

WOMEN HOUSE



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"But our house has been nothing but a play-room. Here I have been your doll wife, just as at home I used to be papa's doll child," says Nora, the main character in Henrik Ibsen's play *A Doll's House*. Written in 1879, this play had an unprecedented influence on early women's liberation movements towards the end of the nineteenth century. Ibsen makes a child's toy into a prison in which an objectified woman moves from room to room, trapped in fantasies and representations of womanhood. A century on, several artists used miniaturized depictions of the domestic sphere as reflected in doll houses. Laurie Simmons photographed one in which she placed a figurine of a housewife standing, sitting or kneeling in rooms where tasks are assigned to her. Rachel Whiteread designed a *Modern Chess Set* based on reproductions of objects from a doll house belonging to her. Instead of a king and queen, an ironing board and a stove are placed on a chessboard made of mismatched pieces of carpet: the artist replaces chess pieces with day-to-day objects used by a housewife. Penny Slinger's *Exorcism House* is a nightmare vision of scenes of abuse and violence. On a completely different scale, Joana Vasconcelos' *Teapot* recalls children's stories, taking its inspiration from the Mad Hatter's Tea Party in *Alice in Wonderland*.

A DOLL'S HOUSE



PENNY SLINGER, *Exorcism House*, 1977.
Wooden doll house, various objects
and materials. 2'2" x 1'11" x 1'2".



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