

INSTITUTE FOR NEW FEELING PREMIERES FIRST MAJOR SOLO EXHIBITION, THIS IS PRESENCE, IN COLLABORATION WITH ARTURO BANDINI AT BALLROOM MARFA, TX.”

By Courtney Malick – November issue 2016



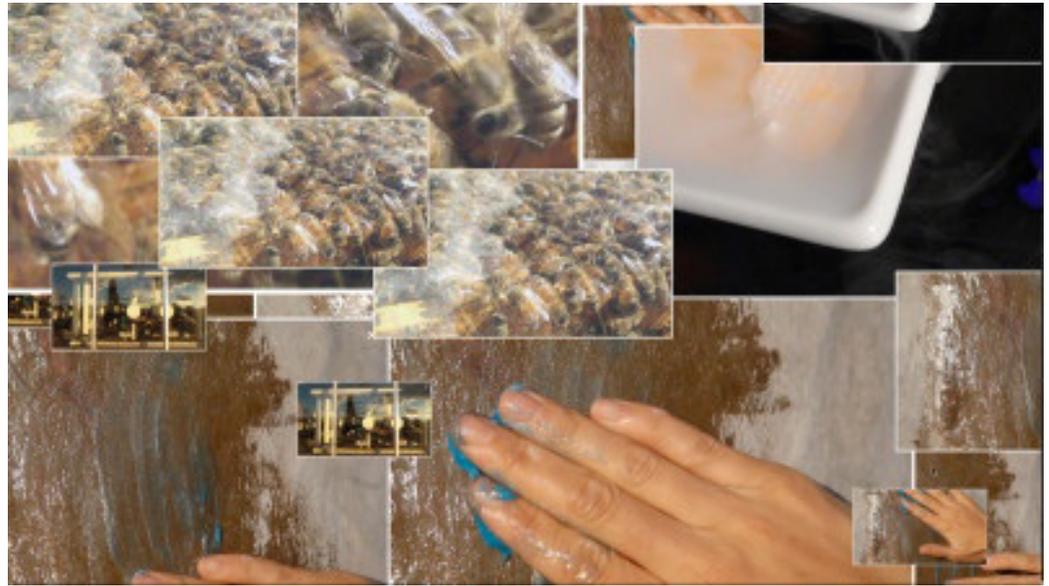
Institute for New Feeling
This is Presence, 2016
Ballroom Marfa

For the past two years, the Los Angeles-based collective, Institute for New Feeling (IfNF), has produced hybrids of interactive art and commoditized lifestyle and wellness concepts. Past exhibitions have included therapeutically-inspired interventions such as massages, baths and exercise routines. Their first major solo show, *This is Presence*, now on view at Marfa Ballroom in Texas, focuses less on specific kinds of physical activities and instead on technological interfaces that catalog such work, opening up the possibility for them to be purchased online.

The exhibition features a new video of the same title that utilizes a first-person perspective, placing the viewer in the familiar position of an internet user. The video simulates the movement of browser navigation by

mouse with the cursor drifting to clickbait like “Want to see more?” and selecting them, thus opening additional windows within the screen that present older works alongside new ideas. Many of IfNF’s image-based concepts appeal to the allure of touchable surfaces that, when juxtaposed to one another, form a sort of commercially-driven, misnomer style vernacular. One such idea within the video is labeled with what appears as a clickable pop-up that reads, ‘Sleep well at night,’ which promotes the supposed healing effects of synthetic objects and substances that nonetheless share characteristics with less soothing images of organic matter. This brief segment begins with shiny droplets of a mysterious, pink, luxurious goo dripping onto a rock. But when the lens zooms out it reveals that the fleshy hue has morphed into the slimy exterior of a raw chicken breast

Art in America



Institute for New Feeling,
This is Presence, 2016
(digital film still)
This is Presence,
installation view

with a laser beaming through it.

Along with the video and an installation of wellness products -- including custom earplugs and contact lenses -- the exhibition debuts a prototype of Ditherer, an immersive shopping interface accessed through a virtual reality headset. Ditherer places viewers-cum-shoppers in a large warehouse where they can browse a vast selection of items stacked on virtual shelves, from things

as common as avocados to the inventive lifestyle product/art objects made by IfNF. As it is still a prototype, Ditherer cannot be used to actually shop. Simulating the activity instead, when a user selects an item, the image of stacked boxes on shelves gives way to a collage that presents relevant information about the chosen product that can range from a list of ingredients to specific celebrity endorsements.

Art in America



Institute for New Feeling,
This is Presence, installation view
Ditherer, 2016
HTC Vive VR Headset,
video projection

Each product's collage is unique, and the economic and cultural narratives to which they relate multiply and intersect as users add more items to their e-carts. IfNF describes Ditherer as at once, "a commercial trap and an escapist fantasy," as it creates a more tangible shopping experience while also generating valuable data about consumer preferences that could potentially be synthesized and studied by both purveyors

and advertisers. More sharply than IfNF's previous works Ditherer connects the tactile appeals found in marketing strategies to the artificial reassurances they often create that prompt incessant buying. In doing so, they continue to blur the line between where the art in IfNF's commodity-drive project begins and ends.