'Remember, practise. We'll be back.' Suddenly, the projector cuts out and floodlights turn on – they're blindingly bright. At the same time, cheery lift music plays through the speakers – a palliative, just as ineffectual as a throwaway apology. But while the work highlights a wilful lack of empathy, it doesn't address how racial discrimination and border control coincide, as recently demonstrated by the Windrush scandal.

Harrison-Mann & Redgroves' return the space to its previous function as a public toilet. A sign outside, footed with a fictional company name, 'ptaa', invites park-goers in. In the foyer, a strong smell of bleach rises from the original laminate floor. Like many public services outsourced to private firms, the ptaa facilities aren't in full working order: the cubicles don't have doors, the tiling is half finished and the toilets are unplumbed. But there is one working bathroom down the corridor. As you approach the door, a light below the handle flashes red and it bolts shut. As you step back, the light turns green and the lock opens again. This goes on as you try to avoid activating the motion sensor. Like *HEFT* and the other exhibits, the work integrates interactive game design within its form, only revealing or granting access to certain features if visitors can solve a puzzle of sorts. After a while, you are forced to ask yourself, 'what's wrong with me?', highlighting the way it is possible to internalise discrimination. Inexplicably, the door eventually opens to an ordinary toilet, except for a set of instructions for discarding toilet paper: 'To make sure that other people, like yourself, will be given access to the same facilities, validate our system ... your DNA does it all.' The gamified public convenience seemingly uses interactivity as a cover for monetising racial profiling. Despite attempts to resist gamification-from-above, the exhibition leaves visitors in no doubt that there is no recess that it cannot worm its way into. ▮

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A Woman's Place

Knole House Sevenoaks 17 May to 4 November

Is the English country home a battlefield? Knole House, the fortress-like ancestral seat in Kent of the noble Sackville-West family, has witnessed countless battles since the 1400s, when the building's massive construction began. In 1884 an angry mob stormed the locked gates of Knole to protest the closure of the vast house and deer park to the public. Knole was eventually reopened to visitors – who still flock to this popular National Trust property, these days squabbling over limited-number visitor-parking spaces.

As documented in 'A Woman's Place', a six-person exhibition of newly commissioned artworks, generations of Knole-based females have waged a quiet but desperate battle since at least the early 1600s, when resident Lady Anne Clifford penned her mournful diary. As chronicled in artist Melanie Wilson's evocative audiotour *Women of Record* (all works 2018), Lady Anne was perpetually ignored by husband Lord Richard, who left her feeling stranded in the lonely English countryside. Anne's lamentations are combined in Wilson's piece with the voices of contemporary British women despairing over their menfolk – the emotional neglect, gambling debts, infidelities, looming creditors – with striking similarity to their historic predecessors. An unwritten female history emerges in *Women of Record* as an uninterrupted march of punishing marriages, stretching with remarkable uniformity from the 17th century to the 21st.

Women were treated to special inequality at Knole, where an ancient family law decreed that house and title could only be passed down the male line. Famously, the writer Vita Sackville-West (1892-1962) was prevented from inheriting her beloved childhood home because she was a woman. The 1928 novel *Orlando* was 'a love letter' to Vita, as author Virginia Woolf described the multi-gendered fictional biography of her longtime friend and lover. *Orlando*'s original manuscript is held in the house archives, and in it Vita/Orlando survives miraculously intact across centuries – just like Knole itself. Impossible leaps in time also feature in Lindsay Seers's beautifully shot films *2052 Selves (a biography)*, viewable online only. Presented across three principal chapters, and often splitting the screen into a triptych, Seers's films are obliquely based on the 'three V's' haunting Knole – Virginia, Vita and her mother, Victoria – intertwined with the gender-shifting autobiography of actress Sara Sugarman, who offers a candid and mesmerising performance. Emily Speed's tiled, working fountain (titled *Innards*) focuses on Lady Victoria, and the rituals conjoining a wealthy woman's toilette and her gardening: the watery care of a woman's body (at the dressing table) and her flowers (in the garden), both expected somehow to remain perpetually in bloom. Lubaina Himid examines one of the house's least leisured inhabitants, the 17th-century black maidservant Grace Robinson; *Collars and Cuffs* are tiny, highly stylised paintings concealed within a courtyard where 'the blackamoor' Grace laboured for years. Alice May Williams's video *By the Accident of Your Birth*, tucked away in a side-turret, considers the continuing impact of the 'faults' or incidents of birth – gender, class, geography – so vividly played out at Knole.

In sum, Knole's centuries-long story is unusually fraught with struggles centring on women, class, sexuality and power, and for good reason curators Lucy Day and Eliza Gluckman have sited 'A Woman's Place' here as part of the National Trust's 'Women and Power' programme this year. Idyllic Knole – where in 1967 the Beatles were filmed singing *Strawberry Fields Forever* – conceals a conflicted history that merits critical scrutiny, and to this end the selected artists have produced sensitive and informed works. No doubt curating duo Day+Gluckman jumped through countless bureaucratic hoops in order to realise new artworks adhering to the heavy restrictions surrounding a bona fide Grade I architectural treasure, plus the abiding demands of heritage tourism.

The pair's curatorial solution was to literalise women's historic near-invisibility by hiding artworks in alcoves (Williams) and behind drain pipes (Himid), or dematerialising them in a soundwork (Wilson) or online films (Seers). In practice, the unfortunate impression is that women – whether as artists or the subject of art – remain as banished to the backstairs and recesses of Knole

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