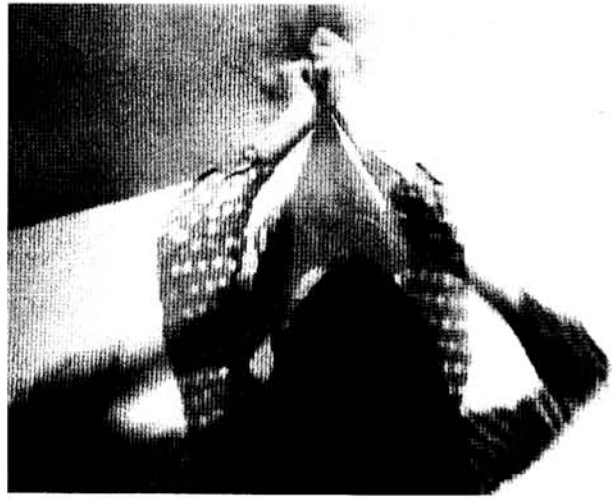


PETRA CORTRIGHT
STEVE TURNER GALLERY

BY JODY ZELLEN

WHEN NOT SURE WHAT TO SAY OR WRITE, ONE MIGHT FILL SPACE with "x x x," "blank blank blank" or "...". Petra Cortright titles her recent exhibition with all three—"x x x blank blank blank . . ."—alluding to casual causality and ideas that will be completed later.

Cortright has become something of a sensation on the Internet. Her YouTube webcam videos have attracted a huge following, and she has created a sophisticated algorithm based on number of views to determine the price of the gallery editions of these works. In these self-portraits Cortright records private performances and then applies stock digital effects. For example, in the 24-second *RGB D-LAY* (2011), Cortright holds her long hair above her head and lets it fall over her face. The image appears in multiple overlapping colors, simulating channels being out of sync. This video, like all her YouTube creations, records a simple act. Aware of the many impetuses people have to perform in front of webcams, her gestures are often silly, campy and girly. Her clips differ from other works posted to YouTube, however,



Petra Cortright, *RGB, D-LAY*, 2011

by not being confessional or sexual, but rather humorous and mocking that mode of self-expression. In contrast with other YouTube-inspired works, like Natalie Bookchin's multichannel work *Testament* (2009), which juxtaposed confessional clips to critically comment on this phenomenon, Cortright indulges in the joys of inanity.

Kitsch and camp are further explored in Flash animations such as *Enchanted Foreststrippersnopeeasy2girls* and *SpringValle_ber_girls* (both 2012). These monitor-based works are composites of appropriated animations made into infinite loops, which function as evocative screen savers. In these works she illustrates fantastical scenarios by combining downloadable applets appropriated from alluring ad-like links on websites. Layering scantily clad dancing girls, fluttering butterflies, a mooing cow, and a prancing unicorn in a lush green landscape, Cortright makes works that are simultaneously banal, hilarious and absurd, and which fit perfectly into the aesthetics of remix culture.

In her digital prints—silk banners and aluminum panels—she uses multiple layers and many of the given tools in Adobe Photoshop to add, subtract, invert, erase, fill and blur colors, tones and textures taken from images she finds online that are enlarged to form the base of her compositions. Most of the original is obliterated, leaving only traces of landscape overlaid by swirling gestures and textures that hover between abstraction and representation. In *PokÉmon xxx* (2013), yellow blobs dot the foreground. Perhaps they reference the Pokemon of the work's title, however the works share more with Monet's flower-filled paintings of Giverny than they do with a cartoon landscape.

Mired in Internet culture, Cortright's strengths lie in her ability to appropriate imagery and formats, combining fragments into aesthetically pleasing works. She shifts from making discrete pieces for the computer screen (experienced individually and privately by the viewer) to producing an installation of mixed media works that fill the walls, facade and nooks of the gallery space. The result is a surprisingly successful and coherent whole, fusing intriguing formal relationships.