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Dreamhome: Stories of Art and Shelter

This exhibition, at the newly opened expansion to the Art Gallery of New South Wales, features a collection of works in which artists explore their dreams of home.

In the Art Gallery of New South Wales's new building, the exhibition *Dreamhome: Stories of Art and Shelter* explores what "home" might mean. Looking beyond the architectural, the reflections in these collected works are not confined to perfect or happy homes but also include those that are provisional, remembered, anxious, unsettled – even absent.

The most arresting work in this show may be *Guts* (2022), an installation that uses mirrors to create the optical illusion of a skyscraper that goes on forever: not only up, but down as well. Disturbingly, the balcony "floors" and "ceilings" contain grotesque objects, including coloured plastic reptiles, toppled living room furniture and mixed-media creations that look like intestines. A response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the work is by Los Angeles-based artist Samara Golden.

Another impressive installation is *Avatar Towers* (2020), a 77-piece collection featuring bronze and clay sculptures by Sri Lankan-born Australian artist Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran. Arranged on timber shelves attached to a pink scaffold, anthropomorphic figures of various sizes and colours bare pointed teeth or smile wide. Many figures' heads and torsos are combined, while others have wide, staring eyes or shortened limbs. For Ramesh, these figures are like guardians of the home, inspired by Hindu deities.

Other works in the show riff on the theme of home in other ways – there's Phyllida Barlow's *untitled: brokenupturnedhouse* (2013), an assemblage of broken building materials; Sayre Gomez's *Friday night* (2021), a photorealistic painting of lightning above a mobile home; and Simone Leigh's *Sentinel* (2019), a sculptural work that engages concepts of both home and womanhood, referencing African architecture and costumes as well as stereotypes around black bodies.

The work I found most moving of all is Louise Bourgeois' *Untitled* (No. 7) (1993), which is a bronze sculpture of two pairs of hands clasped together. These are the aging hands of the artist and her studio assistant, who was Bourgeois' constant companion for the last three decades of her life. A small house protruding from one forearm tells a simple but powerful story of the artist's understanding of what home means to her.