

FRIEZE

Tora Schultz Cleans House

At Palace Enterprise, Copenhagen, the artist shines a light on gender bias in male design

BY [ALICE GODWIN](#) IN [EU REVIEWS](#), [EXHIBITION REVIEWS](#) | 15 SEP 22

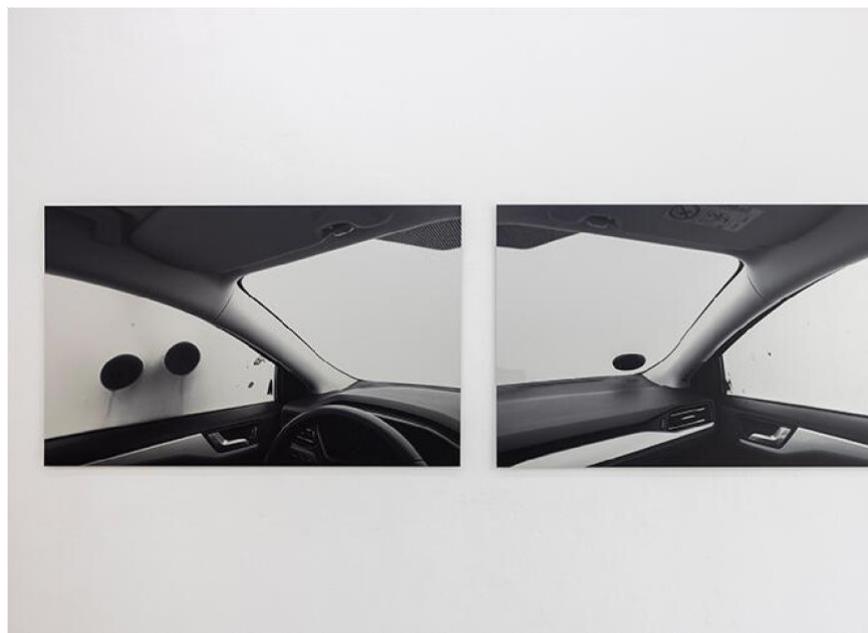
In her ground-breaking book, *Invisible Women: Exposing Data Bias in a World Designed Men* (2019), Caroline Criado Perez details the countless ways in which women are living disadvantage. From smartphones to cars, many products have been developed without w in mind, leading to overarching negative consequences for nearly half the global popula 'It's affecting our ability to do our jobs effectively – and sometimes to even get jobs in th place,' argues Criado Perez. 'It's affecting our health, and it's affecting our safety.'



Tora Schultz, Stratification, 2022, stainless steel, ten red plastic trays,
235 x 50 x 55 cm. Courtesy: the artist and Palace Enterprise

Tora Schultz's 'D I R T Y' – the artist's first solo exhibition at Copenhagen-based Palace Enterprise – speaks to this gender bias by subtly reframing the tools that shape our lives. A tower of red plastic trays, encased in a steel frame, takes centre stage. They're made of dishwashing racks you might find in a school canteen; yet, the highest trays of *Stratif* (2022) are too high for any kitchen worker, let alone a female worker, who is typically shorter than their male counterpart, to reach. In manipulating the tower's scale and recontextualizing its humble objects, Schultz mirrors the surrealist penchant for rendering the familiar strange. By doing so she highlights the problems that arise when such implements are developed without thought to different users, just as Criado Perez points out that many ordinary tools like wrenches, are designed for the often larger, male hand.

Nearby, a diptych of black and white prints on aluminium depicts the inside of a car being washed (*Wiper*, 2022). In addition to the vehicle's windscreen wiper, the work references the action of cleaning and returns our focus to the title of Schultz's show – 'D I R T Y'. A series of dark circles recalls Rosemarie Trockel's hot plate works (e.g. *Untitled*, 1991), in which the German artist adopted the symbolic form of the electric cooker ring – reduced to a mini dot – to confront the nightmarish reality behind idealized notions of feminized domesticity. In turn, *Stratification* can be seen to allude to Donald Judd's 'stacks' of uniform rectilinear units, such as *Stack (Pile)* (1972). These works share a searing red palette and, just as the number of units in Judd's stacks is reduced to accommodate the equal spacing between them depending on the size of the exhibition space, *Stratification* has been built specifically to the height of Palace Enterprise. However, while Judd valued the box for its symbolic neutrality, Schultz's plastic trays are far from impartial. If Judd's stacks can be viewed as totems to machismo of mid-century minimalism, Schultz's are concerned with the gendered strata society.



Tora Schultz, *Wiper*, 2022, print on aluminum, 79 x 125 cm (each).
Courtesy: the artist and Palace Enterprise

Finally, *Face down Ass up* (2021) features a Magnus Olesen-designed chair placed upside down on a table. Olesen's furniture has been a staple of Danish schools since the 1980s and she has previously used the Series 8000 chair as the inspiration for several works, including *Statua* (2021). The design of the chair encourages students to sit in the same position, based upon a male model. Women, whose bodies do not align with this male template, are forced to sit awkwardly. Just as Schultz's playful title conjures a dominant/submissive sexual encounter, the Olesen chair sees the female body submit to a default male design.

Schultz cites such quiet cases of oppression with devilish humour. Her juxtaposition of and made objects draws our attention to the gender bias that surrounds us, echoing Cria Perez's call to arms: 'Designers may believe they are making products for everyone, but reality they are mainly making them for men. It's time to start designing women in.'