

# ARTFORUM

## Sondra Perry

### THE KITCHEN

512 West 19th Street

November 2–December 10

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

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