global trade – are made to fit the hole of the drain in these domestic sinks, just as cigars are made to fit the human mouth. The floor sculpture *Ruin*, composed of four thousand dirty bars of soap embedded with body parts of bugs, creeps around *Plug* and spreads around corners, permeating the gallery with an unsettling smell. *Baby* is another new sculpture composed of three waterbeds, suspended from the wall and filled with water and leaves so they bulge and sag like a beer belly or a pregnant belly – a part of the body we are sensitive not to project onto. *European Interiors*, a sculpture titled after the exhibition, is a small group of leather furniture hosting imitation bones made from cow skin that have been embedded in the padded upholstery like a skeleton. In the meeting of all these materials the body is implied, echoed and confused.

Real hair wigs are a recurring motif for Beier as she is repeatedly drawn to materials that sit inbetween being what they are and an image of themselves. In the case of the wigs one could say they are both hair and an image of hair. Wigs, grown by women in countries ranging from China to India, are bleached, permed, dyed, cut, and styled in order to imitate a variety of western hair types. Beier flattens them under glass in pink frames (lifting the colour from the boxes these wigs are usually traded in), as a way of producing an image. In doing so she draws our attention to the powerful currency of images today.

As in many of her works, Beier explores how objects are witnesses to and absorb the many histories of their own existence. For example *Female Nude* (2015) incorporates the seed of the endangered Lodoicea palm tree, native to the Seychelles, which is the largest plant seed on earth. As the Lodoicea seed is more frequently collected for domestic environments than germinated, here Beier exhibits the anthropomorphic seed on a mound of fertilizer, alluding to how the image of fertility conquers the actual ability of the seed to come to fruition. The fetishized motif of the seed points to the violence of globalisation while foregrounding its exoticised narrative. Shown alongside this work is *Beast* (2018); two motorised rodeo bulls, burdened with tanks of formula milk, repeatedly perform their act of resistance in a mechanical ballet that simulates the rejection of human domination.

In *Mars* (2018), Beier presents a cross-sectional view of our world. Asphalt extracted from a road surface is covered with severed Mars chocolate bars, and in revealing the makeup of these two differing composites she frames everything from the base of our civilisation on earth to the next planet in our reach.

*European Interiors* dissects a jumble of power structures that embody our current reality. Through challenging one power structure, others come tumbling down. It is in this messy pile of contradictions and correlations that Beier's exhibition locates itself.