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Laurie Simmons, "The Instant Decorator"

Sperone Westwater, through Mar 27 (see Chelsea).

Three women stand in a garish kitchen cluttered with dozens of cakes, pies and other baked goods. One frantically cooks, another prepares coffee, and the third stands in stilettos and curlers, staring into the distance. In Laurie Simmons's *The Instant Decorator (Yellow Kitchen)* (2004), the proliferation of pastries is visually associated with the conflicted—even impossible—roles of female domesticity. Another role implicit in Simmons's interior is that of the home decorator herself.

Simmons's "Instant Decorator" series, composed of photographs of her handmade collages, owes its title to a 1976 handbook by one Frances Joslin Gold that showed budding home stylists how to personalize generic rooms. Fabric samples accompanied the manual, but while the book encouraged a range of tastes in patterns, it did not allow for any reorganization of the upper-middle-class interiors (some with pool or ocean views).

In her photographs, Simmons not only outfits the rooms per Gold's instructions, she overwhelms them with a glut of

objects that animatedly compete for the viewer's attention. In contrast, the figures she inserts—clipped from fashion and porn magazines—are absurdly self-absorbed. For example, in *Instant Decorator (Pink and Green Bedroom/Slumber Party)* (2003), seven women, too many for the modest room, lounge in poses that range from cute to come-hither, while re-



Laurie Simmons, *The Instant Decorator (Pink and Green Bedroom/Slumber Party)*, 2003.

maintaining oblivious of one another amid a salvo of equestrian memorabilia: statuettes, paintings, toys and books. Horses in a bedroom begin to seem natural in comparison to the women in this artificial tableau. Like Hannah Hoch in the 1920s or Martha Rosler in the 1960s, Simmons's photomontages employ an aesthetic of excess and pointed juxtaposition in order to reveal—and possibly change—social conventions.—Eva Diaz