



Intelligentsia 智先画廊

Interview with Sara Ludy

August 2015



Sara Ludy 'Dream House' image courtesy of bitforms gallery

Garcia Frankowski: Could you give us a brief introduction about your background and your interest in exploring digital mediums of art production and representation?

Sara Ludy: I grew up in Bluemont, Virginia, a small rural town in the Blue Ridge Mountains. I spent much of my youth painting landscapes en plein air and it awarded me a scholarship to SAIC. During my first semester I learned about video and sound art. Living in an isolated area, I only knew about painting and sculpture so I was completely blindsided in the best way possible. I immediately ditched painting and began working in new media. I floated between the video, sound and art and technology departments making green screen animations and electronic instruments. After I graduated I worked as a video editor and interior designer, leaving little room for anything else. I quit my job in 2008 and began a full time art practice. The first couple years I was mostly experimenting with tools and ideas to get back into an art making headspace. It wasn't until I began using photography as a medium where my interests began to crystalize. I started taking photos of everything with my iPhone, including my computer screen and began making comparisons between physical space and virtual space. This is most prevalent in my Second Life project, Projection Monitor.

Space seems to be a recurrent topic or medium in your work, either in the construction of idealized spaces (as in *Dream House*, *House on Fire*, *Rooms*) or in the use of space as a medium (as with some of your recent environmental or fractal works). What role does architecture, or space in general play in your practice?

My practice explores the nature of immateriality and space as a medium. Digital tools allow me to give form to the intangible without the form becoming physical. I like that I can represent a presence with digital dust. I find that to be beautiful. I'm interested in the fluidity of spaces such as digital, dream, intuitive, psychological, emotional, psychic and spiritual; how their formal qualities, stories and ghosts move between each other and leave imprints.

Up to what point does the unconscious influence your work? Does it have philosophical foundations? Is the work closely related to personal interests, or are they investigations related to the history of art?

The unconscious influences my process quite a bit. I let intuition guide me through explorations of space. For instance, I have this series Sets where I reconfigure a 3D space until a composition appears that I find interesting, usually in its peculiar sense of familiarity. I will upload one of these images to Google Images where their algorithm spits out dozens of images relating to the vibe of mine. This path leads me to the bowels of Google Images where hazy cell photos and cached thumbnails live. I will choose a selection of the image results and recombine them into a fictional place for my series Postcards. In this process, my subconscious activates an algorithm giving birth to a new space and story. Architecture, as it relates to the unconscious through its poetics and ability to shape our experiences, is a form I repeatedly use. I've represented it as something physical and every day, intangible, sacred, dehumanized, ubiquitous, uncanny, as a body, a vessel and an entity; among other things. When I'm not working, I spend time visiting abandoned and haunted places, attempting to access history through clair senses. I'm interested in how information from past events resides in space; where land and architecture becomes a memory bank.

Recently you have been working with fractal generators to work with large scale installations. Moving away from depictions of architecture, your work seems to venture into more abstract terrain (or deeper into the non-figurative unconscious). From digital constructions of avatars of modern architecture, the new works suggest to reference questions that are more related to the investigations initiated by the Romantics. Have your interests, questions or mediums evolved? If so, in what sense? Could you talk to us about this transition?

My interests and questions are always evolving. My Instagram account reflects that in some ways. I have been working a lot with abstraction this year, primarily in preparation for the Wallpapers show at the Vancouver Art Gallery. The series I created refer to qualities of space and points to sublime investigations found in Romantic painting. This new cloud series was a step up from the first series I made in 2012. I found new ways of making them and through experimentation they began echoing painting in interesting ways. I pushed the painterly qualities and created a series of toxic clouds referencing environmental decay. Even though my recent works have been more abstract, I'm still working with architecture. Dream House is continually under construction as a 100 acre island.

Going back to your points of reference, and focusing in that oscillation between digital platforms (as in Google Images) and physical ones with your research on physical spaces (including abandoned and haunted places), your works also seem to be based on that dichotomy between digital mediums and physical methods of representation (and presentation). Do you see your practice more focused on the possibility on working with and pushing the limits of new technologies (google, Instagram, etc.), or are the mediums just a way to dig into more permanent, fundamental questions that might not necessarily be related to technological developments? Is there something specific you are looking for with your works or with the mediums of representation employed? Also, do you find any specific possibilities of limitations of digital platforms versus conventional spaces for art presentation (galleries, museums etc.)?

I would think most artists who are interested in “crafting” their own work find ways to personalize and push the tools they’re working with. I use a lot of the same software and platforms many other creative people use and attempt to find ways around defaults. I don’t specifically think of myself to be pushing limits of new technologies as much as I use them to explore questions of immateriality and space through a subjective lens.

Ideally, a house may be the closest archetype to a concrete representation of the self. In the context of Newnewspeak (a concept we borrowed from Orwell’s reductive language) exhibition, we were looking for works that could potentially deal with forms of language reduction and consolidation, or better said, how artists use tools to create and define ways of thinking through art; how to present a specific worldview through art language. In your work several of the videos, specifically Dream House seem to play with the language of architecture in a deliberate way, as if you were presenting a form of guided tour to the architecture of your mind. Up to what point are you trying to create a form of self-representation in the form of art as language? How do you understand the relationship between the ideas you are trying to explore, and the audiovisual vocabulary you have been developing?

Dream House is self-representative since it’s modeled after lucid dreams I’ve experienced. These dreams impacted my life in such a way at the time that they made me question the nature of reality. The first scenes in Dream House are inspired from the first lucid dream I had in 2001.

It was Sunday morning around 9:30 when the sun woke me up. As my eyes began to focus I realized I was not in my bedroom. There were stacks of books aligning the perimeter of the room. The titles unfamiliar. I got out of bed, having no memory of how I got there. I walked over to the windows to see if I could recognize where I was. There was a vast lush green landscape that extended forever and nothing else. I looked over to the right and saw a bathroom. It was darker and colder. There was a pedestal sink with a large round vanity mirror above. As I moved closer to the mirror a force slammed me against the wall opposite to it. Something wasn’t allowing me to see my reflection.

I woke up terrified, convinced I was somewhere else and not in a dream. This experience eventually became the catalyst for Dream House. Even though it was some years later when I began modeling the dream space in 3D I was able to remember every detail. During the modeling process I realized other dream spaces I had experienced seemed to be architecturally connected to that first one. I decided to develop Dream House into a hybrid dream space, connecting multiple dreams into an ongoing labyrinth.

Using the promotional and visual language of real estate the project presents itself as a premiere vacation destination, embedded with elements from the dreams. Rather than alienating the viewer from a purely subjective experience, this context allows easier access to the work. It brings forth questions of place, ownership and near future escapism. Below is a short descriptive text that was released with the first Dream House video.

{This secluded 100-acre island gem is found resting on the center coordinates from a 3 second transport time. Surrounded by void, this island is a timeless wonder; featuring Dream House, the primary memory palace experience.

The north side of the premise includes a 9-plug waking pad equipped with sustainable primitives and reliable access. Just west of the waking pad is a uniquely tiered water feature overlooking space in a remarkable scene. On the southeast coordinates, between the lush eastern hills and the arid south basin, resides the shape shifting Dream House; a domestic labyrinth built with familiar geometries

and sacred details.

Created during the 1st period, Dream House is known as “the palace of dreams”. This hybrid dream architecture includes 3 lucid dream spaces precisely constructed utilizing genuine memories, native textures and brilliant moonlight. The house is furnished with premier animistics; Transport Bed, Stack of Books, Vanity Mirror, Floating Mirror, Floor Curves, Disc, Entity Bust, Sun Disc and Fountain Pad. All animistics are full automated and activated by proximity.

Dream House comfortably accommodates multiple embeds, providing an ideal platform for remote experiences. Dream House is the traveler’s perfect destination for exploring authentic dreams embedded in time, space and structure.}

Do you see your practice as a way of thinking and producing art related to a specific historical context? Does your work respond to broader questions anchored in the production of contemporary phenomena beyond art history, theory and criticism? Do you see your work in a framework of personal exploration, social awareness or disciplinary dialogue?

I don’t find it necessary to position myself in a specific historical context. I’ll let time do that while I focus on making work. I see my practice moving fluidly through different interests at different times, from personal to cultural to social. I try to balance the intuitive choices with conceptual interests, not wanting to be completely absorbed in my own world and not wanting to only make conceptually driven work.

How do you see your practice progressing in the future? Will Dream House be in construction ad infinitum?

Dream House will develop indefinitely or until I find a closure to the project. It’s as much a personal development as it is an art project, which I like. I have a long list of installation and sculpture ideas I would like to produce and see myself working more with physical space. I look forward to making these works and whatever the future may bring.



‘Dream House’ by Sara Ludy, images courtesy of bitforms gallery