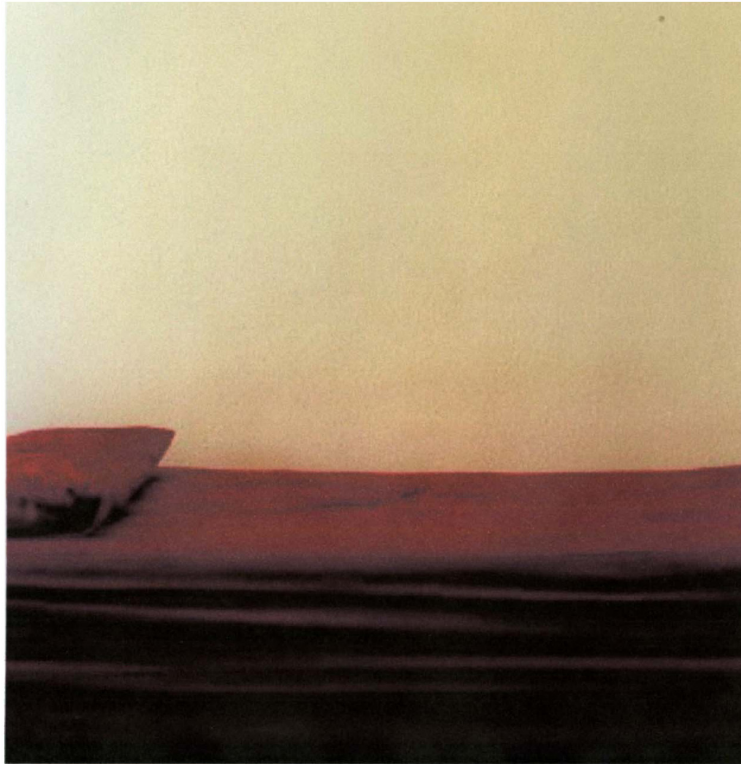


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# Sarah Jones

MAUREEN PALEY, LONDON, UK



Sarah Jones, *Analyst (Couch) (I)* (2007), lambda print mounted on aluminium

A turned back is a denial or a rebuff of intimacy, a passive yet provocative stroke of aggression. In Sarah Jones' new solo show, previous explorations into a rejection of the gaze are transposed from the human figure to the inanimate, yet humanized, object.

Two photographs hang in a corridor that leads to the main gallery space, both suggesting different methods of psychological or spiritual escape. The first, *Arrangement (I)* (all works 2007), is of a miniature Zen garden in all its conspicuously plastic falsity, while in the second, *Analyst*

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*(Couch) (I)*, is an uncomfortable-looking psychoanalyst's couch – designed not for rest but for vulnerability. Both photographs are unpeopled, yet the couch, in its mundane simplicity, suggests a multitude of inner discoveries and personal revelations; the modern confessional.



Sarah Jones, *The Rose Gardens (display: II) (I)* (2007), lambda print mounted on aluminium

In the main gallery space, six large-scale photographs with pitch-black backgrounds have a caustic sharpness of focus. Brilliantly vivid roses in varying states of decay are captured at night, looking almost glassy in their sense of poise. Set just beyond each of the sprawling plants a glutinous darkness eliminates all shadow, rendering the tendrils creeping and malevolent. It is partly this disparity between the brightness of the petals and the languid skulking of the branches that makes the images both so lurid and satisfyingly tense.

The setting for these images is not the garden of a rose-

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growing enthusiast but the municipal space of a public park, where flowers are dashes of colour in an otherwise bleak environment; they are imbued with a civilizing or mood-enhancing power – small pieces of transcendence perhaps escaping from a drab reality.

Each photograph almost appears to offer a portrait of a single plant, tenderly taken to show off variation within type. But, unlike the images used to enhance descriptive catalogues whereby every plant is shown to its best advantage, Jones' photographs are united in their failure to confine any particular flower to a full and intimate portrayal. Each rose seems to categorically refuse to model itself or to be fully imprisoned by the camera.

Subsequently the viewer is shunted to a position of isolation, neither acknowledged nor fully dismissed, forced to stand behind and peer over shoulders. A photograph that ignores you or negates your assumed right as a viewer is an intriguing proposition, and one that Jones' works deftly describes and manipulates.

**Ilsa Colsell**