

ARTFORUM

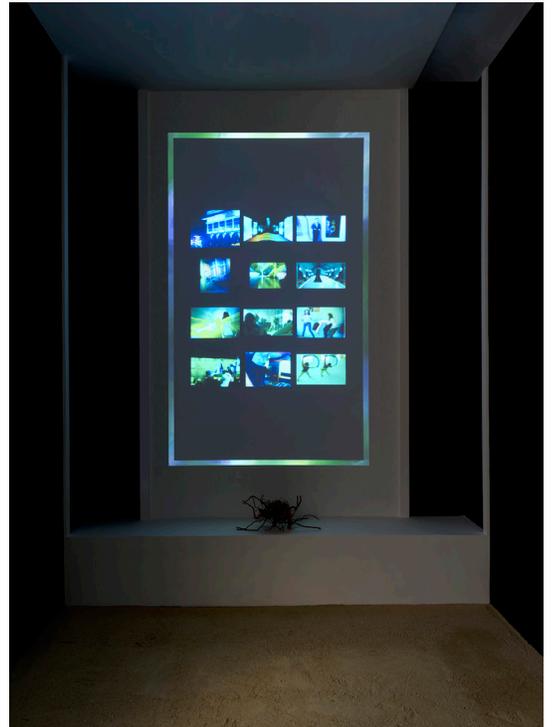
Artforum, New York Critics' Picks - January 2016

by Johanna Fateman

Sara Ludy
BITFORMS GALLERY
131 Allen Street
January 7–February 7

For users of the online virtual-reality platform Second Life, “low prim” signifies an object or room that contains little graphic information. While a strict economy of detail frees up three-dimensional real estate, it also amplifies a pervasive, unsettling quality of virtual spaces and, as Sara Ludy dramatizes in her work, of contemporary life in general—that of the “digital uncanny.” As we kill lots of people in first-person shooter games or make floor plans for new furniture on our phones, we embrace the *unheimlich* as a necessary discomfort. Ludy provocatively applies the ancient philosophical principles of *fêng shui* as a possible remedy.

The prevailing mood in the gallery is one of uneasy quiet. *Low Prim Room*, 2012–16, is a spare, shrine-like installation at the exhibition’s start. A grid of twelve images—material from Ludy’s ongoing archive of the Internet’s uncanny—is projected on a wall recessed behind an empty sand garden and a ledge displaying a ball of twiggy rosewood entangled with a little red tassel and coins. The piece is blankly mesmerizing: aesthetically calculated but symbolically cryptic. In the more beautiful *Rose*, 2015, a feather flower and a zig-zagging path of iridescent beads lead to a hypnotic animation of a milky, constantly morphing orb on the black wall behind them. Whether such disconcerting, elegant arrangements improve the flow of *chi* is perhaps beside the point: Ludy’s striking work asks what *fêng shui* could mean now, when physical space is haunted by its virtual original and life online is simply life.



Sara Ludy, *Low Prim Room*, 2012–16, video, sand, rosewood, tassel, coins, dimensions variable.