

FORT GANSEVOORT

AD
ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST



Artist Zoë Buckman's Brooklyn Loft Embodies Her Creative Outlook

The Dumbo refuge—a combination of home, studio, and gallery—is filled with with her autobiographical pieces

By Julie Vadnal

Photography by Max Burkhalter

Styled by Gabrielle Pilotti Langdon

January 3, 2020

In her work, artist Zoë Buckman uses lacy textiles and lingerie to make statements on femininity, race, and culture. Each piece, whether it's an embroidered hip-hop lyric or an impression of her own body, contains a push-pull between the masculine and feminine, the hard and the soft, the chaotic and the still. For one series, she constructs boxing gloves from soft vintage floral fabrics— then hangs them from hard metal chains.

In her home in Brooklyn's waterfront Dumbo neighborhood, the same dichotomy is at play, because, well, it's chockablock with her own artwork, and for good reason: She works from home too. "It was super-important to me that I would be able to make work out of my home," she says of the space, which is part studio, part gallery. (Her current public

FORT GANSEVOORT

exhibition, *Heavy Rag*, is on display at Fort Gansevoort in Manhattan.) “I knew I wouldn't be able to afford to rent a studio as well as get a home that I was excited about. So I was like, if I can do both in one, I can just about make it work.”



Buckman surrounds herself with her own art in her apartment. “It’s a sentimental thing, to have an actual piece that was hanging in a show,” she says. “It takes on the memories of that experience of that body of work, of making that body of work, of what I was going through at the time I was creating it.”

So, two years ago, she moved into the Brooklyn loft and hired an architect—but not a decorator. Instead, she scoured [Etsy](#), [eBay](#), and [1stdibs](#), where she found a silk rug that inspired the pinks, yellows, blues, and greens that appear throughout the space. (The rug eventually found a permanent residence on the living room floor.) Her own art, and trades from other artist friends—“a perk of the job,” she says—line the walls.

Carving out walled rooms was tempting, but in the end, Buckman decided to follow the light and stick to an open format. “If I was to create some kind of partition, that would mean that the space that I lived in wouldn’t have as much natural light,” she says. “So I decided that they wouldn't be any partition or literal separation between my kitchen and living area and my studio.”

FORT GANSEVOORT

Which means that figuratively, too, there's little separation. "My work is always on display, and my life is always on display when I make my work," she says. The upside is convenience, and aside from being able to work jet-lagged in her pajamas at 2 a.m. (Buckman grew up in the U.K.), she also gets to share her work with her daughter, Cleo. "It's started some really interesting and important conversations because a lot of my work comes from a difficult or painful place, and a lot of it is also autobiographical," Buckman says. "So she'll come in and be like, 'Oh, what are you working on there?' And if it's a piece with text, she'll read out loud and then she'll go, "Well what happened there, mum?" It's really amazing."

But that's not to say she's always working. When the pair need to unwind, they're just, well, living in the space, sipping tea and sharing biscuits in Buckman's bed. "She's now trained to bring me tea and biscuits in bed, which, oh, my God, changed my life," Buckman says with a laugh. "Once I got that down I was like, okay, *this* is winning."



Artist Zoë Buckman whips up vegetarian meals in her open kitchen, located in Brooklyn's Dumbo neighborhood. "I cook a lot more now that my studio is in my home," she says. "Dumbo doesn't actually have that many places to eat. It's odd, man, it's odd. And I'm not actually that mad about it." In the foreground: Buckman uses a small altar for meditating.

FORT GANSEVOORT



The gallery wall in Buckman's living room displays some of her favorite people and pieces: a photo she took of her friend Jemima Kirke holding a speculum; a portrait of her daughter, Cleo; a tear-out from friend Amy Winehouse's first LP; a drawing by artist Toyin Ojih Odutola. Most of the furniture pieces were [Etsy](#), [1stdibs](#), and [eBay](#) finds.

FORT GANSEVOORT



When curators or other guests come to visit her studio, Buckman hosts them in this sitting area. It's also where she ends up doing most of her sewing.

FORT GANSEVOORT



Buckman's previous work, including pieces from her *Let Her Rave* series, hangs in her loft, which is part art gallery, part studio.

FORT GANSEVOORT



At her desk, Buckman lays out textiles for her upcoming projects, while her boxing-glove creations hang nearby.

FORT GANSEVOORT



“I’m not interested in things being too pristine or perfect,” Buckman says of her relaxed bedroom, where a vintage bra and petticoat embroidered with hip-hop lyrics, part of the artist’s *Every Curve* series, hangs overhead. “I drink a lot of tea in bed, and my daughter jumps in—so I’m not trying to have a white bed.”

FORT GANSEVOORT



The powder room got a romantic touch thanks to a floral sconce that Buckman found on [1stdibs](#).

FORT GANSEVOORT



In the loft's second bedroom, Zoe's daughter, Cleo, gets top bunk, and friends and family get the bottom bunk, a double bed. "I didn't want to take a piece of the floor plan and go, this is a guest room, because ultimately, I have guests only maybe three or four times a year," Buckman says. "A double bunk bed means that I can bring her into bed with me and then an adult or even a couple can sleep there—and it's mad comfortable."

FORT GANSEVOORT



Buckman shares the space with her daughter, Cleo.