

Palop, Benoit, "Enter a 'Subsurface Hell' in Sara Ludy's New Show," *The Creator's Project*, January 19, 2016

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## Enter a 'Subsurface Hell' in Sara Ludy's New Show

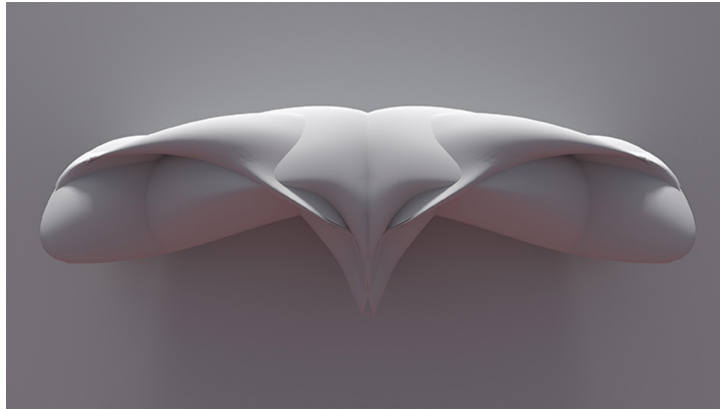
By Benoit Palop — Jan 19 2016



*xzw9hz8hzy9yx1j23hwy2x09uzj.us*, 2015, Website, Dimensions variable. Courtesy bitforms gallery, New York. Photo: John Berens

For *Subsurface Hell*, her first solo exhibition at the NYC-based gallery bitforms, new media artist Sara Ludy treats audiences to a captivating, wide-ranging body of works. No matter the medium, Ludy's artworks are always highly-charged with a magical, mesmerizing aura present in both form and substance. Her creations explore the melting point between the virtual and the real, recontextualizing and questioning ever-evolving IRL/URL boundaries with her digitally-minded approach.

"Sara has been working with technology in her art practice since the early 2000s. She works across a range of media, including websites, animation, video, sculpture, audio-visual performance," bitforms gallery Associate Director Kerry Doran tells *The Creators Project*. "Sara also broaches subjects that could be deemed taboo, including energy and spirituality. Her work is grounded in feeling, which can be especially difficult with digital work, given how cold technology can come across. So she's not only pushing boundaries with the forms of her work, but is conceptually unique," she adds.



*Alien (Wall Mount)*, 2015, From the series *Animistics*, Dye sublimation on aluminum, 48 x 27 in / 121.9 x 68.6 cm, Edition of 3. Courtesy bitforms gallery, New York. Photo: John Berens

Thus, Ludy's *Subsurface Hell* invites viewers to experience an uncanny space inspired and shaped by an ancestral "lifestyle" theory that calls to be harmonized with our surrounding environment. "Feng shui is a Chinese philosophical system used to position ourselves within nature when creating auspicious sites; using astronomy, geography and concepts of chi," Ludy tells us. "For the exhibition, it's applied to subtly suggest an energy in the space. An alien in the home," she adds.



*Rose*, 2015, From the series *Orbs*, Found feather flower, silver beads, HD animation, USB, video player, screen or projector Dimensions variable, vertical orientation, 5 min, loop. Courtesy bitforms gallery, New York. Photo: John Berens

With dye sublimation on aluminum and website feeds on one side, feathers, flower, 4K videos and looped animations on the other, Ludy takes over the gallery to generate an ambiguous atmosphere filled with personal emotional vapors and fragments of residual memories. Thus each artwork contains a mystical emanation: "The aura comes from the engagement I have with a space or subject. When it resonates a sense of 'presence,' I harness that vibe and aesthetic, letting it guide me through the process," she explains. "I don't force anything. I utilize what's there and become an intermediary between intuition and form."

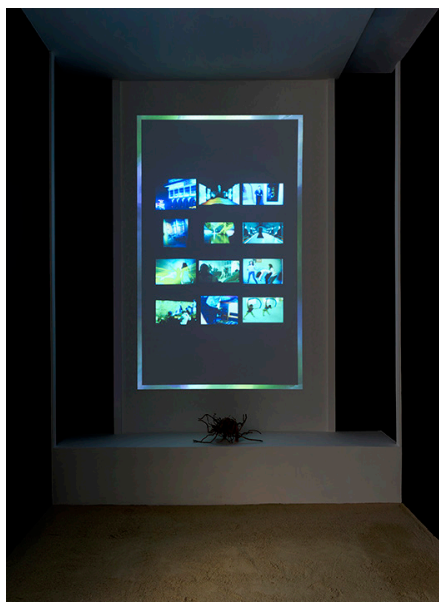


*Subsurface Hell*, 2016, Installation view from left to right: Cabbage Head (Energy Sponge), Embrace. Courtesy bitforms gallery, New York. Photo: John Berens

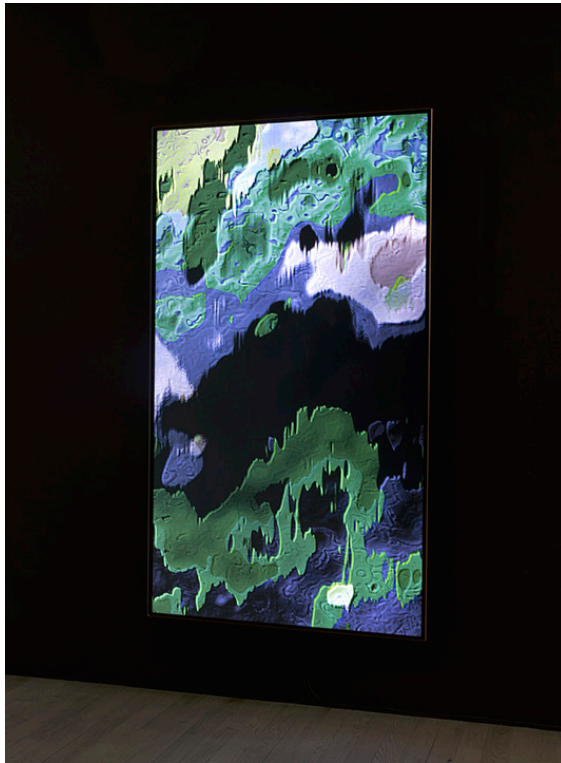
“Each work is connected through aesthetics of the uncanny, imbued with tension between familiarity and unfamiliarity,” Ludy continues. “The exhibition layout references domestic space through interior design choices and feng shui principles,” she adds, giving a generous shortcut to an exhibition that easily requires multiple viewings.

Among the many artworks, there is no doubt that *Low Prim Room* is one the most interesting piece in the show—in the process, at least. “*Low Prim Room* was designed to propose balance with the heaviness of the imagery,” Ludy says. “The room is built around a video projection of *Low Prim*, as a meditation alcove inspired by a tokonoma. A daily smudge of palo santo is meant to clear out any heaviness the images from *Low Prim* may emit.”

Fed by a web-based loop of 12 images extracted from a computer-based multi-themed folder she started in 2000, the built-in, recessed-style space allows viewers to experience a mind-blowing stream of pictures. “I work with imagery that has an ambiguous exterior, removed from its context and exhibiting the mundane,” she explains of the visual content. “Most of the images are low-res cached thumbnails and amateur snapshots found in the bowels of Google images. They are combined to create a sense of place and story.” These loops not only question the nonsensical and uncanny nature of the internet, but also bear witness to Ludy’s online behavior and habits. A sort of intended-browsing-voyeurism, in a way.



*Low Prim Room*, 2012-2016 Installation, Dimensions variable. Courtesy bitforms gallery, New York. Photo: John Berens



*Cloud Relief 1*, 2015, From the series *Clouds*, 4K animation, media player, screen or projector Dimensions variable, vertical orientation, 20 min, loop. Courtesy bitforms gallery, New York. Photo: John Berens

Regarding what's coming next, the prolific artist promises delights in the coming months. "I'm still working on Dream House, a 3D architectural project inspired by lucid dreams I've been modeling for the last three years. I'm also developing two new audiovisual performances, one for a residency in Minneapolis and one in Chicago next fall," she concludes.

That being said, the best way to fully understand Ludy's work is to make it to bitforms gallery before February 7. She is also offering a live audiovisual performance at the Wyndham Garden Chinatown on January 21, 2016.