

Santa Barbara Museum of Art
Contemporary Gallery
29 January – 21 May 2023

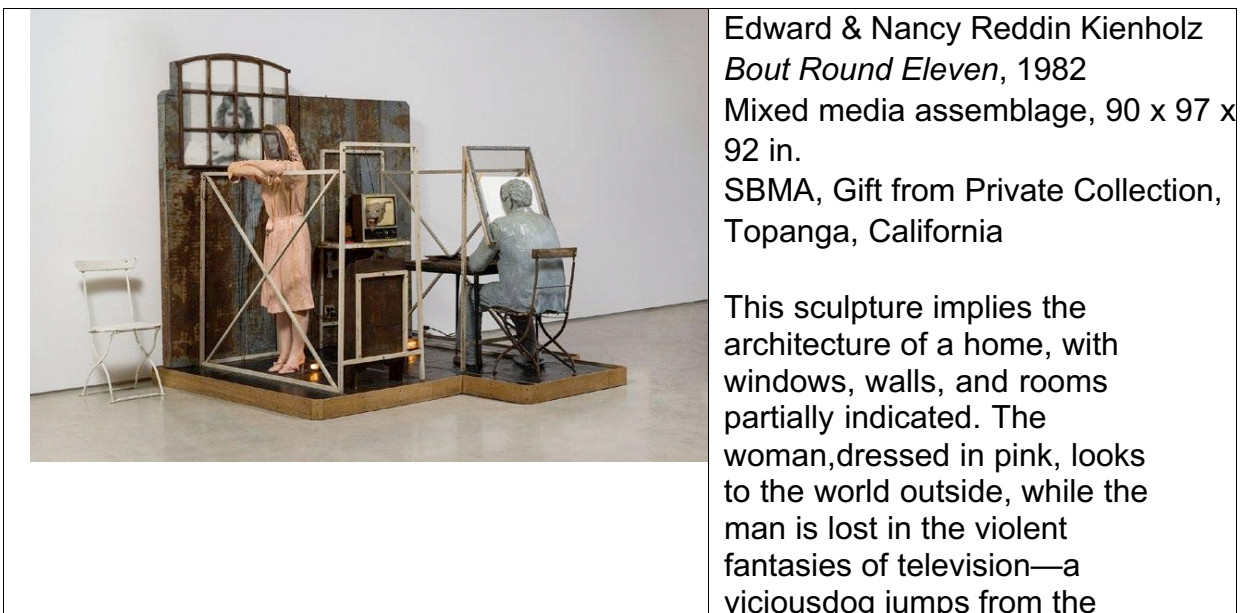
Tentative Checklist + Labels

Last Updated: 1-11-2023

This exhibition explores the themes of marriage, family, and sexuality in the artworks of Edward Kienholz and Nancy Reddin Kienholz through their marriage and artistic partnership. Ed was already a famous—or infamous—artist when he met Nancy in 1972, and his early period is represented by *One and One Half Tits* as well as *The Nativity*. They worked together on *Bout Round Eleven*, and Ed insisted she be given equal credit for all the work. After his death in 1991, Nancy continued to create art, as shown by *Home Sweet Home* and *Face to Face*, an homage to their partnership.

Ed and Nancy's studios in Idaho, Houston, and Berlin buzzed with assistants, friends, and family, plus a massive assortment of flea market and junk store finds. These sculptures are, nonetheless, about isolation and social breakdown, the fraying of marriage and family, or even their destruction. *Bout Round Eleven* chronicles a relationship gone cold, whereas *Home Sweet Home* sarcastically turns a TV into a hearth—the old-fashioned source of warmth for a family—and renders it a smoldering mess.

This exhibition is made possible by the Lilac Drive Foundation.

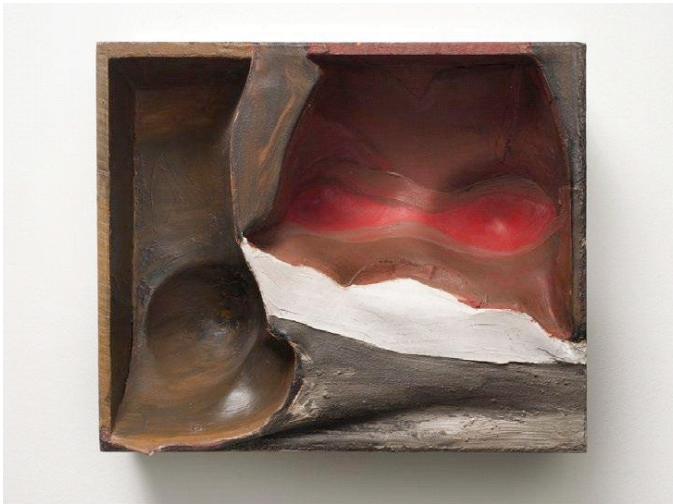


screen. They are physically close but emotionally distant. This relationship is past the point of fighting, at round eleven after ten rounds in the ring. The parts of the story are all there—the separate lives, the resignation to the situation—but there remains plenty of ambiguity. The woman's self-containment invites speculation about her thoughts, and the lonely white chair to the side echoes their lack of connection. The frayed relationship in *Bout Round Eleven* is sadly familiar, even if we do not know all the parts of the story.



Nancy Reddin Kienholz
Face to Face, 2007
Lenticular (mixed media), 30 1/3 x 30 1/3 x 4 3/4 in.

Walk back and forth, and watch how the image changes by degrees from Nancy's face to Ed's and back again. It is an homage to their partnership, their melding of minds and sensibilities. Lenticular images have two parts. One is a corrugated surface composed of hundreds of long, thin lenses. Beneath this surface of light-bending lenses is a photograph composed of the interlaced parts of the two source photographs of Ed and Nancy. Without the lens layer, the photograph underneath would not make much sense.



Edward Kienholz

One and One Half Tits, 1960
Mixed media assemblage, 15
1/2 x 18 x 6 1/4 in. SBMA, Gift
of Martha Gabbert

During the 1950s and 1960s, Ed Kienholz made work that used canvas and paint and that hung on a wall, but they are more sculptures than paintings. This work seems to be a mold made from the impression of a woman's breasts. Mold making and casting from molds is a standard process for sculptors, and this shaped painting evokes the long tradition of taking plaster casts directly from human bodies to make sculptures. Kienholz also references the female nude in art history, especially the ways in which women for millennia have been turned into passive objects for male heterosexual erotic desire. While Kienholz physically turns this convention inside out, he does not question it, much less elevate or even identify the woman who served as his model.



Nancy Reddin Kienholz
Home Sweet Home, 2006
Mixed media assemblage, 86 x 48 x
26 in.

The hearth, the center of the home before the advent of central heating and modern ovens, was where cooking happened and where people gathered for warmth on cold days. By the 1960s, the TV had replaced the hearth as the metaphoric center of the American suburban home, and Nancy Kienholz tells us that there is something moldering at its new center. Bulky cabinet TVs were a common sight in living rooms across the United States well into the 1980s and beyond. The nuclear family—the stereotypical familial unit of mid-century America, with mom, dad, and two or three children—and religious affiliations have been displaced by something new but not yet formed, something charred and questionable, though Kienholz does not spell that out precisely. Home in her rendering is definitely not “sweet.”