4  
A Long Arc
PHOTOGRAPHY AND THE AMERICAN SOUTH

Curator Gregory Harris accurately describes this show as a “layered record” of the southern USA from 1845 to the present-day which “poses urgent and timely questions about American history, identity and culture.” One hundred and seventy works are on display from artists including Isaac H. Bonsall, Robert Frank and Kristine Potter. They shine a light on the legacies of economic inequality and white supremacy.

Allie Mae Burroughs looks directly at viewers from Walker Evans’ striking black-and-white portrait from 1936. She lived in poverty as the wife of a “Sharecropper” in Hale County. Her family leased their farmland — where they lived and worked — from a landlord who took half their crops and money to spend on food, fertilizer and medicine. Evans was one of the pioneering Farm Security Administration documentarians, alongside Gordon Parks, Dorothée Lange and Marjory Collins, whose visual record of extreme conditions suffered during the Great Depression (1929–1939) remains poignant.

Another memorable piece is Parks’ (1912–2006) Odessa Tanner and Her Grandmother Window Shopping (1950). A small Black girl looks with wide-eyed wonder at the dresses modelled by white mannequins. Parks positions the viewer on the other side of the glass display case, causing the models to dominate the foreground. This shot is not only a reminder of segregation, but also of racism that persists today. An-Mi Le’s recent work attests to this, picturing a group of young women sitting in the grass of Lafayette Park, Washington DC, following a 2020 Black Lives Matter protest.

A Long Arc offers a timeline of southern life as well as an evolutionary history of photography. It reveals the development of themes captured on camera over decades. Subjects and artists come together to tell stories and overcome inequalities, whilst inspiring wider consideration and empathy.

Words
Diana Bestwick Tetch
Addison, Massachusetts
Until 31 July
addison.andover.edu

5
Before Behind Between Above Below
MARTIN BOYCE

Do sculptures dream? This is the question posed by Scottish Turner Prize-winning artist Martin Boyce (b. 1957), whose work explores the intersections between design and urban planning. Boyce’s visual language is something special: it relies on asymmetry and dislocation, which are key ingredients to his latest exhibition.

In Long Distance Sleep Talking (2022), a chandelier-like sculpture carries the weight of different acrylic panels. The constellation, made of plastic and metal, evokes the strange dynamism of Alexander Calder’s rotating mobiles. Boyce’s display features a white telephone hanging from its cord, dangling over a neon pink door. It’s a piece that treats the boundary between sleep and waking, simulating a never-ending and never-answered call. We feel an inimitable sense of longing, almost as if监察ing an unrequited lover refusing to pick up the receiver.

Elsewhere, corrugated partitions and wall moulds combine with floating steel apparatuses. In one room, a tasselled lamp rests on its side like a life drawing model. Next, a chair is wedged underneath a door, serving as an improvised obstacle to prevent entry. There is a sense of trying to break out of the domestic sphere — a restless-ness that will resonate with fans of Jesse Darling’s unsettling structures. Journeying upstairs, we’re met with a canopy of rose-coloured aluminium panels that dangle from the ceiling. They contrast against a collection of wax-coated paper leaves collecting in heaps across the floor.

Boyce explains: “The object is perhaps undead, a ghost, a physical presence in limbo.” This exhibition demands discomfort and desire in equal parts. It’s easy to be tamed in by Boyce’s subversion of form in fast, we ought to accept the imitation and stay with these sculptures a little while longer.

Words
Chloe Elliott
Fruitmarket, Edinburgh
Until 9 June
fruitmarket.co.uk

6
Acts of Resistance
PHOTOGRAPHY, FEMINISMS AND THE ART OF PROTEST

Three women stand, one in front of another, braiding each other’s hair, their backs to the camera. Hoda Afshar’s work pays tribute to the Women, Life, Freedom Movement in Iran, prompted by the death in 2022 of Mahsa Amini who was arrested for violating rules requiring women to wear headscarves. The series, titled In Tum, hangs in South London Gallery, delicately printed onto textile. It is truly striking in scale.

A few years back, the words “feminism” and “feminist” seemed to be everywhere. In Twitter bios. On book covers. Spelled out in giant letters behind Beyoncé at the VMAs. That fourth wave, fuelled by the growth of the internet, took shape in grassroots movements such as 2017’s #MeToo. Across two spaces — the main gallery and the Fire Station — Acts of Resistance presents photography born within the context of this past decade, engaging with continued struggles.

Silvestri’s sculptural work uses red threads to allude to the violence of female genital mutilation, whilst Laila Abid looks at sexual violence and reproductive rights, under threat in the USA and Europe. This exhibition brings a multiplicity of different feminisms into play. Here, women’s rights are trans rights, indigenous rights and disability rights. They overlap with decolonial activism, climate justice and queer identities.

Not only do the selected artists’ works interrogate different approaches to the medium of photography, but each one delves into the function of images in today’s world. Artists engage with personal or public archives, self-portraiture and social media, showing how printed pictures can shape lives.

Acts of Resistance is a thrilling addition to a number of group exhibitions re-examining the visual culture of feminisms — alongside RESISTERS: A Lens on Gender and Ecology at the Barbican and Women in Revolt! Art and Activism in the UK 1970-1993 at Tate Britain. This is an exhibition that presents contemporary feminist artwork as intersectional and expansive. It is a fierce and beautiful collective fight back.

Words
Rachel Segal Hamilton
South London Gallery
Until 9 June
southlondongallery.org