

Sarah Pickering
The New Yorker
Vince Aletti
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This British photographer's terrific new pictures were made in "burn units"—fully furnished rooms rigged to teach forensic teams how to determine the origins of household fires and arsons. Pickering captures the moment when the unit (typically a crummy little bed-sitter as realistic as a stage set) starts to combust and fill with smoke. Although these dramas begin as fictions and are carefully contained, the fires are real and the destruction in such an intimate, seemingly lived-in space is alarming. Yet the photographs are oddly thrilling—vicarious vandalism, guilt-free and artful. Through March 15. (Cooney, 511 W. 25th St. 212-255-8158.)