

Rosanna McLaughlin, "Sondra Perry: Typhoon Coming On", *Frieze*, March 20, 2018.

frieze

REVIEW - 20 MAR 2018

Sondra Perry: Typhoon Coming On

A reckoning of dehumanized black identity at Serpentine
Sackler Gallery, London

BY ROSANNA MCLAUGHLIN

Sondra Perry's is an 'un-body of work' Arthur Jafa once suggested. At her show 'Typhoon Coming On' at the Serpentine Sackler Gallery it's easy to see why. The New Jersey-born artist's first major European exhibition is a reckoning of dehumanized black identity, as asset and digital phantasm.

The show's title is taken from J. M.W. Turner's painting of the British slave ship *Zong*, *Slavers Throwing Overboard the Dead and Dying – Typhoon Coming On* (1840). En route from Accra to Jamaica in 1781, 133 enslaved Africans were thrown from the vessel so the crew could claim insurance on the 'goods' they were transporting. Sharing the title of the exhibition, a digitally modified 2018 video of Turner's oleaginous sea is projected onto the outer walls of the gallery interior. Up close the paint look less like water, more like roiling skin. The video switches periodically to a CGI animation of purple waves, rebooting the *Zong* massacre for the present day.



Sondra Perry, 'Typhoon coming on', 2018, installation view, Serpentine Sackler Gallery, London.
 Courtesy: Serpentine Sackler Gallery, London; photograph: © Mike Din

At the entrance to the gallery is a blue screen. A leitmotif in Perry's work, it serves as a reminder of the ease with which identity can be co-opted and narratives enforced. Perry has familial experience when it comes to digital abduction. Her show at New York's Bridget Donahue in early 2018 focused on the use of her brother's image as a student athlete by the videogame company EA Sports, without his permission.

In one of the gallery's inner chambers, I take a seat on *Graft and Ash for a Three-Monitor Workstation* (2016), an exercise bike wired up to three adjacent monitors installed wraparound and close to eye level. The bike is based on 'deskercise' equipment: office furniture that enables users to burn calories while they work. Like the rowing machine beside it, its mechanism has been adapted so it is resistant to use. As I struggle to pedal, a thin, bald on-screen avatar of Perry speaks of the limitations of the software used (her 'fatness' could not be replicated, she says) and of the negative health consequences that result from believing we live in a 'just society' where people get what they deserve, and wonders whether visitors

to the gallery have benefited from colonial theft. 'We are problems made to be fixed,' she states, echoing the so-called moral argument for slavery, which justified industrialized barbarity on the grounds that blackness was a flaw requiring white intervention. At one point, Perry's avatar is replaced by a rotating sphere of brown flesh: a disquieting vision of race as material.



Sonda Perry, *Graft and Ash for a Three Monitor Workstation*, 2016, film still.
Courtesy: the artist and Bridget Donahue Gallery, New York

The manufacture of human deficiencies is good business, enabling markets to flourish by providing remedies. (A strategy pertinent to the gallery itself: Purdue Pharma, owned by the descendents of Raymond and Mortimer Sackler – Mortimer along with his wife Theresa give their name to the gallery – is accused of making billions of dollars from the sale of the highly addictive OxyContin and falsely advertising the opiate as non-addictive pain relief.) As the looped video *TK (Suspicious Glorious Absence)* (2018) shows, fear, too, is a profitable economy. Shot using a body camera, mundane activities such as walking down the street and entering a house are accompanied by a canned horror soundtrack. This footage is spliced together with real US news reports of enforced curfews, riot police raiding homes and advertisements for mass-surveillance technology.

On the wall behind the monitor playing *TK (Suspicious Glorious Absence)* is a projection of Perry's digitally manipulated skin, which ripples like fleshy water. Wherever you stand in the gallery you can see the sea in Turner's painting of the *Zong*. It surrounds the interior, switching from oil paint to CGI, establishing an inescapable context. It doesn't take long to realize that to visit 'Typhoon Coming On' is to enter into a re-enactment. This, I suspect, is Perry's point.

Sondra Perry 'Typhoon Coming On' runs at Serpentine Sackler Gallery, London, until 20 May.

Laura McLean-Ferris, "Sondra Perry", *Artforum*, March 2018, 229-230.

ARTFORUM

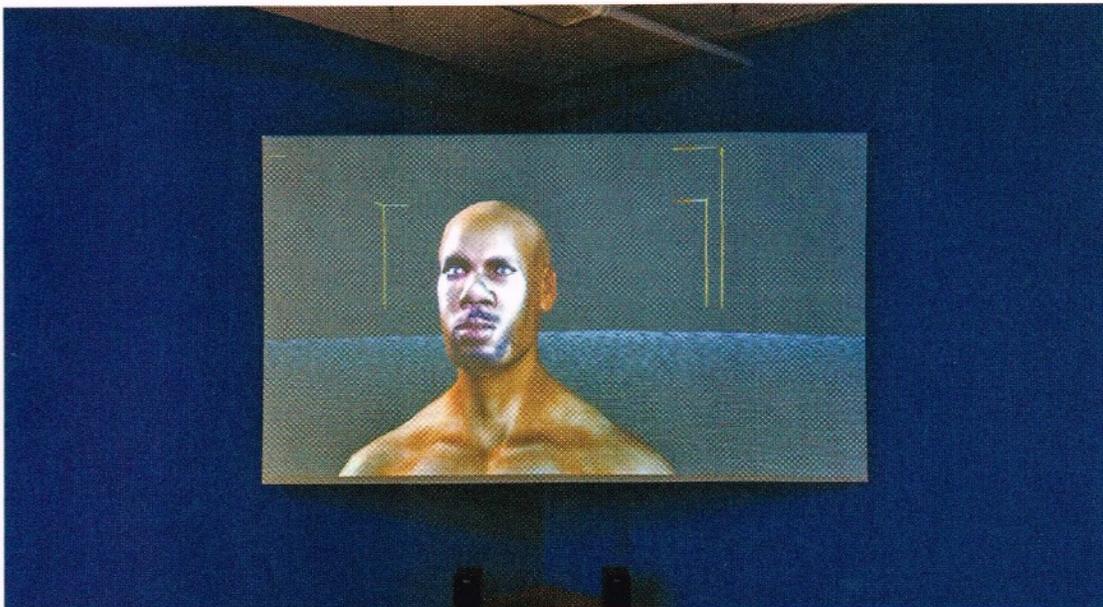
Sondra Perry

BRIDGET DONAHUE

The words "It's in the game" are typically the aggressive opening credits of video games made by EA Sports, at least they were the last time I played one. The phrase's use in the title of a recent video by Sondra Perry, the centerpiece of her debut exhibition at Bridget Donahue, reminded us that it is only half of the original slogan, which promises a Borgesian duplication of the world of sports: "If it's in the game, it's in the game." Perry explores the implications of such doublings in *IT'S IN THE GAME '17* or *Mirror Gag for Vitrine and Projection*, 2017.

Playing on a loop in the gallery, which was painted that now familiar shade of chroma-key blue, the video's brilliant, central conceit continues Perry's recent tradition of using stories from her own family to reveal the ways in which blackness can function as an adaptable technology. In this case, the astoundingly allegorical tale is an account of the theft of her own brother's body. Sandy Perry was a college basketball player whose likeness and stats were used by EA Sports without his permission to create characters in a basketball video game (a class-action lawsuit was brought against the National Collegiate Athletic Association and Electronic Arts and settled in 2015, acknowledging that players had been used without their consent). Sandy, as well as his friends and roommates, are now immortalized as anonymous, selectable characters, and Perry's video documents Sandy navigating a team-selection screen in the game, while he describes the young men behind those avatars as he knew them personally.

Sondra Perry,
IT'S IN THE GAME '17
or *Mirror Gag for*
Vitrine and Projection,
2017, video
projection, color,
sound, 16 minutes
21 seconds.
Installation view.



REVIEWS

As a sibling, Perry complicates her own role in deploying her brother, incisively acknowledging a complicated desire to upload a loved one to her work. We hear an audio snippet of her asking him to do another take, like a coach training a star athlete, as well as his pleading answer: “Sondra my whole night is, like, gone now . . . I had stuff to do.” Sandy is exasperated, but good-natured: This guy was “crafty”; this one was “lights-out” (Perry asks him what this phrase means, and he replies, “If he shoots he’s not missing”). Then the lights really do go out, and we see a huddle of new Sandy avatars, presumably constructed by Perry, apparently lost in a grid of dark, infinite digital space, as though severed from reality. A robotic voice relays a litany of disclaimers that would deny athletes with stolen identities rights to compensation and, we must assume, to their own image. They have been stolen, dragged, and dropped. Sandy’s avatar is visible in freeze frame, high in the air, reaching to shoot a hoop—an image of grace and exertion.

While the implications of the theft of black bodies resound throughout history globally, this work also points to the theft of individuality and specialness, of skill and magic, which is pressed home in the sections that bracket this central sequence. These see Perry and Sandy exploring the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and the British Museum in London, searching for objects while the Stylistics’ hit “You Are Everything” (1971) plays at different speeds (“Today I saw somebody / Who looked just like you / She walked like you do / I thought it was you.”) These objects included an Easter Island statue, which rotated on the screen as a chroma-blue 3-D avatar, accompanied by audio recordings of accession codes and notes about its looting by sailors who claimed it for the British Empire. It’s a powerful pairing, though I would have liked to understand the heart of that analogy more deeply, or to have had it pushed harder. Within a history of destructive pillage, what is the particular nature of this or that particular theft? How do we get inside it? A series of sculptures that at first appear as black stands for screens or cameras are in fact each constructed from a Spalding Universal Shot Trainer, a practice device for basketball players that forces them to adopt a better shooting posture. Some of these were affixed with screens that played looped footage of the rendered skin of an avatar. At one moment, the screen showed us a view from inside the avatar’s empty head, a reminder that the body of the avatar is only skin.

—*Laura McLean-Ferris*

Dawn Chan, "In Her New Show, Artist Sondra Perry Gets in the Game", *The Village Voice*, February 21, 2018.



In Her New Show, Artist Sondra Perry Gets in the Game

by DAWN CHAN

FEBRUARY 21, 2018



Installation View

BRIDGET DONAHUE GALLERY

About fifteen minutes into *Black Panther*, when audiences first meet Michael B. Jordan’s character—a denim-jacketed mercenary from Oakland, California, named Erik Killmonger—he is shown surveying, with magisterial calm, a vitrine full of African artifacts in the white-cubed confines of a British museum. Turning to a curator nearby, he asks, “How do you think your ancestors got these? Do you think they paid a fair price? Or did they take it, like they took everything else?” There is a scene with intriguing parallels in artist Sondra Perry’s latest exhibition at Bridget Donahue Gallery on the Lower East Side. The show’s centerpiece—a video titled *IT’S IN THE GAME ’17 or Mirror Gag for Vitrine and Projection*—includes footage of Perry and her twin brother, Sandy, wandering through the Metropolitan and British Museums’ collections of African, Oceanic, and American art. With their grins, one can imagine that the Perry siblings (who, like Jordan’s character, are African American) are on a playful reconnaissance mission of sorts. And yet the footage, set to the Stylistics’ song “You Are Everything,” seems wistful as well—haunted by the fallout of colonialist plunder. At one point a robot-voiced narrator interjects, euphemistically recounting how various Aztec and Polynesian figurines in the collections were “taken” from their sites. To borrow nineteenth-century activist William Morris’s words, we see flashes of the “melancholy about a museum, such a tale of violence, destruction, and carelessness as its treasured scraps tell.”

A thirty-one-year-old artist from Perth Amboy, New Jersey, Sondra Perry emerged from Columbia’s MFA program to garner steady praise for artwork that often unites concerns about technology and identity, and mixes visual vocabularies from the past and future into a distinctive present tense. Family members make frequent cameos in her pieces. Her grandmother appeared in one older video to discuss the fate of the household’s American flags. Her mother figured in a 2015 performance, flipping pancakes with the help of a pulley-driven apparatus. Here, much of *IT’S IN THE GAME* confronts the strange circumstances her twin brother faced as a power forward for Georgia Southern’s basketball team from 2008 to 2010. Around that time, Electronic Arts released a video game—*NCAA March Madness*—that featured avatars of Sandy and other college athletes without obtaining their consent or offering licensing fees. This ignoble case of digital identity theft is a subject of Perry’s show, as is the surreal consequence that basketball fans worldwide can power up their PlayStations and control a computer-modeled puppet of her brother’s body, in service to their own fantasies of athletic prowess.

For some of us, it’s hard to fathom the degree to which sports so often becomes a crucible for the nation’s weightiest debates—that the people engaging in a controlled form of play end up serving as flashpoints for the most urgent discussions about real life. And yet, here we have it: a president who calls for the suspension of an NFL player for kneeling to protest police brutality, a commentator who tells LeBron James to “shut up and dribble.” Meanwhile, as NCAA players continue to play without compensation, the question remains murky: Who owns a sports star’s behavior and opinions? Who owns his likeness?



“Title TK 5,” 2018

While it's surely discomfiting to see a corporation's fingerprints all over the digital simulation of one's twin, Sondra Perry somehow avoids delivering a ham-fisted response. A more simplistic take might have suggested that what's corporate is vampiric and what's personal is curative. Instead, when Perry deploys computer-modeling software to create her own avatar of her brother for portions of *IT'S IN THE GAME*, the results seem intentionally ghoulish. (Since art school, the artist has seemed fascinated by cyborgs, "as things that are an extension of biological matter," as she explained in an interview; she has deployed CGI to generate deadpan self-portraits for earlier works.) Three smaller video screens, affixed to Spalding universal shot trainers—metal frames designed to help basketball players refine their shooting form—show Perry's digital replica of her twin from revoltingly intimate angles: the interior of his nasal cavity, or maybe his gullet. These pixelated, flexing caverns of flesh evoke an endoscope's live feed. Meanwhile, Perry has applied Chroma Key blue paint to the gallery's walls, transforming them into bluescreens, as if to confront all who visit with the prospect that their own visages will be forcibly manipulated by a post-production guru in a darkened room. One starts to wonder if digital representation might be an equalizing force. As data mining lets all our images be culled and swapped en masse, perhaps everyone will sooner or later encounter their own virtual profile served back to them. And then maybe we'll all feel some flicker of the disorientation that goes hand in hand with being othered.

As many argue, there's a new wave of young artists armed with the tools of computer modeling who are being forced to rethink portraiture, much like a generation of nineteenth-century artists did during the rise of photography. Van Gogh famously wrote, "It's a cause worth fighting for, to show people that there's something else in human beings besides what the photographer is able to get out of them with his machine." He spoke of wanting to paint "men and women with something of the eternal which the halo used to symbolize." What happens now if you ignore people's halos altogether, and focus instead on their abject, off-putting digital husks? This seems to be a question taken up by many digital artists working today, Ed Atkins, Kate Cooper, and Sondra Perry being three notable examples. Atkins tends toward a grungy, almost gory nihilism: his computer-generated talking heads often deliver monologues of doom and gloom. Cooper prefers making CGI glamazons whose artificial beauty nonetheless leaves viewers unsettled—and scratching their heads as to why. Perry, meanwhile, juxtaposes her digital portraits with visual and spoken reminders that all representation is political. But the unnerving avatars they all create have art-historical precedent. Funerary masks and Victorian hair mementos come to mind: the uncanny, morbid objects that result when people try to cling to the likenesses of loved ones. At one point in *IT'S IN THE GAME*, Sandy scrolls through the video-game's avatars of old teammates, occasionally sharing college memories via a voice-over. Listening to him, you can't help but feel the vastness of the gulf between lived experience and the visual artifacts that linger on.

If Perry's show is a glitchy screenshare of a dream about humans and relics and their digitized fates, her insistence on tying futurism to present-day politics delivers a grounded reminder: Though we'd prefer to focus on technological advancements that lead to a radical new world, they just as often pave the way for a scalable status quo. (Think of automation aggravating the wealth gap, or artificial intelligence amplifying hidden racial biases.) As such, the transporters and galactic missions of sci-fi might be distractions—red herrings. Instead, our digitally augmented future fates will hinge most urgently on the conversations about race, gender, and class that are already happening now.

SONDRA PERRY
Bridget Donahue Gallery
99 Bowery, 2nd Floor
bridgetdonahue.nyc
646-896-1368
Through February 25

Annie Godfrey Larmon, “Looks Just Like You: Sondra Perry @ Bridget Donahue”, *Topical Cream*, February 19, 2018, <http://topicalcream.info/editorial/looks-just-like-you-sondra-perry-bridget-donahue/>.

2.19.2018

LOOKS JUST LIKE YOU: SONDRA PERRY @ BRIDGET DONAHUE

By Annie Godfrey Larmon

TOPICAL CREAM



IT'S IN THE GAME '17 or Mirror Gag for Vitrine and Projection (Installation), 2017, digital video projection in a room painted Rosco Chroma Key Blue, color, sound (looped).

You are everything, and everything is you. This line from a 1971 twangy soul track by the Stylistics — slowed and pitched to a bass crawl — pours over Sondra Perry’s exhibition at Bridget Donahue. It’s the soundtrack for the show’s centerpiece video *IT'S IN THE GAME '17 or Mirror Gag for Vitrine and Projection*, 2017, and its elliptical chorus cleverly mirrors the paradox around which the show revolves. That is, net neutrality and open-source software have given us unprecedented accessibility to technology, information, and modes of representation, and these make us more agentive than ever, just as they make us more beholden than ever to the interests of capitalism. We know now that the freedoms we find online mask other kinds of subjection and servitude, just like we know this awareness is easy to bury

under a Netflix binge or same-day Amazon order. Perry plants a reminder about the state of things in a song that is such an earworm — it haunts beyond the exhibition. We could recast it: you have everything, and everything has you.

The song itself is aptly melancholic; it coos that no copy, no proxy, can live up to an original. There is melancholy, too, in the Rosco Chroma Key Blue that Perry painted the exhibition's walls. The hue, which has been a dominant element of the artist's output since 2016, is used in film as a temporary background for those added in post-production because it contrasts human skin. While other artists have employed it (or Chroma Key Green) as a shorthand for the utopian possibilities built into the idea that our representation might, in editing, be transported anywhere at any moment, Perry takes on the technology more critically. For her, the Chroma Key operation reduces subjective experience to an equation of figure and ground; it relies on a binary that works against the conditions of understanding identity intersectionally, of taking into account the contextual factors that contribute to what even constitutes a figure. The notion of a groundless subject ignores the inequities of material reality; it makes promises it isn't ready to keep.



Title TK 1, 2018, Spalding universal shot trainer, painted steel, hardware, Acer 17" 4:3 monitor, privacy screen, SD video (looped).

Perry's work often pushes up against the limits of representation in order to surface the ideologies inherent to new technologies, and tools in general. Here, three of the artist's "workstations" — sculptures in which videos play on monitors affixed to athletic machines — are situated against the blue surround. The iterations of these works that appeared in her 2016 exhibition at the Kitchen placed viewers in the seats of rowing machines or bikes — to engage the work, the viewer had to also engage the pursuit of a body that fits a socially-determined ideal. In these works, monitors with privacy screens are installed at irksome heights and angles on "Spalding universal shot trainers" for basketball players, such that the videos are only visible from specific positions. These subject viewers to prescribed bodily dimensions while challenging the "universal" aspect of the training devices.

It seems Perry makes these sculptural works explicitly corporeal to properly foil the ways in which such faulty claims about universalism play out immaterially. The racism and sexism of Silicon Valley go far beyond hiring patterns or AirBnb user profiling, into the very code that supports the virtual reality that has so much democratic promise. Insofar as software engineering is also social engineering, the predilections and prejudices of a largely white male industry recapitulate existing structural inequalities as they create new algorithmic ones. The New York Times reported this month that a recent study shows commercial facial recognition technologies misidentify the gender of "darker-skinned females" 35 percent of the time, while white men are identified 99 percent of the time. This takes metaphors of social invisibility to a whole other level.

Perry places the digital era's problems of visibility, exploitation, and appropriation in a historical continuum in the 16 and a half minute single-channel video *IT'S IN THE GAME '17 or Mirror Gag for Vitrine and Projection*, 2017. The work centers on her twin brother, whose likeness and physical statistics were licensed, without his consent and without compensation, by the NCAA to the video game developer EA Sports when he was a college basketball player at Georgia Southern University. Footage of her brother, pictured in a small inset video feed, describing the personalities and performances of each of his teammates while Perry scrolls through their avatars in the EA Sports game is interleaved with iPhone video of the twins roaming around the Arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas departments at the MET and the British Museum. They take selfies and navigate online databases of objects that were themselves likely acquired dubiously.



Title TK 1, 2018, Spalding universal shot trainer, painted steel, hardware, Acer 17" 4:3 monitor, privacy screen, SD video (looped).

The video opens with an out-of-focus image of the twins as children. They are overlaid with objects, rendered in 3D and in Chroma Key Blue, sourced from these encyclopedic museum collections. The digital representations spin, seemingly adrift in some ahistorical limbo and ripe for the taking. A cheesy voiceover of an American simulating AI tells us of the provenance of the originals: one of these objects is Hoa Hakananai'a, an Easter Island moai looted by the crew of the H.M.S. Topaze in 1868 and presented to Queen Victoria, who then gifted it to the British Museum. Perry emphasizes the whitewashing performed by the institutionalization of these objects; she challenges the notion that some virtue of the museum could eradicate the violence of their capture. It's worth noting, too, that she includes the logos of Henie Onstad Kunstsenter, Oslo, and the ICA in Philadelphia in her video, making explicit the institutions that support her own assessment of cultural appropriation and colonization. In a similar gesture, the artist's twin brother is pictured later in the video playing the game in which his ill-obtained avatar is featured.

In the video's final scene, we see what looks like a screengrab from a Wikipedia image entry whose caption reads, "Triumphal procession into Paris of art looted by Napoleon from Italy in 1797. The Horses of Saint Mark in the centre, themselves taken from Constantinople in 1204, were returned to Italy in 1815." It throws into relief the more benign-seeming prospect of digital colonization. Sculptures can be returned to a rightful owner, but what would reparations for image use look like? How might one return a likeness?

“Sondra Perry”, *The New Yorker*, February 8, 2018.

THE NEW YORKER

ART GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

Sondra Perry

By painting the walls of her ingenious show chroma-key blue (used in videos as a placeholder for backgrounds added in post-production), Perry suggests that her viewers might be on camera. In other words, the way we live now, every room that we enter could become a set, whether we like it or not. In the show’s central video work, the young New Jersey artist explores the dystopian predicament of her twin brother, who discovered that his animated likeness had been used as a video-game avatar, after a developer licensed the images of college basketball players without their consent. His story unfolds alongside footage of the siblings touring the Met and the British Museum. Perry superimposes spinning artifacts from the institutions’ African and Oceanic collections throughout the piece, as a robot reads the colonialist details of their acquisition. Perry’s lyrical, unpolished use of 3-D-modelling software, a key element of her D.I.Y.-cyborg aesthetic, lends her insights into racial politics an uncanny and timely power.

Natasha Marie Llorens, "Sondra Perry", *Art Agenda*, January 31, 2018 <http://www.art-agenda.com/reviews/sondra-perry/>.

art agenda

by NATASHA MARIE LLORENS

January 31, 2018

Sondra Perry

BRIDGET DONAHUE, New York

January 7–February 25, 2018

For Sondra Perry's solo exhibition at Bridget Donahue, New York, all the walls are painted Rosco Chroma Key Blue. The deeply saturated color is used on television sets and in the production of special effects for movies and videogames because it contrasts so profoundly with most human skin colors. Chroma Key Blue is the obverse of the color of being, Sondra Perry pointed out to me at the opening. No human skin exists in an adjacent shade, and so it can be used as the negative space onto which context for any body can be manufactured and projected. The color of ultimate negativity, or the absence of existence.

Perry's interest in the condition of visibility is influenced in part by Simone Browne's *Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness* (2015), which analyzes the way people of color are visualized using surveillance technologies and, through this visualization, de-humanized.(1) Browne traces the containment of blackness from basic technologies, such as branding and lantern laws, to more technically advanced forms used in contemporary policing.

Black bodies are often represented in the aforementioned visualization techniques against a ground very similar to Rosco Chroma Key Blue: one of the conditions of their visibility since slavery has been that they can be infinitely removed from their own narrative, and infinitely available for the historical demands of



white hegemonic discourse. Perry's recursive use of Chroma Key colors in the broader body of her work is a reminder that technologies of containment are composed of sometimes very simply rendered binary distinctions between the body and its contextualizing narrative, or the lack thereof.

Set against the blue non-space are modular black metal frames of human size and girth that Perry calls "workstations." The frames are made from athletic equipment, the function of which is to model defensive players during basketball practice. The forms are typically configured to have their "arms" out wide or up high to help train players to dodge and weave, like semiotic "enemies." Perry has positioned the limbs of these figures idiosyncratically and equipped each with a monitor partially masked from view with a privacy screen. On each screen, she has rendered a different fragmented view of a body in 3D, creating the impression that the frames are possessed of an uncanny interiority. They have abandoned their role as the hostile props in someone else's game. They have gone rogue against an infinite digital landscape.

On a large screen that hangs at an angle in the far corner of the gallery—like the scoreboard at a sports event—Perry draws four distinct genealogies of representation together through the video *IT'S IN THE GAME '17 or Mirror Gag for Vitrine and Projection* (2017). A sequence of out-of-focus family snapshots of herself and her twin Sandy as happy children in the rich red and brown color palette of the 1980s serves as background to spinning, homeless figurines rendered in the ubiquitous Chroma Key Blue; they are silhouettes of cultural

artifacts from the exhibits on Africa, Oceania, and the Americas at the Metropolitan Museum in New York and the British Museum in London. Here the figure, not the ground, is fantasized as malleable.

There is also footage of the siblings at each museum looking at the artifacts in person as an impossibly cheerful voice gives a rendition of meaning and provenance for each thing. There is a shot of the flat space of a gray spatialization software program that allows users to plot video footage as 3D planes. But the conceptual center of the video is an image of the digital locker room and basketball court of a video game produced by EA Sports using data acquired from the NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) accompanied by a video feed of Sandy Perry narrating the lives of each player whose statistics he recognizes tucked into one corner of the frame.

Sandy played college basketball on a scholarship. His likeness and vital statistics—even his own name—were used to create a videogame avatar. Neither he nor the other athletes featured in the game were consulted or remunerated, even though EA Sports paid the NCAA for their physical data, a transgression for which the players sued the NCAA in response and received a settlement. Sandy is shown scrolling through the videogame menu in which he appears and, at Perry's request, fleshes out the people these statistics are meant to represent. "This one was a great guy, on and off the court." "This other one was Polish and there was a lot of conflict between them"—Sandy utters subtle affirmations of the humanity of the digitally rendered athletes rotating slowly on screen in a simulated locker room.

The point seems straightforward: her brother's body and those of his college teammates are decontextualized before being rendered as props in space of display, a space that Perry suggests is analogous to the universal gray space of the rendering software, or the totalizing and progressive logic of "universal" institutions like the Met and the British Museum. All four pretend to represent the infinite dimension of the human being from an institutional or algorithmic perspective, and yet each is riven with ideological violence, especially in their assumed prerogative to decontextualize black and brown life without consent or negotiated justification.

Perry is working against a very long material history of objectification. Yet what is striking in the video, as in the workstations, is the degree to which a trace of being remains lodged in the decontextualized things she renders. There is enough information in the EA Sports videogame rendering of his colleagues that Sandy can recount the outlines of the lives they were abstracted from. When Sandy and Sondra Perry are in the Met in front of the Dendur Temple they can still feel that there is something deeply violent about its dislocation. A trace of that which is uncontainable about human beings persists, even in the negative space of that intense, opaque blue.

(1) Dean Daderko, "Conversations: III Suns: Arthur Jafa and Sondra Perry," *Mousse*, No. 57, February / March 2017.

Will Heinrich, "What to See in New York Art Galleries This Week: Sondra Perry", *The New York Times*, January 24, 2018.

The New York Times



A scene from Sondra Perry's video "IT'S IN THE GAME '17 or Mirror Gag for Vitrine and Projection." Credit Bridget Donahue, New York

Sondra Perry

*Through Feb. 25. Bridget Donahue, 99 Bowery, second floor,
Manhattan; 646-896-1368, bridgetdonahue.nyc.*

Structures of exploitation so ubiquitous as to be effectively invisible are only the beginning in Sondra Perry's latest video. Called "IT'S IN THE GAME '17 or Mirror Gag for Vitrine and Projection," it's a brilliant bricolage of sci-fi meditations on identity, intellectual property and the digital revolution.

It opens with a 3-D rendering of a monumental statue rotating over a montage of blurry photos. The statue is Hoa Hakananai'a, an Easter Island moai looted by the crew of the H.M.S. Topaze in 1868 and presented to Queen Victoria, who presented it in turn to the British Museum. The rendering is in chroma-key blue — an ecstatic, outer-space tone that serves the same function of controlled erasure in postproduction as green-screen green. The photos are childhood snapshots of Ms. Perry and her twin brother, Sandy, who was one of the N.C.A.A. basketball players whose likenesses were pirated, just a few years ago, by the video game company E.A. Sports. The soundtrack is a slowed-down version of the Stylistics' 1971 soul track "You Are Everything."

From there, the video careens through news footage, interviews, the Metropolitan Museum's Temple of Dendur, an actor imitating a synthesized voice and too many other arenas, both real and virtual, to mention. But what ties it all together is a few candid seconds of the artist's own face, alternately gazing into and ignoring the camera as she tries to capture the evasive reality of what it means to be human now, using herself in all her particularity as an example.

WILL HEINRICH

Nora N. Khan, "No Safe Mode", cover feature, *Flash Art*, v. 50, no. 316, September/ October 2017.

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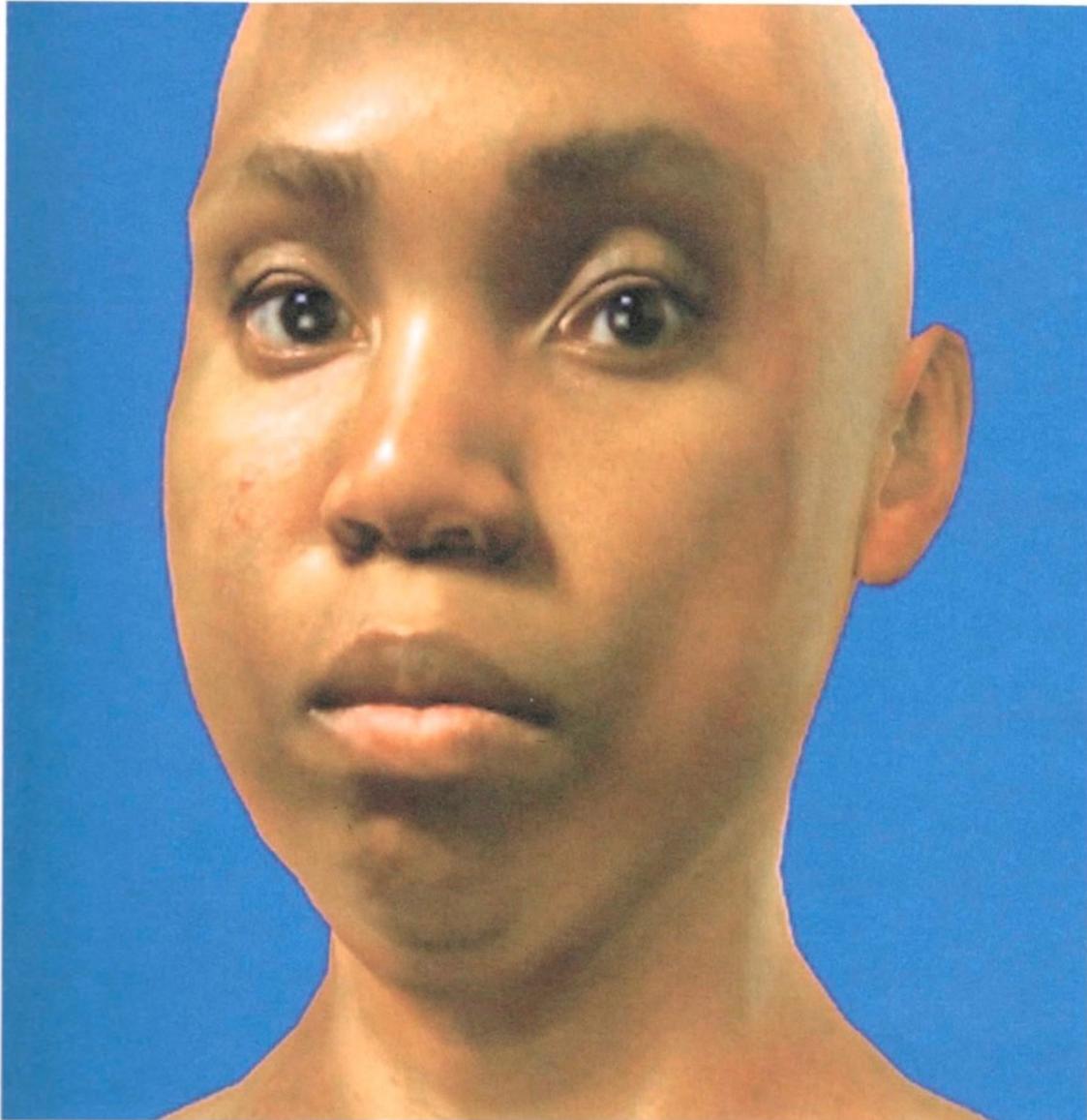
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No Safe Mode

Sondra Perry's Graft and Ash for a Three Monitor Workstation

by Nora N. Khan



“Graft and Ash for a Three Monitor Workstation,” installation view at The Kitchen, New York (2016).
Courtesy of the Artist. Photography by Jason Mandella.

Designers of technology love to propagate the myth of a just world, in which people always get what they deserve.

In erasing the messier and unsolvable elements of social experience that shape subjecthood, technology attempts to frame us as clean and uncomplicated. We become reducible, mapped by a programmable sets of traits with defined, singular meanings. Our digital choices and consumption patterns give a portrait of who we are. We are easily represented by our avatars.

It is cheaper to be a universalist, disavowing structural inequities, abuses of power, the ubiquity of classism, racism, and misogyny. It is easier, traditional, even, to just ignore what we cannot see: trauma, depression, mental illness, chronic pain. It is less agonizing to ignore how environment or oppression or historical lack of opportunities, “factors” that cannot be hacked, reworked, or re-engineered, close doors.

In her video piece *Graft and Ash for a Three Monitor Workstation* (2016) Sondra Perry subtly interrogates and undoes these pervasive technological claims about our ontological position, and our being in the world, stitched into the programs, interfaces, and systems that dominate and organize our lives. Last fall, *Graft and Ash* was part of several video installations within Perry’s first solo institutional show, “Resident Evil,” at The Kitchen, New York. The piece was split across three LCD monitors that were retrofitted atop a bike workstation, painted in electric blue automotive paint.

Fading in, Sondra Perry’s avatar, her face stretched atop a speaking face template, begins to speak. She hovers before an alternating backdrop of Chroma Blue (used in blue screen animation and special effect rendering) and a close up of Perry’s own undulating skin surface in 3D (so detailed it seems to be a surging sea of gold and red and pink). She first intones the details of what we are seeing: the make of the bike workstation, the hexadecimal code of its Pantone paint, the monitor set-up, the Ocean Chill out Music for Relaxation / Meditation / Wellness / Yoga Youtube video playing in the background. Her expression is bemused and warm, searching and curious, looking down at and, it feels, deep into us. The head lolls from side to side, much as we look at ourselves in our front-facing phone cameras. Her voice is relaxing, but still performatively artificial. The viewer relaxes and is primed to be soothed.

“We’re the second version of ourselves that we know of,” she opens, her face captured from Sondra’s image, “rendered to her fullest ability,” with limits, as she “could not replicate her fatness in the software that was used to make us.” This instant friction suggests a body living off camera, off screen, forced to exist in a system that does not acknowledge one’s form as a valid type to be represented. Further, standardization of a neutral, normal, good body is ever a reflection of a dominant cultural standard; all these standards end up in code. People using these programs internalize what is neutral, and what is deviation.

That AI is not neutral, objective, or devoid of values is finally gaining widespread traction into debates about the future of AI. Perry here crucially uses AI or rather, its simulation, as a laboratory for mapping out how race and body politics are woefully mechanized. She frames technology as it allows us to dehumanize one another yet again, flattening race history and political context out in favor of a spectrum of slottable “markers” like age, class, and education.[1]

Frequently, the algorithm’s decisions are not mysterious or beautiful, but quite banal, familiar, a tool and platform for reifying inequity. That AI can now make decisions of horrifying and binding effect (who gets a job, a house, insurance), potentially locking people deeper into structural inequity, it seems imperative we question the pure, mathematical objectivity claimed by engineers who also deny white supremacy’s fundamental relationship to capitalism.

In a nine-minute performance, we learn the detailed contours of Perry’s disembodied representation. Ambient, in the background, is the unseen body, both Perry’s and the black body, generally. The avatar changes tone, clear and measured though still pleasantly neutral: did we know, she asks, that attributing success to personal characteristics instead of biased structural systems has a negative impact on the health of black people? People who “both strongly believed that the world was a just place and experienced higher rates of discrimination were more likely to experience higher blood pressure,” chronic illness, and early deaths.

What does it mean for an avatar to ask us to contend with the persistent social fallacy that trauma and oppression are not legible or real? Perry’s face does not quite fit atop the avatar template, so pieces of the substructure, the wireframe, peek through. A second eyelid glimmers at the edge of her eyes, so the effect of an uncanny mask is constant. The center, the structure, does not hold.

The avatar has slips in its “elaborate performance,” which all minorities must implicitly deploy in a racialized society. Some reviews of the exhibition suggest that the avatar “malfunctions” to tell us how it really feels: “Exhausted ... daily, with you n****s all up in our fucking face.” But the breaks are intentional, revealing exactly what is on its creator’s mind. The viewer is turned to remember that these “mistakes in performance” are not shown often in real life, for fear of social retribution. Perry’s avatar notes, wryly, “We are not as helpful or Caucasian as we sound,” marking the exhaustive labor and burden of such performances.

Perry’s avatar cleverly and obliquely reveals how limited our collective imagining of the interiority of others is, by centering hidden feeling, hidden sickness. “Productivity is painful and we haven’t been feeling well,” she says. She is told she should live up to her potential, but “We have no safe mode,” she adds; existing in the world is a matter of constant risk. How to make this risk continuously legible? As in many of her works, Perry suggests a kind of brief respite in abstraction; the film cuts to a ball of her skin, rotating above a grid.

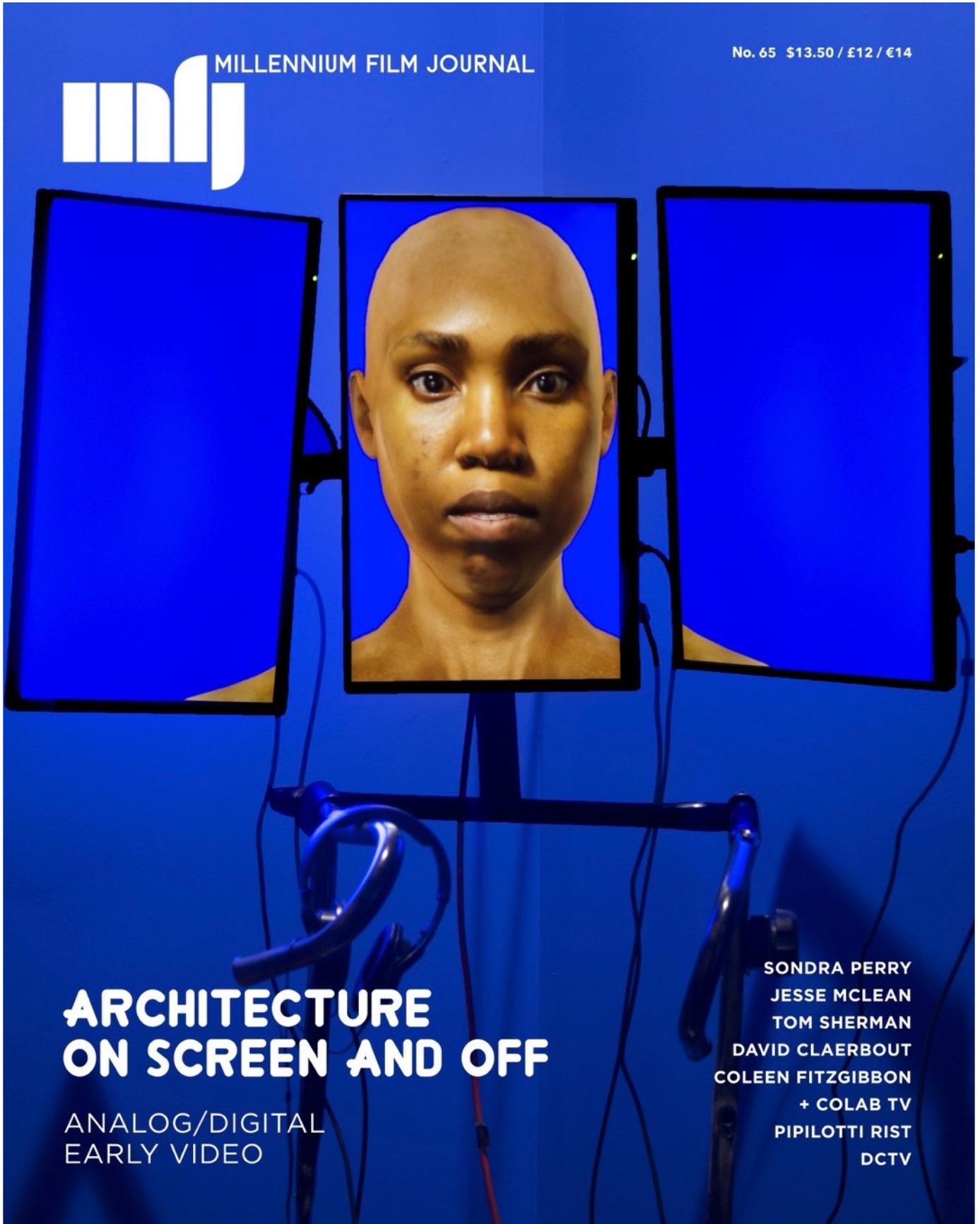
In creating a sustained contrast between who is speaking — the thrown, disembodied voice — and the violence of what is being described — erasure and denial of hidden psychological suffering — the avatar forces us to think about what we cannot see. She also makes us consider what self-care cannot heal. Facials, candles and self-soothing subbass sets on Youtube might soothe traumatic shocks, but it will take more to correct the demand to be a right and good body, meaning, smaller, sweeter, never-exhausted, chipper, light in tone, and lighter. “We are a problem to be fixed, and if we resist that problem, we will be made a problem to be fixed,” she concludes.

She doesn’t assume that the listener is complicit in these structures, asking, “How many jobs do you have? How is your body? How does your body feel inside of us?” The viewer then considers how her own body registers inside of these systems, inside of software, if at all. This is a strong embodied critique of industries that try to engineer good health through self-care. It is an even broader indictment of the core of both neoliberal ideology and conservative politics, which absents institutions, society, of responsibility for anti-black racism, police brutality, and mass incarceration, and demands victims carry their pain as a fated curse, a mark of their own moral failing, ever irredeemable.

Nora Khan is a writer of criticism and fiction, focusing on issues within digital art, the philosophy of technology, electronic music, and artificial intelligence.

[1] Bias in AI was the central theme of the AI Now Symposium held at MIT this past summer, is to be the focus of the new AI Ethics and Governance Initiative backed by the ACLU, and is on the minds of many activists in the field. The surge in focus stems in part from a recent report by Brian Resnick, which showed that artificial intelligence learns to associate “African-American” with unpleasant word clusters, gleaned from training on views delivered online.

Soyoung Yoon, "Beware the Light: Figure Versus Ground, White Versus Black (Blue), or: Sondra Perry's Blue Room and Technologies of Race", *Millenium Film Journal*, No. 65 (2017): 30-37.



MILLENNIUM FILM JOURNAL

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ARTICLES

SOYOUNG YOON

“And in the theater, I want to change my seat / Just so I can step onto everybody’s feet.”² We could argue that artist Sondra Perry offers another type of modern exhibition space to display her moving images—from the black box of the cinema theater, the white cube of the museum or the gallery, to now “the blue room.” For Perry’s exhibitions at The Kitchen in New York City (*Resident Evil*, November 2–December 10, 2016) and at the Squeaky Wheel Film & Media Art Center in Buffalo, NY (*flesh out*, January 20–April 1, 2017), the walls of the gallery are painted a bright, matte shade of blue—precisely, chroma-key blue—citing a post-production technique primarily for removing and replacing a blue or green screen with a different background. In Perry’s “blue room,” there is also a roving Roomba vacuum-cleaner, which carries on its back a set of photocopied zines of theoretical texts. It circles the space of the gallery, moving in-between artworks and at times brushing up against or bumping into our feet. After seeing Perry’s exhibition, we might be reminded of the “rogue Roomba” that somehow switched itself on, rolled onto

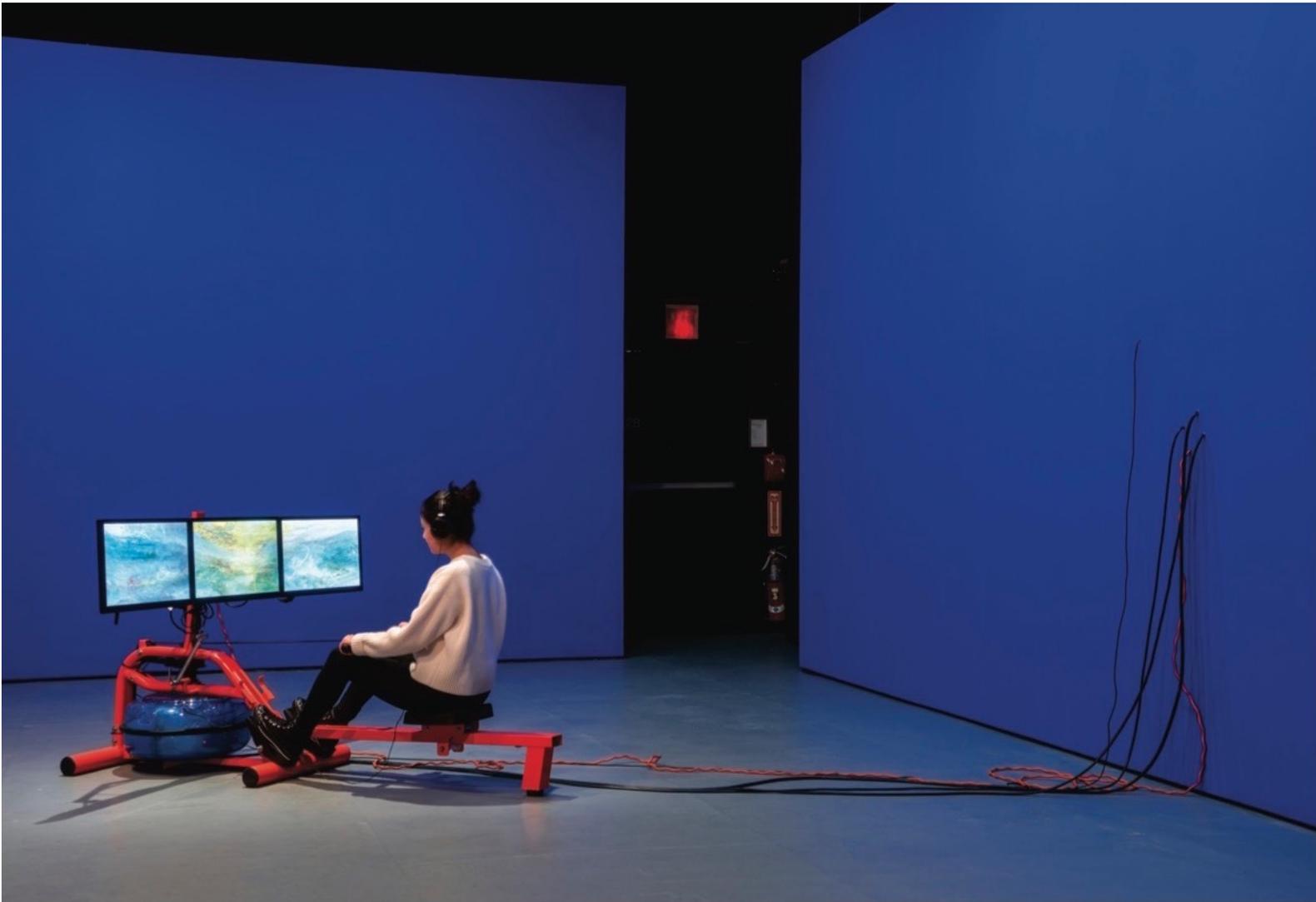
¹ This is a revised and expanded version of an essay published on-line in tandem with Sondra Perry’s exhibition *flesh out* at the Squeaky Wheel Film & Media Art Center (January 20–April 1, 2017).

² Eartha Kitt, “I Want to be Evil,” YouTube video, 3:02 minutes, posted by mrfnk on Nov.16, 2008 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SS02GeKuWQ4>, included in video for Sondra Perry’s moving image installation *Resident Evil* (2016), accessed 11 February 2017.

For further citations and references, please access <http://www.mfj-online.org/yoona-beware-notes-citations/>

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Sondra Perry, *Resident Evil* (2016), The Kitchen, installation view.
All photos by Jason Mandella, courtesy the artist.



a hot plate, and set itself ablaze. Reports spoke of the smoke damage—"everything is black"—which forced its owners out of the comforts of their home.³

The reference to the chroma-key blue of digital world-making speaks to fantasies of space travel: the possibility of positioning a subject against any background, in any place, every place, particularly amidst the darkness of the night sky or deep space. The blue screen, because of its low-luminosity, functions as an especially effective placeholder for the black void of outer space, its infinite nothingness. Perry's "blue room" then would seem to be an extension of cinema's black box as a quasi-sensory

deprivation chamber, which seeks to negate the mobility of the viewer's body and to deprive or rather suppress their sense of the immediacy of their surroundings, so as to project the viewer into the narrative space of the film on screen: "I" am "free" of the determinations of my body, as worlds move around me, for me. In the context of new scholarship returning to the problematic of the cinematographic apparatus, art historian Noam M. Elcott argues for the historical significance of "artificial darkness." As a complement to modernity's conquering of the dark with artificial light, a controlled production of darkness as technology is deployed specifically to create "spacelessness," a suspension of

Sondra Perry, *Resident Evil* (2016), The Kitchen, installation view featuring *Wet and Wavy Looks—Typhoon coming on for a Three Monitor Workstation* (2016), video, rowing machine workstation, Eco styler gel.

corporeality in the theater, for the fusion of the physical space of bodies and the virtual space of images.⁴ However, the possibilities of the blue room (or green room) technique depend upon the sharpness of the contrast between the subject in the foreground and the background, that is, upon the subject's capacity to separate and define itself as a figure *against* the ground. Subject versus Background. Figure versus Ground. Light versus Dark. White versus Black (Blue)...What then of subjectivities—and bodies—that do not seem to possess the stabilized configuration of an "I"? What then for the figure that is diffuse, diasporic, both one and many, localized in neither *a* body or *an* identity? What then of the flesh?

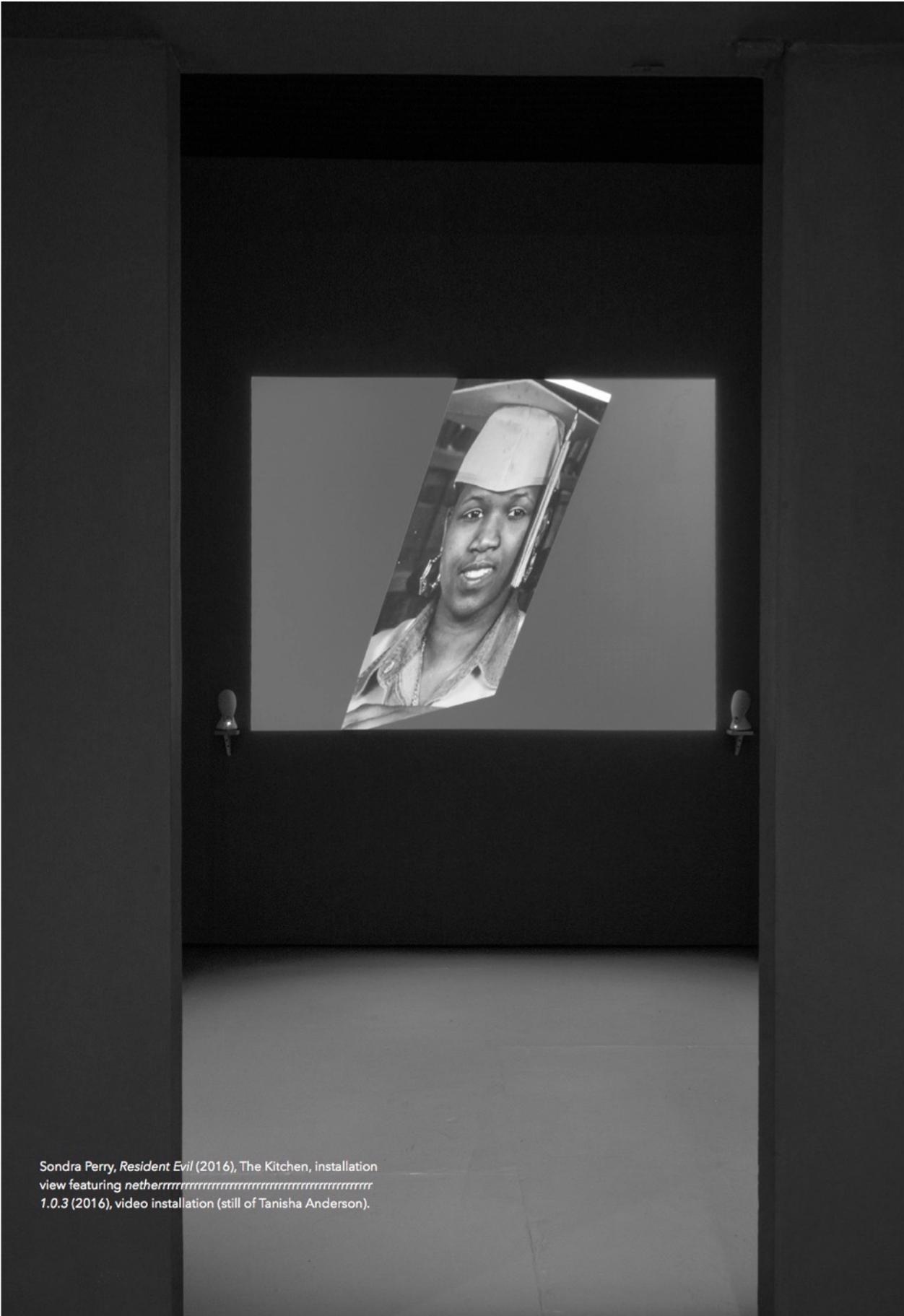
Recent scholarship attests to the historic instability of photographing or filming dark skin in color.⁵ The very technology of color photography had been developed with white skin as norm, blowing out the varying tones and textures of darker skin, rendering it at times inseparable from the background, as if the illegibility of blackness was but a technical error. Technology *is* ideology. In the late 1970s, while on assignment in Mozambique, filmmaker Jean-Luc Godard famously refused to use Kodak film for its inherent, built-in "racism." In his 2016-17 retrospective exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art—which coincided with Perry's own exhibitions in NY—Kerry James Marshall critiques film's norms of color calibration with a self-portrait of the artist shot under a black light bulb. The ultraviolet radiation submerges the scene in a dark blue hue that highlights his white shirt with a brilliant, fluorescent light but renders the artist's black skin even more indiscernible at first glance. The photograph compels us to look and look again, and again, to be able to grasp the lines, figures, curves, and depth, of the darkness of the blue.

At the Met, Marshall's challenge for viewers to recalibrate our ways of seeing, to shift our attention away from the reflective luminosity of whiteness, is made all the more devastating—and necessary—as *Black Artist (Studio View)* (2002) is displayed immediately adjacent to, as if facing off, another work from the same year, *Heirlooms and Accessories* (2002). The triptych of prints display three white women's faces, picked out and pointed up against a white background, by the circular, ornate frames of gold pendants. The women look back at us, as our eyes slowly start seeing—and recognizing—the faint yellow figures that emerge from the background, the whited-out bodies of two young black men hanging from a tree and the tightly-packed, respectfully-dressed, genteel white crowd gathered underneath them, the

ghosting of the infamous night scene from Lawrence Beitler's iconic 1930 photograph of the lynching of Thomas Shipp and Abram Smith, which circulated as a souvenir postcard, a trophy, an heirloom.⁶ The prints body forth the deadliness of the light exploding from the photographer's flash bulb, tethering it to the complicity of the women's look, their look back at the camera, their look at us, as well as to the smiles of that initial crowd of viewers. They are all components of a scene staged explicitly as a spectacle to be seen. What then of our own looking as viewers? Also, what of the all-too-familiar recurrence of that spectacle, now illuminated not with flash powder but the blue light from our electronic devices, the pervasive glow of our television or computer screens, smartphones, video surveillance cameras? Beware the light.

In Perry's *nether* video-projection series, the chroma-key blue also appears as "the blue screen of death," an error screen that is displayed with fatal system errors or crashing of Windows computer operating systems. Through the automated voice of an avatar modeled after Perry's likeness, the video superimposes "the blue screen of death" with references to "the blue wall of silence," the unwritten code that police officers do not report on each other, via tactics of harassment, intimidation, false testimony, and silence—fatal system errors that are not so much aberrations ("a bad apple") as a constitutive necessity of the system as such. The video cuts from a newly-viral video of the Windows 95 launch to police training videos circulated on-line. The riveting awkwardness of Bill Gates dancing on-stage with his fellow chino-wearing engineers is interwoven with the hyped-up virility of police training for a raid in their military-style gear and weaponry. "If you start me up, I'll never stop." In the original source video for the Windows 95 launch, the engineers are attempting to dance along to the Rolling Stone's 1981 song, *Start It Up*. "Never stop, never, never, never stop / Tough me up / Never stop, never stop / You, you, you make a grown man cry / you, you make a dead man come..."⁷ Both performances of technologized masculinity appear wildly, fatally out-of-synch—*what's going on?*—culminating in a punctuating series of photographs of black women killed in police custody, each photograph cutting across the chroma-key blue screen as a rotating image window.

In Perry's work, the difficult, fraught relation to the first-person singular nominative case personal pronoun "I"—as a form of political subjectivity, of narrative agency, of being—is evidenced



Sondra Perry, *Resident Evil* (2016), *The Kitchen*, installation view featuring *nether*.....
1.0.3 (2016), video installation (still of Tanisha Anderson).

skin, that overdetermined site for the “fact” of blackness, becomes flesh, in all its fluidity, viscosity, and sensuality of being. It spills over, spreads out and in ceaseless movement, constantly folding into and out of the background, rendering the ground itself into a figure of sorts. The ground moves, like the sea. In the video for *Wet and Wavy Looks—Typhoon coming on for a Three Monitor Workstation*, Perry animates an extreme close-up of the sea in J.M.W. Turner’s 1840 painting of the *Zong* massacre from 1781, where the British slave ship *Zong*’s captain drowned 133 slaves in order to claim compensation for these “goods” under the salvage clause of the ship’s insurance policy. (Another ten slaves threw themselves overboard in what the ship’s captain later described as an act of defiance.) Through the animating close-up, Perry draws out the texture of brush strokes, the swell and dissipation of waves, the morph, warp, mutation of the sea-as-flesh, the hurried blur.

To see videos such as *Wet and Wavy Looks* or *Ashes for Three Monitor Workstation*, we sit in rowing machines, exercise bikes, or treadmills, advertised as “workstations,” but here transformed into infernal machines from which to view Perry’s videos. The machines have ill-fitting seats, the pedals are flipped, and the effort to produce “a healthier, better you” is further impeded by Eco Styler hair styling gel, as if to underscore the fatigue—the futility—of the *desire* to be a productive subject of capital, a good subject of the state. In *Ashes*, Perry’s likeness appears as an ill-fitting avatar—“Sondra’s body type was not an accessible pre-existing template”—and its automated voice speaks of the absurd, even fatal, exhaustion of such desires, such wishful thinking. Indeed, it is the very philosophy of policing behavior (“broken windows theory”), which has been the motor for expanding the scope and intensity of the surveillance of particular communities, exposing the entire community to a harsh, punitive light, where every move, every gesture could become probable cause.¹¹ For one of the most recent plans by the City of New York to make neighborhoods safer, floodlights have been installed around public-housing units, as part of a new strategy called “Omnipresence.” Critics have pointed out the abrasiveness of the lights and their loud, continued hum, their disruption of sleep, of rest. The historian Simone Browne emphasizes the continuity of Omnipresence with eighteenth century “lantern laws” that required slaves to carry a lit candle after dark, technology-as-prosthesis: the black body as cyborg.¹²

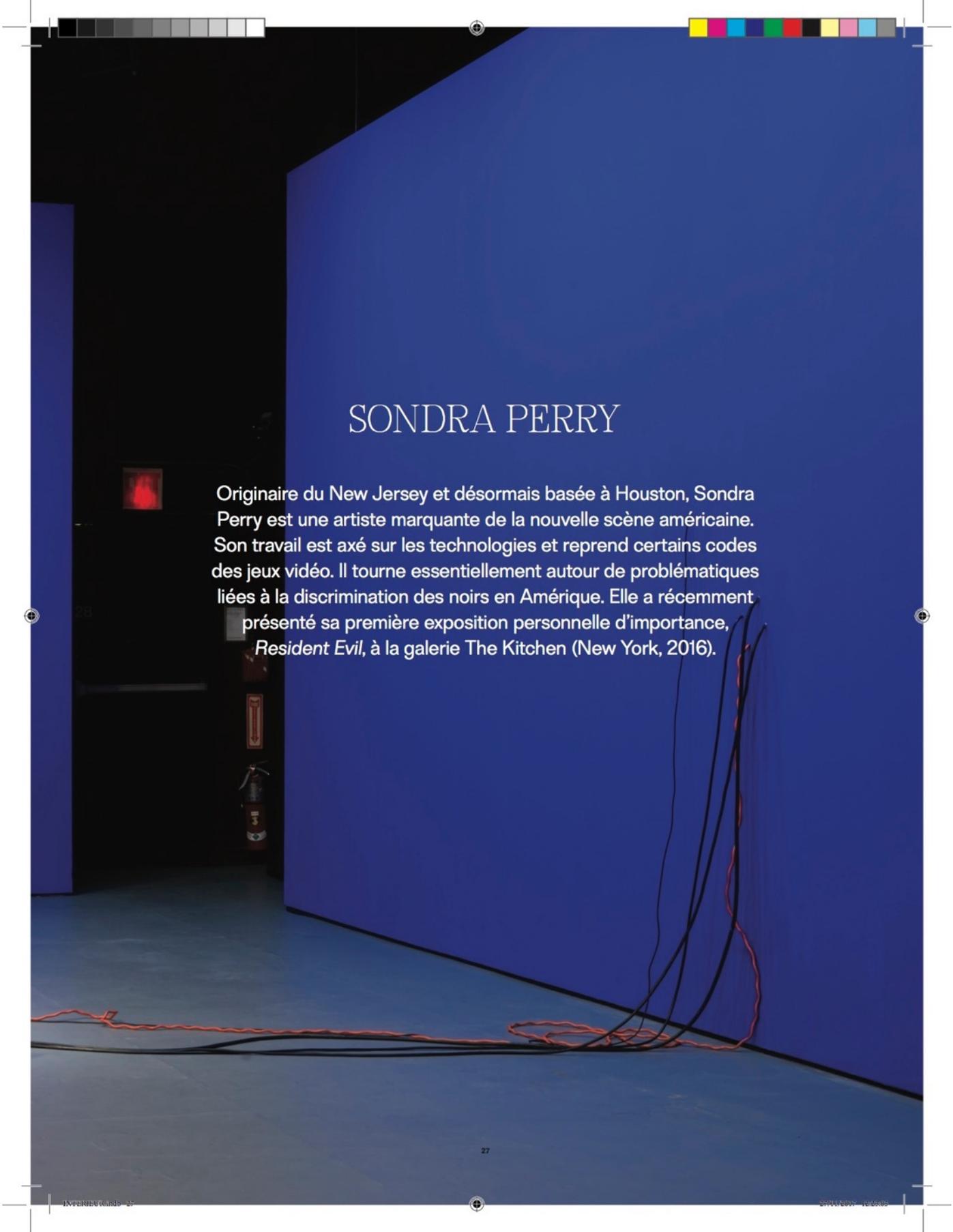
“I wanna be evil,” we hear Kitt sing. We could also recall Bertolt Brecht’s description of a police chief’s fitful dreaming, where, amidst the hallucinatory fumes of fear and bad conscience, the tentative stirrings of the people are envisioned as a flood. “Once it has begun, it never ceases ... they fill everything, like water, they seep through everything, like water, they have no substance. Of course, the police throw themselves against them, of course, batons are flying, but what’s this? They strike right through the bodies...”¹³ Brecht adds, “Such dreams have consequences.” In Perry’s blue room, we ascertain the force, the urgency of that flood.

Angelo Careri, "Formes", *Interieur*, November 27, 2017.

FORMES

LE JEU VIDÉO EST DEVENU DURANT CETTE DERNIÈRE DÉCENNIE UN TERRAIN D'EXPÉRIMENTATION
ET DE RÉFLEXION INÉPUISABLE POUR LA SCÈNE ARTISTIQUE CONTEMPORAINE. PORTRAITS D'ARTISTES
QUI EN ONT FAIT UN MOYEN D'EXPRESSION PRIVILÉGIÉ.





SONDRA PERRY

Originaire du New Jersey et désormais basée à Houston, Sonda Perry est une artiste marquante de la nouvelle scène américaine. Son travail est axé sur les technologies et reprend certains codes des jeux vidéo. Il tourne essentiellement autour de problématiques liées à la discrimination des noirs en Amérique. Elle a récemment présenté sa première exposition personnelle d'importance, *Resident Evil*, à la galerie The Kitchen (New York, 2016).

L'art de Sondra Perry est un subtil mélange entre formes abstraites et engagement politique. Entrer dans l'une de ses expositions, c'est pénétrer dans un espace peuplé d'écrans bleus et d'étranges machines orange qui tiennent du juste milieu entre le vélo d'appartement et la borne d'arcade. Ces dispositifs — par exemple un « rameur » de salon où l'eau, dans le dispositif de résistance censé simuler la pression du courant sur l'aviron, a été remplacée par du gel coiffant — sont associés à des moniteurs où sont diffusées en boucle des vidéos qui semblent tenir à la fois du poste de contrôle et de l'instrument de torture. *Graft and Ash for a Three Monitor Workstation* (2016) met par exemple le spectateur, juché sur un vélo, face à un avatar virtuel de l'artiste composé de polygones et de textures imparfaites. S'adressant au spectateur avec un ton calme et désincarné, il lui explique par quels procédés il a été réalisé et animé, avant d'évoquer une étude sociologique démontrant que les noirs américains croyant à la notion de « monde juste » (dans lequel le bien est récompensé) sont beaucoup plus sujets que les autres aux maladies chroniques. Son discours est entrecoupé d'extraits de vidéos YouTube montrant des exorcismes de petites filles noires et de nappes de textures magmatiques.

Le montage d'objets ou de corps modélisés en 3d avec des extraits de vidéos trouvées sur YouTube est caractéristique du travail de Sondra Perry. Ces éléments, souvent, « flottent » sur des fonds bleus qui évoquent non seulement les procédés de l'incrustation vidéo, mais aussi le « blue screen of death » caractéristique l'OS Windows et de ses erreurs fatales. Dans une série de vidéos intitulées *Netherrr* (2016), l'artiste souligne le fait que cette expression est également utilisée par les policiers américains pour désigner une forme de code d'honneur qui prône l'omerta en cas de comportement inapproprié de la part d'un collègue en service, comme c'est le cas lors de bavures. Une autre vidéo, *Resident Evil* (2016), présentée lors de l'exposition du même nom, développe le même type

de montage parallèle. D'un côté, des extraits d'une vidéo montrent un militant noir prenant à parti un journaliste de Fox News lors d'une manifestation suite au décès de Freddie Gray, un jeune noir mort aux mains de la police de Baltimore. De l'autre, une séquence tournée en vue à la première personne par l'artiste elle-même. Elle y sillonne un quartier résidentiel du New Jersey dont elle est originaire, désert en pleine nuit, avant de s'introduire chez ses propres parents. Avec en fond des thèmes angoissants extraits des bandes sons d'*Alien* et de *Predator*, le dispositif est une référence évidente aux itérations modernes du *survival horror*. Il évoque également le *first-person shooter*, mais aussi les caméras que portent en permanence les officiers de la police américaine sur leur poitrine durant leur service.

Le décor — un quartier résidentiel américain très banal —, filmé avec une caméra en vision nocturne, évoque en effet très précisément un certain types d'images qui circulent désormais de plus en plus à chaque nouvelle bavure policière. Par la suite, une fois introduite dans la maison de famille, l'artiste arrive dans son salon, où la télévision retransmet un clip télévisuel d'Eartha Kitt, l'une des premières célébrités noires de la chanson américaine, interprétant *I want to be evil*. Se met alors en place un jeu ironique et macabre où la « blackness », couleur de peau, devient couleur de la nuit et couleur du mal, au sein d'un dispositif qui évoque le film de zombies. Dans l'imaginaire de l'Amérique blanche, le noir est une créature presque surnaturelle et dangereuse par définition. L'artiste semble également suggérer que le « blue screen » est l'équivalent virtuel de la « blackness » : à la fois car le « blue screen of death » happe les noirs victimes de la police dans des limbes bleues d'oubli — les erreurs fatales de la police ne sont jamais reconnues et ne font qu'enclencher des redémarrage du système —, mais aussi parce que l'image fantasmée et projetée sur les corps noirs fonctionne comme une incrustation vidéo.



Installation Resident Evil (The Kitchen NY, photographe : Jacom Mandella) — 2016



Excerpt of a video it's in the game www.sandsperry.com - 2017

can you do it one more time?



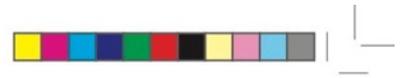
Installation: Resident Evil (The Kitchen NY, photographs: Jacob Muroffs - 2010)

WOULD HAPPEN, AND I DON'T
REMEMBER POINTING DOWN
THE BARRELS WHERE SHE WAS
HIDING.
DO YOU REMEMBER WHY SHE'D
ARRANGED?



Extrait de la vidéo 13 in the game www.easports.com - 2013





Un autre travail vidéo plus récent, *It's in the game* (2017), se réfère plus directement encore au médium jeu vidéo et à la question de la représentation des noirs dans les espaces virtuels. Là aussi, la méthode consiste à mettre en parallèle des procédés propres à la technologie (modélisation d'objets, création d'avatars numériques) et des « faits divers » impliquant différentes formes de discrimination. L'espace virtuel devient alors un lieu où l'exclusion sociale et politique se répercute à travers des formes en apparence abstraites : textures 3d, écrans bleus correspondant à des espaces faussement neutres d'apparition de corps virtuels, etc.

It's in the game présente ainsi des images filmées par Sondra Perry, accompagnée d'un ami basketteur professionnel, au Metropolitan Museum of Art. La visite du musée se focalise autour d'œuvres liées à un héritage colonial : masques amérindiens, antiquités ramenées d'Égypte, etc. Des modélisations en 3d de ces œuvres, réalisées par l'artiste, sont intégrées au montage. Des formes esthétiques ayant été transférées de force d'un espace dans un autre, dans le contexte d'une domination économique et politique, sont à donc nouveau transférées par l'artiste dans un autre espace, virtuel et faussement « libre ». Le MET, depuis quelques années, numérise en effet massivement ses collections sur un espace en ligne dédié et gratuit. Une mission culturelle prétendument désintéressé et philanthrope, qui masque en réalité les enjeux politiques propres à l'histoire même de l'invention du musée comme espace d'exhibition de trophées coloniaux, et aujourd'hui, dans un contexte postcolonial et globalisé, comme rouage essentiel des politiques de *soft power*.

La visite au MET est ensuite mise en parallèle, dans cette même vidéo, avec un scandale lié à la modélisation des joueurs de la ligue NBA dans la série de jeux de basket *NBA 2k* d'EA Sport (le titre de la vidéo, *It's in the game*, reprend d'ailleurs le slogan de cet éditeur). L'ami basketteur qui accompagne

Sondra Perry n'était en effet pas présent par hasard. Dans une autre séquence, face à un écran du jeu *NBA 2k* qui montre la composition de son ancienne équipe, les Georgia Southern Eagles, il décrit chacun de anciens coéquipiers — qui sont tous noirs — tels qu'il les a connus dans la réalité : performances sportives, souvenirs personnels, etc. Pour lui, ils sont parfaitement reconnaissables à l'écran, alors même leurs véritables noms ont été effacés à cause d'un conflit autour du droit à l'image et des licences sportives. Comme le musée, le jeu vidéo a donc transféré les corps et l'apparence de basketteurs noirs, sans leur réel consentement, dans un espace virtuel. L'opération revient à leur conférer une valeur symbolique et économique, dont pour la majorité d'entre eux, ils ne profiteront pas.

It's in the game est un bon exemple de comment l'art engagé de Sondra Perry, de façon particulièrement frappante, déplace l'expérience sociale dans des univers formalistes. La réflexion — attendue mais malheureusement incontournable — sur la possibilité même d'une contestation dans le cadre institutionnel idéologiquement ambigu de la galerie, est donc ici amenée avec particulièrement d'habileté. Sondra Perry travaille sur des espaces dont l'apparence vacuité, loin d'être synonyme de liberté et de possibles, est au contraire vecteur d'exclusion. C'est la preuve que l'art abstrait est loin d'avoir dit son dernier mot, et que si l'avènement de nouvelles technologies est aujourd'hui avant tout synonyme de nouvelles techniques de pouvoir, il est aussi à l'origine de mutations esthétiques.

Angelo Careri

Dean Daderko, "Conversations: III Suns: Arthur Jafa and Sondra Perry", *Mousse Magazine*, No. 57, February/ March 2017.

MOUSSE

CONVERSATIONS Mousse 57

III Suns: Arthur Jafa and Sondra Perry

by Dean Daderko



Sondra Perry, *Young Women Sitting and Standing and Talking and Stuff (No, No, No)*, 2015, performed by Joiiri Minaya, Victoria Udondian, and Ilana Harris-Babou at The Miriam & Ira D. Wallach Art Gallery, New York, 2015. Courtesy: the artist. Photo: the artist

Arthur Jafa and Sondra Perry recently mounted astounding and important solo exhibitions in New York. Jafa's searing and prescient short video *Love Is the Message, The Message Is Death*, presented at Gavin Brown's enterprise's new space in Harlem, and Sondra Perry's intense and perversely humorous *Resident Evil* at The Kitchen were both deeply affecting for me on the strength of their shared interests in Blackness and the illuminating ways in which they smartly address the conditions in which Black folks find themselves socially, politically, and physically today. Given the precarious and dangerous situation of people of color—in the United States and further abroad—voices like Jafa's and Perry's shed an urgent and necessary light on what are feeling like increasingly dark times.

ARTHUR JAJA: One of the things that I found really interesting about your show, Sondra, is how you combine formal and political elements. And there's another sense too—the visceral. You introduce a lot of gratifications of the flesh. Yeah, there's techno savvy, and technology and media, but my impression was, "Wow, this is very Vodun, digging peoples' bodies up and reanimating them."

SONDRA PERRY: It's really complex. I've been thinking through how to represent different, simultaneous points of view in my work. In my recent video *Resident Evil* (2016), I included Fox News footage where you see lots of people shooting footage on their phones of Gerardo Rivera's live broadcast from Baltimore during the recent uprisings there. And there's a citizen journalist who also uses this footage. Then there's the Fox broadcast itself. I'm sticking these things together to establish a ground where I can think through Black being and also come to terms with just what being is.

AJ: Do you see your work as a body? It's a funny term. Is it a body? Or, what's not a body? What's an un-body of work? Your show is literally a re-assemblage. You're putting together something new, like a Frankenstein monster, which introduces a sense of dismemberment.

SP: That's it! I made nonfunctional exercise machines, and animated pictures I took of my skin in a video I projected over an entire wall. I think that the idea of humanness is fundamentally an illusion, and in order to avoid White normativity, I prefer to disassemble my own body. To take my skin, reanimate it into fluid waves, and make exercise machines that have their own artificial intelligence. The machines let you know that if you think you're going to get a workout on them, it's probably not going to happen.

AJ: I met someone in my show at Gavin's who saw my video *Love Is the Message, The Message Is Death*, and talked to me about mobilizing people. He was super charismatic, saying how we've got to take our society back. Even though I'm obsessed with politics, I'm not an activist. There's nothing wrong with it, of

course. And maybe it's even the primary mechanism by which things change in society. But it seems to me that artists operate in a different space—one that's unconscious on a certain level, and symbolic. Black Lives Matter didn't exist as a hashtag prior to Obama becoming president. Black people want a Black president, and we get a Black president, so we assume that this person, because he's statistically Black—whatever that means—is going to look out for the interests of Black people. But Black people are still being shot like dogs during the tenure of a Black president. What does that mean? How do you proceed?

DD: Can you talk about appropriation?

AJ: I feel two ways about it. I've got a lot of video footage in there, a lot of other peoples' stuff, pulled from the Internet. I talked with attorneys who said it was fair use because I was using small clips. It made me think that "fair use" is not the same as "fair." I see a very problematic relationship with criminality comprising ownership in slavery, right? I've got a problematic relationship between law and property. Yeah, I don't want nobody stealing my shit. At the same time, if ain't nobody stealing your shit, your shit probably don't got no value. I'm like, "Well, it's a good sign," a sign that the thing being pirated has some currency. The more your shit has value, the more it's going to be pirated. We're living in a different time and space where technology and the way people use it has completely outrun any kind of Cartesian model that'd keep things orderly. This is a really anarchic moment. They're trying to figure out, even now, how to clamp down on the Internet. It just refuses to be controlled. My friend John Akomfrah said something in an interview that hit me like a ton of bricks because it was such a crystalline articulation of my fundamental methodology. He talked about putting things in an "affective proximity" to one another. That's about as clear as I've heard it. People say, "Oh you cut your video to Kanye's music," but it was like eighty-five percent cut before I even heard his song. I saw him performing "Ultralight Beam" on Saturday Night Live and thought it was amazing, so I downloaded it. I download everything. Anything I like, I download it. I don't even think about it anymore. I also cut out pictures from magazines. It's like, I see something, and want to have it because I may never see it again. It's impulsive. Some people say it's neurotic. Well, my thing is, is it productive?

SP: Right!

AJ: It's kind of like, how are you trying to effect change? I see myself as an undertaker. I'm trying to grab people and say, look, this is what's going on under the surface of things. Don't look away. It's a natural human response to recoil from something you're disturbed by. It's what people do—they pull back. If it's something really hard to see, they'll run away, or turn the page. I've trained myself to do almost the opposite: if something really disturbs me, I absolutely am going to download it. In hip-hop, it's the same thing: you take a thing and do something with it. You don't make a thing. Yeah, these folks are making things, but not usually from the raw material of notes and tones. Hip-hop takes all these given things, these preset blocks, and treats them in a way they weren't necessarily produced or intended to be treated.

SP: That way of inventing a story is part of the reason I started working with my family. I realized that they were really good storytellers. I just think back to being young and listening to the same stories at family events. I'd recognize how those stories would change over the course of ten years or so. It relates to how we move through the world. In one video I recently made with my family I asked them to talk about family histories, but to flip them a little bit, to introduce a tiny bit of fiction. That's what they did the entire weekend we shot. To make a long story short, their contributions changed the entire work. My grandmother told me a story about burying an American flag in her backyard. She said when my aunt went into the military, she started hanging flags in front of her house. She said she'd been taking them down and burying them in the backyard for twenty years. I thought this was so amazing. A few years ago, my grandmother covered most of her backyard with cement, which would have made the flags inaccessible, though there were still some, she said, in the collard green beds.

DD: You included this footage in *Lineage for a Multiple-Monitor Workstation: Number One* (2015), right?

SP: Yes, but that footage was staged. I staged an un-burial because she had the most recent flag under her bed, where she keeps everything: birth certificates, the election of Barack Obama newspaper, all that stuff. My family told me that since it was winter, she was waiting for the ground to get soft to bury it. So we staged an un-burial. When the video was shown, my mom and all of her sisters came to see it. When the un-burial part came up, I said to her, "This is nuts, I can't believe y'all do this." My mom looked at me and said, "We don't." The piece was already done and I'm thinking, "You did what I asked you to do, but without letting me know!" I thought about it for a second, and then asked myself, "Why are you surprised?" It's a survival instinct to elaborate stories this way, and it's so indicative of how we live. It's what Black people do.

AJ: I feel the same way. A Black family is almost like a living readymade. They are readymade. A lot of times people don't quite realize what a resource this can be. Anything you throw at your family, they'll definitely throw it back, and it'll be more complicated when they throw it back at you. It won't be what it's supposed to be. It may not even be true. It may be corrupted. But in terms of how it's corrupted, it can seem even truer.

SP: Definitely! I'm working on a new piece right now about how my mother's company changed all of their employees' desks to a thing called the Uprise system. It's a mechanized standing-desk system. The company's logo says "Join the Uprising!" These clinical office wellness things use wild trademarks and logos. They seem to say, "You're doing better for yourself, you're a revolutionary, you're standing while you work." She said, "But what you don't realize is that standing while you work makes you really tired." And I said, "That's it exactly!" So we're working on a piece that addresses the politics of uplift in relation to the Uprise system. As my family and I are working on these things together, I have to keep reminding folks that this is not just a theoretical understanding of how Black people interact—it's always been this way. I think I got a clearer, more historical understanding of this from reading Simone Brown's book *Dark Matters* (2015). She's talking about surveillance generally, and more specifically about seeing or visualizing Black

folks through certain types of technologies. Lantern laws were one of the first surveillance technologies in the Western world. In her book Brown opens up a space for thinking more fully about being seen, or not being seen, and how this visibility or lack of it is utilized.

AJ: Earlier, I thought you were starting to say something about Black people and technology, and how your work addresses it.

SP: That's exactly what I was getting at.

AJ: It's as if those two things—Black people and technology—are diametrically opposed. It's so clear that this isn't the case, because why wouldn't Black people not just be interested in technology, but also very close or versed in its various uses? In a certain respect, at some point we were the technology. It seems like people always react when they see a Black person with a computer in their hands, like there's something misbegotten about it. Look at Scott Joplin and the player piano, or Jimi Hendrix's guitar: there's never been a moment where we weren't totally preoccupied with technology. And these technologies are the precursors of robotics. It goes back to your idea of things that get used by other people for their own purposes.

SP: There's a moment happening. I think what I'm trying to do with my work is really try to sandwich these ideas into a clear understanding of how technologies have always existed within our community. There are a lot of entanglements that are hard to parse. In my work, this becomes apparent in my interest in representing my flesh through digital manipulations. I animate it with a 3-D rendering program called Blender that's open source. You don't have to install it on your computer in order for it to work, which is important to me because I'm such a transient being. I put the program on a zip drive that I can pick up and take somewhere else. It's important to me to have this kind of mobility, conceptually and actually. I'm interested in taking what I have, no matter how traumatic or joyful, and seeing where it goes. This conception is really at the base of the things that I'm making.

AJ: On some level, it's kind of like, you can't have a position about a thing if you are a thing. The last twenty years, thirty years of hip-hop has been Black people with samplers, with computer systems. So why does this stuff even linger? Why is it that we're not understood as a technologically engaged class of people? Clearly we're not scared. We'll get in there and say, "Yo, you may have designed this thing to do X, Y and Z, but what it's better at is this."

SP: Right!

AJ: One of the things I've been continually obsessed with is the movie *Alien* (1979). To me it's no accident that when the alien first pops out of the guy's chest, all the White folks pull back. But Yaphet Kotto grabs a fork, and he's gonna go in on the alien! He's the only one who's pushing forward, right? He's the one saying, "I recognize, I know what the fuck this is. Let's kill it and let's kill it now!" He recognizes the danger immediately.

In a sense, he's seeing himself. He knows what the danger is. Everybody else is like, "gasp," but he wants to take this thing out. And the alien even has

fronts2, you know? It's like some total hip-hop shit. And I am obsessed that they got this seven-foot-two Sudanese brother, Bolaji Badejo, to play the alien. Black people can't even get work in movies when they want to. So they go to London and find a seven-foot-two Sudanese guy? This is not an accident. You can't tell me it's arbitrary. Somebody, unconsciously or otherwise, searched him out because on some fundamental psychoanalytic level, they knew the alien was a nigga, excuse my language. For real, they straight-up knew this on some profound level.

DD: Yes, and come to find out that the guy who saves the alien is actually a human-looking robot who works for the corporation!

AJ: Exactly! Because the robot is how the corporation implements its power. Every time something comes up, Yaphet Kotto has the most radically pragmatic solution. He's like, "Fuck all this shit, let's nuke the planet from outer space, get the fuck out of here, and deal with the legal ramifications later!"

SP: Later!

AJ: Everybody else is getting into discussions about science and exploration, he's like, "No!" It's him and the working-class [White] dude, Harry Dean Stanton, who voice their opposition.

SP: Yup!

AP: It really ends up affirming how—I always like to say, we're ill suns, it's a term I have now. I say, "Ill suns, we're ill suns," meaning we're suns that shine, but we shine in this way that's off. We are also the illegitimate sons and daughters of the West, meaning we're in it, we're absolutely products of it, but because of the way W. E. B. DuBois's dual consciousness thing works out, we look at this stuff from both inside and out. Like, you go to see a cowboy Western, and you're in this weird complicated between-space: you're either fine with the cowboys or with the Indians. It's constantly fluctuating back and forth. I think there's something about this fluctuation is so emblematic of what Blackness is.

[1] Eighteenth-century laws in New York that required black, mixed-race, and indigenous enslaved people to carry lit candle lanterns with them if they were walking in the city after sunset, unaccompanied by a White person; lantern laws are seen as the precursors to today's stop-and-frisk policing policies.

[2] Decorative tooth covers made of gold, silver, or other precious metals.

Arthur Jafa is an artist born in Tupelo, Mississippi (1960). His latest screenings have been held at ICP, New York; International Center of Photography School, Barnard College, New York, Museum of Contemporary African Diaspora Art, New York. Selected exhibitions include Serpentine Gallery, London (2017); Gavin Brown's enterprise, New York (2016).

Sondra Perry (1986, New Jersey) is an interdisciplinary artist whose works in video, computer-based media, and performance explore what Perry calls the "slippages of identity" that define subjective experience in the digital world. Her latest solo show has been held at The Kitchen, New York.

Dean Daderko is curator at the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston.

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Jennifer Krasinski, "Sondra Perry Explores the Intersection of Technology and Black History in America" *The Village Voice*, November 30, 2016, <https://www.villagevoice.com/2016/11/30/sondra-perry-explores-the-intersection-of-technology-and-black-history-in-america/>.



Sondra Perry Explores the Intersection of Technology and Black History in America

by JENNIFER KRASINSKI

November 30, 2016



riots,” rather than Gray’s story, for white news media. Later in the video, when Perry’s camera enters her family home, it finds Eartha Kitt singing “I Want to Be Evil” on the television. Perhaps, just perhaps, the artist finds something to embrace in this desire.

One of the many consequences of the recent election is the widespread calling-out of “fake news.” Facebook, Twitter, and other outlets have been charged with disseminating untruths that led to the election of Donald Trump. Even the savviest and smartest members of the media have been disoriented by the ways in which the incoming administration and its followers bend stories to their will and wish. Editor of the New Yorker David Remnick recently said of the normalizing of Trump: “I think I’m hallucinating.”

In “An Open Letter to White Liberal Feminists,” posted on the website of the African American Intellectual History Society, LeRhonda S. Manigault-Bryant, associate professor of Africana studies at Williams College, wrote of her white colleagues’ distress at the turn America has taken:

I am delighted that you have received the potential awakening of a lifetime, and that now you might actually get what so many of us have been describing all along. Welcome to that deep perpetual angst.

Our country was a terrifying place for many of its citizens long before November 8; it’s just that some of them — some of *us* — only recently learned exactly how and why ours is a nation to be feared. What we are seeing now is what America is and has been for some time. Perry’s exhibition puts us in a mind to remember that all we had to do to know this was to watch closely, and pay attention.

Sondra Perry: ‘Resident Evil’

The Kitchen

512 West 19th Street 212-255-5793, thekitchen.org

Through December 10

Will Heinrich, "What to See in New York Galleries This Week: Sondra Perry", *The New York Times*, November 24, 2016
<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/24/arts/design/what-to-see-in-new-york-city-galleries-this-week.html>.

The New York Times

What to See in New York Art Galleries This Week

By ROBERTA SMITH, MARTHA SCHWENDENER and WILL HEINRICH NOV. 14, 2017

Sondra Perry

'Resident Evil'



An installation view of Sondra Perry's "Resident Evil." She uses video games in her work, which illuminates the black experience.
Credit Sondra Perry and Jason Mandella/The Kitchen

The Kitchen
512 West 19th Street
Chelsea
Through Dec. 10

“Resident Evil,” the New Jersey-born artist Sondra Perry’s first institutional solo show, should be required viewing. With four formally accomplished, brutally forthright video installations, Ms. Perry uses the implacable inhumanity of computer and video-game software as a searing window into the contemporary black experience.

One video makes the connection between police brutality and operating system failures explicitly, combining discussions of the so-called “blue screen of death,” a type of Windows error message, and the “blue code of silence,” the corrupt police officer’s version of omertà, with photographs of black women and girls who have died in police custody. In another, Ms. Perry’s own face, jarringly grafted onto a ready-made avatar though it doesn’t quite fit, impersonates the kind of deeply shocked false consciousness that life inside such systems can foster.

But the crowning heartbreaker is the title piece, named after Capcom’s first-person shooter video game from 1996. Footage of the artist’s living room, of her mother reading on the couch and of Eartha Kitt singing “I Want to Be Evil” on their television skips jaggedly into footage of a protest in Baltimore after the 2015 death, in police custody, of Freddie Gray. We see both Fox News and citizen-smartphone versions of an encounter between Geraldo Rivera and the young activist Kwame Rose. While Mr. Rose makes an impassioned case for his own and his neighbors’ humanity, Mr. Rivera rolls on like an automaton, unable to deviate from his preprogrammed, sensationalist goal.

WILL HEINRICH

Margaret Kross, “Critics’ Pick: Sondra Perry”, *Artforum*, March 2016, <https://www.artforum.com/picks/id=64976>.

ARTFORUM

New York

SONDRA PERRY

THE KITCHEN

512 West 19th Street

November 2, 2016 - December 10, 2016

Sondra Perry’s crucial exhibition “Resident Evil” registers systemic, racialized violence and viscous identities under surveillance. Against the chroma-key blue walls of postproduction and computer operating system screens of death, a majestic animation, which shares its title with the show, smears the artist’s skin cells like molten lava, giving shape to our structural meltdown. Perry seamlessly choreographs an unnerving network—Fox News Baltimore coverage, a YouTube relaxation trance, a televised exorcism—that offers possibilities for rewiring power relations. Deconstructing righteousness as whiteness and badness as blackness, Perry doesn’t advocate bodily transcendence; she wants Eartha Kitt singing, “I want to be bad.”



View of “Sondra Perry: Resident Evil,” 2016

Kitt appears as “Bad Eartha” on a TV broadcast in *Resident Evil* (all works cited, 2016), pressing her hands against the camera glass with come-hither seduction, calling to herself as a representation. The diegetic sound contributes to a shift in subjectivity, and Perry’s subtext proposes to subvert social binaries by occupying them. Captured by *Blair Witch*–style shaky camera pans and overlaid with accounts of police brutality, the dimly lit domestic scene becomes ominous.

Surrogates for depleted bodies repeat throughout: a rowing workstation mired by globs of hair gel (*Wet and Wavy Looks—Typhon Coming on for a Three-Monitor Workstation*) and a malfunctioning cyborg that twitches and fades, seemingly with emotion (*Graft and Ash for a Three-Monitor Workstation*). The automaton, Perry’s avatar, is exhausted by the risks of being itself and by running hardware beyond its specifications. It’s a potent metaphor for projections that white norms graft onto black culture, corrupting the flesh of physiological health with symptoms in perception and behavior. As public truth devolves and consciousness morphs with fraudulent news and faulty algorithms, the latent virus erupts on every surface—and Perry exposes its entrenched complexity.

— Margaret Kross

Jessica Lynne, "First Look: Sondra Perry", *Art in America*, February 1, 2016, <http://www.artinamericamagazine.com/news-features/magazine/first-look-sondra-perry/>.

Art in America

MAGAZINE FEB. 01, 2016

FIRST LOOK: SONDRA PERRY

by Jessica Lynne



Sondra Perry's *Lineage for a Multiple-Monitor Workstation: Number One* (2015) is a hypnotizing video that explores the relationship between identity and ritual. Perry, who graduated from Columbia's MFA program last year, uses her personal history as a point of departure. On view in MoMA PS1's fourth edition of "Greater New York," the 26-minute, two-channel video features members of Perry's extended family reenacting traditions, singing and sharing oral histories.

The two channels show grabs from a pair of computer screens, with footage appearing in windows. The video begins with a short clip of Perry's family preparing for a group portrait in her hometown of Perth Amboy, N.J. Their faces are partially covered with neon green ski masks, the same color as the desktop wallpaper surrounding much of the footage. In the next episode, they restage the burial of an American flag in the backyard, while in another window Perry's grandmother describes this as a family tradition; her mother had told her old flags couldn't be thrown in the garbage. In the final vignette, the family gathers in the living room and sings the popular gospel song "Somebody Prayed for Me" as the camera pans slowly. The singing continues on one screen, while a clip of the family peeling sweet potatoes together around the kitchen table appears on the other.

Sondra Perry: *Lineage for a Multiple-Monitor Workstation: Number One*, 2015, two-channel video, 26 minutes.
Courtesy Electronic Arts Intermix, New York.

Investigations of black American history and ceremony are crucial for Perry, who is currently an artist in residence at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. “Red Summer” (2010) is a photo series that evokes the tension surrounding U.S. race riots during the summer of 1919. She set off smoke bombs in her grandparents’ backyard and photographed the two of them obscured by the gray cloud, suggesting the physical destruction that occurred in cities such as Chicago and Washington, D.C.

Perry often complicates these inquiries into identity by addressing the ways in which technology shapes personhood, for example, when she alludes to the green screen in *Lineage*. Green screen compositing is used to superimpose subjects onto virtual backgrounds—a technique Perry reminds us of with the color of the two desktops in her “multiple-monitor workstation.” Perry’s family members are dressed in identical green balaclavas and black clothing, as if they were background material to be chroma-keyed out. But their bodies remain solid, grounded in the environs of the Perth Amboy house as the situations and ceremonies change. It is as if Perry wants to suggest that identity is the result of the constant editing of memories and narratives. As the film’s title proposes, history is the amalgamation of these acts over time, acute projections of our many personal renderings.

CURRENTLY ON VIEW Sondra Perry’s video in “Greater New York,” at MoMA PS1, New York, through Mar. 7, 2016.

Jessica Lynne is a founding editor of the online journal *ARTS.BLACK*.